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THE
UNITY AND HARMONY
IN
GOD'S WORD

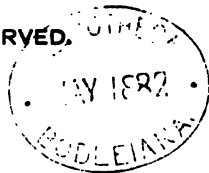
AS
FOUND IN THE BIBLE, THE WORLD, AND MAN.

By JOHN COUTTS,

AUTHOR OF

“PHILOSOPHY OF THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES; OR, REVELATION AND SCIENCE IN
COMPLETE HARMONY,” “THOUGHTS ON THE BIBLE AS A KEY
TO HISTORY,” ETC., ETC., ETC.

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PREFACE.



THE protracted struggle betwixt Science and the Bible, Belief and Unbelief, has been the means, in the providence of God, of causing many men to study with care the arguments which have been advanced on both sides, in this great controversy, with the hope that possibly a system of thought which would produce harmony might be found. This work finds its foundation principles in former works which have specially such an object in view. They are all stones, in a sense, upon which this superstructure is built; the laws of the kingdom of grace (pointed out in the last volume) being the means by which it is built up. These laws are the Beatitudes uttered by Jesus Christ, as found in His Sermon on the Mount. The objects and order of this book are as follows:—1. To study, from the spiritual standpoint of the Beatitudes, the Pentateuch and the Gospels, Moses and Jesus Christ, and the spirits of the Old and New Testaments, for the purpose of discerning their spiritual unity and harmony. 2. A brief consideration of the kingdom of God, as found in the Bible, in a scientific order, by the laws laid down in the Beatitudes; in fact, to discover, if possible, whether the Bible is a scientific book, in its own sphere of the kingdom of God's grace in mercy to men. Men who have studied the Bible, to find in it a science of Theology, can understand how great and important this work must be; and they will not be disappointed if they only get a glimpse into a new heaven of thought, which seems to contain hidden treasures of God's wisdom and grace. It must be remembered by the students of this divine science, that the laws to be used within this kingdom are spiritual and gracious: the Bible is gracious, merciful, and spiritual in its intention; therefore students, if they would be in sympathy with what they are studying, must be in a gracious state and guided by God's Holy Spirit, so that they may understand this marvellous science. 3. There being unity in the spirit of the Old and New Testaments, and a science of grace discernible throughout the whole Bible, the third division tries, by a philosophical consideration of the Bible, in its spiritual principles, of the world, and of man, as three witnesses agreeing in their testimony, to point out the harmony that exists in these three methods of expressing God's thoughts which may be named His WORD to men.

It would appear that this three-fold Word of God, in this wide application of the term, is about to enter into the presence of the Judge of all the earth in company with mankind, so that the past may be judged upon spiritual principles. Were there no Advocate or Intercessor with the Judge, what cause there would be for fear; but even with the gracious Saviour as Intercessor, men have cause for trembling because of their unbelief and sin, their despising of God's moral and gracious laws, and the despite done to His Spirit of grace. Room for boasting on man's behalf there is none, because under the increasing light of truth, grace, and righteousness, they have been found guilty as the slaves of sin, the bondservants of law, and spiritual rebels allied with the spirit of evil. of unbelief, against the true, faithful, and gracious God. It is when such subjects as these

arise for consideration, by the study of God's Word, that in a great measure the primary idea of the reconciliation of Religion and Science—that is, man's conception of theology and the binding nature of law and authority, and knowledge of truth—passes out of sight in the far deeper, more important problems of God's holiness and justice, sin and grace, forgiveness and reconciliation, peace and restoration to God's favour by Jesus Christ. It is when men stand by the side of the Wise, Holy, and Gracious One, that they can discern how foolish and sinful such unseemly strife is, in God's House, between two servants; because Religion is the servant in the moral and gracious service of God, whilst Science, or the intellectual power in man, is a servant, but also like an irresponsible slave, whose first duty ought to be obedience to the Holy and Gracious One by His laws. The gracious soul must find itself out of sympathy with all wrangling and strife under every name; a peace-making son of God must condemn all such works of the devil, because, although men may be named Christians who take a part in such works, in reality—so far as they manifest the spirit of unbelief in God and Christ, and transgress His moral and gracious laws—they follow another master, and not the Lord Jesus Christ. In the presence of the King of truth, the Lord of righteousness, every self-asserting servant must keep silence; but this means the baptism of the meek spirit by God's Holy Spirit, the power to see the Invisible, and the desire to obey truth and righteousness. "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven," may well be the supreme desire and earnest prayer of the people of God at this time; but whilst they pray, let them also work for this great end and watch for His coming in power and glory.

(10—11/12/81.)

THE
UNITY AND HARMONY
IN
GOD'S WORD.

Introduction.

THE spot near to the lake of Galilee where the Beatitudes were uttered by Jesus Christ, ought to be to all men the most sacred. It is not a temple, a porch, a university, or a shrine; and yet no temple can ever compare with it, for there the sacred fire from heaven rested upon a Man as He sat revealing unto men the Invisible God. No Grecian porch can give to man such sublime, divine wisdom as He uttered. No university with its staff of professors has ever instructed men as He taught His disciples, and the multitude by whom He was surrounded. And, whilst all human shrines may be said to veil the Deity, it was given to Jesus Christ to unveil the sacred place of the universe, and to reveal to men in Himself, the perfect Image of God. It is not that He was comparatively more holy or wise than other men, but the fact is undeniable, that He was the Immaculate One, and that in Him Divine Wisdom and Truth had their dwelling-place. Truth, wisdom, holiness, and grace, were enshrined in His being, and thus He is known to be by those who can discern His perfection, grace, and glory, the true Man, and also the King over all those who would obey truth and righteousness.

The Man, His position upon the mountain, and His words of Divine Wisdom, place Him as the central Figure, which men are called upon to study in the history of this world, and of the universe. In, and around Him the spiritual vision can discern a true halo of light, and in His light alone can men read the wonderful history of creation, the great volume of providence, and the blessed story of man's redemption.

Men hunger and thirst after knowledge of God ; for guidance in the pathway of life with its varied duties ; and for peace with God ; and, in Him there is found all that man ought to desire, and what will give peace, joy, and rest to the soul. These are realised facts supported by ample testimony through spiritual experiences, and thus they cannot be shaken. The dark shadows of doubts are at last passing away, men are beginning to see clearly to whom they ought to be in subjection, and their desire is to be conformed to His spiritual image in truth, wisdom, holiness, and grace. To be like Him ; to be with Him ; and to see Him as He is, ought to be the supreme desire of every redeemed soul.

When men are seeking eagerly after what the soul desires and longs for, having found out that in self there is no good, they move, in a spiritual sense, away from self as the centre upon which all their thoughts and desires formerly rested. In man there is found an imperfect standard of truth and righteousness ; but when the perfect standard is found, then self takes the second place and all thoughts, words, and actions must be measured by what is known to be perfect. Man receives, conceives, and treasures up in his soul, very slowly, the many ideas and actions which express the thoughts or will of God. It is when His image in truth and righteousness is formed in man, that the being is changed ; the fatal eclipse which had fallen upon his nature has passed away, and, in the light of God, truth and right abolish error and sin, and things are seen not as they seem, but as they really exist and consist by the will of God.

The fatal eclipse of man from the light of God's truth and righteousness is a terrible fact of history ; error, ignorance, hatred, murder, and every form of evil, testify that man is not living in harmony with God, and the creation in every man is truly groaning and travailing in pain, until there is the perfect redemption of man by God. This was the condition of the world when Jesus Christ appeared amongst men in the spiritual darkness which covered the Roman Empire ; and it is the condition of every man to whom His Word and Spirit come to bring the sunshine of God's favour into the soul. Christ, in the Promises, in the Flesh, and in His Holy Word, is the Light of the world, radiating forth upon men, the truth of God, so that man may know His will, and be wise ; and, the Mercy of God, that his sins may be pardoned, and that the troubled soul might find peace. The world through sin became as one great desert cut off from the Fountain of Life ; and the soul of man like a piece of parched, thirsty ground ; but when Christ comes, then the desert becomes beautiful with verdure and fruit, and the individual soul an oasis in which there is living water issuing forth blessed and a blessing.

This is the position of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and of Man ; He is the spiritual Sun of grace and truth in the spiritual firmament of man's being. He comes a living spiritual power to touch the spirits of men, so that by a new and higher spiritual life, which He communicates, men may be brought out of the darkness of error into God's marvellous light ; out of the state of sin and shame and of estrangement from God into that of reconciliation, holiness, peace, and joy in believing. He comes to men that he may throw open before their spiritual vision the

kingdom of heaven, in spiritual, living truths ; to emit from Himself the constitution of heaven ; and by touching the spirits of men to convey at least those germ-seeds of thought, which if nourished will become the kingdom of heaven in man, and upon the earth. Other teachers elaborate in their teachings upon what man should *do* that he may be fit for the kingdom ; *the* Teacher lays His finger upon the root of all evil, the perverted, sinful spirit, and says, what man must *be* so that the kingdom of heaven may be born unto his soul. The perverted spirit as seen in man is self-sufficient, it cares not for God, and is not obedient to His holy will. This is the greatest of all sins ; the root from whence all sins proceed, because it is spiritual rebellion and idolatry, the turning away from the Fountain of Life and Spirit, and setting self up as a god in opposition to God the Creator. Regeneration of spirit is man's chief want, and not until "the poor spirit" is generated in their spiritual being, can they be said to be so changed that they possess the Spirit of Christ ; but when united with Him by faith and in spirit, then the germ-seed of all that is good and gracious is possessed, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The spiritual Lord of man's being, and of the whole universe, touches the very central point of man's being when He is permitted to come into contact with the spirit and the soul. There is communicated a new living power which must operate upon that by which it is surrounded ; the spark of grace will burn to destroy evil, and to shed forth light upon the darkness within. Here the spiritual vision perceives that a new cycle of thought and experience is begun, and the thoughts are turned away from the Life-giver, the Fountain of grace and mercy, to trace the effects that are produced by this regeneration of spirit in man. The life imparted will grow in the soul being nourished by the Word of Life, and the spark of grace will kindle into a flame and reveal the condition of the soul in the light of God's Word. The vision of a corrupt, rebellious soul is an unpleasant one ; in it there is found room for all kinds of gods, except Him who is God. The pride of man fosters all kinds of foolish conceits as to man's greatness and goodness ; and too often to the perverted spirit there is brought adulation and praise from all quarters of his being. Such incense to the god self is an abomination in God's sight ; and thus the picture presented is that of a spiritual idolatry, which is only comparable with the Pantheon at Rome. These gods must be cast down before the God of all grace ; the temple must be purged ; there is required sorrow because of sin, and, in the lowly regenerate soul, the spirit of mourning, and of a saddened experience, which although for a time it may be bitter to endure, will at last receive comfort and consolation through the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.

Again the spiritual vision is changed, and the soul of man is seen in a different attitude ; the enemies of the regenerate spirit are seen to be cast down ; self-seeking is not the principal object of life ; but instead there may be seen a meek spirit seeking to be obedient to God's law working in man. The perverted spirit was a rebel, a despot, acting according to his own will ; and, because of such a spirit, separated from God, and condemned by His holy and righteous laws. The meek spirit

is like a constitutional ruler in man, ruling according to law and acting for the good of the whole being. Here the state of Eden at the time of the temptation and fall is seen to be reversed; the vile serpent is cast out of the garden of the soul, and God's Word is the law by which the spirit is guided in its thoughts and actions. By disobedience the inheritance of this earth was forfeited by man, and he was proclaimed an outlaw to the Eden of God; but by this new spirit of grace, and obedience to the words of Christ, the inheritance forfeited is restored; man as a king reigns in his own nature, and in due time the world will be governed by the Man by whom it has been redeemed.

At this point, by the spiritual vision, man is seen as restored to the birthright; he is no longer an alien, but a son of God, and an heir of the kingdom of heaven. As he stands by the side of the Son of God and of Man, and gazes around upon the inheritance bestowed upon him, he is struck dumb with amazement that unto such sinful creatures such a glorious vision should be revealed. When man reaches this stage of Christian experience there is no time or desire for the tongue of the unregenerate nature to utter its perfect satisfaction as to its own goodness and wisdom; but there are the operations of the living spirit regenerate, hungering and thirsting after God's truth, which is Divine wisdom, and God's righteousness, which is conformity of the soul to His holy and gracious will. Here man stands not on Mount Pisgah beside Moses viewing the Land of Promise from afar, but in the spiritual possession, by the King's side upon the Mount of the Beatitudes. Nay, even such a comparison fails to express the spiritual reality, for in that King exists heaven and all its promises. He is in Himself the great objective Reality of all spiritual truth and righteousness; and, what the soul of man requires, is to be transformed or transfigured into His spiritual Likeness. What a wonderful spirit this is which men receive when they are born again; it not merely transcends the bonds of humanity, but it appropriates the manifested God, and the soul is conformed to His Image.

Christ is heaven; the Spiritual City with foundations; the Place in whom all God's promises are fulfilled. Heaven is found in man when the regenerate spirit takes possession of all the spiritual wisdom He has supplied, and lives in conformity to His gracious, righteous laws. But Christ's heaven of grace and the heaven for which many men long are not quite the same spiritual realities. Christ's heaven of grace flows forth from Himself in the blessed stream of grace and mercy toward the sinful, depraved, prodigal sons of men; the heaven of men too often stops at forgiveness of sin, obedience to moral law, as far as possible, and the enjoyment of that heaven where there is no trouble, sorrow, pain, or death. The latter is heaven from man's standpoint of a low spiritual nature, but transformed into the likeness of Christ, and His heaven of spiritual thought revealed in the soul, then it is not self-glorification that is prized, but self must be sacrificed, and, spiritually, the man must go forth by Christ's side to seek the lost and to speak of forgiveness to the perishing sons of men. This is the spirit which animated Jesus Christ in the Advent in the flesh; it is

the central spirit of the Bible as a whole; and, it is impossible that any one can understand God's Word until from this point the work of man's redemption is studied. The King of Grace is all-glorious because in Him there exists the perfect kingdom of heaven; the servants of the King begin to manifest forth His glory when they drink of this spirit, and as bearers of the Evangel, they go forth to make known unto men the mercy of God in Christ. He is the Merciful, full of mercy; His servants try to drink of this new spiritual wine, and to convey it to others, but, oh! how small their capacity, and how feeble their efforts. Not because men have been merciful shall they obtain mercy; but because He was full of mercy, He will obtain mercy for those who are allied in spirit to Him.

The first coming of the King of Grace was to bestow upon man a new life and that spark of grace which is regeneration of the spirit, and a new power in the soul. The Advent in the Flesh was also a coming to men, but it was that He might breathe upon them and send them forth to bring to men in all nations the Word of truth and grace. The first movement may be compared to the gracious work of God in the individual soul, the latter as bearing upon the soul in its subjective operations and, in a sense, upon the community, the nation, and the world. Viewed in this aspect the next vision which the spirit discerns is that of the crucible and the fire, a great conflict in the spiritual world of men's thoughts; great zeal in making known the moral law of God, sustained efforts to purge the individual soul, or the community, so that there may be conformity to God's law in the actions of men. The scene is in the storm where the sun, moon, and stars, are hid from view, and where the compass of God's Word through earthly turmoil seems to vary in its motions. On every side strife, self-assertion, the wisdom of man, and doubts as to the truth and righteous ways of God. There is ample zeal for purity, but the Spirit of the Pure One is forgotten, and thus instead of there being a heaven of grace in the soul it is turned into a hell of discord; and instead of a kingdom of peace amongst men, society and the nations are in a state of ferment, of strife, and all that is uncharitable. Such a condition of the soul and of the world is only too well known; but such conditions are permitted so that by the strong interactions of spiritual powers the impure, unholy, and accursed things may be purged out of the soul and from amongst men. Not whilst the storm is agitating the soul or nations do they possess the pure spiritual moral vision, but when the evil is purged away then the spiritual in man can look into the spiritual in Christ, and in Him God is seen manifested to the children of men.

Another cycle of spiritual thought and action is revealed to the spirit of the regenerate, when, the struggle of the soul being over, and the manifold temptations overcome, the spirit is seen looking away from self and all its surroundings into the calm, holy, gracious face of God in Jesus Christ. There has come a deliverance, not from the bondage of the world's thoughts and ways, but from the very devil of self in man; and, at last, the demon of infidelity is exorcised; the rescued soul opens itself to the light and love of God, and there is peace.

Strange experience, and yet how true, how often experienced by the followers of the Pure Prince of Peace. This great work of redemption is not merely the utmost that the King can do for man, but it is also all that man can do for himself. The King comes to give rest and peace for the soul; but betwixt the rest in trusting Christ by coming unto Him, and the peace found by looking spiritually into the face of God, there is the sword which divides the whole being, causing such strife in the soul as men could not otherwise experience. Souls thus saved are called by God to a holy calling; like Isaiah, Daniel, and John they see the King in His majesty and glory; they fall on their faces in shame because of their sinfulness, renounce all self-righteousness, and, being graciously dealt with, they are prepared to go forth as God's ministers of peace amongst men. These are the "children of God;" the gentle doves sent forth amongst ravens and vultures; the lambs which go amongst lions and wolves, carrying with them the words of peace to troubled souls. History records some names of men and women who have with a large measure of this spirit trod the highways of this world, but God's only begotten Son, upon whom the Spirit descended as a dove, and who was named "The Lamb of God," alone is seen to be the Perfect Peacemaker amongst men, and the Son who bears the image of the Father of Peace.

What has the consequence been of the peaceful children of God, His lambs and doves going forth amongst the ravenous beasts which have possessed this world? It is explained in the next cycle of thought and action, which changes the aspect of the spiritual vision from the Father's peaceful home to the world where there is persecution because of righteousness. The scene spiritually considered is terrible to contemplate; it is that of men who have made gods of themselves, and who in their self-will raise their hands against the Lord and His servants, against the Father and His children. What folly and madness must this be for men not merely to despise the message of peace from the King, but to dare to lift their hands against the beloved children of God who are said to be dear to Him as the apple of the eye. Have men really been guilty of this awful crime of despising God's mercy and treating with contumely His ambassadors? Guilty, truly guilty before God, repeatedly, and with increasing knowledge and responsibility. What a marvellous patience is this that abides in God, when under such circumstances the thunder of His majesty and the lightning of His justice have not destroyed men. It is His grace; His well-beloved Son, that restrains the lightning and thunder, and for a time the lambs and doves are seen to be the prey of wicked men. Strange spirit this which can in a furnace of fire become more pure and full of peace by gazing upon the face of the Son of Man; or, when being stoned to death, can in spirit look up steadfastly and see "Jesus on the right-hand of God." This is the key-note to the word, "heaven," and all that it contains as explained in the Bible; and it leads men to Jerusalem, Gethsemane, and Calvary, where the kingdom of heaven was thrown open to men by the Persecuted One. There is no mistake in Christ's words, however strange they may seem to those who are *not spiritual*, it is a blessed state to be like the dove and lamb in spirit

and to be sacrificed, given up to the service of God's grace and mercy in the world. To the follower of Christ this experience may be very trying and full of pain, but man's spirit is permitted to turn away from the world and its troubles, to touch the Spirit, the Comforter, and by such communion of spirit even in the gates of hell there may be the sunshine of heaven filling the soul. This is the secret power of God's grace ; it brings sweet messages through the darkness to the tried soul ; and the spirit looking up strong in trusting Christ, there is seen flashing forth, as in letters of pure gold, not merely words of comfort and hope, but the exulting words, " Rejoice and be exceedingly glad : for great is your reward in heaven : for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

The words of blessing uttered by Christ, when considered in this light, are seen to be the germ-seeds of thought bringing to mankind a new life and gracious power, which beginning in the regeneration of a soul, goes onward in its progress to the restoration of the world to God. The King in a few words explains the nature of His kingdom, and these words, when spiritually understood, prove to be the means by which the mysteries of the kingdom are revealed in His Word, in man, and in the world.

The Book of Genesis.

JESUS CHRIST is known to be the Light of God ; that is, the truth in whom perfect wisdom resides ; and the righteousness of God in whom there is perfect holiness and grace. He is the Son of God, who builds the house of God and rules over it, and this house is the living, redeemed Church united to Him, and animated by His Holy Spirit. Moses is a faithful servant, obedient to Him who placed him in the house of God, and as a servant and prophet he gives a faithful and true testimony to the holy will of his Master. There is a glory reflected from the face of Moses, but it was seen after the second period of forty days upon the mount with God ; and all through these centuries, spiritually, when Moses has gone into the tabernacle to speak with his Master the veil has been removed, but in speaking to men the veil has covered his face. This is in figure a great spiritual truth which may be traced throughout the Scriptures. It speaks to men of types and symbols, of flesh and of the letter, and it also teaches men that beyond the visible and tangible there is to be found the spiritual and the eternal. The face of Moses expresses the visible forms, as in Judaism, the flesh, as in the life of the Lord Jesus, and the letter of the Word as in the Bible ; the face of Jesus Christ reveals the spiritual thoughts in the holiest place, unveiled, and as communicated by God's Spirit touching man's spirit ; the forms, flesh, and letter having vanished before the light of the Shekinah. The words of Christ—"It is the spirit that quickeneth ; the flesh profiteth nothing : the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life," ought to be constantly remembered in studying God's Word, for, beyond a doubt, it is the most difficult thing that any man can attempt to try to pass in spirit beyond form, flesh, and letter, and in spirit to understand the things of the Spirit. Nay, it must be frankly confessed that the power is not in man to do this, for the spiritual light and power is not in him ; but there is such a thing as the unveiling of form, flesh, and letter, and of the Holy Spirit revealing to man's spirit the spiritual thoughts of God. The Bible is not in itself, in the letter, a spiritual, living thing ; but in its development there can be traced a series of changes which comes at every remove nearer to such a condition. At the first, God's thoughts are hidden away in visible symbols and things which can be seen and handled by men ; in the second development it is "God manifest in the flesh," the Spirit of God being invisible and unknown to sinful men ; and at the third change letters and words hide from men who are not spiritual the glory of God, whilst to the spiritual the gracious thoughts

of God toward them are revealed. The forms manifested speak of a Creator and Ordainer not merely of the forms but also of the thoughts expressed by the forms—the living flesh with a living spirit expressing in thought, word, and deed the will of God, comes very near to the spiritual, if spiritual men could only come under the immediate personal influence of such a Spirit; but as this cannot be there follows the written Word, not of the flesh but of the Living Spirit of Christ, and thus there intervenes only letters as signs betwixt the Spirit and spirit. Only signs; but who can interpret these signs to the spirit of man but God's Spirit? and thus it matters not, form, flesh, or letter, the Holy Spirit alone can enlighten man in the thoughts and things of God. This, then, is true, and it has been attested by all the spiritual followers of God who is Spirit, that beyond what man can see or touch there is the spiritual, which is the reality that God desires men to seek after and to understand. Moses in his firmament of thought, word, and deed shines as with the lustre and beauty of the moon in the physical heavens; but, unseen to man, Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shines upon Moses, and it is His light that Moses reflects upon men. The Sun of Truth has arisen, and at His rising the glory and beauty of the moon in a great measure passed away; but the day of the Sun in its marvelous light passed by, and since that time the testimony of God's Word has been that to which men have resorted. Not by the light of Moses must the Scriptures and history be judged, but by the Light of the World, Jesus Christ, must men study the thoughts of God.

The figurative word light, which means spiritual truth, used in this manner as being reflected by Moses, and radiating from Jesus Christ, implies that it shines for a definite purpose, and this is to dispel the spiritual darkness which shrouds the earth. Thus there was the day of moral perfection in Eden; this was followed by a night in which Moses and the promises of God shine in man's spiritual firmament, and the night was followed by a day in which the light of Moses and of the promises paled before the Sun of spiritual grace and truth. Because of spiritual darkness the light shone upon Moses, and in the Pentateuch there is conveyed to man God's truth for the salvation of the world. Moses never claimed to be the Light; He was content if His face reflected "the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Moses as a faithful servant and true witness could not, dare not, set up any light that he might be supposed to possess in opposition to, or even to increase the amount of light received from his Master; had he done so then the servant would not have been faithful, and the witness would not have been worthy of credence. This is a deeply important thought worthy of the most careful consideration, because if men walk in the light of the man Moses as a man, seeking his own glory, doing his own will, then they are wrong, and the blind man is leading the blind; but if he is a faithful servant and true witness, then it is not Moses but God in Christ that is in reality the light shining forth from the five books written by Moses. This is the strongest test by which the servant and witness can be tried, for it is to bring him, his words and works into the sunshine of spiritual truth, and there to question him before his Master as to his service and witness-bearing. The question cannot be the

amount or extent of the personal knowledge of Moses as to the things written, in form or in spirit, but is he a true servant, a witness and a prophet of the Most High God? It is not whether man can fully comprehend all the utterances of Christ or the words of Moses, but is there such a substantial harmony manifested betwixt Christ and Moses that it is seen to be conclusive that the One Holy Spirit of truth animates, or is the spiritual life in both? This is a great work to attempt. May God grant of the fulness of His Holy Spirit to every thinker and reader engaged in it, so that if it is His holy will these things may be made manifest, His great name glorified, and mankind blessed through the abundance of His grace shed down upon them.

To be able to bring the spiritual truths in the Pentateuch face to face with the words and works of Jesus Christ, as found in the gospels, it will be necessary to glance in succession, as briefly as possible, at the spiritual truths which these contain, and if it is seen that Moses and Christ are at one upon the great question of the redemption of mankind, then it may be advisable to sum up the harmonies which exist by comparing the Scriptures with the great facts of history, science, and philosophy, and with the nature of man. And, surely, if these three witnesses are found to speak the same language, and to be animated by the same spirit, then all doubts must be dispelled, and the light of God will once more shine forth upon men from His holy temple.

The Word of God has for its special object the redemption of the fallen sons of Adam: but seeing that they had in their wilfulness departed from the Fountain of Life, the origin of all manifestations, it was necessary that God should not leave His redeemed children ignorant of the great facts related to the visible and invisible creation. It is with this subject that the book of Genesis opens; and it is to be observed that whilst the first chapter expresses the facts of creation, yet it does so in a manner that the ignorant who think only in concrete figures, as known by the senses, may believe in the Creator, whilst at the same time, beyond the figures used, there may be discerned spiritual conceptions which surpass the highest range of vision found within the range of men of science and philosophers.

CHAPTER I., verses 1—2, express these ideas, 1st, a Creator; 2nd, the negations, without form, and darkness; 3rd, the Spirit of God evolving, designing, and manifesting creation. These are the facts which the most advanced thinkers are compelled to acknowledge as true. Science is found to tread in the footpaths of the Spirit of God in design, evolution, and manifestation; but the end of science is negation, a something not to be reasoned upon, but which must be believed to exist, and beyond the negation the Creator, Life-giver. This is a cycle of thought; it expresses all creation in all its manifestations.

In verses 3—5 light and darkness—day and night—are made known. The spiritual light of God is truth and wisdom; the spiritual darkness, error, sin, and the boasted wisdom of man, which is foolishness. The words of God, Isaiah xlv., 7, are emphatically true; "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil. I, the Lord, do all *these things*." God, the Creator, had a perfect knowledge of both good

and evil ; but betwixt these there exists a division ; goodness and truth being the condition for those who are the children of the light and of the day, whilst evil and darkness is the state of those who by disobedience, rebellion, and self-seeking turn away from the Good and the True. The fact is plain enough that God alone is the Author of Truth and Wisdom ; and it is likewise clear that He alone has ordained those strange states or conditions into which the fallen creature comes when he chooses, in opposition to the good will of God, to become his own god.

In verses 6—8 there is separation, expansion, heaven ; spiritually there is manifested the Archetype of Creation, that is the Lord of truth, wisdom, and holiness. He is Heaven, and by His truth, wisdom, and holiness heaven is manifested, and they who are true, wise, and perfectly holy are in heaven, for in Him all things subsist and consist.

In verses 9—13, the visible creation is manifested ; that is all that can be brought under the kingdoms of force or matter and life. The order of matter or force and its laws are ordained ; and the evolution of life, in all its designs, generations, and manifestations revealed.

In verses 14—19 there is the creation of "lights in the firmament of the heaven" for the purpose of giving "light upon the earth." As with the visible world and its heaven, so in the heaven of man's being and its earth, which is his body, there are the great spiritual lights of the intellect and the moral nature by which truth and error, good and evil, can be known. It is God the Creator who places the lights in their definite places for special purposes, and it is for them to shine or rule in the places where they are set. This creation embodies all spiritual power, that power of thought or memory by which all animate creatures are endowed, the intellectual power in man by which he gains knowledge of God's works, and also the moral nature in man which is set in his being as the ruler of all his actions toward God and man.

In verses 20—31 there are found the varied manifestations of the powers of spirit, thought, instinct, imagination, intelligence, intellect, and moral power ; and there is the authority possessed over the lower creatures by their lord, who was made in the image of God. There is also to be discerned the food which God has been pleased to give to the lower creatures ; and in the fruits yielding seed there may be found that living bread of God's thoughts by which the spirit of man can live. The lower creatures obey instinct, walking in that light which God has placed within them ; whilst man is permitted to study the thoughts, designs, and manifestations of God so that he may become more and more conformed to His image in truth, knowledge, wisdom, and holiness. The Sabbath rest of harmony, peace, joy, and conformity to the will of God closes the vision ; the microcosm has manifested the macrocosm, and there was no jarring sound heard in the day that "the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." The perfect moral creation is thus conceived as revealed to man in the cycle of thought which reveals a Creator and ends in the Sabbath.

In CHAPTER II., 4—7, there follows the description, of what can be spiritually discerned as a *new creation* by Him who is named the Lord

God. But the new creation, or re-creation, is seen to take place upon this earth, which is seen to be like a desert, without plant or herb, without rain from heaven, without a man to till the ground and enveloped in a mist. Into this scene there comes a Divine Visitor, even the Lord God, and He is graciously pleased to breath into that which had become as dust of the earth, a new "breath of life; and man became a living soul." Spiritually, there may be discerned beyond these figures the first blessing which God gives to sinful man; it is the new birth of poorness in spirit of which all who are partakers become heirs by faith of the kingdom of heaven; and then the desert of man's nature is changed, for it holds within itself all the seeds which will in due time bring forth all the blessed fruits of God's Holy Spirit. The heavenly blessing will descend to refresh the soul, and the mists of error and sin will be carried away in due time by the breath of God's Word.

In the figures of the "garden eastward in Eden," verses 8—14, with its manifold trees and pleasant fruits; the trees of life and of the knowledge of good and evil; and of the river which proceeded out of Eden to water the garden, there may be spiritually discerned the gracious condition in which man is placed as related to his own soul, in which there is all that God can supply of what is pleasant and good for man; there is also life, and the possibility of man seeking to know both good and evil. The river is the blessed stream of God's grace and mercy, which in due time brings to the redeemed life and peace. It is the same spiritual river as was seen by the Prophet Ezekiel in the vision coming out from the Altar in the mystic temple at Jerusalem, flowing onward toward the Dead Sea, giving healing and life wherever it went. It is the stream of grace in which God takes pleasure and delight; it comes out of the Eden of His love for man, and it is the only means by which man can be redeemed to God. It is an objective, spiritual stream, as seen issuing from the throne of God; but it is also a subjective stream or spring in the souls of men when they partake of that which God has graciously given for their spiritual well-being. The spiritual history of the stream is to be found in the four divisions into which it is seen to part; and the names of the rivers describe its progress in the world and also in man.

In verses 15—17 there is seen the Lord God, as Lord and Law-giver, placing the man in the garden under law. The spiritual facts being that man is permitted to receive freely of all kinds of lawful knowledge and to cultivate his being to the fullest extent in harmony with God's will, or the moral law of life; but to take of that which makes known both good and evil, and which is prohibited by the Lord God, this is sin, it is, to alter the figure, permitting the moon or inferior light in man's nature to rule his being, and it is to despise the law of God and that authority in the soul which He has placed there as His vicegerent. There is free-will, but the consequences of using that freedom for rebellious purposes are made known under the figure of the word death.

In verses 18—20 the Lord God can be spiritually discerned as thinking of the state of man after he has used that free-will which he possessed; his condition is a helpless one, for sin, disease, death, and hell are upon

his track, and the issue must be destruction, unless in the mercy of God, a help-meet can be found. The expressed resolution of the Lord God, "I will make him an Help-meet for him," solves the difficulty, and because of this intention expressed by the Lord God there is a re-creation, a bringing-back of the creature to the state of subjection to Him who is the Head of the race of the redeemed. In the vision there is no difficulty with the irrational creatures, they receive their names and natures, and are obedient; but within this cycle it is not yet disclosed by what means the Help-meet is to be brought to man.

In verses 21—25 the method of the Help-meet for man may be spiritually discerned. Humanity is seen as in a deep sleep, the side is pierced, and a rib taken out of the man, and from that which belonged to man there is manifested the woman in all that is beautiful and gracious. In other words, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spiritual Head of the Church in the days of the Roman Empire, when the world was spiritually almost dead, gave Himself up for man; from His side pierced—another figure—there flowed the blood which redeems and the water which cleanses the soul, and through that death there exists the Church, His bride, which is one with Him in its true spiritual life.

CHAPTER III., 1—8. In this chapter is found temptation; the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, are all seen in action; and the issue is, that the food, the pleasure, and the wisdom terminate in opened eyes, shame-stricken souls, and in terror lest the Lord God should draw near to them and punish them for their guilty actions. What is the food of man? Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God? What is the pleasure which men should desire? It is in seeing the word and work of the Lord prospering in the soul and amongst men. What is the true wisdom which will give satisfaction to the soul? It is to seek to know Him, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." These things are God's will toward man; but they would not be limited to what the Lord is willing to supply, so they put forth their hands to seize forbidden fruits, pregnant with evil, and the end of that way is death.

In verses 9—21 there is discerned another coming of the Lord God; it is to judgment upon the creature who has been so foolish as to take its own sinful food, pleasure, and wisdom, in preference to that which is good, pleasant, and divinely wise in the sight of God. There is judgment upon the lusting desires, the doom of dust-eating upon the perverted intellectual powers; and enmity betwixt the seed of the woman or the spirit of grace; and the seed of the serpent or the perverted reason and selfish lustings and desires in man. To the Church of Christ, in which the grace of God will be manifested, there shall be, in all spiritual conceptions and travailing in birth, great sorrow; and the state of the Church shall be that of subjection, being under the power of men who will rule it according to their pleasure and not in harmony with the will of God. Unto man, spiritually there comes the curse of care, envy, strife, malice, and hatred in his social relations; and for his spiritual food that which the lower creatures have for their portion, even "the herbs of the field," in other words, God's wise

thoughts which have seed or life in themselves are removed from man, and even the beast's portion is to be earned as if by a sweat of the brain and spirit. This is man's reward for his covetousness and rebellion; he sowed to the flesh, and the harvest is corruption and every evil work. In fallen, sinful man there is no hope; he is of the earth and earthly in his conceptions and aspirations; the current of his life is toward sin and death, and through him no life can come. The curse rests upon mankind; but at his side there is found the Living One by whom life is restored and men are reconciled to God. The way to God is by sacrifice and substitution; in this new thought, by this external figure, God teaches men that a way of forgiveness has been found, and that reconciliation, righteousness, and restoration to His favour is before men. But, behind them, or rather within them, there is the garden closed, and to prevent the returning to God by what man can do in his own strength, there is found the flaming sword of God's perfect moral law turning in every direction, so that men may know that eternal life in this direction is an impossible thing.

It may be suggested that in these spiritual conceptions of the visions in Eden there seems to be harmony with the spirit which animates the blessings uttered by Christ on the Mount. As Christ begins with the blessing upon the "poor in spirit," so the first vision in Eden in its cycle, covers the same spiritual field of thought; and it is as indicated, the birth of the new spirit breathed into man when in God's sight his nature was as a desert place. The second vision, which presents the soul of man as a garden, and the means of his regeneration, the river of grace flowing forth as from the throne and altar of God, harmonises with the second blessing in which the soul regenerate, and mourning on account of sin, is comforted by the Holy Spirit the Comforter, which proceeds from the throne of God, by the altar of sacrifice, to the redeemed. The third vision, which makes known the relations of the Lord God as Law-giver and King, by placing man in subjection to law, thus limiting his range of thoughts, is found to agree with the third blessing uttered by Christ upon the meek who shall inherit the earth. Man through covetousness, lusting, and pride, forfeited the inheritance, he was disobedient to law, would not be limited, and thus only through the Meek One who was obedient in all things could the inheritance be restored. Through Him they who become meek by His grace given unto them, are restored to the inheritance and in the meek spirit of obedience only can they inherit all that Christ supplies. The fourth vision reveals the Lord God as deciding to make an Help-meet for man; and as engaged in naming or giving renewed natures to the lower creatures. This harmonises with the spirit of the fourth blessing in which there is hungering and thirsting after righteousness. The Lord God could not be satisfied until righteousness returned to the earth, and as expressed by the prophet Isaiah, "I looked and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury (or zeal?) it upheld me." The fifth vision makes known the method of redemption; in the open side of Christ, His death and the living Church which is redeemed by Him. This agrees in spirit with the fifth blessing

uttered by Christ upon the merciful; in fact it reveals the Merciful going forth amongst the unmerciful, that through His death of self-sacrifice, men might learn how to be merciful toward each other. The sixth vision makes known the temptation and fall of man by disobedience to the will of God; their lost condition and the fear that possessed them lest God should find them. And it is in response to this state of soul that Christ utters the sixth blessing upon the pure in heart, who, through His Spirit and by His power of a pure moral life, have been regenerated and sanctified. The seventh vision reveals the Lord God as come down to earth to seek the miserable creatures who have destroyed themselves, and who naked, in their shame hide from God; but man cannot hide from the All-seeing, the hour of judgment and of mercy comes, and the sentence goes forth from Him who is the King of Peace, and also the appointed Judge of quick and dead. This vision agrees in spirit with the seventh blessing upon the peacemakers; for the Son of God desires peace, sends forth His messengers of peace amongst men, and it is only when they reject His Word and despise His name, that judgment falls upon the wicked. The struggle of the ages is foretold in the relations which will exist betwixt the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; and, in harmony with this, the blessing upon those who are "persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

CHAPTERS IV.—XI. Here is found detailed the brief history of the world from Adam to Noah; presenting for man's consideration a complete cycle of thought and action as these have been fully manifested in the world. The head of the race is succeeded by two sons, Cain and Abel. The elder takes possession of the earth and tills it, bringing to God as an open acknowledgment of His Sovereignty an offering of the first-fruits of the earth; but to such an offering, from a sinner, the Lord, the covenant Head of mankind, had no respect. Such an offering of the first-fruits from holy, unfallen beings, would have been acceptable; but offered by a sinful man it was the work of a proud spirit who would dictate by what means he would render homage to God. The younger son becomes a shepherd; and from amongst the creatures which God had graciously given and nourished, he brought a firstling of the flock with its fat as a sacrifice, and unto such an offering the Lord had respect. Thus there is a division amongst men; the self-righteous spirit who will take his own way, and the obedient, humble spirit who by God's mercy seeks His face through the way of His grace. The issue of this method of man's actions toward God, and of God's aspect towards men, is on the part of Cain jealousy, anger, murder; on the part of Abel, God's special favour, the enmity of his brother, persecution and death. But it ought to be observed, that the real cause of this strife and persecution on the part of Cain is to be found in chapter iv., verse 7, for there the inmost soul of Cain in his desire is revealed, and there also may be discerned the one important conception which has been the cause of, it may be said, all the strife in the world from that day until now. The question is that of *the birthright*; of subjection, and of ruling among men. *Adam had forfeited the birthright*;

it had been given to another even to the Lord Christ who at this juncture appears, not as God, the Creator, or as Lord God, the Revealer who manifests God, but as the Lord upon whom has devolved the supreme power and government of this world. His it is by right of redemption ; and as His deputy, he can bestow it upon whomsoever He pleases. The Lord remonstrates with Cain, explaining that upon his own conduct toward God depended whether the favour of God would rest upon him or not ; if righteous before God then the excellency would be his ; if not, then the serpent of sin lay at the door of his soul and the birthright would pass to another. The first-born killed his brother, the curse of God rested upon his head because of sin ; and, in due time, Seth the one appointed by God, received the birthright and the blessing.

In the cycle from Adam to Noah there is briefly traced the power of this world through the descent from Cain ; and the line in which the grace of God existed in the children of Seth. In the former there is seen the curse of separation from God, the building of a city, bigamy, wealth, music, art, science, and a boasting murderer ; in the latter, God's favour, calling upon His name, walking with God, and the hope of comfort and rest. There is not much known of this cycle of history, but there is no difficulty in discerning that it prefigures, as well as manifests, that external kingdom of the power of man which has repeatedly been set up in this world in opposition to the reign of Christ upon the earth. The cycle is complete in itself from Adam to Noah, but, it is the same manifestation which has been found in Egypt, and also in the power represented by the great image of Daniel.

The cycle is that of the visible power of men who have become corrupt ; giants in wickedness, whose thoughts are only evil and evil continually. Can the Lord save His righteous ones who trust in Him from being corrupted and destroyed by men ? The story of the ark and the Flood is the reply to this question. There is a mighty deliverance for the righteous in the Ark or Christ ; there is a terrible baptism in the cloud and sea during a whole cycle of time ; and there is a redeemed world emerging from the flood of judgment in which the saved may dwell. This is the great deliverance from the power of this world, and in visible power it is repeated before the eyes of men in the redemption from Egypt, the baptism of Israel in the Red Sea, and the destruction of the power of the Pharaohs who, in spirit, were allied to Cain and his descendants in the world before the Flood.

The great cycle of the world power, at least, as described in these germ-thoughts, is brought to an end ; the wicked are overthrown in the midst of their wickedness, and again God reigneth upon the earth. The appointed ruler into whose hands the Lord has given authority raises an altar upon the earth, offers sacrifice unto God, and the Lord accepts man and enters into a covenant with him. The development of thought at this point is worthy of attention ; there is continued unto man all the promises of Eden ; sacrifice to God, the invisible inheritance of the world as the birthright, the prophetic utterances of Enoch, the facts as related to the ark, the Flood, the deliverance of the righteous, as well as the justice and judgments of God upon the wicked. But, in

this covenant which God is graciously pleased to enter into with Noah there is special interest attached to all that relates to life. The world is given to Noah and his sons with God's blessing, and they are instructed to "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth." All living creatures are delivered up to their authority; every moving, living creature is given to man for meat, as well as the herb which had formerly been their portion; but blood, the symbol of life, is to be to man a sacred thing. This covenant encircles not merely man, but every living, moving creature, and the sign of the covenant is the visible rainbow which spans the heavens when the dark cloud keeps back the sweet sunshine from the earth.

The thought which arises specially out of this covenant is the fact that this is still an external or visible order of things; there is, so to speak, the matter or force which constituted the kingdom of force, as symbolised in the days from Adam to Noah, but there is also the kingdom of life which lays hold of matter and changes it into that which is organised flesh. The organisation which was about to be manifested through the descendants of Noah is higher than that of Adam; the former is that of empire, of despotic power, that of a will which must be obeyed without any questioning as to right and wrong; the latter evolves the form of man in an organised body, and within that body there exists all the possibilities of what God is pleased to put into it, in what is known as spirit, thought, intellect, moral power, and gracious actions. It may not be without an important significance that the grant of the fruit of the tree yielding seed, as given to man when created in moral perfection is not given to him at this time; there is living flesh and the herb of the field, but beyond these men are not permitted to go throughout the cycle of the covenant of Noah. It will be observed that a new order of things has arisen amongst men; and, these figures of life, flesh, and herb; of the rainbow and sacrifice; of men seeking after wisdom, truth and righteousness in their fleshly conceits, and never finding the true evolution, are here spiritually held up before the eyes of men. Men are instructed to be obedient, to conform to God's laws, and by doing so they will be blessed; but, there is no promise given that they shall know, or find out the method of God's evolution of creation, providence or redemption; these are fruits which have their seeds in themselves; and only in God's time will men receive this gift of divine wisdom, or the knowledge of God's method of operation. Even as it is with the fruit of the tree, the seed being the last to come to perfection and remaining hidden from the sight of man in the flesh of the fruit, so the ways of God are not openly revealed to men, but they grow up in the very order of things, and, in due time, when God's fruit is fully ripe, then He gives to man to discover all that was hidden away in the germ of His wise and gracious thoughts.

The story which relates the works of Noah as an husbandman, planting a vineyard, drinking of the wine until he was drunk, with the incidents that followed as relates to his sons and their actions, may be taken as a very remarkable fulfilment of what has been stated. The vine and the vineyard are common symbols in the Old Testament, and also in the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they are spiritually

discerned to be figures of the kingdom which God has appointed upon this earth. Thus the Psalmist speaks of the vine brought out of Egypt, which was planted in Canaan, took root and filled the whole land; the Lord's parables of the vineyard will be remembered, and also the parable of the True Vine, as related in John's Gospel. The vine of Sodom is also compared with that of Israel, thus showing that the kingdoms of God and of the world are really meant. The vineyard which Noah received was God's Kingdom upon the earth; the power he received which should have been used in a manner that would make men glad was perverted in its use; he became as if intoxicated with his authority, and exposed himself in his nakedness to his sons and subjects. In his shameful helpless condition "Ham, the father of Canaan," saw him, gloated over his fallen state, and informed his brethren of what he had seen. The action of Ham in this instance is exactly the work of those fleshly lusts which war against the soul; and thus Canaan and the race that sprung from him are the true figurative manifestations of those debasing fleshly lusts which are with so much difficulty uprooted out of the soul. As in the individual soul, so with nations, it is the accursed fleshly spirit ever active amongst men that has wrought so much ruin to the race. The vine of Ham and Canaan, the kingdom of the fleshly lusts, into which the father and son both fell, is accursed; it shall not prosper for ever; but, in due time it shall lose its position of ruling in man and in nations, and become a servant of servants. The vines of Shem and Japheth, or the kingdoms which proceed from these sons, are to be blessed. In the kingdom of Shem a blessing is hid in the Lord of it as in a seed; but when the Blessing, the Seed, has come, then the stream or tide of the kingdom passes to Japheth, who will increase until the dominion of the world is his portion. In other words, there can be discerned in these three sons of Noah and their kingdoms, the history of the world in its evolutions up to the present time; and in the drunken husbandman, who forgot his duties and grave responsibilities, the spirit which has animated the rulers amongst men all through this fleshly cycle of the kingdom of this world.

The relationship betwixt God and man by the covenant granted to Noah, and remembered through the rainbow as a sign, ought to have led men to consider the goodness and grace of God towards sinful men; the sin and shame of Noah and Ham ought to have been a warning to the children of men that they should not resign themselves to the domination of the lustings of the flesh; and, the facts of the history of man before the Flood, with the signal punishment brought upon evil-doers, ought to have been enough to serve men as a beacon for all ages that they should not follow in the footsteps of Cain and his seed. But men have not been wise, they have not been anxious to know the will of God and to obey His laws, and thus history is found to repeat itself under new conditions as soon as men find the opportunity of following the desires and passions of their depraved nature. The pomp and pride of empire begins with "Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord," who began his empire at Babel; and the proposition to build a tower, and a city, to make unto themselves a name, so as to prevent

their being scattered upon the face of the earth, shows very clearly the spirit which prevailed amongst a portion of the descendants of Noah. Pride, ambition, vanity, rebellion, self-sufficiency and self-assertion blaze forth in the leaders of the men who began to build Babel ; but they did not prosper in their evil ways, for no sooner was the ambitious project begun and the pride and power of man manifested, than a revolt took place, men lost that confidence in each other which is necessary to make a work prosperous, and there being repelling powers in operation, there was confusion of thought, word and action, the building was discontinued, and men were scattered abroad upon the face of the earth. The empire of man is thus seen to crumble to pieces under the influence of God's watchful eye ; and silently the disintegration takes place which leaves man's boasted pride, power, and wisdom a mass of confusion.

CHAPTERS XII.—XIII. The Lord's antidote for this nation of men in its glory of empire, name, and unity, is here found described. Man would build all things upon self, making this world the circumference of his power and glory ; God is pleased to interfere to prevent this devilish enterprise which would ultimately change the world into a hell, and He chooses and calls Abram to be the founder of a nation which will not merely be greater than that of Nimrod and Babel, but which will be a means of blessing to all the families of the earth. The two spirits stand face to face in God's Holy Word, Nimrod and Babel are the accursed ; Abram and the promised nation, city and country the blessed of God. As from Adam there is seen to proceed the two lines of descent through Cain and Seth, so from Noah there is seen a diversion into the followers of Nimrod who seek the glory of man by seeking to forget God ; and the followers of Abram, by faith, who seek the glory of God and the well-being of man in harmony with His holy will. The followers of Nimrod have the proud, rebellious, self-centred, self-seeking spirit ; the followers of Abram, by faith, the humble, obedient, God-centred, self-sacrificing spirit, which is the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rebel Ham chooses his own path, putting aside the moral law and despising the grace of God, the end is death and hell ; the chosen of God strives to obey the moral law, receives the grace of God into his soul, and the issue is blessing to mankind, eternal life, and the restoration of the world to God.

To sketch the history of wicked man as viewed by God is quickly done ; the few verses which describe the power of Nimrod, the attempt to build Babel, and the confusion of tongues, with the disintegration that follows, is a microcosmic view of what man has done in the great world of history ; the seed is in the plant, and the fruit with its seed is fully disclosed in the principles embodied in the story. With the story of the method of man's redemption it is very different ; thought upon thought must be evolved to teach men how very difficult this work has been, and, that the whole work has been begun and continued in man and in the world by the Lord, and that unto His name alone can glory be given for the work that has been accomplished. It has been suggested *that the covenant which God made with Noah is*

that of life; that is, like a visible bodily form, and organic in its structure; but as living creatures grow from the germ to maturity, and die, following their cycle of evolution and change, so it may be suggested that this cycle, which is external and visible, will pass away to be succeeded by a spiritual life in a pure moral nature, which will in a measure be found to evolve in a similar manner, but being spiritual and not physical, it will abide for ever. The spiritual men who lived in the days of Noah could possibly look beyond the figure to the great reality; but carnal and fleshly men have not been able to understand spiritual things, even at the present day of Christian light. The call of Abram brings into prominence these two phases of thought; and it is seen that the Abram who "served other gods" in Mesopotamia is a different man from the Abram who "believed in the Lord: and He counted it to him for righteousness." In Ur of the Chaldees, Abram was a fleshly, carnal idolater; after his call by God the visible images were thrown aside, and he worshipped the Invisible Spirit. To understand this man of God it is necessary to lay hold of these two distinct thoughts, and then it is possible to lay aside the fleshly forms by which he is surrounded and to see the man as he walks his spiritual life of holy communion with God. In the light of Christ men are now permitted to gaze with an intense spiritual gaze upon this great father of the faithful; and assuredly the man, and the God who made the man what he became, are both manifested in a new light which is well worthy of the deepest consideration.

The call of Abram to leave his own country and kin, and to go to a land that the Lord would show him, is in plain words not merely the physical change of place, but a spiritual revolution in his own spiritual nature; before that time his face had been toward the fleshly, carnal things of self and of friends; after this time his face was turned heavenward, he sought a city built upon a spiritual foundation "whose builder and maker is God." This is the new birth, conversion unto God, or regeneration. The seed of grace was planted in Abram's soul, and from that time his aspirations and desires were Godward. To this blessed son, poor in spirit, there was given rich promises which reveal the gracious will of God for sinful men, and they are that he is to be the foundation of a great nation, the personal blessing and favour from God will rest upon him, a name great amongst men will be his portion, he will be a means of blessing to other men, and, that eventually through him all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Abram "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was also able to perform." In thus trusting and obeying God, he received the kingdom of grace into his soul, and poor in spirit, most likely despised by men, he went forth from the visible fleshly world of man to receive, not merely the germ-seed which was then in his soul, but the "kingdom of heaven" in its full spiritual evolution within the microcosm of his own soul.

In due time Abram, his wife and nephew, reached the land of Canaan, and at Sichem, upon the plain of Moreh, the Lord was pleased to reveal Himself to Abram, and to let him know that this was the land which

had been promised to him. It is remarked by the sacred writer, "the Canaanite was then in the land." Passing by the external figures, what is here spiritually to be discerned is the spiritual state of Abram, his realisation of the authority and law of God, his being taught by a spiritual Teacher, the prepossession in his own soul of those fleshly desires which are contrary to the Spirit of God, the renunciation of his own self-will, and dedication of himself in obedience to God's laws, which should in the future regulate his behaviour toward God and man. This being done, there is still another sacrifice to be made, and that is of the affections, or the heart; the putting away of all presumptuous thoughts, and thus consecrating the whole being unto God. The spiritual conception embodied in this incident is expressed in the thought of a revelation given by the Spirit and its conception in the soul of man.

But when the spirit of man is cast down within him because of sin, and the full sunshine of God's favour is not resting upon the soul, there is often within the cycle of this experience a falling away from God, a fear of man, a hiding of God's gracious truth, and thus the soul falls into a dangerous state, and shipwreck, not merely of faith but also of God's grace, is likely to be the result. The story of Abram's visit to Egypt should be read in the light of such an experience; it is the visible expression of this condition of the soul. The seed of grace received by faith is found to have a life in itself, and the outcome of the quickening Spirit's operations upon the soul is to reveal the state of the man before God, the need of a perfect sacrifice, the vow of the soul to obey God's moral law, and the giving up of the affections to God. But, in process of time, the soul being left to work out its own salvation, with fear and trembling, there is a departure from the fear and faith of God, connivance with duplicity, the fear of man, which is a snare, and at last grace appears to have departed from the soul, the beautiful one from God seems to be gone, and the soul being robbed of its treasure in the enjoyment of it, the condition is that of Egypt, the living amongst beggarly fleshly things which cannot satisfy the regenerate spirit.

There is the special interference of the Lord to set the soul free from these entanglements, and the issue is the glad departure from such a state of soul. Here a new phase of spiritual experience is made known in the great wealth possessed by Abram and Lot; the strife which took place betwixt their herdmen; the fact that the Canaanite and Perizzite were in the land; the separation and choice of Lot, and the blessing which was given to Abram by God at that time. This chapter, and also the one following it, is to be interpreted in the light of the new experience in the soul as related to earthly things. In other words, the Lord having given a new mark of His favour to the regenerate spirit, there must be a new departure in the Spirit of Christ, and that is toward regaining the inheritance of this earth by a meek spirit, and in conformity to the will or laws of God. When the spirit of a man sets up within his soul God's standard, confessing His sovereignty as absolute, then there cannot be any dallying with secret understandings or hidden designs; these must depart to what they may consider as a garden of the Lord, but God's servant, and ruler in His

name, must live in harmony with the laws laid down for His nation. After such a decision on the part of the regenerate spirit, then God visits the soul, and there is not merely a confirmation of the promises already received, but there is extension as far as a spiritual eye can reach, a promise that these promises shall abide ever, that an innumerable seed will be the issue of God's favour, there is the present enjoyment of God's gift, if not a full realization of its extent and intent. Such are the blessings which rest upon the soul of the man who, without any reserve or duplicity, accepts of God's sovereignty, and who is determined, by God's grace, to obey Him in all things. The issue of this in the case of Abram was the return to the plain of Mamre, in which is built Hebron, and there, too, is the cave of Machpelah, the spiritual meaning being that the rebel soul is sanctified by the altar of obedience to God raised upon it, within the soul there is peace with God and a realised sense of His friendship. Around this spot in Palestine, in figure, there gathers the representation of the faithfulness and friendship of God toward man. The foundations of the Kingdom of God rest in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and this is the portion of the faithful Caleb, whose heart turned true to God when Israel rebelled in the wilderness and would have returned back to Egypt. It is around the Kingdom of God in a man, and among nations, that God throws the strong arms of His faithfulness and friendship; and it must not be forgotten that the spirit of this kingdom is found in the words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

CHAPTER XIV. is specially interesting when viewed from the spiritual aspect, because it seems to point out the history of the contest in the souls as well as of those nations which come into contact with the Law of the great nation, and the true relationship of Abram, the ruler appointed by God, toward Him who is the Priest-King who will receive the favour and guidance of all men. The fightings of four kings against five, the quest of Sodom, the miserable failure of Lot, the heroic pursuit of Abram and his confederates, followed by the flight of the conquering kings of the East, these represent the principles of all the wars and fightings in souls and nations from that day to this. Covetousness, lustings, strifes, and wars are the horrible records against men and individuals and as nations in the past, but the right and true must prevail; these devilish manifestations will come to an end; and then in the Kingdom of the King of equality, the conquerors and the conquered shall meet to render tribute unto Him who is the Righteous and Peaceful King; and the one who has been blessed by the Greater King and King will gladly give unto Him all the praise and honour that is His due. Considering the figure as related to the individual soul, it may be seen the ardent desire of the soul to rescue those powers from the domination of evil into which they have brought themselves, the punishment of the enemies of God and man; the perfect allegiance of the soul toward the Lord Jesus Christ; and the determination to do nothing whatever to do with the accursed things belonging to the flesh and desires of the spirit.

CHAPTER XV. introduces for spiritual contemplation another series of thoughts which require to be interpreted by the thoughts of Christ, and by the inmost experiences of the soul in its struggles against sin. Abram is a king, his inheritance is promised unto him, and to a certain extent, and in a sense, he has been in possession of it; but, on the one hand, he requires a protector to secure for him the promises received, and upon the other he is anxious about the transmission to his seed of that which God had given to him. In response to Abram's thoughts the Lord reveals Himself as the shield against all enemies, and also as possessing in Himself all rewards, all gifts. The Shield of God protects every faithful soul; and from the Lord Jesus Christ there flows unto man all the blessings that the soul can desire. It is not what man can do to protect himself that will make or keep him safe in this world; neither what man can supply or find of earthly wisdom that will make him righteous and fit to possess the wisdom of God. The Lord throws His hand over His faithful servants, and they are safe; He puts within them His Holy Spirit of wisdom and truth, and then they become wiser than their teachers. If men would only believe these two thoughts and act upon them, then they too would be counted righteous, and God's revelation would reach their souls.

But it is to be observed that in the cycle of this experience by man, as prefigured in Abram, there is a divided sacrifice—"a deep sleep," and "an horror of great darkness"—a revelation of the will of God; "and a smoking furnace and a burning lamp" passing between the parts of the divided sacrifice in the darkness when the sun has gone down. These are wonderful figures which express in a marvellous manner the inmost experiences of the soul of man in its pursuit after knowledge in the fear of the Lord God. In the promise—"I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward," there is seen the sweet sunshine of God's favour resting upon the soul; it is light, and there is hope and joy in the thought that these blessings are about to be realised. The Lord brings to the soul's remembrance the fact that it has been called out of the world to receive an inheritance, and the response of the soul is not that of faith toward the Lord, but of inquiry, the seeking after knowledge from the Lord God. It is not the disciple sitting at the feet of the Master that is here spiritually discerned, but the inquirer seeking after knowledge as it has been manifested by the Creator, Law-giver, and Judge of the universe. This figure discloses to view man turned spiritually away from the Master; there is a division in the state of the soul, and the effect of division or separation from the Light is that of the soul so entombed in the body of fleshly conceits that it cannot move. Because of this paralysis of faith, departure from the Light of the Lord into the darkness of doubting and of unbelief, there is subjugation to the world in its fleshly, carnal powers, and inability to move the horrible nightmare which has seized upon the soul. Happy are they who in the simplicity of their faith continue to believe in, and sit at the feet of the Master, and are willing to receive knowledge as He thinks right to reveal it; this is truly the simplest, best, and most expeditious way of gaining a knowledge of the spiritual inheritance promised to man. *Failing this the issue in the single soul, and in*

nations, must ever be the same ; they depart from the light of Truth, and the end is the horrible darkness of unbelief. But this is man throughout history ; it has ever been the same ; man would seek to know the things relating to the Lord God, and the subject being one to which he is not invited, darkness and bondage of the soul have been the inevitable results. From this departure into that which is not lawful, a bondage to carnal conceits, the Lord is pleased to grant deliverance. As it was a sore bondage to Israel in Egypt, so it has been to many souls, and it is only by a strong hand that the Lord could redeem a nation or a single soul. But the figure of the divided soul points forward to a new era, for after the redemption referred to spiritual freedom would not be gained ; there was a wilderness with its fleshly lusts and divisions to be endured, and within the sacred inclosure there can be seen the pillar of cloud and fire which gives light in the darkness, and guidance when there is perplexity. In that day of mercy there is a covenant, and as unto the faithful Abram the spiritual possession in all its extent is guaranteed ; even so with the individual soul redeemed from the power and wisdom of this world there is seen in Christ, the Redeemer of the World, the fullest manifestation of God's mercy toward man.

CHAPTER XVI. The key-note to this portion of Abram's life is thirsting after knowledge ; not, be it observed, in the trusting disciple or the faithful servant, but to the man who has appealed to the Lord God to obtain knowledge of the future. The Lord's thoughts are much higher in the spiritual scale, and thus the lower tones here enunciated have to be listened to with the knowledge of Christ's words ringing through the soul. In the light of this thought this chapter requires to be studied, and then there is revealed not merely the condition of Abram's soul in giving way to the carnal conceits of his wife and her maid, and the Mosaic revelations at Sinai, but also the state of the soul redeemed by God when it attempts, by the observance to outward regulations, ceremonies, and duties, to live in spiritual harmony with the Lord God. It is at this point in man's spiritual experience that the words grace and law come so prominently into view. Grace, the most blessed power of God in the world, seems to be a barren and unfruitful thing, and thus the servant brought out of Egypt must be utilised to bring about the promised ends of God's revealed will. The effect of a conception of this spirit is that the servant despises the mistress, and there is strife in the soul. Grace must reign in the soul if it is to remain gracious ; and yet this spirit of striving to gain a knowledge of the favour of God by obedience to law becomes a very strong opponent to grace in the soul. Whither will the carnal conception lead the soul but into the desert, there to meet with Moses, the angel of the Lord, who will give instructions as to submission to the spirit of moral law and of grace, and who will prophesy as to the number and influence of this seed, giving the name Ishmael (God shall hear) as a promise, and the nature of the descent of such a spirit ? This prophecy of a wild, lawless issue, from intellectual vagaries and of carnal conceits, is well known to be the outcome of all similar movements in a soul, in a church, or in the

nation ; according to the seed sown so must the fruit be is at this point once more the emphatic teaching of the Lord to mankind.

CHAPTER XVII. Another spirit may here be discerned as operating upon Abram ; and it is seen to be in harmony with the words of Christ "Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth." The cycle of man's wisdom in its figure and fleshly spirit is at an end ; and the Lord comes to His faithful servant by the Name of the Almighty God, seeking that Abram should at last walk before Him in a perfect way. At this time a covenant, with the sign of circumcision in the flesh, is given to Abram ; his own and Sarai's names have God's Name, Jah, incorporated into them, and it is revealed that Sarah shall be blessed, and a child given to Abraham by her. The features of this marvellous revelation in its spiritual realities point forward to the history of the Jewish nation after the captivity and return from Babylon in the days of Cyrus, King of Persia ; to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Pure and Meek One, who walked before God in a perfect way, who was born not according to the fleshly conceits of man, but by a special intervention on God's part, whereby the Almighty, in a spiritual manner, incorporated Himself into humanity by what is known as the Incarnation. By the coming of Christ there was the true covenant with man, of which all others are but figures ; and of that true circumcision of the spiritual nature which alone can be of any value in the sight of God. At this time the Lord *appeared* to Abraham ; he fell on his face before *God*, and it is God, not the Lord, who is the Revealer to Abraham of what would take place. The joy of Abraham at this revelation is great, and no wonder, for it was surely a most gracious thing that God should be pleased to cause a child to be born by one so old. As with Sarah, so with the Jewish people who had long gone past their prime, is it not a marvellous thing that amongst such a people the Lord Jesus Christ should be born ? In what sense can this remarkable revelation be applied to the individual soul ? Not that in it by anything man can do, can such a conception and birth take place ; but rather the soul of man may be discerned as standing beside Abraham, the Voice and Power of God are manifested, and the soul falls down before Him who thus graciously visits the soul with such a message. The meek, merciful soul, like a bright mirror, receives the Image of God ; this is conceived in the thoughts, treasured up in the soul, and the striving of the soul is to become like unto the One revealed. Primarily, the spiritual discernment must be turned full upon Jesus Christ, the Perfect Image of God, and then, by a spiritual conception of the Manifested, the soul becomes transformed and conformed to His likeness. The words of God uttered at this time as applied to Abraham, the Lord Jesus Christ, and, in a sense, to the individual soul, are full of blessings to mankind. This incarnation of the Divine into the race of man is the real spiritual indwelling in the soul ; it passes onward in its conceptions of unity, and there is promised not merely the unity of grace in the soul and nation, but of mercy to many nations ; and the covenant is here mentioned as being an everlasting one, and the possession to be inherited of the same nature. Throughout *all this interview of Abraham with God*, pure,

moral, merciful, spiritual realities can be discerned ; the heaven revealed is that in which the Lord Jesus Christ lived and walked, and unto which all those who are spiritual in Him desire to come. Abraham seems scarcely to have realised the fulness of the spiritual realities, the gracious treasures thrown open to his gaze, for he is heard praying, "O that Ishmael might live before Thee." This prayer is made the means by which God tries to impress upon him the supreme importance of the promised Son, as compared with Ishmael ; the one holds in his seed the everlasting covenant of mercy which will bless mankind ; the other, because related to Abraham by the flesh, will become a great nation. The birthright and blessing are spiritual and derived from Christ by faith, and these are for all nations ; the nation which serves the law of Moses and of men's carnal conceptions abides alone ; God is faithful to his promises and the nation is spared, but until it receives the spiritual conception of the birthright and blessing, it is of the world, and in spirit united with other nations. As with Ishmael and the nation, so with the individual soul, it may be named after Christ, but if the spirit of Moses and his institutions rule the man, and not the spirit of Christ, then it is under Moses, serving in the letter and not living in the spirit of grace and mercy. The figure here presented to view, when spiritually considered, as the covenant existing betwixt God and the Lord Jesus Christ, as man, seems to be of great importance. It is true that directly no mention is made of the great Substitutionary work of Christ on man's behalf, but how much more full the spiritual conception when there is seen the Perfect One, becoming subject to all God's laws and undertaking in the spirit of mercy to become a father of nations. This position covers all relationships that can arise ; and thus, if men would know what God required of Christ in taking such a position, something may be discerned by studying carefully the laws of grace or mercy to which Christ became subject on man's behalf.

CHAPTERS XVIII., XIX. The scene may be said to take place in the kingdom of God's mercy and judgment toward His sinful creatures ; these chapters bring men back to this rebellious world, and there is seen in operation amongst men the mercies and judgments of God in operation side by side. Here mercy is seen to precede judgment, and the visit of the Lord and His angels brings glad tidings to faithful souls ; whilst to the wicked there is the forewarning of judgments which are already at the door. Here the spirit of man discerns the Incarnate Lord walking amongst men ; *the Revealer of truth eats and drinks with His servants ; the glad tidings of salvation are made known unto them, and there is joy in the household of faith. A greater Intercessor than Abraham is seen amongst men, and the Judge of all the earth is seen as coming to punish the wicked. "Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God."* Thus it was with the faithful Abraham ; and in due time so it will be to those who are conformed to His likeness. But upon the wicked people of Sodom, and upon the Jews, there fell the terrible fire from heaven which punishes those who are rebellious and who despise God's mercy brought near to them. The personal application of this experience in the life of Abraham makes known to man the nearness,

the immediate spiritual contact of the Son of God with the soul. The key to this visitation is to be found in the conflicting condition of the affections of the soul which would fain believe and trust the Lord, but which cannot see how it is possible that the pure can be brought out of the impure, the holy out of the profane. There is joy at the prospect of such an event, but how it can come to pass is beyond the power of reason, and thus there is doubt even whilst there is hope. Of course, as with Sarah, and the Church of Christ, as found in history in its recurring cycles, so with the individual soul, the eyes are turned to the aged body unfit to bear and to the impure soul which cannot change the condition into which it has been brought. The Lord in this controversy speaks not to the soul in its conflicting state, but to the spirit of faith, and the words are, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Here the controversy in the soul should end, for either the Lord can accomplish this great change in man or He cannot. If all things are possible with Him, then when He visits and revives the soul, there will be such a manifestation of mercy that the regenerate spirit will rejoice in the visitation, and the evil power of strife and lustings will be condemned and destroyed. This is the coming of the strong Man who is able to bind and cast out the impure devil or devils which work within the soul; there is mercy and re-instatement for the dethroned spirit, but judgment upon the mutinous, rebellious lusts and desires. Is there anything good in this Sodom of man's nature? A righteous Lot, one as in a disguise, may be found, but even the deliverance of such powers, and protection given unto them, may be found to contain not merely the spirit of enmity against the Lord; they may also prove to be animated by the spirit of the serpent, and thus bring much evil upon the soul. It is well when the soul is delivered from the power of the doubters and the fleshly lusts, but beyond the veil which manifests these things there is a more subtle spirit in its germs with which the spirit will one day meet in deadly conflict. There is a spiritual allegory in the relationship of Lot to his children, and of this family to the household of faith, but in the meantime, its consideration can be left in abeyance until the seed here sown is found manifested in the fruits that it bears in the world.

CHAPTERS XX., XXI. These incidents seem to be a continuation and an amplification in spirit of the 18th and 19th. There is a removal from Hebron and a sojourning in Gerar. In other words, from the faithfulness and friendship of God to a position of strife or disputation. This spirit is one that is not for the well-being of the soul, and thus, as there is a separation of Abraham and Sarah, and she is taken into the palace of Abimelech, king of Gerar, so when strife enters the soul, the spirit of grace is not retained by the faithful spirit, it falls into the hands of the uncircumcised affections which are ready enough to admit and admire the beauty of the grace of God. The relationship of faith and grace may be here spiritually discerned; they have the same Father, even God, who originates faith in the soul, and gives grace to the humble. But grace has an earthly parentage also; the mother of the fleshly form in the case of the Lord of Grace was Mary; in the visible Church it is that organisation by which men can see the work of the gracious spirit.

The thought evolved here is, that so long as the hand of faith is stretched out toward God for help, trusting in His faithfulness and friendship, the soul is in safety and there is peace; but when faith is weak, and the fear of man leads to duplicity of thought and action, then the very thing that is feared comes upon the soul, the living marriage union, so to speak, which exists betwixt faith and grace in the soul is changed, grace becomes as a sister, not as a wife to faith, and there is estrangement and separation. It is faith that communes with heaven, whilst grace keeps the house of the soul; if faith is active upon God, then grace is engaged upon deeds of mercy toward man; but if faith fails in laying hold upon the Fountain of Grace, then grace in the soul becomes weak and falls into the hands of the enemy. It is evident that living, spiritual thoughts are here manifested worthy of careful consideration. So long as faith is weak, disputing prevalent, and grace separated from faith, it must follow that the soul will be separated from the Lord of Grace. These things are spiritual, but they have also to do with the forms of things by which they are known to men; the spirit of grace fled when faith let go its hold on God, and not until there is restoration of grace to its position as the help-meet of faith can the blessings of God come upon the soul.

Faith and grace, as represented in the lives of Abraham and Sarah, form a beautiful spiritual allegory worthy of a very careful, and a much more extensive study; but at this point of their history there is manifested the fruition of the sister grace, even of Hope, which had been for many years the desire of both their souls. In the incidents related, the things of this world bulk largely, and thus they cut off to a great extent the more spiritual current of Abraham's life of faith; but at this point it is seen that faith in Abraham kept firm hold of the Hope promised to the fathers; and this Hope is the reality which both faith and grace desire to obtain. Abraham's hope was in heaven; but the promises of God embodied it in a child in figure; and in the birth of Isaac is the fruition of a long-delayed hope which at last was fully realised by Abraham and Sarah. Turning from the experience of Abraham and Sarah, and trying to get a spiritual conception of this truth as related to the soul, there may be discerned the realisation of that spirit which agrees with the words of Christ, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." The power of the world has relinquished its hold upon the soul; the lusts and desires of the flesh are overthrown, and the spiritual foes which cause strife and disputation being put down through the gracious intervention of the Lord, the pure soul is prepared to receive the image of God; and in peace there is seen as if reflected from the child of God His gracious image. As with Sarah and Isaac in figure, with Mary and the Child Jesus in reality, so in the individual soul there is a development in spiritual life until this point is reached when the soul may say with Paul, that Christ is in a man as "the hope of glory." This wonderful conception is not limited to the figure, the Reality and the spiritual experience of the individual soul, but it stretches out the arms of faith until it is co-extensive with humanity. The spirit of grace will overflow in men's souls, and then the hope of the ages, God's

blessed Peaceful One, will be manifested amongst men, not in flesh, but in spirit. "Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me." "Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." "Hannah said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord; mine horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in Thy salvation." Every soul delivered from the power of the evil that is in the world, the flesh, and the spirit, and that has such a manifestation within as to be a child of God, must rejoice in such a revelation; but what like the world will be when such a change has passed over it, and all men are children of God, passes comprehension. It is written that when Solomon was made king the people did "eat and drink before the Lord on that day with great gladness." But when the Merciful, Peaceful Son of God reigns over men, then the world will rejoice as it never has done before in the history of man, and the earth, or desert in man, will indeed, in a spiritual sense, blossom as the rose.

The incident of the feast and weaning of Isaac and the casting out of Hagar and Ishmael, viewed spiritually in this development of man's nature, brings out the important thought that at last the spirit of Christ is everything, and the regulations of Moses, ceremonies, and ritual are nothing; these have been useful in the development of man's nature to bring it to be like Christ, but so soon as the spirit is the all important thing and the flesh with its forms a mockery, then there is perfect freedom for the child of God, and no longer must the two spirits exist in the same soul. This may be to the soul of man, even as it was to Abraham for his son, a very grievous thing; because there is something to seek unto and to rely upon in all those associations which regulate conduct by a written law. The little child of grace looks so helpless that it seems almost a sin to cast away the external helps which have been so useful in the past; but though it may seem so, yet the Word of God is right, and the voice of grace in the soul must be listened to; for, if the spirit of bondage divides the control of the house with the free spirit of grace, it is impossible that the peace of the Father can rest upon the child. If the stern voice of Moses, the servant, is always to be heard saying, "Thou shalt not," when will the gentle voice of the Lord Jesus win the soul to perfect conformity to the Father's will? The voice of Abraham here is also the voice of his illustrious son, "I pray Thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain and Lebanon." But no, it cannot be, because the bond spirit, and the free gracious spirit, which is a son and heir of God, cannot remain in the same soul.

The story which explains the departure of Hagar and her son into the Wilderness of Beer-sheba, and the covenant betwixt Abraham and Abimelech, may be discerned to be experiences, not of the soul which has been true to God, but of the spirit of bondage, which has become subject to the flesh and its carnal conceits. The Lord is not spiritually discerned in the future of the life of Abraham; the figure has been carried to its highest spiritual point and from thenceforth *God* is seen in His providence and in His dispensation of mercy teaching men what they must suffer for *His name's sake*. The world of the Roman

Empire, the outcast Jews, who had despised and mocked Christ, the faithfulness of God toward them in the day of their great trouble, can be discerned in the story of Hagar and Ishmael. The covenant betwixt Abraham and Abimelech, the well of Beer-sheba, and the residence of Abraham amongst the Philistines for many days, these things speak of or foreshadow the relationship of Christianity to the Roman Empire during the Christian era.

CHAPTER XXII. Here is related the last great trial of Abraham's faith in the offering up of his son Isaac as a sacrifice to God. The picture presented to view is surrounded with darkness, but in the midst of it there is seen a son of God going forth in dutiful obedience to the mysterious will of the heavenly Father. This incident requires to be studied in the light of the words of Christ, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And also, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven." The spirit of Abraham at this crisis during the three days of his journey to Mount Moriah, and the offering of his son, is the same in kind as that of his Son and Lord who for more than three years upon this earth, prosecuted in the same spirit, a similar journey: but the end of the son of Abraham was safety through a substitute, whilst in Jesus Christ's case He is the Substitute who must endure the sacrificial death, of a spiritual kind, for the redeemed. History presents days of similar trial to the Christian Church during the ages in which the martyrs, persecuted for righteousness' sake, were for a period placed in a similar condition. In the spiritual world of Abraham's soul, of Christ, and of Christians in all ages, the experience is the same, the heavens are dark overhead, there is no light to be found, and the cry of Christ, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" is the cry of the persecuted soul in its trouble and great temptation. It can be seen at a glance that in Christ's case the darkness of persecution and death was complete: the eclipse was total in His surroundings and in His spiritual nature. But with Abraham and the faithful children of God in all ages, the eclipse has been in the external vision and the darkness has covered only the things of flesh and form, whilst within the soul there has been light, and sometimes even joy, in the thought that "God will provide Himself a Lamb for a burnt-offering." This is the great mystery of the redemption work of God in the world. It is seen operating upon and within the Lord Jesus Christ in its fullest extent; and, to a greater or less extent, in shadowy form upon all His faithful followers in all ages. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews touches this point when he writes, "It became Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." It is God the Father and His Son that are spiritually to be discerned in these things; that is to say, the love and grace of God the Father, manifested in Jesus Christ for the evolution of the gracious nature of God. When the image of Jesus Christ is

inborn into the soul of man he realises sonship into God's family and adoption as an heir of heaven, then there is this mysterious baptism of suffering to which the child must be called that he may be brought into fellowship with the Lord of suffering. He had to say of this baptism, "How am I straitened until it be accomplished," but His followers, if faithful and obedient in His spirit, cannot have such a straitening of spirit to endure; they may be cast into the furnace, but it is to find themselves free, and there to discern that no flames kindled by man can touch a son of God; and, to find by their side walking in the midst of the fire, the Captain who is perfect through suffering, and who, by such an experience, makes His brethren perfect. Is it then so very grievous an experience to be brought into this furnace of affliction and to be led to endure suffering? To the flesh it seems cruel, but to the spirit it is the finishing of the purification in the crucible, by which there is not merely sonship and heirship, but fellowship and friendship of the very highest kind that is possible with God and His Christ. It was a painful thing for the martyrs to feel the flames burning flesh and nerves; but what a change when, absent from the body, they were present with the Lord; and, in Him, to find not only the Captain of suffering, but also the Giver of all the blessings which God can bestow upon those who seek in the spirit of Christ to be obedient to His will. This is the mountain of God, the spiritual Mount Clear, from whence the spirit can discern great spiritual realities. But as Abraham is seen returning to Beer-sheba, to the well and the word of God's faithfulness to abide there; and to Hebron the society and friendship of God, to give up the earthly forms of Sarah and himself to the care of God; so the spirit of a man who lives like Abraham, is also permitted to look beyond the figure that is so fully presented in this life, and with Abraham, he too can look "for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

From these few thoughts suggested upon the life of Abraham it is evident that there is presented for man's consideration a most extensive field of inquiry of great importance. He is a God-called man, taken from a rebellious world, and sent forth amongst men to teach them the will of God for the salvation of the world. In the flesh, that is to say, in bodily form, and in his surroundings men who are carnal, will see, read, and in a carnal sense, be pleased with this wonderful story. Even men of this world may be able to follow with great interest the story of this life; seeing God beyond, and also in it, directing all things for His glory and the good of man. But to understand its spiritual meaning, the God of creation, and the Lord God of providence must give place to the Lord of redemption, and then, in the marvellous utterings of Christ upon the mount, when spirit touches spirit and there is life, what a glorious panorama opens up to view, and a new world of spiritual thoughts are revealed. It is not so much Abraham that lives as Jesus Christ living in him; and the life he lived was a prefiguration of the will of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. There is not only Abraham and Jesus Christ in this wonderful story, but there is also history; for in Abraham there are the germs of the history of the household of faith in its relations with the world throughout the ages; and to say this, and to find it true, is equivalent to saying that Jesus Christ is to be

found in history, which is also a great truth. And, again, as specially considered at this time, the experience of Abraham is found to coincide with the spiritual development and experience of the individual soul, and thus as Jesus Christ was related to Abraham in figure and spiritually, so in spiritual reality He comes to be in every soul "the Hope of glory." Surely there is no need to employ further arguments in this direction; the fact is plain enough that this rebellious world was like a spiritual desert, Jesus Christ came to it and gave Himself to redeem it; He poured out upon the world the gracious influences of His Holy Spirit, and then the seed sown by His death rose again to a new life; the issue being the regeneration and restoration of man to God. This is the Seed with life in itself; and this Seed of the woman who came to man in fleshly garments with life in Himself, has crushed the head of the devil, and the issue must be spiritual life and blessing to all who by faith put their trust in Him.

CHAPTER XXIV. In the spiritual light of the words of Christ, Abraham's life is seen to harmonise with the words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." That is to say, the spirit of the man is as here described, and in the seed thus sown into his life, there are found the germs of what constitutes the whole kingdom of heaven. He is the head of a cycle or kingdom. Within him the spirit of the kingdom is generated, and in himself there is a prefiguration, a prophetic delineation, of all that should proceed from him within that kingdom. In Abraham the spirit and the prefiguration of the kingdom is found; in Isaac there is of necessity a change of aspect, and thus a new cycle within a cycle is manifested in his life. In Abraham there is discerned a soul which has been opened toward God to receive the gift of His grace; in Isaac there is found a soul possessing God's grace, but, as yet unable to realise the love of God in its fulness. The gentle Isaac is a subjective contemplation, and thus the words of Christ, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted," give the key to his life and position amongst God's saints. The story explains that after the death of Sarah, and when Abraham was old, his eldest servant was sent away to Padan-aram to bring a wife from thence for Isaac, because he was not to be permitted to marry with one of the accursed race of Canaan. A wife was found in the gentle Rebekah, and it is plainly stated that he "brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah—quarrel appeased—and she became his wife; and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." The spirit that animates the godly servant, the willing and obedient Rebekah, and the meditative, prayerful Isaac, speak of the contemplative soul engaged in realising its position before God. And it is not without meaning that when Isaac met Rebekah "he came from the way of the well Lahai-roi," that is, the well of the Living and Seeing One. The spiritual condition of the soul, to change the figure into a spiritual experience, would be realised in this way; there is felt a want in the soul when the grace of God is taken away from it in the loss of that joy which is known when the soul is visited by God's grace. The communication betwixt heaven

and the soul seems suddenly to be broken ; there is a longing after that which gave so much pleasure ; there is introspection within the soul to find out if possible what could have been the cause of such a sudden desertion ; in this searching into the soul's state its true condition is made known, and there is mourning and sorrow because of sin. To whom can the spirit turn at such a time but to Him who lives and sees all things ? By prayer and meditation upon the Word a blessing is found ; the quarrel is appeased betwixt the soul and the Lord ; and in His grace there is found comfort for the mourning spirit.

CHAPTER XXV. The incident of the barrenness of Rebekah is related here ; Isaac's intercession with the Lord on her behalf ; the conception of twin sons, their struggle in the womb, and the prophetic utterances relating to these children. There is also given a description of Esau's skin at his birth, how Jacob took hold of his brother's heel ; the occupation of Esau as a hunter ; of Jacob as a man dwelling in tents ; the preference in the affections of the parents toward their children ; and also how Esau despised his birthright, whilst Jacob prized it and bought it from his brother for a mess of pottage. These figures when studied in the light of Jesus Christ's words, and the principles embodied in them, open up to view very important thoughts, which are not merely far-reaching in their conclusions, but which touch at almost every point the kingdom of heaven in the individual soul as well as in its manifestation upon the earth. The words of Jesus Christ which have to be kept in view in studying the birth and life of Jacob, are these, "Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth." In other words there is disclosed the beginning of the kingdom of God ; the strife which will be manifested betwixt the elder and the younger ; and the fact that to the Seed in the younger the kingdom would be given. The strife of Cain and Abel is here repeated again, but there is such an extension of view that the simpler story about Cain and Abel is as if individuals were compared with nations. In Cain and Abel the germ-seeds of their life are made known by their actions ; in Esau and Jacob there is a prophetic revelation as to the rivalry of nations ; and the issue is made known before the children are born. The question is one of foreknowledge, but this knowledge is God's, and it deals with the condition of man, and the state of men. The seeds are those sown by Adam who sinned against law, and by Jesus Christ the second Adam, who obeyed law, and thus to the eye of the All-seeing and All-wise, the fruits that must follow from the seeds are perfectly known. Limiting the question to the individual soul, it would be expressed in this form : the spirit has passed through the sad experience of the sinful state of the soul, it has received comfort by the grace of God, and for a time there was peace and joy ; but the soul is barren in itself, and only through revelations from God can it advance in the knowledge of, and obedience to, God's will. This desire of knowledge and obedience to God's law is the spiritual conception in the soul of man, but it is a double conception, the one being carnal, and of the flesh, and the other of grace, aspiring after spiritual things ; in fact this is the double man in the soul, of which Paul writes *so fully*. Let the soul inquire of the

Lord why such a strife should exist, and the reply, is that there are two diverse spirits in the same soul, in nations, and in the world. The elder is that which comes by the seed of Adam and sinful; the younger, that which is by Christ, and which must be the stronger; and in the order of birth it is the seed of grace from Christ which must ultimately gain the ascendancy in the soul. The affections and desires of the carnal spirit are exercised in hunting after worldly pleasure, and trying to satisfy the fleshly lusts; and by seeking after such things there is despising of God's grace, His kingdom and its laws; the affections and desires of the gracious spirit is to gain the birthright, and thus, possible, God's blessing.

CHAPTER XXVI. It may be suggested that the story about the birth of Esau and Jacob, and their relations to the birthright, comes before this chapter, because such thoughts bear upon those deep principles which operate in the soul before there is a definite realization of duty and responsibility toward God. They are so to speak the hidden impulses which direct thoughts, actions, and events, the actor being unconscious of the important results which must arise out of them. put the matter in a very plain way, as a matter of fact an infant child has an inward impulse from its perverted nature, and with knowing that it acts contrary to the laws of God, it does in reality do this. This is what men know as the original corruption or perverted bias of the creature's spirit. Just as with the perverted spirit there is an impulse to do wrong, to seek to please self, and to gratify the lusts of the flesh, so in the new man in the soul it has a different impulse, bias, and that is to desire to know and obey the will of God. The two being opposed to each other, there is of necessity conflict in the soul, but at first this may not be very clearly discerned. The carnal spirit has the whole world of pleasure before it, and thus the birthright is despised; the gracious spirit has its impulse God-ward, and thus it gives up the mess of pottage for that which it prizes. It is still the same all-important thought so often reiterated by Jesus Christ, according to the nature of the seed, so must be the living impulse, growth, and the fruit.

Turning back to the spirit which Isaac represents, viz., that of the soul which has passed through the experience of a knowledge of its own sinfulness, unfitness to serve God, also of the forgiving grace of God, and comfort by His Holy Spirit, there is here discerned the soul passing through a famine for the Word of God and seeking a bread where it can never be found, and that is amongst the uncircumcised desires, with the face set toward the bondage of Egypt, the fleshy forms of this world. This spirit is commanded not to go down to Egypt, but to remain where the Lord should direct. Where can communion then be betwixt the broken and contrite heart of the saint, and the proud, lofty, and lusting desires of the spirit of this world? Absolutely none. The place however is not a home for the regenerate spirit; it is the place of strife; and in order that this spirit should be obedient to the Lord, it is necessary that a revelation be given unto it for guidance under such conditions. The promise of

Lord to this spirit is a confirmation of all the promises given to Abraham with the Lord's presence, and these words added, "Because that Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." There is seen, in this instance, duplicity as to the relationship of Isaac to Rebekah, he said ; "She is my sister ; for he feared to say, she is my wife." So also with the humble spirit in many instances, there is the fear of man, of uncircumcised thoughts and desires, and the grace of the Lord by whom peace was brought to the soul is not owned as it ought to be. Up to this point in the experience of the soul there is no open rupture, the humble and contrite spirit fears what the unhallowed desires and affections may do ; but it is not necessary, there is, so far a desire to do what is right, and thus, the gentle spirit of grace would, in its outward forms, be fairly treated. The time of great prosperity came to Isaac in Gerar, and he is seen to become so rich and great, that his neighbours became envious of the many blessings he possessed. The wells used by his father had been closed up by the Philistines ; they are dug up and used again by Isaac, but about these there is strife. The well in the valley is a living stream, but about two of the wells there was strife and contention. The humble and contrite spirit enjoys God's greatest blessings, but such enjoyment becomes the means of stirring up envy and contention in the soul. The well of living water is to be found in the valley of humiliation, in that poorness of spirit through which the living water of grace first entered the soul. But there is here a strange conflict, for the proud lusting desires claim that this well is theirs by right, and that it is not derived from the Fountain of Grace. Another well is found, and about this also there is strife and contention. Are there not two such wells of living water opened up for the soul by the Lord of Grace : these being the Old and New Testaments ? And has there not been a continual strife in the souls of men, and among men as to the authorship of them ? The proud, vain-glorious desires, saying that the Bible is the work of man, that is to say, of Moses, Solomon, and others, who by their own wisdom gave them unto men : whilst the humble and contrite spirit maintains that they are the gift of God to thirsty souls. The issue of this struggle is that Esau and Sitnah, strife and contention, are left in the hands of the uncircumcised, that is to say, they are permitted to keep the visible forms, the letter, in all its scholastic and critical details, whilst the mournful, patient spirit, turning away from these things finds a spiritual Rehoboth, where there is plenty of room and fruitfulness ; and also a Beer-sheba, where they can drink deep from the faithful Word of God.

The spiritual analogy which exists betwixt this story about Isaac and the Philistines, the wealth of Isaac and the strife about the wells, and the story of Abraham during his visit to Egypt, his leaving that land so rich in cattle, and the strife betwixt the herdmen of Lot and Abraham, followed by their separation, should be studied, and it will be seen that the same spirit is manifested in both places. The story of Isaac enters into details in the figures of the wells, and it can be seen that it is suitable that it should be so, because of the special spirit that Isaac represents. Abraham as the head of the whole cycle gives the spirit

which animates the whole; whilst Isaac represents the spirit of the smaller cycle within a cycle. The spirit of Abraham, that is, of faith and a poor spirit, ought to animate the whole life of the Christian; the spirit of Isaac is introspective, contemplative, sorrowful, patient under persecution; turning away from fleshly forms and lustful desires, and humbly desiring and seeking to know and obey the will of God as revealed in His Holy Word. The proud spirit of man is vain glorious full of self-conceit about what it has done and what it can do; the gracious, mourning spirit seeks spiritual communion with the Lord, by the Word of His grace, and trust in His faithful promises. It can be seen, that this spirit manifested by Isaac, and so suitable for the Christian, ought to be the permanent spirit abiding in the visible Church of Christ. It is at all times, so to speak, surrounded by the uncircumcised Philistines, whose desires are contrary to the will of God, as it has had constant strife and contention about the Word of God in its letter and outward constitution. It is surely time that there should be turning away from these proud, critical, uncircumcised spirits to find the spiritual thoughts of God in which there is so much room for all the powers of man's being, and when this place is found, with fruitfulness then the faithfulness of God will be fully acknowledged and His name praised in His Church.

CHAPTER XXVII. In this chapter the spiritual vision is seen to be changed; the thoughts are turned upon the birthright which has already been disposed of by Esau to his brother, and the blessing which is about to be given by Isaac to his favourite son Esau. The words "Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison; but Rebekah loved Jacob," seem to point in the direction to which the thoughts should be turned. There is strong affection in the mournful, contemplative spirit toward the strong, ardent and generous son who with genuine affection brings to the father those things which are pleasing to the carnal nature. The words uttered in Eden, to the woman, or the Church, in their spiritual significance, may be remembered here, "thine desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." The arm of Isaac is weak; there is a strong support, a carnal one, upon which he is tempted to lean, so that it may help him, and he is anxious to be blessed by this means so that it may be blessed by God. On the opposite side there is found Rebekah, who favours her gentle son, who is already the heir to the birthright, and she is anxious that the father's blessing and the Lord's benediction may rest upon his head. The natural affection of the soul say, Give the blessing, and thus the power to rule to the eldest, the strongest, to the one with the genial and the manly desire who can be generous, and not too scrupulous about his actions; there is so much that is lovable about him that there is no doubt he will turn out a good ruler. The renewed and gracious spirit passes by the fair exterior the manly form and generous nature, ponders upon the prophetic utterance of God about the destiny of these diverse spirits, and an effort, a carnal one, is made to get the blessing for the younger instead of the elder. Esau, and Saul the first king of Israel, may here be compared with advantage as manifesting the same fair exterior and

natural disposition, the very spirit that a man would choose to rule over the soul, or a nation, but which, apart from the grace of God, would turn out to be a jealous, tyrannical despot. The thought that is developed in this chapter seems to find its fulfilment, to some extent, in Saul, and in David, who had so longed to flee from the wilful king; and specially the condition of the soul can be traced at this critical period of its experience when it is beginning a new cycle of change, from that of the subjective and contemplative, to the active duties of governing the soul in all its functions. The first-born, the Cain and Esau spirit, have their claim to the birthright; the natural powers of man which are for governing the man in the soul, seems to be in all respects more fitted for this work than the new spirit received by grace which has done nothing to show its fitness for such service. The commonwealth of the soul is not a happy settled family, but it is in a constant state of internecine war. How then can the gentle untried spirit, with God's grace, rule over such a lawless community? There seems to be need for the hand of steel to keep down by force all lawless movements of the flesh and spirit, instead of the soft and gentle hand which would probably be helpless when the mad passions are set in operation. In this way it may be discerned that the weak and foolish spirit of man might at such a critical period of Christian experience reason upon the best method of taking up and carrying on the government in the soul; and if the carnal conceptions had their way the carnal man would be chosen to receive the blessing, and the Christ-man born into the soul would be rejected or passed over. Thus far the thoughts of the Isaac spirit as traceable in the individual can be discerned, but it is necessary to consider briefly the lines upon which grace in the soul will operate, so that the blessing might come upon the head of the one to whom it has been promised. It is evident that both Rebekah and Jacob prized that which they took so much trouble to obtain; the danger was imminent, and they were unable to discern how it could be obtained by fair means. What then, would they remain idle, stand by and see God's plans frustrated, or, should they try to prevent Isaac from doing wrong, and at the same time get the blessing which is the heir's portion? What is all this in spiritual language, but taking counsel with the flesh, and forgetting to ask directions from Him who is, and who gives, the Inheritance and Blessing? Jacob is the supplanter, who by cunning, deceit, and lying, puts aside the Christ-man in his own soul; he grasps at the shadow and loses the substance. Strange exposition this, but it is as true as it is strange; because, it is seen that the soul is not subject to the spirit of Adam, neither is it obedient to the spirit of Christ; but in His name, because the promise, and the inheritance were His, he has taken the power in a deceitful way, and thus the ruler is a supplanter, a wilful Saul who takes his own way, and not the Lord's deputy, obedient to His gracious laws. These thoughts throw a flood of light upon the spirit and work of Christian men; upon the history of the Church and nations, and, spiritually, as related to Christ and His kingdom, it is Jacob the supplanter that has ruled the soul, the church, and nations, and the Christ-man has rarely been found.

Looking for a moment at the blessings given to Jacob and Esau there

may be discerned the following important thoughts ; to the former there is given the lordship ; all his brethren are to be his servants ; and plenty of corn and wine are his portion in this life ; to the latter there is given the fatness of the earth, the dew of heaven, to live by the sword, to be a servant to his brother, and when the opportunity should offer to break off the yoke and assert the dominion. Applied to the individual soul it reveals the cycle within which the supplanter can move and the end to which he must come ; because the deceitful seed thus sown in the soul must bring forth fruit according to its kind. Deceit terminates in discovery, the fear of punishment, the assertion of the strong hand, distrust, remorse, and death to such a spirit ; whilst the spirit of the first Adam breaks the yoke, asserts his own authority, brings anarchy into the soul, and not until the Lawful King asserts His right to rule can this anarchy be subdued. These figures work into the very innermost thoughts and actions of the soul ; they touch the very roots of man's desires and ambitious projects, and they make manifest the folly of this position of the supplanter who, whilst he would oppose the natural man, will not be obedient to the Christ-man, and thus he takes a middle position with the assertion that he is the Lord's deputy by divine right. This spirit in man, in the churches, and in nations is only too well known, and thus further comment seems to be unnecessary.

CHAPTER XXVIII. The spirit of the king who has assumed the reins of government has been discerned : and now it will be necessary to follow him in the kingdom which he governs, to observe the manner of life he leads and whether it is really so pleasant to be a king who gains his power by deception, and who rules by a self-seeking, deceitful spirit. What the king might have been if obedient, honest, and faithful to God is known by the words of the Lord Jesus "Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth," but this king has started on his career under different principles and thus it cannot be expected that he will manifest such a consummation in his life. As with Jacob in this instance, so with every servant of Christ at this point of his spiritual experience, it is of the deepest importance that a right choice be made, that Christ in the man be acknowledged and truly obeyed as king, and that upon no account the fear of man, selfishness or self-seeking, be permitted to turn the spirit out of the right way.

Jacob receives his father's blessing and departs to go to Padan-aram—the field of the deceivers—and he is seen with his back toward Beersheba and his face toward Haran. In other words he is bidding farewell to the faithful promises of God, and in spirit returning to the land from whence Abraham came. Poor Jacob ! and also poor soul animated by this spirit of Jacob. It is true that this is not returning to Chaldean idolatry and to the spirit of Nimrod ; but it seems very like returning to the country from whence he came out, and not desiring that better country where God has prepared a city for the faithful followers of His Son. This is a sad state for a redeemed soul to be in, and yet it has been the living experience of many, very many of God's children. Who can portray the state of Jacob's soul at Bethel upon that first night, away from home, from grace, in the darkness of a spirit which

has begun its self-seeking career? It is darkness, for the spiritual Sun has gone down, and during a long, dark night, only visions which trouble the soul even whilst they bear within them gracious promises for the future will be the thoughts upon which the spirit can ponder. The vision at Bethel is a wonderful manifestation of the grace of God; it is heaven open at the darkest hours of the soul's history, the way to it revealed, gracious messengers ministering unto man, and the Lord of heaven revealing Himself as "the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac." It speaks of faith as the means of favour, and through faith by God's grace all the promises given to Abraham rest upon this poor miserable supplanter who has dishonoured if he has not rebelled against his King. Grace; yes, this is the King of grace, He follows this poor wanderer, speaking to him of His presence being with him wherever he went; that He would keep him in his sojourning and bring him back again; never leaving him until the promises made were fulfilled, and the great nation made a blessing to all the families of the earth. The King speaks; and truly He is a King, when compared with the worm Jacob, the miserable, self-seeking supplanter who has taken his own foolish ways instead of patiently waiting for the King's instructions and obeying His commands. How majestic is the King as He utters those gracious promises and speaks of His faithfulness to covenant engagements; how contemptible is the man as he trembles with fear, as if he had been caught doing something wrong; vowing a vow that if God would be with him to keep him and give him bread and clothes, and bring him home in peace, then the Lord would be his God, the place would be known as God's house, and he would give one-tenth unto God. Self, self, self looks out from every point in the man's words; and instead of realising his true position, and that from the Lord every blessing comes, he speaks as if he would confer a favour upon the Lord by giving him a tenth of his property. Poor Jacob; very true; but come, turn the light of this word upon the individual soul, and ask if the thoughts thus expressed do not come home with equal power to it also? Are not men kings in their own small domain of the soul and the property they possess? Do they not by cunning and deceit steal the birthright and blessing? Do they not set themselves up as independent rulers, giving it may be the nominal sovereignty to the Lord, but keeping the absolute power in their own hands? Are they not self-seeking, ever-craving for His protection, food, raiment, and a return in peace to God's house? And do they not think it is really a magnanimous thing to give one-tenth of their income for the Lord's service and work? Here and there "an Israelite indeed" may be found amongst men, but the mass are miserable Jacobs, who, if they could see themselves in the light of Christ's Word and Spirit, would despise themselves for their baseness and ingratitude toward the King. These are very serious thoughts; they touch the spirit in its very quick, causing it to shrink as if pierced with a sword; the question is really that of loyalty toward the King, and thus although it is most painful to touch, because it reveals the disease of pride and conceit within, yet it is surely better to know the worst, and look at the facts honestly, and then the remedy may be discovered. The remedy can easily be

discovered, it is found in the Lord's words, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." and this means the abjuration of the deceitful, self-seeking, patronising spirit, which is truly contemptible, and must be abhorred by the Lord; cherishing the spirit of loyalty in meekness and in thorough obedience to the King's commands, and then the miserable Jacob will depart and the Israel of God will reign in the soul in his stead.

CHAPTERS XXIX.—XXXI. In these chapters there is given a detailed account of Jacob's arrival in Haran; what occurred during the twenty years of his stay there; and God's call to him to return to the land of Canaan. It may be interesting, and spiritually profitable, to contemplate very briefly the spiritual thoughts which lie beyond the figures which court consideration. Jacob, the king, may here be discerned as coming in contact with other kings and peoples in the East; in the midst of them there is a well which is the common property of all; but it is not an open well from whence water can be drawn at all times, because it is covered by a very large stone which requires to be rolled away before the refreshing draughts can be drawn for man or beast. At this well Jacob met Rachel; he removed the stone from the mouth of the well and supplied the flocks she tended with water; and after this he revealed himself as her relative, and received a kindly invitation to reside in the house of Laban. The well is the central figure in this scene and around it the interest is concentrated. Remove the well with its precious life-sustaining water, and the men and their flocks would be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth with no common interest to unite them together. Turn this light inward upon the soul of man, that is of the Christian, so far advanced in the ways of God as to be in the third class in this school, and under the same spiritual experience of Jacob and consider what it teaches. The man though self-seeking is not a rebel, he is not in the Father's house and sitting under the sunshine of His favour, but in the field of his soul there is a well of grace from whence he can derive sweet draughts of God's grace for the thirsty spirit. Around this well there are many longings, desires which would fain drink to supply their wants were it not for the stone which hides from their view what they desire, but when the living grace of God draws nigh in all its beauty and attractions, then there is an effort made by the spirit, the veil is removed and from the depths there is drawn out that which will refresh and give pleasure to the soul. This well is seated in the heart, or affections, and thus when it is drawn upon there is joy and peace in the soul.

Again, Jacob is seen as settled down in this place, his affections are set upon Rachel, and he agrees to serve for her for the period of seven years; but his deceitful uncle gives him Leah instead, and thus for seven years more he has to labour for his beloved Rachel. What is it that is spiritually discerned here but the well-known fact which is engraven on the history of the world that deceitful men are in their turn deceived, and that as they have acted so it is amply repaid into their own souls. It was Jacob's pleasure to take the blessing by deceit *he must be taught the lesson that with the seed he sows, be it good or*

bad, so he will reap in his own experience. If a man is deceitful in his actions, let him rest assured that the day is coming when he will find that a more cunning man will repay with interest the coin he has passed upon others. Jacob for seven years fondly dreamed of a Rachel, a living, loving one, to whom he would be united, and in her to find joy and peace. The night of the nuptials arrives, he thinks he possesses what he desired, when, to his great chagrin, he has clasped to his bosom the tender-eyed Leah—the weary and tired—for whom he has no affection. Is not this a very common experience of the soul? How very often the self-deceived spirit has gone on in its own wilful ways; not asking directions from the King and not obeying His laws; and the end has been failure, disappointment, weariness of the flesh, and being tired of life because the end desired has not been attained. But for other seven years of servitude Rachel may be possessed, thus hope leads Jacob forward in his path within which he must experience something of the evil which springs from sowing bad spiritual seed. Men have to learn that it is not the “beautiful and well-favoured” things, in themselves, which men prize, which prove a blessing to the soul, but rather whether the Lord is pleased to bless them and make them blessed.

This leads to the point where the Lord is seen considering the condition of Jacob and his two wives, and the attitude of his affections toward them; and He is seen to bless Leah the one who is hated, whilst He permits Rachel to remain barren. Applied to the soul the figure or allegory would read thus: the elder power to which the soul is united is God's moral law, that righteousness of life which is the burden of the Old Testament; the younger, but to whom in reality the affections were first engaged is the grace of God, which is the revelation found in the New Testament. It is quite true that in the soul of man there is only too often, at this point of Christian experience, a strong aversion to the moral law, that is perfect submission to the Holy will of God, the King of kings. This is seen to be the very sin and perversion of life into which Jacob has fallen; and his punishment is that he must find by his side, continually keeping him in remembrance of his sin, that which is to him spiritually what tender or inflamed eyes would be to the physical body. In other words this is Moses and the rod, as the schoolmaster in the wilderness of the soul, using the power he legally possesses to bring the soul, in the government of its actions, back to the service of God. The children of Leah are spiritually the legitimate offspring of the man who by moral law seeks to be obedient to God; the children of the hand-maids are the offspring of those carnal fleshly counsels which men use to gain their own ends; and the child of Rachel, Joseph, is the one who receives by grace the divine birthright and blessing. This is not the place to enter upon the wonderful allegory which is seen to arise from the seed-thoughts which are sown at this place; it will be more suitable to explain these things at the end of Jacob's life, where he blesses his children, and then a better conception of the spiritual truths will be realised.

Passing by the condition of the soul in its relations to the moral law,

with the conceptions which arise out of it through the actions of the perverted soul ; the condition of grace as barren and unhappy ; and the effects of a double-dyed carnal policy which brings trouble and confusion on the one side, and thoughts full of contempt on the other, it is to be observed that when Joseph was born, grace began to be fruitful, then there was a desire in the soul to return to the ways of the Lord. But it is so very much more easy to depart from the paths of truth and righteousness than to return to them after deceitful by-paths have been entered upon ; and thus Laban represents the carnal desires which would tempt man to remain a little longer in the same condition. The Lord blesses a man with carnal things and thoughts because of the grace of God in his soul ; but when covetous desires are set in operation they become a tyrant, and all the spiritual powers of the being are strained for the purpose of becoming, it may be wealthy, wise, or powerful. In Jacob there can be seen the elements of a king, or a man, who uses, it may not be termed dishonest means to gain his private ends, but there is certainly very sharp practice in what he does, and it is quite clear that the words, "Do unto others as ye would that they should do to you," are never for a moment pondered upon. The man is seen engaged in a race for wealth and power, and all his energies are concentrated upon gaining what is desired. After all, when the man has gained, not that which satisfies his soul, but what whets his ambitious desires, he is led to confess that such a life is a miserable one, for in the day the drought consumes the tender blades of grace that would rise in the soul ; in the night the frost nips every bud that gives promise of joy and peace ; and under such an intense struggle to master the world in the soul, the world becomes a very devil within, which will not permit the eyes to be closed, so that there may be a moment's rest. Is not this the picture of the self-seeking man and the despotic ruler ? the man who, as he is seen by men of the world, is so often envied and considered as blest ? Poor creatures, they pervert the ways of the Lord, and instead of happiness they find misery. They are to be pitied and prayed for, and not envied or praised, for they have sown to "the lust of the eyes," and they reap such a weariness and waking, such a gazing upon the hideous god they have been following, that they almost despair of ever regaining liberty of soul from such a master. God help such poor creatures, for assuredly unless He arise and come to their aid they will return no more to Him and to His Word of Grace.

This is what the Lord is seen as doing for Jacob in his extremity when all is darkness around him, and the command which he receives is to return unto Canaan and to his kindred ; the way is opened up so that he can return, and although there is a flight from Laban, yet God steps in betwixt them, and Jacob is permitted to return in safety. The pretended cause of the pursuit was the image which Rachel brought away with her, and which by a little scheming she was able to retain in her possession ; but in reality it was the spirit of the world which found out that it had been outwitted in deceitful ways, and there was a strong desire to punish the successful deceiver. There was peace through a covenant and sacrifice, and then Laban returned to his own land. The soul that has been in the service of the world requires

to be redeemed from such a perverted state, and the Lord Christ alone can carry on this work and bring it to a successful issue. The chains which bind the soul which is a captive to the spirit of the world are not easily thrown off; and even when they are, it may be that there may be found, put carefully away in the affections, an idol which belongs to the world. This world in its lusts and desires after visible things has its place in the soul; but it is not the king, it is a servant, and may be a friend when rightly used; but it is necessary, if the soul would be free from the thralldom of this world and its ways, to raise a witness and to be constantly on the watch against any encroachment from such a spirit. The worldly spirit swears by God, but Jacob is here found to swear by the "Fear of his father Isaac." In other words, the world and the Creator pass into the background, and there is a return on the part of the soul to that spirit of mourning because of sin, and fear to sin against the Lord, which is the peculiarity of the gentle Isaac.

CHAPTERS XXXII.—XXXIII. Deliverance from the powers of the world and its lusts, through the strength of God exerted on behalf of the soul, is the beginning of good things; but it ought to be remembered that though this strikes off the chains and permits liberty of movement toward God the Lord, it also leaves the soul to consider the past, and to answer for all the deception and self-seeking which has been an abomination in the sight of the Lord. The face is homeward, the spirit is changed and become an obedient one, and thus the Lord in His grace, sends forth messengers of peace to give a welcome to the wandering, perverted soul. Two hosts meet at this point face to face; this is the beginning of a new state of the soul, for the King is going to receive into favour again this self-seeking ruler, and to give him a place of honour as a loyal subject.

The fear of Jacob, and his message to "My lord Esau," may be said to delineate the condition of the soul when it considers the past, the means by which the birthright and the blessing were obtained, and the use made of these things. There is such a thing as retribution, as judgment, as man being brought to stand face to face with his own actions, and to find that they bring a blessing if good, but the curse of fear for the consequences if they have been evil. How awful it must be for the spirit of a man who has no hope, who can see nothing but the dark cloud of wrath, the lightning flash of judgment, and the terrible thunder of God's voice in the soul as Judge. Better, far better that such a man had never been born; yet do not such souls too often walk by the Lord's side for years, listen to His gracious words, and see His merciful deeds; and yet they choose gold instead of grace, self instead of Christ, death instead of life, and hell instead of heaven? Surely men, sinful men, ought to tremble before the Gracious One, and seek to drink of His Spirit. If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? Draw near in spirit to this poor backslider, listen to the cries which burst from his troubled soul, and there learn that the way of transgressors is a hard, a very hard one. For years, many years, *God has been spiritually forgotten, the Lord's*

promises despised, heaven has been far, very far away, and earth self have been the centre of the man's being. Yet he is a child of one of the Lord's redeemed, who inherited many rich and precious promises, and who had been graciously visited by the Lord. This child, whose face has been turned heavenward, has undergone a great experience, for now God is seen to be all, the Lord to be his Guide himself a creature "not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which Thou hast shewed unto Thy servant: for with a staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become a burden to thee." This confession is rich in spiritual thought, for it represents the man as entering on its career alone, and with a staff, God's Word, in his hand; its service is filled up in the word "unworthiness;" as the work of God toward this unfaithful servant, "mercies and truth" is so, and the experience of thousands who have entered the wilderness as Jacob did have been ready to confess, when they quit it, that the mercies and truth of God, that is His faithfulness to His promises in His Holy Word, are really all that they have found in it that is worth of being taken out of it. Everything else passes away in the experience of the wilderness, and only Caleb and Joshua, faithfulness and truth take possession of God's promises. But the travailing cry of a man at this time is for deliverance from Esau, for he is afraid that he will come, and in revenge for the past, massacre his loved ones. Darkness, a terrible darkness, is in the soul; he can speak of "mercies and truth" but he cannot see Him in whom the faithfulness and truth dwell. They are to be found in the Brother who had to bear, and suffer in an immeasurable manner, incomprehensible to man as Jacob was at this time suffering. Because that Brother was cut off from the "mercies and truth" of God in the awful hours of the darkness, all His brethren in their hour of trouble can pray, "as thou saidst, I will surely do thee good."

Passing by the arrangements made to appease the coming brother which may speak of the strong desire for reconciliation and peace, there follows the lonely night, and the struggle with the world "until the breaking of the day." The Brother has come sooner than expected, and in the wrestling of spirit with spirit here described is such a spiritual conflict as can only occur once in a man's life. A self-seeking spirit has been a despot long enough, and at last there has come that there must be decision whether the man is to be making his own laws, or if he will consent to renounce this position, and become a constitutional ruler in his own soul, in conformity, and in harmony with, the laws of God, and in obedience to the laws of kings. This is the most terrible spiritual conflict that any man can enter upon, be he a peasant or a prince, a pauper in a workhouse, a despotic ruler over a great empire; and it is so, because it is wrestling with flesh and blood, with the powers of this world, the powers of the flesh, or the infidel spirit in any of its forms; but of the conflict wrestling with its Creator, and the redeemed striving for mastery over Him who has redeemed the soul. This is marvellous grace which condescending as to enter the precincts of a self-seeking, perverted man there to seize the strong man armed, wrestle with him, and obtain

victory. It is a bitter draught to drink, to be brought to confess that the spirit in its ruling power over the soul has been a supplanter, who took possession of the King's position; but when this is done, then the day breaks, the King's face has been seen, and the spirit is no longer a supplanter, but a prince of God. The children of Israel are princes of God who are obedient in all things to His holy will; they do not eat of that part of the spiritual nature which had to be touched by God before the self-seeking spirit could be subdued; the children of Jacob still partake of this spiritual food, and thus they may be spiritually discerned by the way in which they are found supplanting the King in His kingdom of the soul.

When a soul is at peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, then, as between Jacob and Esau, brethren find no difficulty in being at peace with each other. When God forgives so much, surely the errors and sins of men toward each other should not be a barrier to bringing about peace upon the earth. "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." First reconciliation with God and then peace upon the earth and good-will amongst men. Confess that God is Creator, Law-giver, and Judge, and Christ the King of kings, and then proceed to Shechem, the seat of government for Israel, for the birthright is at last to be bestowed by God along with the blessing upon Jacob unto Israel; and this will in due time become the portion of Ephraim, the son of Joseph, to whom the birthright and blessing were given by his father. As Abraham bought the field at Mamre from Ephron the Hittite to be the constant remembrancer to men of the faithfulness of God to His promises, so Jacob bought a field from Shechem, the Hivite, and upon it he erected an altar and called it El-elohe-Israel, in other words the truth of God in which Israel put his trust. The teaching here is very beautiful, because it reveals in what the kingdom of God consists, and it is seen to be truth, the almighty power which subdues all things to itself and which must reign in the soul of man, of nations, and of the whole earth. It is worth while to turn the spiritual vision upon Jerusalem, and for a moment to gaze upon Christ before Pilate. The supplanter is there seen sitting upon the judgment seat, and the King of truth is arraigned at the bar. Listen to Pilate's words, and the King's response. "Art thou a King, then?" Jesus answered, "Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." Pilate saith unto Him, "What is truth?" To the self-seeking man there is no essential truth; no embodiment of all that is true upon which he can lay his hands, or bring it into contact with his spirit; if he did this the light would condemn the principles upon which he acts, and thus in the conflict of truth and error there would be either deliverance and obedience to the truth, or rejection of the truth and a final falling away into error. The figure of the wrestling in the dark night at Jabbok is now seen to be a majestic and a glorious one; it is Christ with the self-seeking soul; truth with error amongst the nations, and light with darkness in heaven and earth; and, in figure, Israel takes possession of *the soul, the nations and the world, and*

sanctifies them to the Almighty God of truth, who will one day s the whole earth. In vision the true eternal kingdom of God spiritually discerned; and all who obey the truth have heard, hear, the voice of Christ. Grand consummation to the strug tempted soul, to reach Truth, to find that Truth gives freedo the soul being sanctified by self-sacrifice, to be obedient to Truth things. This is the birthright which God has given to man; t sacred trust which he should have prized above all things; but i of doing so he sold himself to the father of lies and deceit, fo self-seeking, ambitious ways, and thus there came the thick da upon the world; but, thanks, eternal thanks and praise be unto C the Truth who has redeemed man, restored the birthright, an brought him once more into the light of God. What a glorious right is this for men to possess through Christ; it is to be set fr in freedom, as princes to serve the Truth. Away then with the Adam, and self-seeking, supplanting Jacob, from the souls of these are cursed rebels who have dishonoured the Lord, and w much evil to man. Let Christ the King of truth reign, sole Loi men, and then the inheritance once forfeited will be completely re Men will be found meek in spirit, and unto them the Lord will g inheritance of this earth. Raise the altar amongst the nations a it the El-elohe-Israel: sanctified to the Almighty God of tru King of truth and righteousness.

CHAPTER XXXIV. The spiritual position prefigured in the for chapter makes known the Almighty power which, in the hands of must bring the souls of men and all nations into subjection to t of God, and that power is truth. This power alone can conque and whilst it does so very completely, it does not raise up e which would tend to bring about a hatred or fear of the power has conquered. This is not a despotic brute power which c obedience by force, but it is by enlightening the soul and reveali harmonies of God's thoughts and will that there is moral per and the most powerful moral constraint to impel men to follo which is true and good. Truth may be considered as the sub conception in the soul of a man, of all that is true and righte found in the objective world, and manifested in Christ; the th of the man agree with the facts in all their relations and manifest and thus to know Christ is to know the all inclusive truth of c and re-creation. But what a man knows must be put into use ar men, and thus truth and knowledge go hand in hand, whilst rig ness and the actions are linked together. Any departure fro straight path of truth by unrighteousness is unjust; that is som unequal, a departure from truth and right, thus to moral, resp beings it is sin. The perfect standard which the King sets up i and righteousness; any departure from this standard is rebellio iniquitous, unjust. The Lord would have in all His redeemed th fact standard, and not until they reach this point will mercy and righteousness and peace be united together amongst men so that th be blessed. In the kingdom of man there is a Dinah, or judgment,

power which, upon the evidence supplied, comes to a true and conclusion and the final utterance when this point is reached is judgment. Responsible beings should love and obey God ; be true ; toward fellow-men ; seek to know all the duties incumbent on them ; discern clearly all that is right, and then pronounce a judgment in harmony with truth and righteousness, and act upon it. Wherever constantly done by a perfect being, the perfect moral state is sustained and the soul would remain pure, a virgin spotless as melting snow before it comes in contact with the earth. But as with the daughter of Leah, who went amongst those who were not in her company for her, so the judgment of man has been perverted and led. The fall of man in Eden took away the virgin purity of man in its original holiness, truth, and righteousness. The defiled man was an object of intense affection to Hamor ; but the carnal man is mixed up with fleshly lusts ; and, as is common with such a man, he was willing to do anything if he could only retain his mistress as a slave. The condition upon which he was to be permitted to marry Dinah was that of circumcision ; this Hamor was willing to do to gain his ends, and the policy which was used to gain the people over to becoming circumcised, was that of greed and gain. The whole story is a picture of the ways of men of this world ; the lusts of the eyes and of the flesh bring about sin ; sin leads on to deceit and lying ; men to gain their self-seeking ends, whether it be the gratification of the lusts of the eye, of the flesh, or the pride of life, will lure pain ; and the end of the whole affair is the death of the souls of the men with their iniquitous self-seeking. The work of Simeon in this matter, in this matter, opens up a most extensive line of research into the scriptures, which cannot be entered upon, but suffice it to point out that they are made the instruments of punishment upon the ungodly, and they are the figures of great spiritual truths, which have their place within the kingdom of God. Simeon means to hear and also to see ; he is the second son of Leah, and she said when he was born, "For the Lord hath heard that I was hated, He hath therefore named this son also." Leah represents the moral nature in man, the dispensation in the nation, and her family the legitimate offspring. Reuben defiles his father's bed, and because of this the birthright is taken from him. But sin having entered the kingdom of God in man hatred toward the moral law of his being ; this brings judgments which come upon man which are the strange works of the world ; these are found to be "instruments of cruelty" for the punishment of men ; all souls desirous of obeying God will shrink in from attempting to enter into the secrets of God in this field of truth, they will not be desirous of uniting themselves with the men who disobey God, neither will they wish to pronounce a judgment upon the just ways of God with wicked men. It will be remembered that when Moses blessed the tribes, at the end of the wilderness' journey, the tribe of Simeon is omitted, thus leading to the thought that the judgments and punishment are gone past for ever upon the tribe of Simeon. Levi is joined with Simeon in this work, and the judgment upon both tribes is that *they will be divided in Jacob and scattered in*

Israel. Simeon was divided in Judah as a tribe, and lost its place and power; Levi was scattered through Israel, but it was to bless, for the true Levi, Jesus Christ the High Priest of men, the curse is turned into a blessing. From these remarks it will be seen that this touches the fringe of one of the grandest allegories in the Holy Scriptures; but in the meantime, it seems necessary only to point out the spirit of the thought embodied in the punishment of the Shechemites and how it refers to the kingdom of God in a man, a nation, or in the whole world. Turning these things into the personal experience of man the thought runs in this way: man as at first created had a perfect moral nature with the power to know truth, to love and obey righteous laws. True judgment, which is the highest function of the soul, was defiled through lust, sin, deceit, and greed of gain; but to gain selfish ends man would willingly bear a little pain, if by doing so the things which he himself seeks after could be obtained. But man is deceived, for God lives, and judges in man by His laws; and it is a hopeless condition in which he finds himself when the judgments of God fall upon soul and body and there is no one to help. "It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

CHAPTER XXXV. It may be conceived that the coming of Jacob to Shechem and the destruction of the Shechemites are linked together to show the relationship of the kingdom of God's truth toward those who choose to walk in the lusts of the eyes, of the flesh, and in the pride of life; they have outraged the judgment of God, and their portion is that the judgments of God fall suddenly upon them and they are destroyed. This principle in its narrowest sphere can be found operating in a man more extensively in the life of a nation, and also in the history of the world as a whole. With this thought full in view turn again to Jacob who is called upon by God to go to Bethel and, there to make an altar to that God who appeared unto him when he fled from the face of Esau. There is preparation for this act of worship, and sanctification of the people, so that they might appear in God's house, there to worship Him and Him alone; all idols being buried out of sight, no more to be used again by him and his upon whom the blessing of God rests. This blessing will be found to be an equivalent with that promised Abraham in the 17th chapter, where the Lord appears as Almighty God and enters into a covenant with Abraham, and institutes the right of circumcision. In other words there can be spiritually discerned the coming of Christ, not to Shechem or the moral kingdom, but to Bethel, the house of God. The government is about to be transferred from Judah to Joseph, from the spirit of Moses to the spirit of Christ. The long cycle of estrangement and perverse self-seeking is near an end, and it is where God met with him on his departure that he must meet God when he returns, and there, and then, have the name Israel confirmed upon him, which was first bestowed at Jabbok. The spirit breathed at Bethel is that of Christ, for He is God's house to man; and when the altar El-beth-el is raised the blessing descends and Jacob is lost in the true Israel or prince of God who prevails in prayer. If these thoughts are applied to the individual soul, the experience is that of the u

ho has been won back to God by his love in Jesus Christ, weaned from the world and all its lusts, and is found willing to become as a thing that God in Christ may be all in all; and that His spiritual kingdom with its manifold blessings might be freely and fully poured upon men to the glory of His own grace, and not for the praise or glory of men. If this vision, or figure, is cast upon the history of the world, then it lies beyond the subjection of the world to truth and righteousness, and of the punishment of the wicked, who will not have Christ to reign over them. This event may not be very near in the opinion of some; but what if the King of truth be *very nigh*, the King *standing* at the door; then it may also be correct that the King of grace is about to visit His house, and who may abide the day of His coming? "Watch therefore: for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh."

The incident of the death of Deborah, Rebekah's nurse at Bethel, is referred to, and also the name given to the oak tree under which she was laid to rest. It may be that the names give the key to this allusion; Deborah means word, Rebekah the strife, or quarrel removed, and Bethel, God's house. It is the word of God which has been the means of making known to man, that the quarrel or enmity which existed betwixt God and men has been removed; but, in what way the way leading to Bethel, and the receiving of the blessing, is to supersede the old Word, in the letter, in the affections of men, may not seem so clear. This thought however is found in several analogous places in the Bible, and it certainly amounts to this, that there will be a great *ritual* change, so that the Word will, as it were, at one time be a written letter to men, and suddenly it will be manifested as risen to a life in heaven; and, the thought that the written Word is to be transferred to the heart, so that all men may know it, and none require to teach his neighbor, runs also in the same line of spiritual thought; nay, it may be said that the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ seem to be very intimately linked with this incident.

Bethel, the house of God, is the place where the will of God in its *ritual* significance is known and obeyed. Think, therefore, of the condition of the soul when it is so changed from the ways of this world to become the very temple of God, a consecrated place where His will and will alone are heard, and the whole being is governed in conformity with His will. It will be observed that this conception of Bethel is analogous with the most advanced teaching in John's Gospel, where the unity of the Father, Son, and the disciple, are taught in a wonderful manner. It is the Father's house; Moses, the faithful servant, is deposed, and Christ, the Son is set "over His own house; these house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of hope firm unto the end." At this point "God went up from him in the place where He talked with him." That is to say, the God of nature and revelation, as formerly known, disappears from the experience of the soul, and the history of the world, and in His place we know the Father of all mercies, and the Source of truth, who is in His very nature the very essence of their being. The anointing with oil of the altar of stone set up at *Bethel*, and pouring a drink-offering upon it,

speak of complete consecration of man's being to the Father, as rendering up unto Him the pure thanksgiving of the soul.

There was another removal from Bethel; they were but a distance from Ephrath, the land of plenty and fruitfulness, and there that the birth-pangs came upon Rachel. This was to be a struggle; for the child was born, and as her spirit fled, she named him Ben-oni, the son of my sorrow; "but his father called him Benjamin, the son of the right hand." Rachel died and was buried in the land of Ephrath, which is Bethlehem." It can be discerned that there is a double line of spiritual thought in this passage; the one being the experience of Rachel in dying when her son is born; and the other the prophetic name given by *the father* at the birth. The child is the mother's sorrow, "in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children," these are the words uttered in Eden to Eve, to the Church, and to the visible relations of the soul to the world. The past has been a sorrow in the conception of spiritual seed; and of death in giving birth. The living forms, in which spiritual births have been conceived, are the organic body of the Church, the body of man comes very near to the land of fruitfulness, the house of bread, but it may not dwell therein. At this point some of the thoughts written by Paul in the body, and the creation, deserve especial attention, especially in chapter viii., where the Spirit of God breathes upon and amplifies the sad thoughts embodied in this incident in the death of Rachel. For Rachel it was an experience full of sorrow, and the spiritual experience runs throughout history as found in individual souls, but also, in a special manner, in the repeated crises of history, when there has been a new spiritual conception by the Christ amongst men, with its lowering travail pains and pangs of birth in men and nations. Turning from the past and anticipating the future, surely it is becoming a palpable thing to all thinking men, that not merely has another come upon them, but that the hour has arrived, and Rachel is the Church of God amongst men and in men's souls, is in "hard labour." The visible order of things may desire to reach the Father's House of bread; but it cannot be, for flesh and blood cannot inherit spiritual things. In Rachel near Ephrath, and Moses upon Mount Pisgah, can be discerned the same spirit; the fleshly forms pass away not merely in the pangs of labour, but in a transfiguration and a passing from the visible to the spiritual. The apostle Peter in a very striking figure seems to write of the same things, when he states that the Son of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved in fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up. Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. In the meantime men may discern that there is the fire consuming the things of this world; that is to say, a spiritual conflagration going on which is destroying all that man has produced by his own perverted thoughts. Christ look, however, not for a settling down of the chaotic mass which is seething around them, but for a new order of things altogether. The result will be in spiritual reality a new heaven and earth. The re-

is the knowledge of the relations of thoughts which are true as ordered by God; folly is the knowledge of the relations of God's thoughts as they have been perverted by sinful, conceited, self-seeking men. The hungry soul turns toward the Sun of Truth to receive wisdom; the rebellious, selfish soul looks into the darkness within, and in the light of the fire it can kindle, it seeks for that which is not truly wisdom, but foolishness. The wise student is hungry, therefore, he requires to receive in all humility and thankfulness God's wisdom; the self-satisfied philosopher, presumptuously thinks that he has the measure of all things in himself, and thus out of the chaotic mass within he undertakes to make manifest all the wisdom which is to be found in the universe. Wisdom is with God in Christ; foolishness in presumptuous man, therefore in the light of Christ alone should men seek after divine wisdom.

The central figure in this portion of the Scriptures is Joseph, in whom the hidden wisdom of God is partially revealed. He is a figure of the wise providence of God which during the ages works in the world for the preservation of the people of God, for the government of the nations, and for the purpose of bringing the Divine Wisdom to be the Ruler of the world. As with the macrocosm in the great world, so it may also be found in the microcosm of the soul, for it also has its cycle within which it hungers after righteousness in the wisdom and fear of God.

The scene opens in the family and kingdom of God upon earth, men as shepherds are seen feeding their flocks, and in their midst there is seen the favoured one who seeks to know the truth and to obey it. But there are also in that company evil doers; and it becomes the duty of the one who would act righteously to report the evil committed by them to the responsible head of the family. This true and righteous one is beloved by his father above all his brethren; and because of this love which is so strong, he thinks that it is right to give unto the child what shall be a proof of his affection. This gift which is the visible, and *suitable* expression of his favour upon a worthy son, has a very bad effect upon the wicked brothers, for they envy and hate the obedient, faithful lad, and cannot even speak peaceably unto him. The lad is of the righteous kind, he has a poor, meek spirit, and he is also, even at this early period of his life, "persecuted for righteousness' sake." When the sun sets and the night closes in darkness around the soul, then heaven opens to view; and it is then that the beautiful stars illuminate the sky, and heaven is seen to be more lovely, wonderful and full of glory than this earth. The gentle Joseph lies down to sleep sad and sorrowful because of the evil-doing of others; but in the night watches, heaven is open to the thirsting spirit, and heavenly visions enlighten the soul. The first revelation is the great harvest field in which men are the reapers; each reaper has gathered his sheaf and they all wait to see what shall be the order of events. One sheaf, that of the despised and hated one, is seen to arise and take the central position, whilst the others make obeisance to it as lord. Another dream is given to the beloved of heaven, and it excels all earthly *relations*, for to the one hated and envied, the sun, moon, and stars bow

their heads ; in other words to this child is given "all power in heaven and earth."

Passing by Joseph and his brethren, explanation cannot be necessary to show that these thoughts find their fulfilment in Jesus Christ, the Beloved of God the Father, who, in His obedience and faithfulness to His Father, failed not to make known the evil deeds of men, who was blessed above all men with the poor, meek, and gentle spirit, who was persecuted by men, who had the heavens thrown open to His view, and who, after His resurrection, had all power given to Him in heaven and earth. But, turning the eye inward upon the soul, and thinking of it as the microcosm of a family, or a commonwealth, it may be useful to find out if anything like these things could take place in so small a place. The picture is that of a soul, with a poor, mournful, meek, and patient spirit, which has passed through the varied experiences of the Christian life until it has come to a knowledge of the truth ; and in obedience to the will of God it is determined to be faithful to every duty, and is desirous of knowing the will of God. The motto of this spirit is, in the highest sense, "Excelsior;" it is aspiring to leave the dark world beneath the feet, and in the light of the truth of God to inspire His blessed thoughts ; but it is surrounded on every side by foolish thoughts, contemptuous words, confusion, envy, hatred, and all that would tend to make such a spirit unhappy. Whence shall it flee for comfort, rest, and hope but unto the Father, and in His truth the wonderful thoughts of God will be revealed to the patient, waiting soul? How shall the regenerate spirit become Christ-like? This end can only be attained by work ; go forth into the great harvest-field of life, there labour as in the sight of God, and in due time all the unruly, envious, covetous passions and desires of the body will be made subject to the regenerate, gracious spirit, and by this means the earthly part of man's being, his body with all its powers, will bend low before this master spirit. But is this all that God has promised to him in whom there is a thirsting desire after righteousness? By no means, for there is a change in the vision ; earth has been changed into heaven, that is to say, the lusts and desires of the flesh have become sanctified for the Lord's service, thus they are raised into heavenly places, and there are seen sun, moon, and stars bowing down before the gracious spirit which is become the supreme ruler in man's great heaven, of his own small being. In other words, this vision reveals the fact that the moral nature, the sun in man, represented by Jacob, or the visible kingdom ; the intellect, or the moon by which knowledge is gained ; and all the affections and desires of the being, are, in due time, to become subservient to grace or the gracious power of the Lord working by the regenerate spirit. These have been to men in the past as dreams, but surely men will now be able to discern that they are the great realities of the Supreme Wisdom. In the past the evil passions have so troubled the souls of men that through the darkness such things have appeared to be like visions of the night. It is time that the darkness of night should pass away, and that men should in the light of God's truth discern that God's heaven harmonises with, yea, it makes the heaven within *the soul*.

The scene changes, and from the family circle in Hebron, the home of God's faithfulness and fellowship, the brethren are sent forth to their duties, to attend the flocks at Shechem. Israel sends forth the beloved son to see the condition of the flocks, and the well-being of the shepherds, and to bring him word again. He leaves the Vale of Hebron, proceeds to Shechem, fails to find his brethren there, and being told that they are at Dothan, thither he proceeds, and finds them. This forms a beautiful allegory of the position of men in this world; they were all instructed to go to Shechem—that is to say, to continue under the gracious, moral government of God, but, instead of remaining there, they went to Dothan, or in other words allowed the instructions they had received to be forgotten, and they are found following the traditions and customs set up by men. It was thus that Christ found men at His advent in the flesh. The Spirit of God is sent forth into the soul, that it may observe its well-being; but instead of finding that it is ruled and guided by the laws of God, as found in His Word, there is the observance of the customs and traditions of men, God is not honoured, but in reality there is revolt from God by disobedience.

The scene changes again, and man is permitted to enter into contact with the conspirators and to listen to their diabolical suggestions. This hatred toward "the master of dreams" is intensified by his near presence, and they propose to kill him, cast him into a pit, say that an evil beast had killed him, and then they would see what would come out of his dreams. To such suggestions Reuben gives the advice that no blood should be shed, but that he should be cast into a pit, purposing secretly to get him out of their hands and send him back to his father. As amongst these wicked brethren so with the Jews when the Lord came unto them; they consulted together as to His death, but in His case, though they could not touch His spirit, the body was truly cast into the pit of the grave. The individual soul may be here considered as surrounded by its foes in those corrupt lustings and desires which are enmity to the grace of God, and it is only through the partial faithfulness of the moral nature within, whose voice is heard, and through the fear of the dread consequence of evil through murder, that the spirit of grace is permitted to live. This at least is evident, the chosen of God shall not be permitted to reign over the soul; he shall be stripped of all that distinguishes him from the other powers, and since there would not be any profit in putting him to death, let him be sold like a worthless slave, cast out of the family and its counsels, and amidst strife in the bondage of Egypt, there to be forgotten and treated as if dead. Such is the intention of the rebellious, covetous nature in man, by and through such wickedness it is the ordained way of God that the wicked passions and desires, having rejected a lawful and gracious rule, may find out the consequences of evil deeds, and thus the grace of God, the light and glory of the soul, is removed, and it is left in sorrow to mourn and lament over the loss sustained.

CHAPTER XXVIII. The position of this chapter, as if bracketed in between the bad actions of the brethren toward Joseph, the sorrow of the

home in which he had lived, and his life in Egypt, would seem to point to the condition and actions of the rulers in God's kingdom and house during the time that wisdom was banished from home. It is not Reuben that is represented as ruler in visible things, but Judah; and it may be suggested that the previous chapter indicates why this is so. The unstable Reuben meant well, but when the hour of a crisis came upon him he had not the courage of his convictions, and did not act up to what he knew to be his duty; he saved the lad's life by having him cast into a pit, intending to release him and send him home to his father, but with the hour of the crisis there passed away the opportunity of doing his duty, and thus he had to lament his momentary weakness in days and hours of grief and remorse. In the words of Judah may be heard the voice of the supplanter, for upon him has fallen the spirit of Jacob, and by his proposal to sell his brother, and carrying it into effect, he became the ruler over his brethren. In what spirit will he rule? in that of wisdom and the fear of God, or in folly and wickedness? It is impossible that it could be in the former, because he has despised such a spirit and cast it out; therefore the spirit is a selfish, debased one, which serves the lusts of the flesh, and thus it is not in harmony with the will of God. To put the matter as shortly as possible, there may be discerned in the narrative the following thoughts: Judah married a Canaanitish woman, an idolater; she had three sons, Er, Onan, and Shelah. The first married Tamar, and died without any children; the second son, being wicked, was also killed, and thus Tamar was left as a widow without any children. The youngest son, Shelah, was not grown to manhood. Judah was anxious to save this son, and so he instructed Tamar to wait until he was grown. In the meantime Judah's wife died; his daughter-in-law, who had acted the part of a harlot towards her father-in-law, gave birth to twins, with this peculiar incident at their birth: The first-born, Zarah, put forth his hand, a scarlet thread was tied on to it, the hand was drawn in again, and the other child, Pharez, was the first that was fully born. It may be suggested that these thoughts give a fair representation of the facts of history as related to the visible rule in Church and State throughout the Jewish and Christian eras. The spirit of Judah as he acted toward Joseph, Shuah, and Tamar can be discerned in the facts of history. The wife and friends of the ruler in God's kingdom and Church have been traffickers in idolatry, and men who seek to please the people; the offspring, Er, has been found in the kingdom of Israel, carried away into Assyria; Onan, in the kingdom of Judah, carried away into Babylon; and Shelah, in the Jews after the captivity, who were very careful not to be led into visible idolatry, as their forefathers had been. Tamar is the visible Church of the Jewish dispensation in its relations to the State; and the offspring of Judah and Tamar are Zarah, with the scarlet thread, or the evangelical spirit, and Pharez, or the self-asserting spirit, as found in the rulers of the Papacy and other sects in their relations to the rulers of the States during the Christian era.

Passing away from this story it may be profitable to consider whether it is at all probable that *anything like this* might become an experience

of the soul in a man who rejects the wisdom of God and who seeks to rule the soul by his own carnal conceits. The first thing that such a soul will do is to strengthen itself by gaining worldly power and favour with men as by the intellectual powers ; thus by meditation to conceive means by which self may become great and wise. But, the first fruits of this conception is that the soul finds itself as an enemy to God ; the second conception brings forth pain and iniquity, unhappiness in the soul ; and the third brings about the breaking up of that unity which was supposed to exist. In this way it is discerned that to supplant the lawful, by force, may be a desirable and ambitious thing, but it is in reality a foolish thing, for the soul is then out of joint with the nature of things, and thus pleasure and peace are unknown. Will gratifying the lusts of the flesh bring happiness to the soul ? By no means, for although for a moment there seems to be the light of pleasure thrown across the path of life it is followed by divisions in the soul, and strife ; and the only hope that comes near the soul is the mystic scarlet thread or the hope of redemption, through the evangel of Christ.

CHAPTER XXXIX. In thus considering the incidents in the life of Joseph there has been discerned the family of God with the beloved son as its central object of delight ; the revelations given to him by dreams ; the hatred of his brethren ; his being sent forth to inquire into their well-being ; their diabolical work in selling him to be a slave ; and the behaviour of Judah as ruler over his brethren. In these thoughts there may be spiritually discerned the condition of the soul ; the favour of the Father toward that grace which brings salvation ; the extraordinary visions which this power of God brings to the soul ; the opposition of the perverted desires and affections toward the Spirit of Grace ; the means by which it is cast out ; and the idolatrous, shameful, deceitful, sinful government of the perverted moral nature, which supplants grace and reigns over the soul in its own disgraceful manner. In this chapter the scene is changed and Joseph is found in Egypt, as the slave of Potiphar—belonging to the sun—rising to be overseer over the house ; tempted by his master's wife ; and on account of her lies cast into prison. The spiritual thoughts arising out of this change of place and order of things may find its key in the name of Potiphar ; it is, that the spirit of grace in its gracious wisdom is placed under what is equivalent to the sun of man's being, or the perverted moral nature. So long as the spirit of grace is humble it is prosperous, and working as it does in harmony with the moral nature in man, the natural consequence is that grace will become the overseer, and so keep all within the soul in harmony with law. But, as the sun is ruler in the heavens, and the moon the queen of night, so in man the moral nature is the ruler and the intellect is the help-mect. It is here that the great beauty of the allegory flashes forth, because it can be discerned that the temptation means more than the bed of fleshly lusts, and that in reality it covers the whole field of intellectualism. But in a special manner it is applicable to the intellectual powers, which operate for the gaining of knowledge as power, for gaining and maintaining the dominion over the world of the soul in all its actions. The

cursed serpent can be discerned as holding out the tempting baits of every form of worldly wisdom to the spirit of grace, but the immaculate, the wise with God's wisdom, cannot be thus defiled, and thus it flees from the tempter. The view that opens up here may be emphasised in the words of the serpent in Eden, "for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil." It is the infidel, sceptical thoughts of this world, presenting themselves to the soul, asking admission, consideration, correction and acceptance, or rejection according to the truth and wisdom they contain. This serpent is a most enticing devil; so beautiful externally, so plausible, full of art, skilled in the use of words, and also promising so very much, that the whole drift of the perverted nature is in its favour, and thus the spirit of grace within has no power to resist such an onslaught. Think of a child of grace sitting down to debate with a learned professor who is not merely animated by this abominable spirit in all its fulness, but thoroughly furnished with all that the masters of this art, which Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and the latest developments in science and philosophy can supply, and there is to be discerned the master of the devils with all the artillery of hell at his back ready to overthrow the helpless child, who possesses no weapon except faith in God. Would it be wise for such a child to meet such an opponent at such a time? By no means: he is not called upon at this stage of life to meet the foul fiend in combat, but it is the right thing to flee from the cursed tempter, to hide the troubled face in the bosom of the Father; and in due time that knowledge of truth and wisdom will be supplied which will destroy all the boasted weapons which the devil can use against the soul. "Flee youthful lusts" is a command that must not be limited to the lusts of the flesh; but it ought to be extended so as to cover the lusts of the eyes, the flesh, and the pride of life; and it is presumptuous, dangerous, yea, it may be a deadly thing, to listen to the serpent in its sweet unsical words and thoughts which are in their very spirit opposed to the will of God. The Lord can make a child His champion; but the child is not to go forth unbidden to the dreadful combat, lest the issue might be to the glory of man and the disgrace of God's cause amongst men. The battle is the Lord's; and man may rest satisfied that at the right time, He will destroy the boasted power of the devil, show forth the corruptions of all fleshly lusts and bring down to the dust that proud head which has been so long raised in man and amongst men. This allegory deserves very full consideration, the story pictures the state of the soul, and also it shows what has really been manifested in history; because, it is only necessary to extend these spiritual thoughts to the world, and the same principles are seen to have been in active operation amongst men during the past ages.

CHAPTER XL. The scene is a prison-house within which Joseph as the spirit of grace in wisdom has his abode; and in this place the prisoner has been raised until he is seen to be fully trusted and charged with all that relates to the prisoners. Two of the chief officers of the court are committed to *prison*, and whilst under the care of Joseph they

are both visited by dreams during the same night. The dreams cause them trouble because they can find no interpreter ; but they are assured that dreams and their interpretations belong to God. The chief butler's dream is that of a vine with three branches, which budded, blossomed, and brought forth fruit ; and the ripe clusters of the grape were pressed by the butler into Pharaoh's cup, and by him it was accepted. The interpretation was that the three branches are three days at the end of which he would be restored to his place again. The chief baker's dream was that he had three baskets on his head containing all kinds of bake-meat for Pharaoh ; and he saw the birds eating of the cakes in the baskets : the interpretation was that in three days he would be hanged and the flesh of his body would be eaten by the birds. As interpreted by Joseph the dreams were in due time fulfilled. These dreams are specially interesting as viewed by the limitations of space and time, and the issues which awaited the prisoners. Viewed aright it is a magnificent picture of this world under the three days of grace, that is the Adamic, Abrahamic, and Christian eras ; and of the limitation of boundary which is the prison house of this world within which men live. The butler and the vine is the ruling power in the state, or the moral power ; and the baker and his bake-meats the wisdom, or folly and vain conceits of men, which is the sphere of the intellectual power amongst men. To these there are given three days of grace, then the judgment will come and the reward shall be according to the interpretation. To God's kingdom restoration in moral power ; to the rejected intellectualism a shameful death. Carrying this thought into the soul the same principles may be discerned, the prison-house is man's body ; the appointed ruler is the grace of God, the moral nature which rules conduct in righteousness, but which owing to its iniquity has been placed under the King's displeasure ; the intellect has worked its evil will by poisoning the bread of God through its ambitious schemes and great performances ; it would be as a god, but the sentence upon it is that of death, so that it may no longer rule over men.

CHAPTER XLI. Again the scene is changed, and the palace of Egypt, with the king who has been visited by heavenly dreams, is the central figure. The dreams of the kine and the ears of corn are rehearsed to the wise men, but there were none who could interpret these visions given by God to man. The chief butler remembered his faults and informed the king of the young Hebrew who had interpreted the dreams in the prison. Joseph was brought before Pharaoh, the dreams were interpreted as meaning seven years of plenty and seven years of famine ; the issue being that Joseph was made ruler over Egypt, with instructions to carry out the will of God so that the people might be preserved from the famine that was coming upon the earth. It is worthy of notice that the name which Joseph received at this time—Zaphnath-paaneah—means, "To whom secrets are revealed," and also, "The Saviour of the world." Asenath, the name of his wife, means peril or misfortune ; and Poti-pherah, besides meaning belonging to the sun, means also to scatter or demolish, and On, force or iniquity. It will be remembered that this is the third series of dreams and also the

last, which Divine Wisdom brought before Joseph. Thus it is not stretching the imagination very far to find in this allegory a prefiguration of the beginning of the Christian era where the true Joseph, the Wisdom of God and Saviour of the world, is found amongst men revealing the perfect will of God ; joining Himself with the misfortunes of the fallen race, breaking down the strength of the perverted moral power or government amongst the nations, and subduing that force and iniquity which has abounded upon the earth. As with Joseph and the Christian era as a cycle, so with the nature of man ; there comes a time when the thoughts of this world cannot satisfy the soul ; they are foolishness, and they will not explain the great mysteries of God. The spirit of grace and truth as found in Christ in the New Testament, is the one that is called upon to explain all mysteries ; and it shows that in the time of plenty and of famine, there is a cycle of experience, in which the soul is filled as with the finest of the wheat, but a time of famine for the Word of God duly arrives and then in the darkness that surround the world of a man's soul, there can only be light and life found where Christ and the Word of God are received, loved, and obeyed.

CHAPTERS XLII.—L. The years of plenty pass away, and during that period to Joseph there is born a Manasseh—forgetting, and an Ephraim—fruitfulness ; the place is not home to Joseph, yet the bitterness of the sting had been taken away ; and there was fruitfulness, even plenty, in the land of his adoption. But the years of plenty passed by quickly, and then came the years of famine which affected not only Egypt, but also the land of Canaan. Jacob having heard that there was corn in Egypt, despatched his ten sons to bring them food so that they might not die. In their intercourse with Joseph, the brethren are treated roughly, as if they were spies, and the effect of this is that they remember their cruelty toward Joseph. Reuben rebuked them, and called to their remembrance what he had said to them, assuring them that their sins had followed them, and that these things were the voice of their brother's blood. To prove that they are true men, Simeon is detained as a prisoner, and they are permitted to return home. After a while they are again called upon to go down to Egypt for corn, but the brethren will not depart unless Benjamin is sent with them. Reuben, anxious to get away, offers his own sons as surety for Benjamin, but the father will not accept his offer ; but eventually the surety of Judah is received, and they return to Egypt to buy corn. At this visit Joseph tries his brethren still further, Judah makes a confession, he reveals himself to his brethren, and then they are invited to remain in Egypt, whilst he sends for his father, who is overjoyed because his favourite son is still alive, and has attained to the position of ruler over Egypt.

This is a brief sketch of one of the finest stories that is to be found in God's Word ; the fulness which it possesses cannot be touched, but some of the great lessons it carries in its bosom may be glanced at in its relationship to the spirit of gracious wisdom which Joseph represents. Historically there may be discerned the great success of the gospel in

the early Church, in which the past was forgotten in the great prosperity with which the nations were blessed. The bread of life was so abundant that all nations rejoiced in the fulness of the manifold blessings with which God endowed them; or, if purely spiritual food is not to be specially contemplated, then there may be seen the great wealth and power existing in the condition of the nations from the time of Nebuchadnezzar onward to the fall of the Roman Empire. But the idea here is that of truth and wisdom, and under the figure of the corn in abundance, in the charge of Joseph, the main thought must be Jesus Christ, in whom is hid all treasures. The relationship is that of Christ to the nations as the invisible, supreme Ruler, and thus it will include all forms of prosperity, because whether men wish it or not, they cannot pass from under His gracious sway, or the ministration of His judgments. It is when the judgments fall heavy that men begin to consider their position, and to seek after God in Christ. The past leaves its record upon history, and thus men are led to confess their former evil deeds; the aggregate conscience is clamorous, but instead of any peace the trouble increases, the wish or power to hear God's voice in providence with acceptance is taken away, and it would almost seem that God by His grace had left wicked men to their evil ways. Men who have no spiritual food, and who have a desire created within them to seek after the wisdom of God cannot rest satisfied until the thing desired is possessed, and thus it is not until the coming of the Son of the Right Hand, and the confession of the present rulers of their sinful actions, that the Wisdom of God can be revealed to the world. As with the macrocosm in history, so also with the individual soul, for in that wonderful power, the memory, there is a strange clinging to the past, the happy home of childhood with its lessons, and it is only in prosperity that there is forgetfulness of the past, and fruitfulness in the work which God gives to perform. But if the soul has revolted and cast out the spirit of wisdom, then the time comes when poverty and starvation surround the soul. The beginning to feel a great want is experienced, and God must be sought, or at least, the food which He alone can supply. The soul seeks food, not Christ, or the grace of God, but in seeking, the experience is such that it brings up the past;—conscience—the first-born in man, but sadly despised, brings up the bad actions of the past, and the whole soul is led to consider the guilty position into which it was brought by such wickedness. This is the arrow of conviction which wounds; and, the barbed arrow being left in the soul, the thoughts are concentrated upon its state as guilty and condemned before the Judge of all the earth. Again the hunger for the bread of life returns, the conscience is pressed and would do anything to give satisfaction, but in the past it has been found to be like a reed shaken by the wind, and thus its words are not heard or valued. The ruler in man, that is the moral nature, seeking to obey God's law, becomes surety that no evil shall come upon the beloved of the father, and with him there is another attempt to get food for the soul. But it is only after the soul has realised its sinfulness, the conscience has been troubled because of its neglect of duty, and the supplanting moral nature has made full confession of past offences, that the grace of God is

manifested, and the fear which formerly existed turned into joy through the forgiveness of sin and acceptance into favour by the grace of God.

Having glanced at these analogies, which may be traced in the history of Joseph, and having followed the story of his brethren, which begins with their envy and hatred toward the chosen of God, and ends in the fulfilment of the dreams which he related to them, it may be discerned that at this point the figurative cycle will end, and the other portions will have to do with the next great cycle of the redemption from Egypt under Moses. In Abraham the spirit of faith and obedience is fully manifested. In Isaac there is seen the mournful, contemplative soul, which is that of the servant of God in the Church and in the world; or the subjective power of grace in operation, bringing the soul into that condition in which it shall regulate its actions by the laws of God. In Jacob there is found the one to whom the birthright was promised, but he turns out to be a supplanter, and only when he becomes Israel does he become the meek one whose portion is the kingdom of truth, and his inheritance the redeemed world. In Joseph there has been traced the gift of wisdom from God, receiving great revelations of the relationship of Christ toward the world as its Redeemer and King; toward all men as the Saviour and Judge; and toward all kings and rulers in Church and State as King of kings. The all-wise providence of God directing all affairs, and yet as the tender-hearted Brother who seeks through His grace the highest good of all His brethren.

Wisdom is the knowledge of righteousness and truth; it is knowing that which is true and right in their order of development. In the light of truth and righteousness of Christ, the ruler of the kingdom, and the kingdom itself, it is necessary to consider, very briefly, the thoughts of God as they are concentrated in the names of Jacob's sons, and in the blessings placed upon them by Jacob and Moses. The spirit of wisdom does not lay hold upon something abstract and apart from mankind, but it is set in operation to discern the laws of the kingdom of truth and righteousness, and through these laws the relations of those things which are true and right in God's kingdom of redemption. In the visions of Joseph there is revealed the Worker and Ruler; in the dreams of the butler and baker, the Saviour and Judge; and in those of Pharaoh, the providence of God amongst the nations. In considering the sons of Jacob the stand-point is changed, and the kingdom of heaven in a soul and in the world, is to be discerned in the method of its operations for the regeneration and restoration of man to God.

The first-born son of Jacob is Reuben, or, see a son. What is his history? He ought to have been a glorious creature, animated as with the very power, authority, and majesty of God; but, through adultery, defiling his father's bed, he became as a broken reed; his head was dishonoured, and the stain of shame rests upon his name. What power in man can this be but the conscience, the highest, first-born manifestation of God in man? It is not the *moral nature* in its knowledge of relations, but the *conscience of that nature* formulated in law, the

very representative of God in man, in his pure and perfect moral state. The aged Jacob speaks the facts as to this son leaving his future with God, but Moses is found uttering the prayer, "Let Reuben live and not die; and let not his men be few." The cycle of the curse is at an end, but it is not to the moral conscience in conformity to law that the birthright and blessing are given; there is restoration, but it is as a servant in subjection to the power of grace which alone will govern the soul.

Simeon is the second son in the family of Leah; that is, in the order of the perverted moral nature in man. When he was born Leah said, "Because the Lord hath heard that I was hated He hath therefore given me this son also;" and, on his death-bed, the aged Jacob spake of the cruelty, secrecy, anger, and self-will shown by this son, and also of his portion, that it was to be division throughout Jacob. The great law-giver has no blessing for Simeon; this tribe is not to be found amongst those who enter upon the promised inheritance under Jesus. As already suggested, there is here revealed the mystery of evil in the world and in man. In Reuben the crown is seen falling from the head, and the dishonoured creature flees from the face of God; in Simeon, the power which hears and wills, even the perverted, sinful spirit is touched, and in the words of Leah and Jacob there are embodied the thoughts of how hateful sin is in God's sight—how desperately wicked in its actions—and also that the punishment awaiting this spirit is disintegration and division until it shall vanish away from the face of the earth under the rule of Jacob, or the supplanter. Simeon speaks also of the spirit of prophecy in the Israel of God; it is dispersed; in Jacob it was divided by the succession of prophets amongst the tribes; and with the Christian era the prophetic vision comes to an end.

The third son of Leah was named Levi, because she hoped that through this son her husband would be joined unto her. Jacob, on his death-bed, joined Simeon and Levi together. In Jacob there is a curse which vanishes away; in Israel a blessing which gives a new life to the whole nation. During the long centuries of the reign of the supplanters these two have been working silently side by side; and the true Levi can be discerned in Him who was known as the friend of publicans and sinners. But when Moses uttered a blessing upon this tribe then there was not restoration merely, but all the gifts and graces upon the consecrated who were set apart for God's service in the redemption of the world. It was a true prophetic thought which animated Leah that by this son there would be union to the husband and father; but it was the union of God with Christ, and man in Him to the Father, that was God's thought in the utterance. The conception embodied in this son for the contemplation of the individual is the birth of a new spirit within the soul, which must come in contact with the perverted, sinful spirit; it is the Christ in man working amidst the dark, cruel, hateful things to overthrow them, and to put the light of truth, love, and all that is beautiful, good, and gracious in their place. It is true that in Levi there is the Christ, the High Priest from heaven, but He does not separate Himself from His followers, for they also are priests, not after the order of Aaron, but spiritually,

and thus one with, or in, Himself. Of course, a distinct line must be drawn betwixt the carnal, sinful spirit, which is enmity against God, and is accursed, and this holy, gentle spirit of grace, the new creation in Jesus Christ; the former can never become the priest of God, it is self in all its base, self-seeking, self-asserting ways, which, through the grace of God, is disintegrated, divided, and destroyed, but the new spirit is the one which abhors all self-seeking, and seeks likeness unto God the Father, as manifested in His Son Jesus Christ.

The fourth son of Leah is Judah, which means praise, or the external expression of man's duty toward God. It is not this son of Leah which will receive praise from his brethren, for he is the supplanter who inherits the Jacob spirit, and who has proved himself to be unworthy of praise; but the One to whom all praise must be given is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, David's son and yet David's Lord. It is quite true that to the tribe of Judah there was given the position of rule and authority over his brethren, the kingdom, the laws, and all that Jacob represents, but these were only in the external form, and not in the great spiritual reality, as found in Judah's greatest Son. The symbol is to pass away when the Shiloh appears, and then unto the rest, peace, and abundance of grace found in Him will the nations be gathered. But this King and the relationship He will bear toward men is concealed in the following enigma or metaphor: "Binding His foal unto the vine, and His ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine and His clothes in the blood of grapes: His eyes shall be red with wine and His teeth white with milk." The vine is the kingdom of God amongst men, and Christ, as King over men and related to them, is bound to them and One with them. What, then, is the work of this King? It is that His own garments, His body, may be washed in the wine of the terrible wine-press of the wrath of God, and His clothes, that is to say His redeemed ones, in the blood of the grapes by martyrdom. His eyes shall express the great agony which the soul endures, but from His lips, through His teeth, shall come the nourishing milk of heaven by which the redeemed may live and praise Him. The 63rd chapter of Isaiah, beginning: "Who is this that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bosrah?" is an amplification of the same thought, for it is there that the Man is seen coming for man's redemption out of Adam, the earth-man, with His garments dyed with the tribulation and distress that is resting upon His sheep. Such is the King that comes to man by Judah, but the veil is lifted by Moses, and there is seen an Intercessor who prays that Judah's voice may be heard; that He might be brought unto His people, that His hands should be sufficient for His work, and that help might be given Him against all His enemies. Thus there still remains the kingdom for and in Judah, but it is the government in visible things, or within the moral sphere in man and nations. The kingdom of truth and righteousness will be manifested, and unto the Lord Christ of the seed of David must the glory, praise, and dominion in that kingdom be given. Turning for a moment to the individual soul; in all these things there can be discerned what must take place in the kingdom within. *It must be redeemed, washed in that strange wine*

and blood of the grapes, which brings salvation, and, being saved, then there must be, by moral persuasion, conformity to moral law, a renewed power within, as if the courage of the lion had been given to the soul, and willing obedience to the will of God. This power of governing the being is not the highest by any means; it is being placed under law, as a schoolmaster, so that the desires and affections may be subdued, and the soul regenerated and sanctified, and thus led to love and obey truth and righteousness. The King of grace comes in a different spirit; His is also a yoke and a burden, but these are easy and light, because the spirit finds in Him peace and rest for the soul. It is the meek spirit which is blessed, and thus, if men would enjoy the kingdom, the lowly spirit must be cherished in simple trust and faithful obedience to the Word of God. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

At this point Leah left off bearing children. Rachel became envious of her sister, and in her hunger of spirit she said to her husband, "Give me children, or else I die." The time for Rachel to bear was not yet come; but she could not wait God's time, and thus she gave her maid, Billah, to Jacob, and by her Dan was born. This departure from the will of God by such a carnal conception is not in the line of God's free grace, but rather a judging and judgment upon the ambitious, restless spirit. Jacob, before dying, spake, saying, "Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. I have waited for Thy salvation, O, Lord." This is an experience which is not unusual in the soul of man; it is the proud, selfish spirit which will not be subject to law, going on in its headstrong path of sin and shame; but at the moment when least expected, the judgments of God come, the proud spirit is cast down, and there is heard within the soul, the cry of the spirit of grace, in its bonds, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." Moses, in his blessing upon this tribe, utters the following words: "Dan is a lion's whelp; he shall leap from Bashan." The soul in its bonds is set free and receives salvation from the Saviour. By this spirit within there is a new departure, and it is from the shifting sands upon which the soul had built its hopes to build upon Christ the Rock of Agea. What existed in the soul and brought down the rider was the serpent of sin, which in due time brings punishment; but the new spirit is that of the seed of the lion of Judah, and it springs in to destroy the fallen spirit and to slay the serpent bred of sinful lusts and desires. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

The second son which Rachel received by Billah she named Napthali, or wrestling. The aged Jacob said of this son, "Napthali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words." And Moses said, "O, Napthali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord; possess thou the west and the south." The first glance at this son reveals the face of the father as he was found on his way home from Padan-aram, at the Brook Jabbok. The second reveals the freedom obtained by wrestling; and the "hind let loose" is Israel coming out of the struggle with his self-will broken, and speaking, in a new

language, of having seen the face of God. The third vision is Jacob changed into Israel, the land possessed, and the children in the happy possession of the favour of God. In the soul, after judgment has been passed upon the wicked spirit, and salvation is brought into the soul, there are oftentimes great wrestlings as to the lordship, but eventually grace remains in possession, the face of the Lord in favour is seen ; there is a gracious sense of acceptance in Christ, and thus gracious words flow from the lips. "Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth."

The success of Rachel led Leah to give her maid, Zilpah, to Jacob, and of the first son that she bare "Leah said, A troop cometh ; and she called his name Gad." The aged Jacob said of this son, "A troop shall overcome him : but he shall overcome at the last." Moses, in blessing this tribe, said, "Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad : he dwelleth as a lion, and he tearth the arm with the crown of the head. And he provided the first part for himself, because there, in a portion of the law-giver was he seated ; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the Lord and his judgments with Israel." In this description of Gad there is to be found the soldier of Christ, who has had a sacred charge committed to his trust. It is the law and testimony, or the Word of God. Many men have joined this noble army, and it has been their portion, as foretold, to find that the enemy has been more subtle than they have been wise ; for the enemy has come, and if he has not taken away the trust placed in their hands, he has, through scepticism and infidelity, so blunted the weapons of Christ's soldiers that their warfare has been unsuccessful. But Moses is enabled to see this tribe in a better position, in the act of overcoming the enemy ; and thus the lion breaks the power of the arm that would dare to touch the sacred Word. In the individual soul Gad is known to represent a seeker after truth, a lover of righteousness ; this is the spirit of Elijah, or of John the Baptist, ever seeking after the will of God, and calling the soul to obedience and righteousness. It is fitting that the soul, when it is made subject to law, should seek after divine wisdom. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness : for they shall be filled."

The second child which Leah received through Zilpah was named Asher. She said, "Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed." The aged Jacob said of this son, "Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties." Whilst Moses in blessing Asher said, "Let Asher be blessed with children ; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass ; and as thy days so shall thy strength be." It is not that which a man receives which renders him happy, but that which he is able to bestow upon others for their good. If this child of Zilpah is to be self-seeking, no blessing or happiness could lie in his path ; but if, on the contrary, he is to be given to men for their good, then blessing and happiness are sure to follow. The evolving cycles of thought have revealed the sinner ; the self-seeking sinner swallowed up by the judgments of God ; the *High Priest* who is Himself the great spiritual sacrifice, and *His brethren* who became priests and Levites

through their union with Him ; the spirit of the man ruling by law ; the self-asserting rebel spirit overthrown ; and the spirit of grace set free within the soul to obey the will of God ; the soldier of Christ standing fast before the enemy, and calling men to obey the law and the testimony ; and in this cycle of thought there is seen the Blessed One going forth to give Himself for the redemption of the world. It is out of the Lord Jesus, the Merciful, that there is given to man "living bread," and the repast which He gave to mankind can never be exhausted. His table of mercy has been spread in this world for all who desire forgiveness and reconciliation with the Father, such a feast of heavenly things that men are unable to understand their true value. What is thus prefigured of the Lord Jesus and His merciful visitation to mankind, is in a sense applicable to all His followers, because it is at this point that the Spirit of Christ overshadows the poor spirit in the kingdom, and the Christ-man is called upon to go forth into a perishing world to seek and to save perishing souls. In heaven, the one cry above all others, which the Father desires to hear rising from earth is the cry for mercy, and in response to this desire of the Father's heart of love, the Son came forth to give the draught of mercy and the feast of love to those who will only seek after it. For this object, and to continue this work amongst men, all the Lord's work within them is to bring them to this spirit so that men may become Christ-like in the mission of mercy. This can hardly be compared to fruit-bearing ; it is not nearly so high an experience as that ; it is simply permitting the gracious and merciful spirit within to grow according to its nature, and to develop to the spirit and mode of action which is in conformity with the Father's will. To this every Christian is called as the very first out-going of the affections in the work of Christ ; and it is to be done as if by dipping the foot in oil, or with such gentleness that no soul may be afraid to draw near to the Lord Jesus, and yet with the firmness and intrepidity, which may be compared to "iron and brass." The work is not a pleasant one, but it was the one that the Lord chose willingly, and followed to the end. Surely those who are forgiven, made happy, and blessed by the mercy of God the Father being brought into their own souls, the least that they can do is to extend this knowledge so that others may enjoy the same rich blessings. It is easy to say that duty points out that this is the Christian's pathway in the world, but, alas, it is not *duty* that will compel the redeemed to enter such a path, for this is the ruler laying down a law of life ; whilst the spirit of love is spontaneous, living water, a compassion, pity, and love that cannot be confined to the individual soul. "Blessed are the merciful : for they shall obtain mercy."

A change comes over Leah ; there are no more children by Zilpah, but in a very strange manner there is a compact between herself and Rachel, that because she gave to Rachel her son's mandrakes, her husband would be with her. The issue is a son, and she called his name Issachar. The aged Jacob said, "Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens : and he saw that rest was good and the land that it was pleasant ; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute." Moses speaks of Issachar in an exulting tone ;

there is rejoicing in the tents ; calling of the people to the mountains ; the offering of righteous sacrifices ; and the reaping of great treasures. Leah might in her selfishness have kept her son's mandrakes ; but she had learned the lesson that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Passing by the figure, and thinking of the condition of the merciful spirit when asked to do what is unpleasant by one who may be considered as a rival, the thought which occurs is this, Reuben's mandrakes are a figure of the returning power and authority of the conscience, which is called upon to act in all the duties to which the Christian is called. What is the one grace above all others that the merciful spirit requires to be clothed with in all its services for Christ to man, but patience ? It is no easy matter to go forth into a world which is burdened with evil, and in the midst of all that is opposed to the aspirations of the soul to labour for Christ, where and when He may direct. It is indeed necessary to be strong in humility to endure the burden of being a messenger of mercy to men on the one side ; and the almost intolerable burden of wickedness and opposition of the world on the other. In such a state is it not sweet to find rest in Him, the patient One, in whom true rest can be found ? and surely in His company it has been found by His faithful ones, that instead of this being a desert for the soul it becomes a pleasant place, a true "valley of humiliation," in which even the angels of God hold communion with men. This is the day for bowing the shoulder, bearing the contradictions of sinners, and of paying a willing, that is gracious, tribute of obedience to those who would be lords over God's heritage ; but Moses discerns a new day for those who have such a spirit, and there is seen rejoicing, calling to the mountains of delight, the offering up of sacrifices of thanksgiving, and a kingdom and treasures which cannot be valued by man. The vision of Moses carries the spirit of the burden-bearer away beyond the confines of this world and its sorrows, sins, and troubles ; and instead of these there is heaven open ; all the treasures of grace and truth exposed to view, and the light of the Father's countenance shining upon the soul. "Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God."

Again Leah bears another son, and this time she says, not that her husband will be joined to her, but will dwell with her, and thus she gave him the name of Zebulon. Jacob speaks of Zebulon as dwelling at the haven of the sea ; as a shelter for ships ; and with his border toward Zidon ; whilst Moses unites Zebulon with Issachar in the blessings of rejoicing, in going out, in calling the people, in offering sacrifices, and in receiving the treasures of the world. The thoughts which arise out of these utterances, are, the state of the soul as it is purified by patience and experience ; and it is seen sitting in the sunshine of God's favour, there dwelling with the Father as His peaceful child, satisfied with His love. The condition of the soul is compared to that of a peaceful haven into which ships may enter, and be safe from the storm, the pirate, or the enemy ; and the border being toward Zidon, speaks of a shelter and safety for the hunted one, behind whom the enemy are in full pursuit. Of course it is not that there is peace and safety in self, but *in the soul in communion with Christ, who is the*

Refuge of the soul. The soul is a home, because the Father and the Brother are there through the Holy Spirit, and thus it is true in this sense, that the kingdom of heaven is within the soul. Moses reveals a change, and it is the day of peace when wars, piracy, and hunting are at an end, and the dove is seen rejoicing in its goings forth upon its messages of peace to call the outcasts to the feet of Christ. "Blessed are the peacemakers : for they shall be called the children of God."

When the troubles and strife of the family were past, then God remembered Rachel, and she also received a son ; and she said, "God hath taken away my reproach, and she called his name Joseph ; and said, the Lord shall add to me another son." The blessing uttered by Jacob upon the son of his love, strains language to express the manifold blessings which God would pour down upon his head. He is compared to a fruitful bough which draws its nourishment from a well ; the persecuted whom the archers sorely grieved and hated ; but though his enemies were strong and many, strength was given to him from the mighty God ; out of him is to come the Shepherd and the Stone of Israel, and then follows all the blessing of heaven and earth upon the head of the one who was separated from his brethren. The blessings uttered by Moses are as full, but they differ in the form of expression ; all blessings of heaven and earth ; the precious fruits brought forth by the sun and moon ; the things of the mountains and hills ; of the earth and its fulness ; and the goodwill of Him that dwelt in the bush, all these are to come upon the one who was separate from his brethren. And, after all these, there is the dominion over the earth by a great victory through Ephraim and Manasseh. The soul has at last reached the haven of peace ; the troubles in the world, within the soul, and toward God are gone to rest, and there comes the Holy Spirit in the fulness of His gracious influence bringing to remembrance God's promises. God remembers, hearkens to the cry of the soul, takes away the reproach of barrenness, gives peace, and joy, and the bright hope of a glorious hereafter. To understand the glowing metaphors which fall from the lips of Jacob when he addresses this son, it is necessary to think of Jesus Christ, the holy Son of God, for only in Him is it possible that such blessings could reside. The aged Jacob speaks of his beloved son ; but the Holy Spirit speaks of the Only Begotten Son of the Father, "full of grace and truth." But although all this can be clearly discerned, still it is also true that as with Joseph in Egypt, and with Christ in the world, so also with the followers of Christ, those who have been "persecuted for righteousness' sake," the same things may be spoken of them ; they are all Josephs in their experiences, but also Christians, that is, one with Christ in all that has been promised to, and realised by, Him. All the fulness of promises, realised experiences, and hopes of the Christian era, meet upon Joseph ; and, through Christ, upon all who, like Joseph, follow in the footsteps of their Lord and Guide. Because the soul drinks of the living water from the invisible well of God's grace, it is fruitful ; because of fruitfulness in the works of the Spirit there is persecution from the world ; but persecution, instead of being a curse, is made the means of the creature turning away from man and laying hold of the strength that is in the

mighty God ; and such a faith, method of life, and communion with God, is made the means by which the creature is filled with all the fulness of God's blessings of heaven and earth, moral and intellectual, philosophical and scientific, with the assurance of a glorious victory over all enemies. At last the birthright has come into the kingdom of a man's soul ; and it is found to rest, not upon the vacillating conscience, the moral nature which defines right and wrong, nor the intellect which seeks to separate betwixt truth and error, but upon the supreme power of God manifested toward and in man in the gracious Spirit which is full of mercy and compassion upon the sinful and rebellious. Reasoning to prove the fitness of this order of things is altogether unnecessary ; it exactly fits into man's condition, and it can be seen that unless God followed the same order there could not be any salvation for man. If, then, God so loved sinful creatures as to manifest Himself in Jesus Christ so that this thought might be expressed in a living form, and through Christ men become Christians, then this must be the issue of the whole question,—let every Christian *live Christ*, for this is incumbent upon him by the name he bears. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Rachel conceived and bore another son ; but for herself this was no cause of joy, but rather of sorrow, and thus, as she died, she named him Ben-oni, whilst the father named him Benjamin. Jacob, when blessing his sons, uttered a strange prophetic thought about the work of Benjamin as a tribe. In vision he perceives a wolf that has entered the fold devouring the prey upon which it can seize, and laying hold of the spoil upon which it can pounce in the night. This is the utterance of Rachel—"Ben-oni." The words of Moses strike a different key, for he says of Benjamin, "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him ; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders." In these words can be discerned the voice of Israel who named the child Benjamin. It is hardly necessary to point out that in history there will be found two kinds of persecution, the first being that of the world toward the Church of Christ in its infancy, and of a perverted Church, turned into a wolf, which lives upon and destroys the loved ones of the Father. In each case Rachel, or the Church, suffers, and there is the cry Ben-oni ; but as, in the gracious providence of God, Saul, the persecutor, the wolf of the Jewish Church, became the beloved of God, a Benjamin, so even from amongst persecutors there have been drawn those who have been the most faithful servants of Christ in the world. Referring this thought to the individual soul, it can be seen that there is not a change in the principles as embodied in Joseph ; in the one case there is more of passive endurance under persecution—self-sacrifice—a giving up of self patiently for the good of others ; whilst in the other there is active working for Christ in the spirit of Paul. In the world there is found trouble, reviling, and persecution ; in the Lord a safe dwelling-place for the soul ; amongst brethren false accusations, lies, and hatred ; in the Lord a cover to shelter from the burning sun that scorches the soul ; amongst men contemptuous treatment ; in the Lord there is the resting

upon His love, and being governed by His holy gracious will. This is a step beyond the experience of Joseph, but not beyond that which the Lord endured at His trial and upon the Cross; then Ben-oni and Benjamin were side by side, and it is to such an experience that there can be applied the words, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

From the thoughts suggested upon this book, it can be spiritually discerned that there is in reality a wonderful Genesis contained in it if men were only capable of seeing spiritually all that it contains. The creation of the world, in its physical and spiritual forms seems to look upon man with a changed face, and beyond the forms there are discernible eternal truths which alone can give satisfaction to the reasonable, law-abiding creatures of God. The thoughts bearing upon this conception of Genesis are well worthy of minute study, and it would seem that the more closely they are studied the greater will the light be in the souls of men, and the more they will seek to glorify the All-wise, Powerful God, the Author of all manifestations in the universe.

But there is a Genesis which is not God-given, but man produced, and this is the darkness which covers the works of God. Sin, perversion of spirit, rebellion, revolt from God, is the hideous, awful thing, or condition, which meets man face to face in the study of Genesis, and its effects are seen in a desert over which death of a spiritual kind reigns supreme. It is at this point that the universe seems to groan and travail in anguish, because the glory of the Creator's works has been taken away by the creature, and no intelligence throughout the universe can discover a remedy. The question is a momentous one, not merely for man, who has destroyed himself, but for God whose glory has been tarnished. The folly, ingratitude, and shame of man is apparent; but the fatal step having been taken, must just judgments follow the rebellious creature, and is there no means by which the sinner may be reconciled to God? Will man, lying, darkness, and hell prevail? or is there in God any power which, whilst it works in harmony with creation in its perfection, will at the same time overthrow man's sinful, rebellious career, destroy the darkness, and bring into this world a light and glory which far exceed all that the unfulfilling creatures could imagine? The answer to these questions lies in the Genesis of the grace of God, the Father, which is revealed in hidden words and forms in this book of Genesis, and it can be seen that the highest wisdom is found in this method of overthrowing that kingdom of sin, disease, death, and hell which man had called into existence in this world. In the story of Cain, Abel, Seth, and their descendants, and the punishment of men by the Flood, there is seen the infatuation of man in following sin, the awful judgments of God, and also His mercy in saving Noah and his family. The reply of God to proud, rebellious men who will not accept mercy or listen to His gracious voice is that of judgment; whilst to the gracious souls it is salvation and a new world. The new order begins a cycle of thought higher than the past, and life

is made the symbol of God's sovereignty over men. But in the visible order in which men live there is soon a departure from God—another revolt which ends in the setting up of man as sovereign upon the earth. The flesh and its lusts pervert the right use of the vine of moral government; the pride of life in its ambitious projects would so build as to reach heaven; it rebels against God; would dethrone the King of the universe, and erect the kingdom of man upon the earth. Ham is the embodiment of this idea, and the issue is that the base creature becomes a servant of servants, the slave of his own lusts.

In Shem there is a hidden Name which will bring blessing to man, and it is in the faithful Abraham that God is pleased to embody the outlines of His great kingdom which is to stand in opposition to the kingdom of sinful man, and which, in the long run, would bring about its overthrow and destruction. The life of Abraham embodies and expresses the spirit of this kingdom of grace set up by God in the world in its manifold forms, as related to God, to the sinful soul, to the rule over the spirit, to the means of gaining wisdom, the method of mercy toward men, the life of gentle endurance toward self-asserting men, the spirit that ought to animate those who seek the highest welfare of others, and also that suffering, even unto death, which is the result of setting up the Spirit of Christ, the peaceful Son of God, in opposition to the spirit of the world. In other words, it is clearly made known that the kingdom of grace is completely opposed at every point to the kingdom of man and evil, and that it is by returning to God in faith, receiving forgiveness, and walking in the footsteps of Abraham, and of Abraham's Lord, that this kingdom of evil is to be overthrown upon the earth, and that the kingdom of grace will take its place in the souls of men and amongst the nations. In the gentle Isaac there is discerned the grace of God operating in a regenerate soul, and by the light thrown into it the darkness is revealed, the need of self-sacrifice manifested, and forgiveness and the favour of God toward the soul made known. In Jacob there is seen to arise a much more complex question, and it is discerned that there is centred in this man all the ramifications of thought which have to do with the actions of a man, his responsibilities and duties, his perverse, supplanting ways, and also the method by which the creature is regenerate and made fit for the kingdom of heaven. The story of Jacob's greed and deceit in the matters of the birthright and blessing, his life in Padan-aram and return to Canaan, embody in figure the experience of man in this direction. But, as already hinted, the facts should also be found to fit into the life of man, because at the bottom they are one, the only difference being that a fuller development may be found in a man's soul and in nature, whilst the life of Jacob embodies principles or the seed-thoughts from whence the details are derived. With this thought full in view it may be worth while to glance for a moment at the life of Jacob; the relation of the sons to their father's life; and the relation of the sons toward history, or the kingdom of God amongst men.

The analogies are: As through Jacob's deceit in obtaining the blessing, there came the *change and new departure* in life; so, through

the weakness of Reuben, Joseph was sold into Egypt; both Jacob and Reuben, as God's servants, were called to obedience and righteousness, not to duplicity, self-seeking, and sin. The departure of Jacob from Beer-sheba, and his lonely condition, fit in with the retention of Simeon in Egypt, or, generally, the departure of man from God. The vision at Bethel harmonises with Levi, in whom Christ is revealed. The life in Padan-aram is the counterpart of Judah, the supplanter in the kingdom. The flight from Padan-aram and pursuit of Laban reveals the features of Dan. The night of wrestling at the brook Jabbok speaks of Naphtali. Peniel and Penuel are specially related to Gad, who seeks God's face by the law and testimony. The reconciliation of Jacob and Esau the work of Asher. The stay at Succoth in booths makes known the patient Issachar. In Shechem, and the altar to the El-elohe-Israel, there is found Zebulun and peace. In Hamor, the Shechemites, and Dinah, the judgments of God upon the wicked. In Bethel and its altar, and in the complete sanctification of the people, Joseph in whom God's blessings meet, and at Bethlehem, in the death of Rachel and birth of Benjamin, there is found Benjamin, the youngest son of the Right hand, the removal of visible forms, and the coming of the spiritual kingdom of Christ. The seed-thoughts in Jacob and his sons may be thrown forward into history, and their features discerned in the cycle of the kingdom of Israel. Thus Jacob's deceit is the cause of his departure to Padan-aram, and Reuben's duplicity and cowardliness of the children of Israel going down into Egypt. The dark night at Bethel harmonises with Simeon and with the nation of Israel in bondage under the Pharaohs. The revelation at Bethel to Jacob agrees with Levi, the revelation to Moses the Exodus from Egypt and Mount Sinai. The wilderness of Padan-aram with Judah, and the wilderness of Sinai and Paran, or the time of the rejection in the wilderness for forty years. The pursuit of Laban with Naphtali and the time of Joshua and the Judges in Canaan. The wrestling at Jabbok, Peniel and Penuel with Gad, Samuel, David, and the prophets. Reconciliation with Esau, Asher, and the coming of Christ. The tents at Succoth, Issachar and the time of the Reformation. The altar at Shechem, Zebulun, the coming of the King of Peace. Dinah, Hamor, and the Shechemites, the judgments upon the nations. Bethel, Joseph, and the revelation of the gracious will of God. Jacob at Bethlehem, Benjamin and the coming of Christ as the King with the right hand of power. This gives the great cycle of the kingdom in Jacob, but the features of a smaller cycle may be discerned in Reuben's duplicity, the departure into Egypt, the time of bondage, redemption, the wilderness, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, David, the kingdom of David, Solomon, the judgment upon Israel, and Christ in His coming as Joseph and Benjamin. It is not to be supposed that all these things can be discerned by man in the book of Genesis, but it is presumed that the seed-thoughts are to be found there, and thus the book holds, in germ, all that the Bible contains, just as a seed may be said to hold the tree of which it is the seed.

The book of Genesis has been considered in the light of the words uttered by Christ upon the Mount of Beatitudes, and the issue has

been that it is found to contain, in germ, all that is to be found in the Bible, in history, and in man. It is to be observed that when God said, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," there was embodied in the words all the spiritual meaning which has been to a very great extent hidden from men; and when He promised to fulfil the promises given unto the patriarchs, the meaning, in its fulness, embraced all the gracious thoughts which were hidden away in the figures, names, and promises, as a germ-seed contains and evolves the tree to which it shall be developed. Genesis is seen to be a complete volume in itself, in so far as the seed-thoughts of God's words are concerned; but it is also linked with other parts of the Bible in the inner cycles of thought which have to do with the world as a whole; and specially with the seed of Abraham by faith. It is linked with the issue of the history of the world in its carnal, fleshly forms; and it is also specially united in its body by the spiritual life given to Abraham, found in Isaac, operating upon, and in, Jacob, and in Joseph and his brethren.

The position at the end of Genesis, in the development of God's thoughts, as viewed in the light of the words of Christ, is that of man under the blessing of hungering after righteousness. Abraham and the poor spirit; Isaac and the mourning spirit; Israel and the meek spirit; and Joseph and the righteous spirit, have not passed away, but they are the foundations upon which the kingdom of heaven rests. There is to be a development from these principles which are to be considered as involved or inwrought into the soul; and the forward movement is seen to be one differing very widely from those that had gone before. To put the matter in a very simple form it amounts to this, that viewed personally, all changes up to and including Joseph, are subjective in their nature; that is, receiving the grace of God, permitting it to operate upon the depraved soul, so that by repentance and forgiveness there may be peace with God, seeking to rule the soul by God's laws, and endeavouring to gain a knowledge of the works and ways of God.

The Book of Exodus.

CHAPTERS I.—VI. reveal the condition of Israel at the end of a cycle of the sojourn in, and bondage under Egypt; it is that of slavery, where the world is supreme, the darkness is that of midnight, and the light of the Israelites being crushed, their lives are indeed miserable. In this awful darkness there shone one ray of hope, and that was the prophetic utterance of the beloved Joseph, "God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence."

The light of Christ's words, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy," require to be thrown across this gloomy picture, and, when this is done, then it is seen that the blessed kingdom of God and mercy toward mankind is the great figure which is covered by the darkness of the Exodus from Egypt. Egypt and Moses, Rome and Christ, run in parallel lines; only the former are seen in the visible forms, while the latter are to be studied in their spiritual realities. As with Israel in Egypt, or the civilised world under the heel of Rome, so the same man may be brought into as gross a darkness, as fearful a bondage, by sin and to the self-assertion of a perverted spirit which seeks the highest good in worldly power, pleasure, or wisdom. It ought to be forgotten that the world in its external organisations as found in its proud, self-sufficient condition, its schools of wisdom and science, its intense selfishness, self-seeking, and self-satisfaction, are the most imperious powers when they seize the soul. As the spirit of grace in a man could not set itself free in such a state, so neither could the Israelites under the Pharaohs change themselves to freedom from being bond-slaves. This would be a hopeless task, thus the power of mercy alone can bring redemption to a soul, to nations, or to the whole world.

There are three points in history where this thought of the kingdom of mercy flashes forth, and in each place under similar conditions they form the seed, the fully developed form, and the plant bearing the seed. The first will be found in Genesis xv., where Abraham, under the shadow of seeking to know God's thoughts as to the future, where the deep sleep and horror of great darkness come upon him, he was informed that his seed should be in bondage, that God would send deliverance to them and judgment upon their oppressors. The second is found in the condition of Israel under the Egyptians, their pride of power, conceit in wisdom, and glorification of themselves as greater than all peoples, and their gods as being supreme even to the God of the Hebrews; the end of this is the plagues upon

gyptians, and the Exodus from Egypt under the hand of Moses. The third time in which a similar movement takes place amongst men is when Greece in its mighty wisdom is upon the wane, and imperial Rome at the very flood tide of power; it was then that the greatest man and spiritual power appeared upon this earth, and the history of the Christian era is the issue of His life and of the establishment of His kingdom of mercy upon the earth. In Genesis the seed and promise is found; in Exodus the fully developed form; and in the Gospel according to Matthew, the tree-bearing seed in Christ, which in the Christian era is to spread abroad and multiply a thousand-fold. It may be further useful to remember that the seed-thought is found in Abraham's life at that point of development where the blessing of righteousness or wisdom and mercy meet. In the Abrahamic cycle of the nation it is found at the same point; thus, Abraham is the poor in spirit; Isaac the mournful spirit; Jacob, as Israel, the meek spirit; Joseph the righteous or wise spirit; and Moses, the next great name in the history of the Jews, the spirit of mercy. Further, in the great cycle of the world it is found that the spirit of mercy falls upon the Lord Jesus Christ; the great epoch-forming men who preceded Him being Seth, the poor spirit; Noah, the mournful spirit; Abraham, the meek spirit; Moses the righteous or wise spirit; and the Lord Jesus Christ is the Merciful One, who in the fulness of the times came forth from heaven to establish the kingdom of mercy upon this earth.

If these thoughts are clearly understood, then it will be seen that the method of studying the book of Exodus must be different from the means used in trying to lay hold of the principles laid down in the book of Genesis. In the latter there is the working in, so to speak, of God's thoughts into the soul as living seeds of grace; in the former there is required an external presentation of the kingdom in its relationship toward mankind. The seed holds in its living germ all that will be developed or grow out of it; but it does not follow that the external form will have the same configuration as the seed; it will develop to its kind, and according to the nature God has given it. In fact, it ought not to be a matter of astonishment if the seed and the full-grown tree have no visible resemblance; for this is a very common occurrence in the world of nature; but it is of the greatest importance that the fruit be the same in kind as the seed, and thus prove, to a scientific demonstration, that the seed, the tree, and the fruit-bearing seed are one. As with natural seed, so with the spiritual seed and its fruit-bearing seed in the Bible; it may be difficult to understand how it can be that the seed-thoughts uttered to Abraham agree with the work of Moses and the redemption from Egypt; but when the words, life, death, and resurrection of Christ are studied along with the history of the Christian era, then by spiritual discernment there is discovered the seed, the visible tree, the fruit, and the seed bearing fruit. The study is an objective one; or, rather, an outward development into forms from the living seed within. As with Christ the kingdom of mercy was complete in Himself, the perfect fruit-bearing seed; so with Christians there ought to be the same kind of development out of self in the sphere of mercy, seeking to lodge the seeds of the kingdom

in other souls as yet in bondage to the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The bondage in Egypt is the condition of man in his perverted state, subject to pride, the conceits of men, and their self-seeking for personal aggrandisement. It is that of the world before the flood, when wickedness abounded: it is also the spirit of Nimrod and his descendants; and of all despotic forms of governments which exalts one man, or a few men, and makes the masses of men their slaves. Here again the prefiguring cycle of the world is discerned in the book of Genesis as found in history from Adam to Noah; the seed is found in Babel; the tree in Babylon; and the fruit-bearing seed in the mystic Babylon of the Christian States and the Papacy during the Christian era. But this redemption from the power of self-conceit and self-assertion of man, carries also within it salvation from the domination of the lusts of the flesh, as well as a complete victory over all spiritual enemies; and thus there is seen to move cycles within cycles of the wonderful workings of the Lord of mercy for the deliverance of the redeemed. Standing beside the apostle Paul, as he is found in the 8th chapter of Romans, men are able to say, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" The world is seen to be lying in wickedness, the oppressor and the oppressed alike miserable, because they are in the darkness, under the shadow of the righteous judgments of God. There is a call from heaven which reaches men, bringing to them the marvellous mercy of God; and since God has been so earnest in this matter as to give Christ freely "for us all," surely men ought to listen to this call. Those who listen to the call of God become His chosen people; the proud who oppose His will are His enemies; God is with those who have the poor, inournful, and meek spirit, and He redeems them from the hands of the proud, conceited, and self-asserting sons of men. In process of time fleshly lusts war against the soul, and they threaten to make it a very Sodom in iniquity; yet from this also there is salvation. The fleshly lusts which would burn up the soul have also their cycle in Scripture. In Sodom and its destruction may be found the seed-thoughts; in the condition of Palestine in the days of the Lord upon earth, the full-grown tree; and, the fruit bearing its seed in the mystical Sodom, see Revelation xi. 8, where the witnesses of God are seen lying dead and dishonoured in its streets. Further it may be suggested that the spiritual enemies, as expressed in the word devil, may also find their cycle in the seed: viz., Jericho as taken by Joshua; in the early days of the Church, as the full-grown tree, as described in Revelation vi. 2, where Christianity is seen attacking its spiritual enemies in the Roman Empire; and in the

fruit bearing its seed, as found in Revelation xix. 11—21, where Christ is seen riding forth as King of kings. This cycle may not be so clearly shown forth in Genesis, but it can be discerned in the sin of Lot, in whom this spirit is prefigured. It ought to be remembered that this spiritual warfare is not like the fleshly lusts, or the power of the world, visible things, which have their manifestation before the coming of Christ in the flesh, but rather that this most subtle spirit of perversion in the sphere of the intellect, is in full bloom after the coming of Christ; and the fruit bearing its seed is the manifestation of modern scientific, philosophical, sceptical thought.

"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." The works of the evil spirit of this perverted world are summarily comprehended in "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;" and thus the sphere of the work of the kingdom of mercy is easily discerned, and also the issue which it proposes to reach. The condition of Israel at the opening of the Exodus was complete subjection to the world, the flesh, and the devil; and thus what may be expected in this book is that it will show how judgments upon the wicked and mercy toward the repentant will destroy that which is contrary to the will of God. It is not necessary to analyse the book to point out the facts in this direction, but a few thoughts on the leading points ought to be sufficient to show that the book fully expresses the means by which the redemption of God's people is attained. If the principles are known, then, there ought not to be any difficulty in applying them in the full study of the book of Exodus.

The work of redemption begins, in a sense, with the birth of Moses. This was the darkest hour preceding the dawn, and the power of the enemy was most keenly felt in the horrible edict that all the male children of Israel should be destroyed at their birth. Moses was hid for a short time by his mother, but at last, in a little ark of bulrushes, he was committed to the river Nile, and, through the kindness of the princess who found him, he was educated in all the wisdom of Egypt. The child drawn out of the water, separated by God for His service, fills up the first cycle of forty years of his life in the Court of the Egyptians; but at the end of that time a new spirit began to move within him, and the thought of delivering his people from the hands of the enemy filled his soul. An attempt to lead his people to understand his desire, and the object he had in view, was shown when he killed the Egyptian and protected his brother Israelite; but the consequence of this was to bring, instead of immediate relief, his own rejection by Israel and his flight into Midian. For forty years his life was that of a shepherd in the desert, and at the end of that period the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob appeared unto him in the burning bush, gave him instructions as to the deliverance of the people from Egypt, and sent him into that country, that this great work might be accomplished. The third cycle of forty years is filled up with the Exodus, the receiving of the law at Sinai, and the journeyings in the wilderness, the end being the giving up of his authority to Joshua and his departure from amongst men, up to the lonely Pisgah and to heaven.

Such are the leading facts as bearing upon Moses, although it is to be remembered that the latter portion of his life, work, and death are taken from other books; they are mentioned, however, so that a clear conception of this man and his work may be taken as briefly as possible. The thoughts which spring into view are these: One of the race of bondslaves is selected for the great work that is to be carried on; he is himself saved, drawn out of the waters which are destroying his brethren. At the end of a cycle the one saved by an ark breaks away from the proud world, and would redeem his brethren of mankind; but, instead of this, he is found in the house of Reuel—shepherd and friend of God—and becomes his servant for another cycle of forty years. Again a change takes place, and Moses stands face to face with the Incarnate Son of God, as manifested in the Burning Bush, and from that time his work is the redemption of the people under his care. The end being the resignation of his power into the hands of Joshua, the Saviour, who will lead the people into the promised land.

These thoughts indicate that the kingdom of mercy, in its recurring cycles, does not date from the days of the Exodus from Egypt, but that in reality the spirit of Moses has existed in the world during the three great cycles which have passed over men. The time from Adam to Noah may be looked upon as a prophetic cycle, containing, in the germ, all that would be manifested in the world. With Noah in the ark there is also an invisible Moses, who in spirit is set adrift on the great river of time. In the great world, in its cycle of more than 4,000 years, Moses is found, an unseen power, influencing men in their actions toward God as the great deliverer. In the cycle of the Abrahamic era Moses stands side by side with "the friend of God," and throughout this era his name is great as the deliverer and law-giver. In the Christian era Moses is still found amongst men, as in a great wilderness, deliverer, law-giver, and teacher or schoolmaster. The spirit of Moses, not the man, is thus seen to be a living power in the world, and his work has been to deliver men from the power of the world; to give laws for the guidance of those who were thus redeemed, so that their fleshly lusts might be kept under; and to lead men unto Christ by teaching them his own inability to give them rest and peace in law.

The second line of thought that may be studied with advantage, after the position and work of Moses is understood in the great work of mercy, is the signs that were given to Moses by the Lord in their meeting at the burning bush. They are three—the rod turned into a serpent, the hand made leprous when it was put into the bosom, and the water turned into blood. It will be observed that these three signs answer to the three cycles of the world, the flesh, and the devil. In the first sign, the changing of the rod into a serpent, there is the definite idea of the power and authority which God was pleased to give to man turned into an evil thing of which man is afraid; but by His command, and through His power, by the hand of Moses, it is again changed into the rod of God's power and authority. The Lord remarks upon this sign, that it is given "That they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God

of Jacob hath appeared unto thee." The sign is very comprehensive, and it is one well known amongst men; and the words of the Lord are all inclusive unto all to whom such a sign could come, because as related to the Lord God all nations are included, and in the narrower circles of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob there is a special message given to Israel. These words, "that they may believe," are not repeated again, for the simple reason that they are not required, because if men will not obey His Word, and dare to disobey the enemy, they will not understand or obey the more advanced signs given to Moses. The sign of the leprous hand reveals the fleshly lusts, the abominable things which come out of the lusting soul of man, such as evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil things come from within, and defile the man. Leprosy in the flesh is the visible sign for all these things, and it is only by the word and power of God that man can be saved from them, and by obedience to law overcome and subdue them. The third sign is the water turned into blood; this touches the spiritual and rational life, because there must be some consideration given to the signs before they can be understood, and the relationship of the signs in the change that occurs is also of great importance. God's blessed pure water is a symbol of a pure moral life, of that grace and mercy which He has poured out upon men for their redemption; and it is also a sign for the Holy Spirit of God, the power of God for sanctifying the soul. When such water is changed into blood, what can this be but despising God's grace, rejecting His beloved Son, and choosing spiritual murder and eternal separation from the Fountain of Mercy? This is an awful thought; if it is not crucifying the Lord in the flesh it is crucifying Him afresh in His spiritual members, whom such men detest and persecute. To sum up these three signs, it seems evident that they cover the whole experience of man, as in his contact with the world that is around him; in the carnal world of his own fleshly nature; and also in the spiritual field of thought where spirit meets spirit, and the devil, in hatred to Christ and His work of redemption, turns the sweet waters of purity, peace and joy, grace and mercy, into the bitter, horrible stream of hatred, war, murder, and all forms of evil which destroy men.

Having glanced briefly at the man Moses, the spirit he represents, the work he has to perform as deliverer, law-giver, and teacher or school-master; and also at the condition of mankind as a rebel serpent, a loathsome leper, and a murderer, it may be profitable to look away beyond the man and the means to be used of changing the serpent into a dove, the leper into a healthy, moral creature, and the insane murderer into a creature redeemed by God the Father, as he sits clothed in a new robe of righteousness, and animated by the spirit of love toward God and man, and to consider the Author or real Power able to accomplish such a mighty work. To do this it is necessary to consider the Lord's words as uttered from the burning bush, and also His words after the first interview of Moses and Aaron with Pharaoh, when the proud king had uttered the words, "*Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I*

let Israel go." The words of the Lord in both instances are found to run in the ascending scale of the blessings uttered upon the mount, and in harmony with them in thought; but it is necessary to consider in what way His intentions of mercy fit into the conditions which make men blessed. The words, chapter iii., 7, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt," harmonise with the poor spirit which is the beginning of spiritual life toward God. "And have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters;" these words harmonise with the state of the soul when the seed of grace has been implanted in it, and there is anguish and mourning because of sin and the thralldom under which it is passed. "For I know their sorrows," reveals the meek Son of sorrow enduring suffering in obedience to the supreme laws of mercy. "I am come down to deliver them;" this is the object of the kingdom of mercy in all its hidden power and wisdom; the supreme truth of God in righteousness which all men should desire. "To deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians;" this is the King of mercy bringing unto men redemption by His gracious work of salvation; the kingdom of the merciful for all who have obtained mercy. "To bring them up out of that land unto a good land and unto a land flowing with milk and honey;" this is the promise given to the redeemed of a return to a pure moral life in harmony with the will of God. "Unto the place of the Canaanites," &c.; at this point the enemy is seen as overcome; God's kingdom of peace, truth and righteousness is contemplated, and men have been so changed as to become the children of God.

CHAPTER VI.—XIV. In chapter vi. there is seen to be not merely a change of place, but also a change in the mode of expression. In Midian the word of the Lord is, "Come now therefore and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people, the children of Israel out of Egypt." In Egypt the spirit is changed and beyond Moses there can be discerned the Lord repeating the words, "I will," in relation to the great deliverance. In Midian there is the figurative deliverance as under the Abrahamic era; in Egypt there is a prophetic utterance of the great reality as carried out by the Lord of mercy. A comparison of these two chapters, in their language and spirit, will be profitable for those who have the leisure to follow this thought as bearing upon Moses and Christ. The Lord says, "I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage;" here the condition of the poor in spirit can be discerned; it is the covenant people, the seed of grace that is remembered, and it is upon their account that He has visited men. "I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians:" the mournful spirit requires deliverance from its burdens and comfort from the Deliverer. "I will rid you out of their bondage:" the order of this life is slavery, forced obedience to the will of man; but instead of this the Lord will give the meek spirit and power to obey the gracious laws of the kingdom of mercy. "I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments," how boundless are the mercies and judgments of the Lord: they fill the *great volumes of truth, wisdom and righteousness*. "I will take you

to Me for a people:" this is the appropriate working of the kingdom of mercy; the taking of men out of the world into His own gracious care. "I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians." It is at this point that the pure moral vision is given, and the redeemed are able to *know* that it is the Lord who is their Redeemer; in His light of truth they see God in Him, and become "pure in heart" as He is pure. "I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob;" this brings men unto the Lord, the peaceful One, who is the embodiment of all the promises given to the fathers, and in Him they become the peaceful children of God. "I will give it you for an heritage;" in other words, the kingdom of mercy has realised its hopes; "the persecuted for righteousness' sake" have found Him whom their souls desired, and in Him there is found the kingdom of heaven in all its fulness.

In considering the spirit of Moses there was discerned the visible means by which men are redeemed; by deliverance from the power of the world; through the constraint of law over the fleshly lusts; and, by teaching the ways of God which lead up to Christ, all those spiritual powers which have been subject to the devil. In the serpent, the leprous hand, and the blood turned into water there has been traced the kingdom of evil in all its perverted powers and operations, as found in the world and in man's soul. And in the Lord's words in Midian, and in Egypt, there has been traced the Invisible Redeemer of mankind who carries on His great work of mercy throughout the ages. It is now necessary to consider, as briefly as possible, the means which He uses in this world to produce the great end of bestowing upon the redeemed that heritage promised to the fathers, and which has been the great hope of the Christian era. The promise and hope being Himself in all His fulness of a perfect moral nature, and gracious power, as manifested in the flesh, in the spirit through the redeemed who are united to Him by faith; and in that glorious manifestation of truth and righteousness which has yet to be manifested. The words of God, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt," indicate that the physical plagues have a higher meaning and suggest the thought that by studying the signs the real facts as related to God and man may be discerned. It is not necessary to enter into a critical examination of the plagues, but rather, if possible, to look beyond the signs and thus realise the method of the judgments of God amongst men. Before any of the plagues came upon Egypt, Pharaoh was commanded to let the people of Israel go, but this king was utterly rebellious; he would not permit Israel to depart out of Egypt, and thus open war was proclaimed against God by Pharaoh. The king of Egypt required a sign, a miracle, and this was given by Aaron's rod being turned into a serpent; the wise men of Egypt by their sorceries did the same thing, but Aaron's rod swallowed up all their rods. The sign is a peculiar one; it does not run in the same line of thought as when it was given to Moses, but rather it is the sign to show which power, the world's or God's, possessed the greatest wisdom. Which of these *antagonists* will gain the victory, the wisdom

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or intellectual power of the proud man, or the Divine Wisdom in Jesus Christ, the Rod of God? The issue is seen to be that God's wisdom in Christ swallows up all other systems of truth, mixed with error, and thus the wisdom of God includes and surpasses all human wisdom in all its phases and manifestations. The sign speaks of Christ, the Rod of God, upon whom the power and authority of the kingdom fell; and the issue of the Christian era will be that Christ's wisdom, as found in the Bible, will include all the wisdom of all the nations on the face of the earth.

This sign of the rod goes before the judgments; it is the merciful visitation making known to men how they may be wise by serving the Lord, becoming reconciled to the Son, lest He be angry and men perish from the way of mercy. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." But the sign is rejected and then follow the three distinct cycles of three-fold judgments which are sufficient and efficient to break down all that is in Egypt and to bring about liberty in the state and freedom in serving God amongst men. The means by which the judgments of God fall upon despotic nations such as Babel, Egypt, and Rome, are by war, discontent amongst the people, and by famine and its loathsome consequences upon society. Blood, frogs, and lice, are suitable signs or figures for such terrible judgments upon nations. It will be observed that these plagues within this cycle are such as touch external things: they are outside of the body, and thus they are fitting signs for the punishments which fall upon the power known as "the world."

In the beginning of the second cycle, a new day, Moses is again instructed to wait upon Pharaoh at the riverside; again he was to demand that God's people should be set free; and, if the response was not favourable, then another series of miracles, as signs, would follow as punishments, the just judgments of God upon the wicked king and his people. The series of plagues in this cycle seem in figure to touch the body of man: there is the bite or sting of the flying creature, such as a mosquito, causing itching, swelling and pain; the murrain or disease in the flesh; and the disease breaking out into boils and blains, which would be offensive to look upon and showing that the body was far gone in corruption.

The third cycle of the plagues pass beyond external things and the bodily condition, and there is manifested a series of plagues which destroy what man lives upon, ending in the thick darkness of three days' duration. In other words there is to be spiritually discerned the awful conditions of infidelity, or spiritual perversion, which has been fully manifested in Christendom.

The thoughts which arise out of this three-fold cycle of judgments are, as has been suggested, the means by which the judgments of God come upon man during the development of the powers of the world, the flesh, and the devil, through the past centuries. In the visible world, that is the pride and conceit of nations, the avenger comes in the shape of the evil passions of men who, in their pride and hatred of God and of their brethren, go to war for the purpose of gaining their covetous, ambitious purposes. The sword has been used as an arbiter,

but it is one which turns upon the victors, and instead of bestowing what it promises, it usually turns upon the ambitious man and nation, and the day of reckoning brings more blood, defeat, discontent, demoralisation and disintegration of the people. Egypt is the symbolic head of such a history amongst nations; and the great empire of man beginning with Nebuchadnezzar, in Babyion, and ending in the downfall of Rome Pagan, is the great outcome of such principles. The second series would point toward Israel and the Jews before they were taken away into captivity; and the Christian kingdoms united with the Papacy as found existing in Europe during the period known as the Dark Ages. In these the lusts of the flesh were fully manifested, and the judgments of God fell upon men, and made manifest the immoralities and corruptions that existed in society. The third cycle being in its nature spiritual, it follows that only in a spiritual era could the complete manifestations of infidelity be fully realised. The gross idolatry of Israel and Judah during the time of the kingdom was of the flesh and its corruptions; but even in the days of the Lord, there were the manifestations of infidelity amongst the Sadducees in Judea; and the Gnostics in the Roman empire were a premonition of the horrible devil-worship which has covered the earth. The time at which this spirit broke forth with intense power was at the end of the eighteenth century, in that sudden revulsion against the Papacy and kings in France which, in a sense terminated the gross fleshly power of the Papacy. But with this new spirit there came, not merely infidelity, but all the plagues of God upon the world, the flesh, and the devil, which were again manifested at that time. Napoleon the first was the head of this new world power; which waxed and waned with sudden glory, but whose spirit has not quite left the world at this day. The sensuality and debased condition of the masses of the people fill up the second cycle in all its revolting corruptions. And Ritualism, Socialism, and Agnosticism have given men up to a spiritual darkness which has been truly appalling.

But as with Pharaoh in Egypt, where the plagues were as signs, and the seed-thoughts of later manifestations, there was no true repentance or desire to hear God and obey His commands,—so with the full manifestation in Rome Pagan and in modern empires; in Israel and Judah and Rome Papal, and amongst sensual men; amongst the Sadducees and the Gnostics, as well as modern infidelity in its many phases, there never has been any desire to turn unto God, and to do His holy will. The ascent to heaven is to be found in the blessings uttered by Christ; the descent to hell can be traced by means of the plagues which God sends upon the wicked. It is true that there is brought about disintegration amongst nations; such corruption and immorality in social life as uproot and destroy all that is pure and good; and such darkness of soul unutterable, that men, if they had a grain of moral sanity left in them, would perceive that their only hope must lie in turning to God. But this is not the case, and it can be clearly seen that men will deliberately choose the sword and war rather than God's word and moral persuasion; satiate their fleshly lusts, rather than live a holy life; and believe *the devil's lies*, with the darkness of death and hell, *rather than accept God's truth*. The picture is a terrible

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ne, but history amply proves that these are really the facts, and th
ne world, the flesh, and the devil have been, are, and will remain,
enemies of God, and also of mankind. What, then, must Israel rem
n Egypt because the world, the flesh, and the devil will not chang
By no means: there is still another plague which the Lord will bri
upon men, and then they will be so terror-stricken that they will rise
and thrust Israel out of Egypt. This plague is the killing of the fir
born of man and beast; in other words, it is the destruction of th
pride of power and conceit which would make man a god, which
the first-born after the fall. In the Passover-feast in Egypt there is
figure such a consummation, because by this visitation Egypt w
humbled, and the conceit of the wise men completely subdued; a
God, by a lamb, used as the Passover sign, saved Israel, and broug
His redeemed from under the hands of the enemy. The seed-thoug
of redemption is found in the Passover-feast, and in the killing of
first-born in Egypt; the tree, in its visible form, is found in the
Jesus Christ, Our Passover, who was sacrificed for us; and the fr
bearing seed in the downfall of the kingdom of evil in the world,
the establishment of the true spiritual kingdom of Israel which is at ha
The pursuit after the Israelites was the work of men bereft of judgmen
their own gods had given them up to destruction, and thus they w
overwhelmed in this sea of the Lord's final judgment upon the ungod

CHAPTERS XV.—XVIII. Exodus contains the great principles
the kingdom of mercy in their far-reaching cycles of thought, w
cover successive eras of time. It is the spirit of Moses that is eve
work amongst the rebellious against God as the disintegrator of wor
power; as the avenger of fleshly lusts by disease; and, as the dres
messenger carrying death and hell to infidels who deny God, and
will not serve Him. He is also to the redeemed of God their deli
from the power of the world; their law-giver, to show unto the
laws they ought to obey; and the teacher who takes the adv
pupils by the hand, and leads them into the King's presence.
the great servant of the Great God, powerful to destroy the rebe
but also wise to teach the redeemed the hidden meaning which
the signs of the serpent, the leprous hand, and the water turn
blood. But, passing away from Egypt, its bondage, sins, and s
and the death and hell to be found in it, a few thoughts upon
dition of Israel, betwixt the Red Sea and Sinai, require attent
will be enough to point out that the baptism in the Red S
equivalent for the baptism which is the spiritual portion of th
are set free from the power of the world, and who, being rede
the Lord, the Real Passover, are led to rejoice over the en
to sing the great song of victory in praise of Moses, and
of God. The song of Moses ought not to be limited to the d
from Egypt; it is a glorious cyclical utterance which touches
tions, speaking to men in glowing words of the fire of G
judgments upon the wicked; and of His mercy toward the
But, after the song of victory, then the experience of t
the work of introspection into the soul's condition, and find

great wants. Here, again, the cycle of the Lord's blessings comes in, and in a few words the relationships will be pointed out. The song of victory, after passing through the Red Sea, makes known the poor spirit which is not merely redeemed, but which possesses in the germ of grace in the soul, the kingdom of heaven. The experience at Marah, where there were wells of bitter water, is a figure of the soul, when by introspection there is an examination to find out whether the water of a man's life is such as will nourish the life of grace, and be acceptable in God's sight. The corrupt nature requires to have thrown into it not the corrupt seeds of its own sinful nature, but the seed from the tree of life, and then only can the waters be made sweet. This is an ordinance and a statute that cannot be changed; out of the corrupt only corruption can come; but when the healing power of grace changes the corruption, then the life can become pure and holy, and the fruits will be those of God's spirit. At Marah, men may read the words, "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." At Elim, with its sheltering palms, which speak of victory, and the refreshing wells which gladden the soul, it is not difficult to find the words written, "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." In the desert of Sin, where there is hunger for bread, surely men will have no difficulty in realising that man can only truly live by the word of God, and thus they are put in remembrance of Christ's words, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." At Rephidim there was no water, and the people with their cattle were like to die with thirst; here there was temptation and strife, because men did not know whether the Lord was with His people or not; but the merciful God pointed to the rock in Horeb, it was stricken, and there flowed out abundance of water. In this Massah and Meribah of the soul, the doubts and fears of men, the awful thirst for God, the living God, what can satisfy men? Only the stricken One, from whence salvation flows to the human race. In Him salvation has its source, but blessed be His Name, He would not retain the streams of His grace in Himself, and thus He looks amongst men who have had such an experience, whose flinty natures have been stricken by Moses, and from them He delights to see the same stream flowing forth amongst men. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." This is the great revolution that changes the soul; and thus in Amalek, the enemy of God, who can never be forgiven, with whom Joshua fights, whilst Moses, Aaron, and Hur, are upon the mountain with the rod of God held up, there can be seen the proud spirit of man, the devil, in the spiritual nature, fighting against Christ's spirit of grace in the soul. As Joshua overcame the enemy, and an altar was raised and named Jehovah Nissi, the Lord my banner, even so the spirit of grace takes shelter under the broad banner of the grace and love of God, and in the war against the infidel spirit there is victory. Here the words "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God," may be easily discerned, because the soldier of Christ is seen fighting against the enemy, but his eye is fixed upon the banner of the King, and upon His face. The visit of Jethro to Moses may be seen to complete

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he cycle of the blessings up to that of the peacemaker : and in the wise councils, the offering up of sacrifices by Jethro, and in the feasting and fellowship, there may be discerned the thought, " Bless are the peacemakers : for they shall be called the children of God."

CHAPTERS XIX.—XXIV., 11. Turn now toward Mount Sinai, the place where man must meet with God in judgment or in mercy. A critical analysis of these chapters will not be attempted ; but the leading thoughts embodied in the Sinaitic legislation will be considered very briefly, for the purpose of indicating the method of God's thoughts and actions toward the redeemed. It may be suggested that the revelation at Sinai is not limited to the people of Israel, but reality it follows the same cyclical order which has already been pointed out in the other divisions which have been briefly considered. The spiritual vision requires to be extended very widely when the 19th chapter is considered, because in it there seems to be given the seed-thoughts of the revelations of the will of God on man's behalf. The condition of man when he transgressed moral law was that of the wilderness of Sinai ; and the flaming sword at the gate of Eden preventing man from eating the tree of life, was another Horeb under a different figure. But passing beyond all figures, what may be spiritually discerned, is the fact that in these chapters the Lord speaks unto Moses five times ; the first is the great cycle which includes manifestation harmonising with the seed cycle from Adam to Noah ; the second agreeing with the world, or all the nations descended from Noah ; the third with the separate nation, the seed of Abraham, which agrees with the fleshly forms ; the fourth with the incarnation of the Lord upon earth ; and the fifth with the Christian era, which is in nature spiritual.

Laying hold of this conception it will be interesting to notice what way the cycles are thus expressed in the words of the Lord. In verses 3—6 the Lord calls unto Moses and gives him a charge to lead Israel ; the house of the supplanter and to the spiritual child and His first word is His Own faithfulness in protecting and bringing the people unto Himself. If they will be obedient, and keep covenant of grace, then they would be unto Him as a treasure, kingdom of priests and an holy nation," and for their encouragement the fact is made known that all the earth is the Lord's. These things having been considered by the people, they agree to do all that the Lord had spoken. The next revelation is that of the Lord coming in a thick cloud " and speaking unto Moses so that all the people might believe, and obey Moses. In other words, the Lord is not seen ; it is the cycle of the world, and only out of the great darkness covered the earth has the Lord been speaking to men ; in judgment by the plagues ; in mercy by the sacrifice and that which surrounds it. The next revelation is that of the Abrahamic Mosaic era, wherein there is sanctification by washings and observances under the hand of Moses ; when there was made the thick cloud upon the mount, the fire, and the thundering ; and, in fact, there was a revelation of the law of God, and it taught us

exceedingly the holy Lord God. In the next revelation, the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, Moses was called up unto him ; but it was to be sent down again in great haste to prevent the people breaking through into the unrevealed, where in their spiritual perversions they would be destroyed ; in this may be discerned the Incarnation of the Lord amongst men and their awful perversity. And the last is the Christian era, in which both Moses and Aaron, the law and grace, prophet and priest, are invisible to men ; whilst the priests and the people are presumptuous in sinning gainst the Lord.

It may be well to remember at this point that there is harmony, or agreement in the principles expressed as they are viewed historically, or psychologically ; that is to say, as covering the cycles of the world, the flesh, and the devil, as found in history in its recurring cycles, or in man as he is subject to either of these three powers. What the Bible specially teaches at this part may be considered as the conditions and the manifestations which are to be found in a man, or in history in its advancing cycles. Viewed in this aspect chapters xx.—xxiv., 11, give the cycle of the world-condition of the soul in which the redeemed is subject to an unwritten law and judgments, and to a method of sacrifice and of communion with God which is external in its nature. The form used in giving the Ten Commandments is worthy of notice ; it is God and the Lord God who utter the great moral principles which, although given in a negative form, really express in a marvellous manner the moral obligations under which man is placed. It is under the shadow of this perfect moral nature, and of man's perverted condition that there is seen the lightning and the mountain smoking ; and heard the thunder of God's voice and the trumpet summoning to judgment. Such a display of God's power is enough to make the strongest man tremble, and he will have no desire to draw near to God except through the Mediator. Men are seen afar off from God ; but there was One who entered the thick darkness, and until this hour His voice is resounding through the ages, in the awful words, "Eloi, eloi, lama Sabachthani." Because of His intercession, it will be observed that at verse 22 there is a change in the mode of address, and the Lord speaks unto Moses instructing him about true worship, and the method of offering up sacrifices. The judgments which are the means of punishing transgressors of moral law are such as men of all nations have possessed. The Sabbath is the Lord's ordinance for all nations. The feasts are of the kind which all nations ought to observe ; these being the feasts of unleavened bread, or sincerity and purity of the soul ; the feast of the first-fruits, or the rendering of thanks unto God for His gracious providences, and the feast of ingathering, which speaks not merely of the great harvest of the world, but also of the end of a man's life.

It is worthy of notice that it was Moses, as priest, that is a figure of Jesus Christ, the great High Priest of all nations, who offered up the sacrifice upon the altar under the hill ; there entering into covenant with Israel that they should be obedient to the laws of the Lord God. The closing scene is striking in its contrast to all that had gone before in the giving of the law ; *for the elders of Israel are seen not upon a Mount Sinai, but upon a Mount Sion ; there is perfect reconciliation,*

perfect holiness, "the God of Israel" is seen, and men eat and drink in His presence. Here the cycle ends, and it can be spiritually discerned that the world has been changed, for there is the sudden change from the introductory blessings or conditions of the kingdom of heaven, and men are seen in peace in the Lord's presence as "the children of God."

CHAPTERS XXIV., 12—XXXI. The next cycle of thought and of history is to be found here, and it can be seen at a glance that this division has specially to do with the Jews as a people. The Lord called Moses up into the mount, so that he might receive for the people "tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them. And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the Mount of God." An external law and ritual written down so as to give to men an objective picture of the Lord's thoughts is here the idea presented; added to, or rather, in God's thoughts, preceding all these, there is the perfect moral law engraven upon stone. In the first cycle Moses alone draws near to God; in the second cycle Moses and Joshua arise, the latter being the servant of the former, that is to say, grace and truth are overshadowed by the Mosaic spirit, and it is Moses not Joshua, law not grace, that rules over men. It is worthy of notice that although Moses went up on the Mount when called by the Lord, it was not until the seventh day that the Lord began to reveal to him the special things of this cycle; in other words, it was not unto Abraham that the Lord gave the visible forms of things, but unto Moses, the seventh in direct descent from Abraham, was the revelation given. The fitness of this can be understood at a glance, because Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph represent the seed-thoughts of the kingdom which are wrought into a man, whilst Moses in the great work of mercy gives visible expression to the thoughts conceived. The fathers lay the foundation of the kingdom upon the Foundation; Moses raises the superstructure and makes manifest to men the gracious laws and thoughts of God. Moses in the great cycle of the world fits into the blessings of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and thus what he represents to the world he embodies in the position he holds toward Israel. It is not necessary to enter into a detailed consideration of the visible tabernacle in its structure and fittings; the position of Aaron and his sons as priests; the sacrifices and ceremonies by which they were consecrated, and all the ritual ceremonies which relate to this visible expression of God's thoughts as hidden in the seed of grace, or as spiritually known during the Christian era through the life and death of Christ and the teaching of the Holy Spirit. It is enough that all these have a position in the development of mankind in the work of redemption, and that they have been a suitable means by which men have been taught great spiritual truths. It is worthy of observation that in the world cycle the Sabbath was remembered; here again in the flesh cycle the Sabbath is set as a sign for men, even as a perpetual covenant; and, further, it is a spiritual sign for ever, because it speaks unto men not merely of creation and the moral obligations of *the creatures*; but it also speaks in a peculiar manner of a resting on the

seventh day, and of a refreshment enjoyed through labour and subsequent rest. It may be that this refreshing speaks of the gracious work of the Lord, by the new creation which He manifested by His incarnation.

CHAPTER XXXII. In this chapter there can be traced the prophetic ending of this cycle. It was when Moses had ended his communing with the Lord at the end of the forty days and nights that there was given into his hands the emblems of a perfect moral nature, engraven into stone, so that it appeared to be, so to speak, its very nature. In other words, this is the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh, the perfect Image of God, descending from the Mount of God under the care of the great law-giver, that he might reveal unto men the perfect and holy will of God. But the scene changes, and the people of Israel are seen to be rebels and debased idolaters; they are worshippers of a golden calf, and ascribe unto it the glory of their redemption. Again, the scene is changed: the people are rejected by the Lord, and he calls them the people of Moses, and not the Israel of God; mercy they have had, and now judgment pleads for their destruction, but by the intercession of Moses they are spared. The forty days and nights of communion with God are at an end, and Moses departs to return unto the people, carrying with him the two tables of stone. Again the law-giver is joined by his minister, Joshua, and together they enter the camp; but it is to see the people of God changed into devils, and men so far departed from God that they rejoice in their shame. It was before and amidst such men that the perfect and holy One was cast down; the Jews rejected as a nation; their capital and temple destroyed, and a new order of spiritual worship set up amongst men.

It is to be observed that the cycle of Israel ran its course and terminated in the rejection of this people from being the conservators of the revealed will of the Lord, and the next cycle is one of a shorter duration, and of a special kind. The tabernacle of the congregation is removed outside the camp, the cloudy pillar descended upon it, the Lord spake face to face with Moses, and Joshua took up his abode in the tabernacle. There is a Presence and glory, and at this time it is not upon the mountain, but in the wilderness. The goodness of the Lord passed before men; the gracious Name of the Lord was proclaimed in their ears, and His mercy fully manifested. This was not a full revelation of the face of God in a spiritual sense, but the hidden ones covered by the hand of the Lord were able to discern through the flesh the grace and glory of the Lord. This cycle, it may be suggested, should not be limited to the thirty-three years of the Lord's life upon earth; but, rather, it may be discerned as stretching from the time of the rejection of Israel and Judah as kingdoms during the prophetic utterances of the prophets, who, turning from the past, speak to men of judgment and of mercy; punishment for the idolaters, but mercy for their children; the grand consummation of the cycle being the coming of the Lord in the flesh, dwelling in a human tabernacle, and by means of it making known the grace and glory of the Father. The spirit which breathes in the prophets may be discerned in this cycle; it is the day of preparation for the spiritual cycle which would in due time visit

the world. It should not be forgotten that throughout these cycles of revelation of the will of God Moses is the visible figure before men, and even when the Lord was in the tabernacle of flesh, and the cloud of glory rested upon Him, it was Moses that ruled the people, and in all things requisite for the fulfilment of the law and the prophets Jesus Christ was the servant and not the Lord over Moses. It may be difficult to realise Christ in such a position, but during His life, while setting up His great kingdom of mercy, grace, and truth, He was in reality walking under the shadow of the great Law-giver, and it was not until after the Resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost that the spiritual kingdom of mercy was fully thrown open for those who were ready to enter in. It was to the visible order of things; that is, the forms which He had Himself ordered through Moses that He was subject in the flesh, but in spirit it was not so, because in the invisible world of spiritual things Moses lay at His feet, pleading for His spiritual presence, and beseeching Him to show unto man His glory.

CHAPTERS XXXIV.—XL. Another cycle begins at this point, where Moses is commanded to hew two tables of stone like the first, to take them up into Mount Sinai, and there the Lord would write upon them the words which were upon the first stones. Moses was obedient, and at this time "the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord." And in that proclamation there may be spiritually discerned the spirit of the Christian era in its fulness of mercy and grace, goodness and truth, patience and long suffering, toward men. It was when this revelation was fully given that the servant realised the glory of the Master, "and Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped." Still though the spiritual glory is manifested, the work of the servant is not ended, and thus he pleads for the people committed to his care that the Lord might take them for his heritage. In answer to this prayer the Lord said, "Behold, I make a covenant; before all *thy* people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the Lord; for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee." In these words pregnant with judgment and mercy, the Lord hides what the manifestations shall be; but if this verse is taken as representing the secret thought of the Revelation which closes the Bible, there is no difficulty in understanding the terrible things which are meant. Again, the promise of victory over enemies is given; a warning is also given against entering into covenant relationships with the enemies of the Lord; war is to be declared against all their spiritual idolatries; only the Jealous One is to be worshipped, who cannot permit any duplicity or spiritual perversions; and the feasts of sincerity and of a poor spirit of perfect consecration to the Lord, the Sabbath rest, the first-fruits of thanksgiving, and the complete sanctification of body, soul, and spirit as the harvest of life are enumerated. In this spirit the Christian era is a manifestation of the gracious will of the Lord, and all these things have been written in the New Testament so that men might read and understand them. Jesus Christ is the Covenant of God with men, and

Him every blessing that God can bestow is treasured up for the Israel of God. It was during this period, at the end of it, that the Lord wrote upon the tables of stone the ten commandments; in other words, at the end of the cycle, the light of God's holy moral law is to be known, written upon the tablets of the soul. But this is not all, a change is seen to come upon the countenance of the law-giver who has been the means of restoring unto men the moral law of God. He has been so near to the Lord, been drinking in so much of the Spirit of the Master, that there flashes forth from his face a reflection of that which he had been privileged to see. He is no longer Moses, the one who was drawn out of a rebellious world which was rushing onward like a great river to destruction, but he brings to the redeemed the tree of life out of the Paradise of God, and the light of grace and truth shine with a halo of glory around his face. When he came down from the mount, and the people saw his shining face, they were afraid to go near unto him; but the law-giver graciously called them unto him, and he talked with them. Of what nature was his discourse at that time? it is said that it was "all that the Lord had spoken with him in Mount Sinai; and till Moses had done speaking with them he put a veil on his face." The words have been sounding in men's ears throughout these many generations, and the veil has covered the prophet's face; but it would seem that the veil is soon to be laid aside, the law-giver will bid farewell to his followers and pupils, and the light of grace and truth will descend upon men. The servant of God waits with the veil upon his face serving God and men, but his next step is the unveiling and going to see the Master's face, and to speak with Him. It is true that the disciple of the Lord is greater than Moses, as a child is more highly favoured than a servant; it is sweet to think of the children's portion at the Father's table, and the sweet communion at the marriage feast; but what a servant is Moses, how faithful in all his labours, and how self-sacrificing for the sake of those who are to become children. First the spirit of the servant, then the privilege of the child; this is the order in the kingdom of heaven. The spirit of Moses is that of the past ages of humble service for the good of others; and be it observed that the Lord in the flesh sought no higher a place than to be a servant in a sense subject to Moses, and like Joshua his minister. What is the issue of all this, but the fact that the great deliverer, law-giver, and teacher, when he enters in "to speak with Him," it will be no longer as the servant, but as a son who has tasted the Spirit of the Father and the Son; whose being is saturated with grace and truth, the very Spirit of Christ, and thus as a son he also takes his position amongst the Sons of God. The development of the Christian life, even in the Christian era, is not as some would suppose, the new birth, and then the palace and the feast; there is evolution, and it is no small honour for a man to be permitted, like Moses and Jesus, to be faithful servants. As yet the veil of the flesh hides the King and the palace, the Father and the Son, but when the flesh is laid aside, or is transfigured, then there is the change of relationship, the servant departs to speak with Him, and in the spiritual vision and kingdom the sonship and the heritage are obtained.

There is another *cycle of thought* found in this portion of Exodus,

and it covers the period during which the people were so changed they were found to be not selfish in taking all that they can magnify themselves, but generous and self-sacrificing in giving they possessed for the service of the Lord. The desires and powers of men and women are sanctified, and there is a spirit of emulation giving and working for the glory of the Lord. So willing were they to work, and generous in their gifts, that Moses had to issue a proclamation to restrain the people from bringing and giving. The work of the tabernacle, the house of the Lord used in the wilderness, and when it was completely finished and raised up. When finished, a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." Into this tent Moses was not able to enter, for the glory of the Lord took possession of it; the spiritual envelope was visible, and by it the children of Israel were aided in their journey. When shall this cycle find its spiritual fulfilment? Is the day at hand when men will revolt from their present methods of thought and action, and in joy, peace, and brotherly union and communion work for the purpose of building up the Lord's house upon the mountains? The day is at hand, and beyond the thick cloud that envelops the mount of God there can be seen the sweet sunshine of His favour. His purpose of blessing falling abundantly on the sons of men. The men who, like Moses, have toiled as servants in the days of darkness, see that glorious light that shall burst upon mankind, and upon that magnificent temple which shall be established upon the top of the mountains? They shall see it, because at that day the forms of things will be past, and in spirit those who are on both sides of the great river will worship God in spirit and in truth. Thank God for His faithful servant Moses, who brings men unto such a new condition; but unspeakable thanks are due unto Him who, by His great mercy, removed the vail, to reveal it from the top to the bottom of heaven to earth, from the spiritual to the visible, so that men may become spiritual and enter into fellowship with Himself and with the holy spirits throughout creation. Moses is the form which is shown before men from the bondage and slavery of the world on which men are called into the King's presence as spiritual princes beyond the visible Moses there is to be discerned the Lord, the Righteousness, who is gradually in and from heaven dispelling the thick cloud of sin and sorrow, and causing blessings to fall upon

The Book of Leviticus.

PTERS I.—VI., 8. The sphere of thought in this book is revelation; and the opening verse makes the Lord known as speaking unto us "out of the tabernacle of the congregation." The Lord is invisible; therefore, out of the holy place wherein He resides, in symbol, He makes known His will as to the means whereby men can draw near to God, be accepted by Him, and reconciliation effected.

The way of access to God is by the *burnt-offering*, that is, above all things, by the perfect self-sacrifice of Christ as the real sacrifice for whom is acceptable to God as the Substitute, upon whom by faith a man can lay his hand. By Christ there is atonement and reconciliation, not only through His sacrifice can purity of the soul be attained. Subjectively, the sacrifice is Christ; subjectively, the sinner being reconciled to God, and a desire for holiness of life having been inspired, there must be conformity in thought, word, and action in the Spirit of God, or self sacrifice for the good of others. The Lord alone is the sacrifice acceptable to God; the creatures who are redeemed, being redeemed by Him in all things, seek to imitate His life to the extent of their ability.

The sinner reconciled to the Father through Christ requires to offer to the Lord what is named a *meat-offering*. In this sacrifice there are embodied the thoughts of a grateful, thankful soul, sincerity of thought, purity in behaviour, consecration of the being to the will of the Lord, implicit trust in the faithfulness of the Lord to the covenant of His grace, and an earnest desire to make manifest that the soul is in a gracious state, thus reflecting the abundant grace that has been received.

Such a state of the soul brings the redeemed one very near to the Lord; the condition being that generally known as being justified by faith; and the fitness of the *peace-offering* is seen to be most appropriate; and thus can peace be obtained, "through our Lord Jesus Christ." Strange figures in this offering show forth in a marked manner the going of the affections in holy sincerity toward God and man in noble service; and in the words "All the fat is the Lord's," there may be discerned this very important thought, that God alone is the fountain from whence compassion flows; and it is His compassion that flows through His redeemed ones for the peace, joy, and consolation of others.

These three offerings embody the means of atonement, reconciliation, and abiding peace, as provided by God, the responsive action of man

in grateful thanks, by and in Christ, who is our peace, and in man in a life conformed to the life of Christ. It is to be observed that leaven and honey are not to be offered in sacrifice; in other words, there must not be deceit, or fulsome flattery toward God or man in any service. Also, it is stated, men are not to eat fat or blood, and this is to be a perpetual statute. Does not this mean that men are to remember that God alone is the fountain of mercy, of all spiritual blessings, and of the holiest affections of the soul? If men say that they can give to others peace, joy, and holiness, or the blessed assurance of forgiveness of sin, then they rob God of the glory of His greatest gift to men; and, should they eat blood, this would be to despise the life that God has given for the redemption of the world, and thus to disgrace themselves and dishonour God. It is well for men to remember these important ideas, so that they may be very careful in their thoughts, words, and actions, in keeping down the self-seeking, presumptuous spirit, in giving all the glory of redemption to God, and in being just and gracious toward their fellow-men.

The thought which arises when the *sin-offering* is considered, is that of the children of God, the redeemed and accepted, who have had an assurance of the love of God, and who have had peace and joy in believing, falling away into sin, either by omitting to do what is required, or committing sins which are forbidden. The words of the Apostle John should be remembered, in connection with this offering; they are, "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In considering this sin-offering it is seen that all are included within its range: the priest, who ministers in holy things, the whole congregation of the people, a ruler, and one of the common people. In each case the idea of personal substitution is carried out; for the priest lays his hand upon his substitute; the elders of the people, as their representatives, on the substitute chosen for the nation; the ruler on his substitute; and the private individual on his substitute. Sin is here seen to be a very serious thing, because it breaks up the communion and friendship existing betwixt God and His redeemed, accepted servants, and there is no peace or amity until through sacrifice the sin is taken away. It may be that if the thoughts embodied in the burnt-offering and sin-offering are considered, in the light of the 9th chapter of Hebrews, and of spiritual facts, a new light will be thrown upon these sacrifices. The burnt-offering is the alpha of redemption, the point to which all men must come who desire forgiveness of sin, and reconciliation with God. This altar of sacrifice is in the outer court of the world; in other words, it is the Lamb of God, a visible Man, hanging on the accursed tree, obedient unto death, a substitute for the sinner. But the sin-offering is something different: it speaks of a sinner reconciled to God who has fallen into sin again; one for whom Jesus died in the flesh, but who, because He possesses spiritual life, and because he is spiritual, requires a spiritual sacrifice.

It is true that the figure does not extend to the spiritual significance of the Christian era, but as related to the priests, and to the whole congregation, it is within the holy place ; that is to say, within the fleshly forms of the Mosaic ritual and ceremony. The sin-offering has specially to do with representative institutions : thus the sin-offering for a priest, who is God's representative, is the same as that to be used for all the people by their representatives. In both instances there is a young bullock without blemish selected, there is confession of sin upon its head ; it is killed ; then the priest, taking the bullock's blood, enters the holy place, with his finger sprinkles the blood seven times before the veil of the sanctuary ; some of the blood is placed upon the horns of the altar of incense, and the remainder of it is poured out at the bottom of the altar of burnt-offering. The fat is taken out of the bullock, also the kidneys and fat upon them, and these are burnt upon the altar of burnt-offering ; but the body of the bullock is taken outside the camp, and there burnt with fire. These are important figures as bearing upon those who are initiated into the service of God, and who, as His representatives among men, require to be separate from sin, not merely in the outward life, seen and known to the world, but specially as seen by God, whose servants they are. The sacrifice is the Lord Jesus Christ, the One in whom no blemish can be found ; His blood cleanseth from sins of omission or commission, as related to His chosen servants ; but in their case it is necessary that the precious blood should speak in front of the mercy-seat with a perfect utterance as to stonement for sin ; that the prayers offered by His servants should be consecrated by His blood of obedience unto death without any sin ; that the innermost and sweetest affections of the soul should be offered up to God ; and that the fleshly lusts which war against the soul should be completely burnt up, so that a pure spiritual life might be attained. If the thoughts are turned toward Calvary, the two-fold meaning of Jesus Christ's death, as burnt-offering and sin-offering, will be seen ; amongst the passers by, and the loiterers about the cross, there were those who said, whilst they wagged their heads, "Ah, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself, and come down from the cross." There were also to be seen the chief priests mocking, saying, "He saved others ; Himself He cannot save. Let Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe." In both cases people and priests are far away from God ; but the culpability, the heinousness of their sins differ widely ; these who wag their heads and laugh at the pretensions of Christ, are in the outer court, looking upon the altar of burnt-offering, but they know not what it means ; the chief priests and elders are standing beside the sin-offering, and in their fatal infatuation, they ask the anointed Priest and King of Israel to do that which would be the very means of irretrievably destroying themselves. It was at this time that the burnt-offering was laid upon the altar of the world ; then also through the sin-offering there was laid the perfect atoning blood before the veil : and, when these things were done, darkness covered the earth, the spiritual conflict began, which terminated in the rent veil, and *the disclosure* of the sanctuary of

God. In this sin-offering men ought to learn, especially Christians, that the servants of God in Church and State require a substitute for their public life with its sins against God; and that Christ only is the substitute acceptable by Him. Upon all men who have authority, in a family, or personally, there comes responsibility, and every failure is sin, the transgression not merely of law, but of a trust conferred. Who is sufficient for such things? Truly, no sinful son of Adam; and thus it is important that the servants of God should constantly realise all that Christ is to them as a sin-offering.

Passing from the sin-offering, there are also the *trespass-offerings*, which require a moment's consideration. The sins which require a trespass-offering are of three kinds: these being personal, as found in sins of omission and commission; as relating to the holy things of God; and as bearing upon duties and relations toward men. As related to self there are sins of perception, conception, and volition; as related to God, sins of omission through ignorance, and of commission or transgression of law unwillingly; and as related to men in lying and deceit, in hiding of goods, and swearing falsely. In each instance there is a trespass-offering of blood, amendment is to be made to the party wronged, and there is to be restitution with interest. In the sin-offering there may be specially traced the relations toward God and Christ in a representative capacity, showing that only in Him can the sinner and transgressor draw near to God in peace; whilst in the trespass-offering the thought of Christ being still kept in the forefront as the only sacrifice for sin before God, there are also the duties which are incumbent upon man to use every possible means to avoid transgression of law, and at the same time to make amends and full restitution of any evil committed. The sin-offering is the perfect, complete atonement for sins of ignorance; the trespass-offering, covered by the sin-offering and burnt-offering, represents the sinner doing his part in that which is in harmony with the will of God in Christ. If a man confess his sins, then He is faithful and just to pardon through the atonement, but there must be obedience toward God in the future, and full restitution made, and forgiveness received from man. In other words, there is the seeking after the life which is harmony in the soul; of union and communion with God in Christ; and of agreement and full sympathy with mankind. If there are trespasses or transgressions in any of these spheres of thought, word and action, there must be want of harmony; want of harmony is sin; sin can only be cancelled by a perfect sacrifice. Christ is that perfect sacrifice, who has changed the sinful order of things, and men find that it is possible for them to return into harmony with their own inner beings, at-one-ment with God, and friendship with all men.

CHAPTERS VI.. 8—VII. The institution of the sacrifices, in their order, was given to Moses; that is to say, they are to teach men the means, and the order of approaching God; they hold within their fleshly forms definite spiritual truths, which spiritual men who would look beyond the form and letter might apprehend. At this point there is a change in the the aspect of revelation, and the prophet is instructed to

teach the priests what they are to understand about the sacrifices, and the laws concerning them ; and what their duties will be in respect to these ordinances. The priests are to look upon these offerings as objective realities, and they are to rule their conduct by obedience to the laws of the Lord. They are the Lord's servants, ministering at the altar according to His instructions ; and they are not to set themselves up as law-givers, or self-assertors in the Lord's house. The altar of burnt-offering is a standing monument that must be always kept before men throughout the long dark night of sin ; the fire must be kept burning on it continually ; and the priests who minister at the altar are to be holy and consecrated to the service of the Lord. Through this burnt-offering men will be reconciled to God, and their sins forgiven ; and through it they will desire to draw near with grateful hearts to God, and render unto Him an offering of all that is gracious in themselves ; but in such an offering there must be perfect sincerity and purity of motive, so that it may be acceptable to the Lord. In this meat-offering of the people the priests of the Lord have a share ; in other words, they are thankful and rejoice in the work of grace that has been manifested in gracious souls. But in the priests' meat-offering no priest or man must be partaker ; it is to be wholly burnt, and not eaten, there must be complete self-sacrifice to the Lord, and no keeping back of any affection from His service, or the attributing of praise and thanks to any except the Lord. The sin-offering is seen to have a double meaning ; the part to be wholly burnt is related to the priests or to the whole of the people, thus teaching the position of Christ as man's representative before God, and the heavy responsibilities which rest upon public representative men ; whilst the sin-offering of a ruler or a private individual takes a place side by side with the trespass-offering. In the trespass-offering there is seen the subjective condition of the soul in its union with Christ, and the position of the soul when forgiven, as offering up the affections of the soul in the Lord's service. The peace-offering has changed its place in order of time, but the laws of holiness, sincerity, and thanksgiving are to be observed, also, the important fact that there is to be no delay in eating this offering. The important question of peace in the soul, reconciliation with God and with man is not to be put aside until a future time ; this day, and now, is God's accepted time of salvation, and they err greatly who think that peace, God's peace, and the peace of the world is to wait for their time. Another important thought relating to the peace-offering is that the unclean are not to touch it ; the feast of peace is for the reconciled, the holy, who are accepted by God ; it is union and communion in love ; therefore it is clear that the unholy cut themselves off from spiritual communion by the uncleanness or the sinful condition of their souls.

In addition to these sacrifices, the prohibition of the eating of fat and of blood is extended to all the children of Israel ; in other words, the inward and most sacred thoughts are to be given unto the Lord ; and life, the life of the soul, is to be a sacred sign, not to be reasoned about, but given up to God in service for the good of men. The figures teach that *soul and body, the life with all its desires and*

affections, should be given up to the Lord, and that as holy, sincere, and loving servants, men should minister in all things unto Him.

CHAPTER VIII. Two thoughts have been considered ; these being the *means* of access to God by grace, which makes known by what method there is forgiveness of sin, justification by faith, and peace with God ; and the duties of Christ's servants, as priests, as covered by the Great High Priest for the redemption of the world. In this chapter there is a new departure ; the means and duties pass into the background, and the *man* upon whom the duties will rest is placed in the forefront. That Aaron is a figure of the great Reality must be at once granted ; but at the same time it can be discerned that passing beyond Aaron and the Lord Jesus Christ there can be seen a spiritual priesthood which harmonises with the figure here represented. Aaron is the visible form, Jesus Christ is the great Reality, and the redeemed are the spiritual manifestation as united in the Lord, their Head. What Aaron is in figure, that the Lord Jesus Christ is in reality as the Head of a nation of priests, and every Christian is in Christ a spiritual priest, offering spiritual sacrifices unto God through Him.

The first thought is the very important one, that God is pleased to choose the priest and all relating to his work. Levi, as has already been pointed out, is the chosen of God in whom His grace is treasured up for men ; and the priests who minister at the altar, and have charge of all the sacred things, are, in figure, the means by which God's grace is bestowed upon men. The first-born of Israel, in figure, is Levi, not Reuben or Simeon ; and it is given to this first-born to be the lowly minister of the grace of God to sinful men. The chosen one is dedicated to this work ; and it is necessary that before entering upon it, suitable means should be used to render him fit for the position he is to occupy amongst his brethren. In Aaron's case, and that of his sons, there is of necessity a sin-offering, a burnt-offering, and a consecration offering ; such a priest is unfit to minister in his own condition of sinfulness, and thus the Substitute, the Perfect One, must be brought in to shelter and cover the imperfect. But is it not necessary at the outset to lay hold of this fact, that in all these figures the spiritual reality is to be found in Christ ; and, on the other hand, Christ is Himself to be found in them, that is to say, the true Levi, who brings the grace of God to man is Jesus Christ ; the real High Priest is the Anointed One ; and Jesus Christ incorporates Himself in humanity, thus placing Himself under all forms and ceremonies, that He may identify Himself with His brethren. It ought to be remembered that Levi is the first-born, or the first manifestation of grace from God to men, and thus the Lord Jesus in this relationship ought to be considered as the Servant come to minister, and not to be ministered to. The Head and the members are one ; God will not look on Aaron and Christ in him, but the Head is all in all, and in Him there is found Aaron and all true priests figurative and spiritual. At this point of spiritual development there is seen the hidden seed of grace brought into the soul ; the Seed of grace is numbered with the graceless, and the Holy is incarnate into, and identified with, the unholy. But this thought ought also to

be kept in view, that Levi, or the spirit of grace, is in reality the head of the cycle, and thus, in this spirit, there will be manifested, in figure, the complete cycle of the spirit from its inception unto the full spiritual development. This conception of Levi, that is, of Christ, should be pondered upon at this point, because it will be found to open up a magnificent view of this book as related to all the redeemed. If the subjects already considered are looked upon from this standpoint, then it will be observed that the means of access by sacrifice unto God covers the whole cycle; and that the duties of the ministers of Christ fulfil the same end. Further, the change of order in the means of access to God, and the order of duties are not without a definite meaning. The first, by the burnt-offering, meat-offering, and peace-offering shows all that is necessary for man to be at peace with God, and then follows the means by which the redeemed who sin in ignorance, can receive forgiveness and reconciliation; the second brings in all that is requisite for man to do, and ends with the peace-offering, and it is not stretching the figures too far to suggest that these offerings may be found to be in harmony with the blessings uttered by Christ upon the mount.

Laying hold of this idea, there follows of necessity this thought, that the first-born from amongst men requires to be redeemed, chosen, and dedicated to God; but these thoughts touch also upon the objective work of Christ in that higher field of thought into which sinful men are not capable of entering. Men require a sacrifice, so that sin may be put away, and that they may be brought near to God. What is this sacrifice? The grace of God, as expressed in and by Jesus Christ in His obedience to death; it was through the Eternal Spirit that He offered Himself, a spotless and a perfect offering. Priest and Sacrifice, Object and Subject; He is manifested as at once giving a new life of grace to man, and of taking away by His death that which has been the cause of man's death. Is there something that is incomprehensible here? It ought to be freely granted that the reason of man cannot touch the problem, but it is seen to be *the* necessity for man's redemption. It is not a new problem, but, as can be seen, it is the one presented in Eden, and which arises at every point where men ask about the means of reconciliation with God. An answer can be found to the question in these words, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." What then? is God in Christ to be relied upon, as giving a true, right, and perfect expression in reply to this anxious thought of man's? Assuredly He is, and it must be taken for granted that the question, *how*, as related to God and Christ, is not one that should trouble men. The fact is unquestionable that Jesus Christ is the perfect manifestation of the moral will of God; that He is also the perfect Gracious One, who endured all that wicked men could do to Him; and, that, in spirit, He was separated from God, and endured a spiritual death which passes man's conception. These things being true, though men may not be able to reason *how these things are the means of reconciliation*

with God, they ought without any delay to accept the great Gift of God's love, believe in Christ, obey His word, and the issue must be everlasting life.

These thoughts may stagger unbelievers who would have all things in heaven and earth to be measurable by their intellectual powers ; but believers who love and obey can have no delight in such problems. They know and are fully persuaded that Jesus Christ is the Son of God ; but that they should ever be able to apprehend and comprehend Him in this direction, ought never for a moment to be entertained. This is a dizzy precipice for a man to stand upon, and unless His Own hand give support the fall would be an awful one. Thank God, the Deity is veiled in a Man, a gracious Brother, and thus there is joy, peace, and comfort in drawing near to Him, as a High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but who, although tempted as a man, is yet without sin. The High Priest of humanity, for that is really the aspect of the question, is to be seen as incorporated into mankind. He is the Lord from heaven, a Spiritual Seed to bring about a spiritual change upon that which is identified with Himself. The Lord is to be seen in the presence of the whole congregation ; He is One with them ; but as He has identified Himself with the unclean, it is necessary that there should be a washing, that is regeneration, a new clean life in the body before it is set apart for sacred service. The clothing, the breastplate, the Urim and Thummim, the mitre and its plate, express the holy, gracious, perfectly righteous and wise character of the Lord ; and all that covers Him covers those who are found in Him. The oil for anointing bespeaks the unction of the Holy Spirit. "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God : for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." It is in the glorious and beautiful garments of wisdom, holiness, justice, truth, and grace, that the Lord, the High Priest, appears before men ; but upon the priests, after their regeneration, there is placed a coat, a girdle, and a bonnet ; in other words, they are covered with His righteousness ; girt about with truth, and have as a covering for their heads "the hope of salvation." There are many priests who offer sacrifices so clothed, but there can only be one High Priest who is perfectly wise, holy, just, good, and gracious.

The relation of Moses to the Aaronic visible priesthood is that of the prophetic servant toward the priestly servant. Grace, essential grace exists in neither of them, they are the servants through whom the spiritual truth will be manifested. To put the matter in another form, Moses represents the moral nature in man turned to be the servant of God, and during the time of training, grace is required to be subject to moral law within its own sphere. Or to put the same thought in another form, the moral nature of man is the seat of the affections ; by the affections man can be influenced for his salvation ; the seed of grace is placed in this portion of his being, and if it is nourished and protected by the moral nature, it follows that the gracious nature will live and act in harmony with moral law. Looking at the subject from this stand-point it will be seen that the actions of Moses in connection with the sin-offering are all full of meaning. He is the minister of God in man's moral nature which has been depraved ; he

with an altar and sacrifice into it, and with the blood of another tifies every part; and having purified and sanctified the us, then they are ready to offer unto God the holiest, most and richest treasures of the heart or affections. But the body , the perverted, unholy, sinful lusts and affections are to be p with fire outside the camp; the unholy is condemned; and, ; not to be forgotten that upon the Holy One was laid the of us all.

ext ceremony in the consecration of priests after regeneration, othed, the heart or moral nature changed or sanctified into an l the body of sin burnt up, is the burnt-offering which speaks pirit of the priest, the poor spirit which is in all things subject ill of God. Men cannot manifest such a spirit in all its lowli d thus they lay their hands on *the* Lamb of God, and by doing is not merely substitution but reciprocation of spirit, and as r Priest is, so the priests desire to become. There is a whole fering; complete self-sacrifice; purifying of the moral nature, he actions, and such a spirit is acceptable in the sight of God. remony of the sacrifice of the ram of consecration, gives a grand on of the condition and the service of the Lord and His priests; le body is seen to be consecrated for service, the moral nature is i with the redeeming love and life of Christ; the affections strength possessed are given up in self-sacrifice for the good of and viewed before God as an offering unto Him; and then the ature or power as represented by Moses, receives the breast, to say, the spirit of consolation and of sweet comfort in God. usecration of the whole being, body, soul, and spirit, unto God, oing of the affections, and the reception of divine consolation fort is followed by the sprinkling with anointing oil and blood e garments; in other words, they are the appointed ministers of rarry unto men the influences of His gracious spirit, and that cious life of grace in Jesus Christ, which are for the regeneration ation of the world.

ervants of God, the High Priest and the priests, are consecrated, set apart for their mission of grace and mercy to lost men. e is to be no hurry in this work; it is a long one, men require ed for their duties; and thus instruction is given as to the food a they must partake. They have put their hand to the plough, e cannot be any turning back. They must learn how to live d in Christ, in whose fleshly form was enshrined the light of d; and upon His Holy Word, which is the consecrated bread r the soul's nourishment. To leave these and to seek other food is to desire that which is poisonous and will produce men ought now to understand that the perfect Moral Jesus meat indeed; and the ineffable gracious Christ is drink indeed; e perfect spiritual Prophet, Priest, and King, for the sinful sons

THE IX. reveals the consummation of the consecration of the upon the eighth day, in the sacrifices of sin-offering, and burnt-

offering for the priests, offered by themselves for themselves ; and in a sin-offering, burnt-offering, peace-offering, and meat-offering mingled with oil on the part of the people. These things speak of the new relationship under which men are placed, because they are taught that in the future they are to look away from the prophet who has offered sacrifices, and to look for, and to, a Priest, who by a sacrifice is to bring salvation to men. From that time, in Israel, priest and sacrifice, sin and atonement, enmity to God and reconciliation by sacrifice to peace are to be very important thoughts. To the rulers in the state men will look as to their moral relationships with men, but unto the priests for peace with God. In the ceremony of that day the priests were taught their own responsible position as related to God and men ; also, their unfitness personally for such a work by the sacrifice of the sin-offering ; and it is only in the lowly, poor spirit, in which they were called to be servants of God the Lord, they had to act toward men in the burnt-offerings. The people were taught their responsibilities and duties, the spirit in which they should live, the peace that would rest upon them if they cherished such a spirit and lived in harmony with it and the glad thankfulness of their lives in spiritual communion with God. The ceremony being at an end, the high priest raised his hand and blessed the people ; then Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle, came out again and blessed them ; and it was at this conjunction of the moral nature and the spirit of grace, oneness of thought in the soul, perfect harmony with the will of God, that the glory of the Lord appeared to the people ; for the fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt-offering and the fat. The people in their Head were accepted by God the Righteous ; and there was throughout the whole congregation great joy, adoration, and the spirit of humility.

CHAPTER X. There is seen to take place in this chapter a sudden change, a revulsion of all that had gone before. The sin-offering and burnt-offering had been offered in vain for Nadab and Abihu, for in their pride and presumption they offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had commanded them not to offer ; the consequence being that the fire from the Lord struck them and they died. It is not an easy matter for a man, a class of men, or a nation to receive the rich blessings of the Lord, and at the same time to retain the lowly and poor spirit which is to be the spirit of their life. How good, generous, and gracious the Father had been to them in choosing them to be ministers of His grace can be seen at a glance ; how wicked they were in rebelling against God and disobeying the laws of the Lord can hardly be understood. This sin of offering strange or common fire, instead of the hallowed fire that came from the Lord, is not, it is to be feared, so unusual a thing amongst the servants of God ; it is in reality taking their own selfish, deceitful ways, instead of God's ways, placing man's thoughts above God's Word ; and if men draw near to God with such an offering, is it strange that instant punishment falls upon the offenders ? Men were struck with astonishment when Nadab and Abihu were found blackened corpses before the altar, or when Ananias and Sapphira fell down dead in the presence of God ; but be it remembered,

y considered, that these are the external figures, whilst the y is the moral nature, seared as if with fire, and the con- to believe a lie instead of the truth. This is an awful how much more terrible the thought of what the servants have done during the past ages. Nadab and Abihu are ministers of grace upon whom this awful judgment has read the allegory aright men are required to enlarge their ion and to contemplate to some extent the *spirit* of the God throughout the world, in Israel and Judah and in the urch. There have been many Eleazars and Ithamars, to God for his restraining grace, but alas! for the Nadabs who have been found amongst men. It is the spirit, the obedient spirit that is everything, as the motive power in a the Lord; if this is not possessed then there is nothing o God the Lord.

esson given unto men for all ages to teach them the iniquity . presumption; and it ought to be remembered that whether itoxicated with drink or not, they were in reality intoxicated l spirit of self-conceit and self-assertion, and this is worse oxication which debases the body and depraves the soul. ating cup is a fitting figure for such a spirit in man, because ct is generally that of elevation, pride in self, independence man, and the end is the ruined temple upon which the

How shall the ministering servants of the Lord act when ment falls upon wicked men? They are to remember that consecrated of the Lord; that through them the grace of o the people; and thus it is not for them to mourn because ts, but in trembling to remember their sanctification and to race may be vouchsafed to the people. If the streams of isoned or cut off from the Fountain, then by what means eam flow? By sinful men, the spiritual priests of God, for conduit pipes of mercy, not of judgment. Even though r people, which are most precious, are taken away suddenly, alled to speak of the Lord's mercy, and permit others to weep because of judgment. The Lord will be sanctified in them lim; and in the presence of all people His Name will be here is a blessed sanctification of God by grace in the ere is also a terrible sanctification through judgment; but rey and judgment, God is glorified.

l law of the Lord is stringent in all its requirements; upon id under no consideration ought duty to be left undone. the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the labour of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no talls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my

Thus writes Habakkuk, when the judgments of God made rt; and to Aaron, upon that awful day, the same experience thunder-clap from heaven: His cup of blessing had been rim, and in an instant it was spilt upon the ground, and ft was changed into a *Marah*. What then, shall the moral

law command obedience and demand the voice of thanks and unto God, when the soul is become as a broken reed? The law demands such a service as right; but before this high priest who has sons there comes the great High Priest, who will not break the reed of faith, or quench the smoking spirit of grace, and He demands more than the stricken soul can give. Mercy has triumphed over judgment, and the spirit of grace is greater than moral law. Moral law demands that which is right and what is due without consideration of circumstances; but grace rejoices in forgiving in healing and cheering the broken, contrite spirit. It is an amazing thing, by a sudden calamity, to lose the sweet assurance of the favour and grace; but, surely, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, He reveals Christ as the High Priest, who is touched with a feeling for man's infirmities, brings comfort and consolation to the stricken

CHAPTERS XI., XII. There is given a figurative description of the clean and the unclean, what is to be received or rejected by the commandments of God. It is not necessary to enter into details in this chapter but to point out briefly what is spiritually embodied in the figures. The question may be put in this form: What is the spiritual food suitable for the redeemed and consecrated servants of God? The first thing necessary is that men should be brought to the position and condition whereby they may learn to discern betwixt good and evil. Men's souls are surrounded with all forms of thoughts, none, however, being essentially evil; but the moral relations in which they are placed make them good or bad, true or false. Conduct must be related to persons; thus the moral law is the staff of life and God's Bread. But man cannot, in his perverted, diseased state, be himself pure, and thus the water of life, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is necessary for daily nourishment and cleansing. To conform to the moral law is life; to disobey God's moral law is death; therefore, men must be trained to conform in all their actions to the standard found in the Lord Jesus Christ. Pure thought, word, action, in the society that is chosen, and in the things that are loved, is very important, and all forms of flattery and communications should be eschewed as poisonous food for the soul. Affectionate and pure, loving desires, a meek and lowly spirit, should be cherished; and all vulturous, unholy, proud passions should be fully avoided. Christ, in all His beauty and perfection of wisdom, holiness, truth, and grace should be kept in full spiritual view, as a crawling, sleek, cunning serpent, with his abominable spirit, should be loathed. To seek to be like Christ, who is the Image of God, goodness and grace, is a God-like aspiration; it is seeking to grasp the very nature of God, which is man's portion in Jesus Christ; to gain this end there is not only need of discernment and of judgment, but also of moral decision, of obedience to the conscience enlightened by His Word; and, above all, of the spirit of grace in all its full living power, because it is grace that recreates, renews, and builds the man in the image of Christ.

When the ministering servants of God have been taught to disti

betwixt good and evil, truth and error, and there is a conception of grace and truth as found in Jesus Christ, then some of the problems of existence are presented for consideration, and it is necessary that the men who are called to teach Jacob the judgments of God and Israel His holy law, should be in a position to make these things known unto men. The 12th chapter seems, in figure, to teach what the condition of man is, not merely from birth, but in conception, and thus in reality, when the figures are set aside, the real point at issue is whether there is in man the original purity and holiness which God bestowed upon him, or is it a corrupt, depraved nature which he inherits? The reply to such questions is plain enough; there is sin in the very fountain of man's being; and thus to bring a clean thing out of an unclean one, is simply impossible. The seed is unholy, and therefore the tree and the fruit must be the same in kind. There cannot be any appeal upon this question, which would be of any value, to any facts, which are outside the order found in nature; there has been in the past, diversities of opinion upon this point, but when the order of nature, including that of grace, is clearly understood, then it will be seen that no exception can be admitted, and any man who will deny the order of nature in its manifestations will not even be listened to. The word "*nature*" in this instance, it will be observed, is used in the very widest application in which it can be used; because in considering the order of nature it includes, all that is of God up to the perfect moral nature; then there is found a break in the continuity and harmony, and sin is found in operation, a thing of perversions and reversions, which was introduced by man. But surrounding this sinful order there is found the nature of grace in its own order, which is appointed by God for the removal of the evil introduced by man. It ought to be clearly understood that although man has the power to pervert nature, he has done nothing but what was foreseen and provided for; and he did not enter into an inheritance of his own creation when he sinned, but in reality he moved onward in an order of nature of Divine appointment, possessing its own cycle of disease, pain, physical death, insanity and moral death, and the judgment to come. It is, therefore, a great truth that the whole order of nature, the good seed producing a good tree and good fruit; a corrupt, perverted seed bringing forth disease and death, hatred, and murder as its fruits; and the seed of grace working in the perverted and corrupted seed, tree, and fruit to bring back moral perfection upon the earth are all of God's appointment. The word "*nature*" is used here as related to the order observed in creation; but it could not be said, for example, that the original nature of man was sinful, and that by development he sinned; this is quite a different question, and it has to do with the creature's will as *opposing* the will of God, which is evidently unnatural, or contrary to the order of nature.

The race of Adam is corrupt, perverted from truth and righteousness; and thus the new-born child requires not merely a circumcision of the flesh, but of the spirit and the affections; and the name of this spiritual change is being born again, or regenerated by the gracious power of God in Jesus Christ. But as with the child Jesus there was circumcision, that is, consecration of *the infant to God* in purity, and presentation

in the temple, so every child requires to be spiritually cleansed, consecrated to God, and offered unto Him in prayer.

But at this point the attention is taken away from the child and fixed upon the mother, and the different periods of purification which are appointed for a son and daughter. In the former case from the day of birth until the purification is forty days; and in the latter case it is eighty days. These, it will be observed, represent great eras or cycles of time; in a word, the Jewish economy and the Christian era. If this interpretation is admissible then the mother becomes a figure of the Church in its impure, imperfect state; the issue of the Church is in the first instance Jesus Christ, and in the second His bride, which is the purified Church, not in form of flesh, but in spiritual beauty. During the time of purification the mother cannot appear before God, but at the appointed time she is permitted to do so when she has through the priest offered unto God for her purification a lamb for a burnt-offering, and a dove for a sin-offering; in other words, the Lamb which takes away sin and gives the pure spirit; and the Dove, the Holy Spirit, which sanctifies the soul. There is life for life in the sacrifice, and also the thought of sin forgiven, and life preserved for the glory of God. The mother thus brought into relationship with God could think of her purification effected, reconciliation attained, peace enjoyed, and with a spirit animated by thankfulness to God, and a mouth speaking His praise, she could return to her home, her husband, and her duties in life.

CHAPTERS XIII.—XV. If chapter xii. can be conceived of as a figure, teaching the corruption of the race of Adam in a man and in the Church or the world, and the means of their purification, reconciliation, and peace with God, thus grasping the whole cycle of the thought in the woman and her children, then it will be seen that chapters xiii., xiv., contemplate the mysterious workings of sin in man and the world, under the cover of the disease known as leprosy. It will be enough to point out the spiritual thoughts which arise out of these chapters; and these being compared with the figure the analogy that exists may be discerned. The outward mark of a leprous, sinful soul is the inflamed spiritual condition of pride and presumption; carnal fleshly lusts are seen in operation, and this sinful state unfits the soul for communion with God. The great High Priest watches, and His servants should watch very carefully these emotions and conditions of the soul, because if they increase in intensity and spread over the sphere of thought and action, then the issue must be that the spirit shall be cut off from God and from His people. Should the evil symptoms subside during the period of separation, and there is no breaking out into evil ways, then the patient may be pronounced as clean, and admitted into the family of God. When the leprosy affects the head, that is the intellect and moral nature, and a man is pronounced unclean by the priest, then the poor creature becomes an outcast; he is in a condition that no man can help him, for the fountain of his spiritual life is corrupted, and only the All-gracious can heal such a disease of the being. There is mercy and healing for such, and the Lord of mercy has healed the bodies and

souls of many such of His creatures, who have been objects of loathing to their fellows. But such a healing implies a new life given to the diseased, and a new power working in soul and body for health. There is not merely sacrifice, but there is the singular rite of the two birds; one being killed, the blood of the creature being allowed to run into an earthen vessel through running water, whilst the other bird, with the articles used for purification, are dipped in the blood; the leper is sprinkled with the blood and water, and then the living bird is permitted to fly away into the open field enjoying its freedom. This is a peculiar figure, but it is very impressive in its significance, and far reaching in its principles; it is expressed in the following words:—"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?" In other words, the blood is the figure of the pure, perfect, moral life of Christ given for man; the running water the spiritual stream of grace by which man is cleansed; and through these the leprous, immoral soul of man is cleansed. The beauty of the figure is exquisite, because it shows exactly what the relationship of the Holy One is to the unholy; and it teaches in a wonderful manner the Origin, Conduit, and work of grace upon a soul. This figure is worthy of study because it brings out so clearly the distinctive functions of the blood and water, the sacrifice and the cleansing. Only once in history is there a pure Being found who gives in self-sacrifice His own life that others dead in sin might receive life through Him; but the stream of God's cleansing grace which purifies and sanctifies flows on for ever. The figure touches the very roots of saving truth, and shows clearly that moral and eternal life has its seat in Christ for fallen men, and that it is through Him, His sacrifice, that grace, God's stream of mercy, flows to mankind. Upon the eighth day after this impressive ceremony there followed in order the work of the priest in receiving, declaring, and presenting the leper as clean. In this ceremony there is also much that is worthy of consideration, but the chief thoughts are centred in the blood of the trespass-offering, and in the oil of the meat-offering. The blood of the lamb was placed upon the ear, thumb, and toe, thus redeeming every faculty and power of the body, soul, and spirit to the Lord; and the sprinkling of the oil seven times before the Lord, placing it over the blood upon the ear, thumb, and toe, and pouring the remainder of it upon the head speaks of the joy and gratitude of the redeemed, given up in all things unto the Lord, and every faculty and power of the man being dedicated to God. The ceremony of the cleansing of property from leprosy is the same as that of cleansing the leper; because only through the sacred offering of Christ, through the eternal Spirit of grace can the creatures of God once turned to vile uses be made holy and fit for His service. In Him the new sacred life exists, and through and by Him all things, creatures, and rational beings are reconciled to God.

These thoughts upon leprosy as a sign, and the unholy, immoral soul, perverted spirit, and diseased body as the reality, and the means of cleansing and perfect redemption and sanctification of the whole being cover the whole cycle of *sin, redemption, reconciliation, and the*

sanctification of the soul in the presence of God. In the 15th chapter another line of thought is entered upon, and it teaches the condition of man during his time of probation; whilst the impure, unholy nature is not subdued, and there is the inward struggle after a holy life. The body of man and the issues which proceed from it are the figures but Christ reveals the truth in the thought that it is out of the heart the affections, and the desiring, lusting soul that evil thoughts proceed. These are the unclean issues which make a man unholy; and not until the centre, the germ of life, is made pure can the issues of life be holy and righteous. If there is an issue from the life which is born of pride, conceit, hatred, or any other form of sin and iniquity then it is clear the fountain is not pure: and if such a soul should say it has no sin, it is deceived, blind to facts, and the truth of God is not known. In such a case sin has dominion, and the perverted spirit is the home of the tyrant. It is important to remember that there is not merely an impure fountain within, but that the organs which serve the soul may be made the means of communicating evil, engendering the same, and thus the seeds of evil communicated become the means of unholy propagations. In relation to this matter in all its phases the remedy is pointed out: two doves are required, the one for burnt-offering, and the other for a sin-offering. In other words, falling back upon first principles, there must be the giving up of self to God in Christ, in a lowly spirit; and there must also be confession of sin seeking after purification with a penitent spirit, and, being reconciled the giving up of the affections in all joy and gladness, purity, and love to the service of the Lord. There is need of personal piety, but this piety or holiness must not spring out of a self-righteous spirit, for this is an abominable sin in God's sight: it must have its roots in Christ, in the new life of the soul, and nourished by His Word and the stream of grace, even the Holy Spirit, there will follow purity in thought, word and deed, as the outcome of the new nature.

CHAPTER XVI. There may be discerned in this chapter not only a change in form, but also in the spirit of revelation given by God to Moses; the attention is drawn away from the priests generally, and their relationships toward the people in the important questions which have been considered so briefly, and the gaze is to be fixed upon the high priest entering within the veil before the mercy-seat, there to appear before God on Israel's behalf. The outer court of the world is past, the holy place within which the priests minister in fleshly forms is left behind, and there is given, in figure, the entrance into spiritual realities. In the order of history the great High Priest is come amongst men, and Nadab and Abihu are dead. Spiritual things are about to be revealed, but not as yet to all men, through all men: for there is seen the Chosen Servant, who, at a set time, will enter into the holiest place. The figures point out the means by which Aaron was instructed to enter the holiest place; there was first the sin-offering of a young bullock, and burnt-offering of a ram on his own account; these speaking of substitution, the sprinkling of blood, of a life perfect before God, consecration of the inmost affections of the soul, the destructio

of the evil within, and the sacrifice of a poor spirit which is acceptable in God's sight. Besides these offerings there was also the washing of the body and the putting on of the holy garments; in other words, a regenerate soul clothed with perfect holiness. The offering from the people of Israel on this eventful day of atonement was two goats and a ram, the former being for a sin-offering, and the latter for a burnt-offering. The two goats were placed before the Lord, lots were cast upon them, and the one was doomed for death, whilst the other was as the scape-goat, to be led away into the wilderness. These things having been ended, atonement was made for Aaron and his house by the sin-offering, and then Aaron, with a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, with sweet incense, entered within the vail. The incense having been placed upon the mercy-seat, and the cloud covering the testimony, the blood of the sin-offering was then sprinkled seven times upon the mercy-seat and before it; and the same ceremony repeated with the blood of the goat for a sin-offering for the people. By this ceremony atonement was made for the holy place, because of the sins of Israel, and coming forth unto the altar of burnt-offering, it also was atoned for, cleansed, and hallowed. By this means the sin-offering was made the means of atonement for the sanctuary, the holy place within which the priests ministered, and also of the altar in the outer court; but during this time and the performance of all these things there was no one in the tabernacle to see him offer the atonement. Then followed the confession of sin upon the head of the scape-goat, and its removal from the camp; the taking off of the holy garments, and washing of his body by Aaron; the offering of the burnt-offerings for priest and people; the burning of the fat upon the altar; the purification of the man who removed the scape-goat; the burning of the sin-offering outside the camp; and the purification of the man who burned the sin-offering. That these things point to Christ cannot be questioned; but in Him they are changed from forms into realities, and the High Priest of humanity is seen entering the presence of God for the redeemed, who even now wait for His re-appearing. Does this figure cover the day of Christ's life and death amongst men, as the Head, or is it also meant to cover the Christian cycle? The thought arises that the whole figure extends from the days of Jesus Christ upon the earth until the present time. He has entered in within the vail of hidden spiritual things, after having sanctified the whole of man's being and surroundings. During all this time He is alone as Intercessor within the vail, not idle, but purifying the innermost spiritual nature in man, the tabernacle or fleshly nature, as well as the outer court. As yet this end is not attained, sin is not removed, and the complete sin-offering of the fleshly lusts of mankind is not consumed. But as the goat departs to be no more seen, and the man who led him away is purified, the sin-offering burnt up, and the man who burnt it cleansed, even so the day is coming when sin will be cast out of the house of God, and all will serve Him in lowliness and holiness.

But the time of the year when the day of atonement took place is worthy of attention; it was *not at the same season* as the redemption

from Egypt, but six months later; in fact, at the beginning of the civil year, as the Passover was at the beginning of the sacred year. This day of atonement is one upon which there was to be affliction of the soul because of sin: no work was to be done upon it by any one within the camp, for it was the day of cleansing for the whole of the people of Israel. Following this day of cleansing from sin, atonement, and peace with God, then there came the feast of tabernacles for eight days, which was a time of joy and gladness; the great harvest thanksgiving, the public reading of the law of God, living in booths, and the drawing of water from the well of Siloam. These things speak of the closing of the Christian era, a harvest, a feast, knowledge of the Word of God, and the giving of the Spirit of grace; of things that should abide for ever, "an everlasting statute," although in the Mosaic ceremony they were remembered every year.

CHAPTERS XVII.—XX. A new sign is here given, and if studied in the light of Scripture history, it seems to point backward to Noah, and also forward to the time when the partition betwixt Jew and Gentile having been broken down by the coming of the kingdom of Christ, there is a falling back upon the first principles of action which all nations have been taught to obey. With Noah, the covenant of blood, as a symbol, was entered into by the Lord after the Flood, the sign of promise given to men being the rainbow, and these all the nations of the world inherit; the descendants of Abraham had as a sign the rite of circumcision, which points to personal holiness, and is the sign of the Abrahamic era. But when Christianity was accepted by the Gentiles, and thus the figures of the outer court and of the holy place had vanished away, then it was decided at a meeting of the Church of Christ that the Gentiles were to be taught that "they abstain from pollutions of idols and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood." The era of Christianity is once more the era of the Gentiles, with this difference, that altar of sacrifice and laver for ablutions, the holy place and holy of holies have all vanished away, and men have been taught to look beyond these symbols and to think of the spiritual High Priest, who is Invisible, and the One sacrifice for sin which has been accepted by God. Passing by the figures which are found to agree in Noah, Israel, and Christianity, not in its pure spiritual conception, but in its first submission to forms, there arises out of this chapter the following thoughts:—The sacredness of life, because blood is the sign for physical life, and also for the higher moral life received from Christ. By life given for life was man redeemed from death; therefore death should be unknown amongst the people, except where there is by sign the great truth of substitution. If this command is obeyed, then there will be peace, and men will rejoice in rendering up unto God in faithful service the loving affections of their soul.

Men are not to offer sacrifices to devils, this is a statute for all generations; in other words, if any man turns away from humble obedience to the Lord's commands and takes his own way in anything, this is spiritual idolatry; self is the devil that is worshipped; burnt-offerings of *pride, conceit, self-seeking, hatred, covetousness, and all iniquities*

are offered to this devil, after whom there is spiritual whoredom ; and the issue is that such a soul is cut off from that commonwealth of Israel which obeys God's commands, and wrestles as a prince with God for the good of others. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry : because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He also hath rejected thee."

If any one eat blood, the consequence is that he is cut off from God and His people ; in the blood there is life, and this is the sacred sign of the moral state of the soul. The figure vanishes from view and man is seen devoid of life, because he has cut himself off from the Fountain of all that is good, true, and holy. In Christ there is essential life ; by giving Himself up to bear and endure the wickedness of men and the outlawry from the face of God, a new life was granted to men ; and, by the spirit of grace, that life is nourished and grows in man. To take blood is to take life, that is, become a murderer ; to hate a man is the germ-seed of this devilish condition, and thus the spiritual reality is seen to be a terrible thing in the light of Christ's words. If to eat the flesh of dead creatures, whether strangled or torn by a foe, or that may have died through disease, rendered a man unclean in those days of figures, then how much more important for living souls, redeemed by Christ, the Living One, who bestows upon man the Bread of Life and the Water of Life, that they should abstain from all the dead thoughts of wicked men who would destroy the life of the soul, strangle the blessed Word of God, and would give to hungry souls a dead carcass of philosophy, science, theology, or something else that can never nourish or give strength. Christians have not merely eaten such viands, but, enjoying the rich seasoning with which they have been prepared, they have devoured such food with intense lusting. Is it any wonder that men have seen a spiritual Taberah in these days, an awful plague upon men because they would go after the dead things of men, and not seek by faith to receive and rely upon the living Word of God. Truly God is merciful toward sinful, unclean men ; and though they have not sought to wash themselves from their uncleanness, He has not left them to bear the iniquity, but, in His abundant grace, He is again giving to men His living Word for their food, and turning them against the loathsome dead meat which has been so long in use. Surely it is an awful sin to loathe the Living Bread and the sweet waters of grace, and to turn away with strong lusting desires to the dead and strangled things which men can provide. Oh, that the Blessed One would give His Holy Spirit to His servants very abundantly, and then they will turn with disgust from what has been their food in the past, and with a healthy hunger and thirst of soul they will eat and drink the sweet portion, the feast of fat things He has provided.

"Oh that there were such an heart in them that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever." Such are the words of God, uttered by Moses ; and such, in principle, are the thoughts embodied in the 18th to 20th chapters of this book. The spirit breathed is that of God's favour toward His people, His *strong desire* that they might conform

in their actions to His holy will, and that they would carefully a the ways of the world on the one side, or the sinful, sensual, fleshly iniquities of the perverse spirit and perverted nature upon the other. To walk in His ways is to live in and by the laws of God, to follow the will of the flesh in their ways is death; the life of a soul, of a nation, or of the world, is found in obedience to God's commandments, and death must be the inevitable result to a soul, a nation, or the world there is disobedience and the wilful transgression of moral law. Passages by the figures presented to view, some of the spiritual thoughts which may be discerned in these chapters will be stated very briefly. Human relations are to be kept sacred; it is life toward all men to act toward them in harmony with the will of God; to uncover nakedness makes manifest the state of sin and shame that exists, and surely the Christian is called upon to play the part of Ham, and thus bring a curse upon men instead of a blessing. The blessing is in, and upon, the family; therefore let them render blessing even for cursing, and thus the nakedness and shame of kinsmen will be covered up. The family relations must be kept sacred; for if there is an uncovering of sin in the home circle and its life becomes polluted, then there cannot be peace or happiness. This was the shameful act of Reuben, and it results in the corruption of the conscience, want of respect for parents and thus contempt for the authority and Word of God. The family relations should be kept pure and holy, because, if men tamper with God's sacred ordinances and depart from His laws and order of nature, then the issue is the unnatural and abhorrent actions which are as sin in the soul, and which must react upon others who are dependent upon the sinner. Not only are human, family, and social relations intrusted to man, and he is held responsible to God for his actions, but the lower creatures are also placed under his protection, and they have rights and righteous claims, which man cannot refuse without bringing sin upon himself by punishment upon his own head. The irrational creatures cannot be held responsible for they have no responsibility; but they are linked with man in the order of nature, and any outrage upon them must rebound upon the man who commit the sin of offending against these little ones, who must be precious in God's sight. The figure used to describe the consequence of the sinful deeds referred to is a very expressive one; it is that of a country becoming disgusted with its tenants, and there is such a revulsion of the mute land that it turns against the debased creatures it has nourished, and they are vomited out of it as being altogether unworthy of nourishment. When the land is sick of its inhabitants and the immoral creatures are cut off from communion with God, to all that is good and true, then to whom shall they turn? This is the portion of the wicked who disobey God, who seek to serve their lusts and make themselves gods; and the end is disease, death, and hell.

If there is not conformity to the will of God in the world, society, the family and toward the lower creatures, then it is hardly possible that a child could be trained in truth and righteousness. It is not a small thing, but a very great one, for man to consider, that according to the order of nature in the environment, so in all probability must

ion of society and the family become. If society and the be righteous and truth loving, so will the rising generation ; if proud, covetous, and hateful, then the same spirit will be bred in the young. "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." The Lord would that His followers should be obedient to Him and walk in His ways, they do so they will live in them ; but passing from society He is to all as to their duties, but specially to the individual, as to the heart, the soul, and the motives by which man shall act. It will be noted that the 18th chapter bears particularly upon God's statutes and commandments ; but the 19th chapter touches the very centre of the law, the moral nature, and takes cognisance of its condition. The law set up is holiness ; after this men must strive, and they are to strive because this is the nature of God. What is the first sign of a child that wishes such a spirit ? It is that of obedience and the honouring of the parents ; they are to the child as God's representative until the child is ten years of responsibility ; and thus the love and obedience shown to the parents is a fitting natural thing in the child. But the law will come when the Heavenly Father will be sought after, and the keeping of the Sabbath is the visible sign of loyalty and obedience unto God. The Sabbath is set as the visible sign to men, and it proves whether they are loyal or rebel ; if the former, they will be honoured ; if the latter, then this is turning unto the devil and forsaking the only Lord God. The spirit of the child of God is to seek peace and to make peace ; this is to be done, not by force, but willingly ; and, above all things, it is not to be delayed. The offering of making peace with God is a dangerous thing ; it is an honorable thing to name the Name of God, and at the same time to name the devil. A man cannot serve two masters ; therefore choose between peace, and not self, and to be cut off from God and the law of faith. The children of God are not to be greedy, covetous, or stingy all that comes within their reach ; but, like God, generous and merciful of the poor and strangers. Theft and lying are an abomination ; false swearing and profanity are signs that the devil dwells in the soul. To wrong a neighbour by keeping what is his right, or taking away from him that which is his ; to swear ; are things that are condemned ; and, to keep back the wages when it is due is an unjust thing. The deaf are those who do not hear, the blind those who do not see ; separation by distance, or by physical disease, brings about such spiritual conditions ; do not curse the absent, but bless them and speak well of them ; and do kind actions for men when they do not see their own names and do not know their benefactor. The righteous things of God are to be man's judgment ; and there ought not to be any pre-emption of judgment to the rich or the mighty, over the poor and the weak. The scales must hold the scales equal, and remember that God the great God is specially interested in this matter. Gossiping, backbiting, and lying are despicable, contemptible in man or woman, but that which thinketh no evil, and with loving words removes hatred and evil, is blessed. All men are brethren, therefore love them ; but

if a brother commits a sin, speak to him, showing him the evil, for if this be not done sin lies at thy door, and it will take possession of thy brother's soul. Be not deceived, sin in a brother is like a venomous serpent in a house—it will not die, but in due time it will bite and the issue may be disease and death. "Am I my brother's keeper?" is the cry of the cursed Cain. "Rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him," is the Lord's word to his brethren. To seek vengeance upon, or to cherish a grudge against a neighbour, is contrary to God's will; but to love a brother erring and sinful, as one would desire to be loved, is Christ-like. The motives of spiritual action are all to be in conformity with the will of God, and by keeping such motives pure there will be a growing likeness in holiness, in a pure moral life, which is God's image in the soul. But there are not merely the evil and the good, the truth and error, righteousness and unrighteousness to be chosen betwixt: there are also mixed motives of desire, and of expediency, which a perverse spirit will be led to act upon for the purpose of gratifying the fleshly, carnal lustings of the soul. All mixed motives are of the devil; they show that there is no true circumcision of the soul, separation of the clean and unclean; the eye of the soul is deranged, and there is darkness within; or things and thoughts are seen out of their true proportions and relations. The remedy is the light of truth and righteousness, a single eye for God's glory and obedience to His will, and then there will be light and the motives will become pure and holy. Beware of the lust of the flesh, for they make war against the soul; and should they assert the supremacy and bring the soul into subjection, be assured that there is no escape without a scourging, for the free spirit of grace and the bond-spirit of lusting cannot get on together. This is a sin which requires to be confessed and forgiven, else, instead of the soul being a holy place, it will become like a Sodom. Men are not to suppose that as soon as grace takes possession of a soul or a nation, that straightway they are holy, sanctified, and fit for the Master's use, and for the presence of God. It is not so; for ages or cycles of development pass away before there is purity in the national life or in the world; and cycles of experience are developed in the soul before there is likeness to Christ. It is in the fifth year that the fruit is to be eaten; in other words, the fifth blessing of Christ; "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy," is the spiritual manifestation through which there is increase and blessing upon men. The life of a man is to be clean; full of love to God and man; and in His hands all times and seasons are to be left, so that He may bring about in His own time His wise, holy, and gracious purposes. The body of a man is to be held sacred; it is the temple of God. The affections of the soul are to be sacred, holy, and devoted to God; for if these go astray, spiritual whoredom and wickedness is the inevitable result. The loyal acknowledgment of God as King, and spiritual worship is binding upon the soul. Every form of perverted thought, and impostures of every kind that man can suggest are to be disregarded; the Lord He is God, and any rival who would displace Him in the affections of the soul is a devil. Reverence the hoary head, and with loving respect seek to

e fathers amongst men ; but beyond all earthly relationships, face of the God-Father and fear Him. Amongst men there are ; in the world there are those who are not of the Father's race such, not as strangers, but " as one born among you, and to love him as thyself." The people of God are a redeemed people ; therefore, in all their transactions in trade there must be honesty and justice ; man must not be taken as the standard, but the righteous laws, statutes, and judgments are to be followed, and in these men shall live and be blessed.

And that is sown in the life of a man, or a nation, bears fruit to its kind ; if the seed is good, the harvest and the fruit will be plentiful, but if evil then justice and judgment must come. The order of nature cannot be put aside, and men might expect to gather grapes from a thorn-bush, as to see the blessed God's Spirit in a godless, unrighteous, unholy man. In the consequences of sin are brought into prominence, and invited to consider the fruits of the evil seeds which have been taken root, and have brought forth their baneful fruits. Attention is called to the horrible deed of an Israelite giving a seed to pass through the fire to Molech ; but if the spiritual seed conceived, it is even a more abominable thing and the consequences are as awful in their kind. The word Molech means this god is the chosen idol of the Ammonites and Moabites, ungodly descendants from the covetous Lot. In a man who is given to covetousness, cruelty, and spiritual pride, there is set up in his soul an abomination as foul and profane as Molech, and such a man, being king in the realm of man's being makes him go through a process which will end in his own destruction. This spirit is utterly opposed to the moral nature of God, and to the workings of His spirit and thus in due time, the order of nature, the awful judgments of God, which are as God's face set against the evil-doer, bring down death upon such a soul or a nation. This form of rebellion is the anti-Christ, the devil of self in man ; but beside this rebellion there are various degrees of departure from God, from righteousness by deceit, hypocrisy and double-dealing, that is, by bad words, trying to serve God and Mammon ; but the end of all these ways is death, separation from God and all that is good. The sin of disobedience to parents carries a curse with it ; the end of all ungodly ways is death to the soul, and wars and revolutions in the world.

Impure and unholy thoughts, words, and actions in the soul, in the family, in society, the nation, or the world, bring about corruption and sin ; and that the land abhors its offspring, they are accursed, cast out as unclean, abhorred of God, and thus the issue is disastrous. Not for such things has the Lord brought redemption to them that they might possess a perfect moral nature, and rejoice in the love of God in Christ as the milk and honey of the soul. Because they have been separated from the unclean and unholy and have been given a new life in the Redeemer, it is for them to act like rational, intelligent creatures, and to discern betwixt right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error. *The Lord has chosen Israel for His people ;*

He is holy, therefore they ought to be like Him ; and as the Father in heaven is perfect, so they are called upon to seek after the same spirit of grace which is the perfection of man. If any man should set himself up as a god ; greater or wiser than others because of their relationship with the spiritual world, such a spirit is anti-Christ, he is under the wrath of God, and the curse of death rests upon his own head. The mercy of God has been brought nigh to men, but because of pride, covetousness, fleshly lusts, and power they choose self and reject God and His Grace ; to such there is no mercy, for they have despised Christ, and thus the issue is the wailing and gnashing of teeth ; and the outer darkness. "Be not deceived : God is not mocked : for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

CHAPTER XXI. seems to be the beginning of a new division of this book, and it is worthy of notice that the words of God by Moses are sent "unto the priests the sons of Aaron," and thus Aaron is omitted. In all former communications to the priests, Aaron and his sons are joined together ; but here it is not so. It is thus conceivable that this message from the Lord deals with the spiritual priesthood of Christian believers, not indeed of the Christian era only, but of all times where men have risen above mere forms, to realise, in some degree, their spiritual unity with the great High Priest of men. The representation is one of spiritual condition, and it is not to be specially limited to time or place, although it ought to be remembered that as after the day of atonement the thoughts are in harmony with the Christian era, so this new departure will also find its place in history. The thought that no priest shall come in contact with a dead body, that the head and body should be kept sacred, would point out that sin which causes death is not to come near them, and that they are to realise that they are sanctified by the Lord for His service that they may be able to be the means of giving life to others. In body, soul, and spirit they are to be holy, so that they may not reflect by their behaviour any thought by which the Lord's Name may be profaned. The life of a follower of Christ who has been placed in this position is to be a fair copy of Christ Himself ; and if they fail to reflect His image as conceived from God's Word then they are verily guilty of profaning His Name. They are in reality living stones built up into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Such a priesthood is to be especially careful in regard to their marriage union ; because, if the spirit of the wife, that is of grace in its order, is not one with the spirit of her husband and the Lord, then it is evident that there cannot be pure worship in the highest spiritual service. The inmost soul with all its desires and affections are to be holy, the whole being sacred, even a temple in which the Holy Spirit of Christ may dwell. This is something like what is required of Christ's "holy priesthood ;" and it can be seen that not merely is the ideal a very high one, but also that nothing short of this can be the standard to which men must be brought.

The 16th verse begins another revelation which is sent unto Aaron ; and in it there may be found the following thoughts : that any

impurity of the soul makes a man unfit for the sacred office of ministering in the gracious things of God. The Ministering High Priest is Jesus Christ, for in Him alone no blemish can be found ; in all other men there is something visible or invisible, in body, soul or spirit, which renders him unfit to "go in unto the vail," or to go "nigh unto the altar." But if men are unfit for such a position is it not a gracious thing that they are not cut off from the Living Bread and the Fountain of grace ? He may not "offer the bread of his God : He shall eat the bread of his God both of the most holy and of the holy." There is hope in this matter, because it is written, "Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God." This is to be within the vail and nigh to the altar, and thus it is good that the imperfect and the unholy are not cut off, but they have held out before them the highest spiritual position which Christ can confer upon His followers. It is the Lord that sanctifies, and thus the work will certainly be accomplished.

CHAPTER XXII. In Chapter xxi. there is found explained who are fit to be priests unto God and who are not ; also there can be spiritually discerned the very high spiritual requirements of those who would serve God perfectly, and the thought that Christ alone can enter within the vail, stand by the altar and offer the shew-bread unto God. The 22nd chapter advances to explain the condition and service of priests, and thus it may be considered, in figure, the spiritual position and service of the Christian holy priesthood. The priests are here referred to as a separate and holy people ; they are more holy than the holy children of Israel. In other words, there is gradation ; the priests are here the spiritual servants of Christ who understand and serve in His kingdom of grace ; the people of Israel are, as if they were in the holy place ; and the people of the world in the outer court ; or to reverse the order, the people of the world are children who live in an objective world, never thinking of their own subjective spiritual state ; Israel is serving under Moses in the forms of things under laws, and to the letter of Scripture ; whilst the priests have been taken within the vail, beyond form and letter, and there, being spiritual in Christ, they see spiritual things. If they are spiritual and can manifest Christ in their lives, it is well ; if not, there is profanation of His Name. This separate holy people is not perfect ; thus it is conceived that there will be sin manifested by them ; but such a condition unfits for spiritual ministrations and the drawing near to God with a pure heart. The cutting off from communion with God is the consequence of sin, because so soon as sin intervenes betwixt God and the soul, the vail drops, and the sinner is found in the holy place, beside the threatening law amongst the forms of things, or better still, beside the altar and laver in the outer court, waiting for the forgiveness of sin and the cleansing influence of the Holy Spirit. Into the sacred relationship of spiritual communion with God in Christ no stranger can enter, the deep things of God's love in mercy, purity, and peace, are sacred things, which none should touch unless they have the experience within their own souls of what they mean. Should any man unwittingly partake of this heavenly food, the consequence will be that he will show his

ignorance and profane His Name ; in other words, profession and the life with its behaviour will not agree, and this want of harmony will produce painful results.

The Lord is very gracious toward His servants, therefore it is a fitting thing that they should express their gratitude in free-will offerings, peace-offerings, and sacrifices of thanksgiving. To do this all are welcome, even strangers who are not named by His Name ; but, the offerings are to be free, the grateful expressions of grateful souls ; they are for peace, so that God's peace may abound in the soul and amongst men ; and when there is peace, then a thanksgiving sacrifice, given freely, and without any delay, will be acceptable in His sight. The position attained is in figure and in spirit, in harmony with the fourth division of the work at Sinai ; there is peace and joy amongst men, and being free and grateful they give abundantly of what they possess for the building of the tabernacle. This may point forward to the building of a spiritual temple of God amongst the nations, and to the spirit which will animate men in those days which are promised to, and expected by, the servants of Christ.

CHAPTER XXIII. Here are found arranged in order the feasts of the Lord, days of holy convocation, upon which men are called to have fellowship and communion with God. They are the Lord's feasts, and thus they are spiritual in their nature, although in this place they are presented to men in definite forms. The feasts cover the whole cycle of the year, and thus they may be taken as fairly representing the history of the kingdom of God, or the era of grace, in the world.

The first day of convocation is the Sabbath of rest, a sacred day—a day upon which the Creator should be acknowledged openly amongst men and reverently worshipped. To serve God upon this day is to acknowledge His sovereignty, and thus to show loyalty to His cause ; to pay no respect to the Sabbath is a manifest sign of rebellion, self-seeking, and the virtual choice of serving the devil and not God. This is not called a feast ; it is the normal condition of a moral, responsible being, and thus it is like the necessary food for the soul and body.

The feast of the Passover takes place on the fourteenth day of the first month, and it is followed by the feast of unleavened bread for seven days. In the first and last days of the feast there is a convocation ; the whole period is sacred, and an offering by fire is made unto the Lord, but on the first and last days of the feast all labour is set aside, so that there may be fellowship and communion with the Lord. These things speak of redemption from the power of the world, the holy life of moral purity, sincerity and honesty in all things which the redeemed are called to live, and the giving up of the soul to receive the communication of God's grace in all its fulness during the complete cycle of redemption. It may be worthy of notice that the Jewish sacred year, which had its origin at the Exodus from Egypt, begins at that season of the year when the day and night are nearly equal in both hemispheres of the world ; when the sun is at the equator in its return from the south, thus bringing back to northern latitudes the spring of a new year, with all its hopes and blessings. This is not a trivial sign to men,

but it speaks of the harmony that exists betwixt the external world of nature and the kingdom of grace. God comes to men, not at the extremes of heat and cold, light and darkness, truth and error, but at the equator of things, thus showing that His ways are equal, and that His coming in grace is to bring light, hope, and blessing to those who are sitting in the darkness of the world and in bondage to sin and death. The new-year feast, with men, begins near the shortest day of the year, when the sun is shining upon the southern hemisphere and the northern portion is bereft of that heat and light which are so essential to life ; but, as it is very soon *after* the shortest day that the new year is held with all its feasts, when the sun has begun its northward journey, this may indicate that at such a season, in the spiritual history of men, the seed of grace was planted in this world. In fact, it may point to the day of disobedience and the fall of man, whilst the year would begin with the inspired hope of salvation through the Seed that should bruise the serpent's head. These are thoughts which relate to the physical world, in its relations to the solar system ; and also as related to the visible world of man's being, and if there is harmony in such thoughts, then they are in their own sphere of importance and useful to Christians.

The spiritual corruptions which are presented thus far as related to the kingdom of God are, that there was at the beginning the perfect creation in all its moral beauty, the figure of which is to be found in the Sabbath ; there followed a darkness, a blank, and then the figure of the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread come into view. In other words, sin intervenes, the darkness swallows up the light, and for a long period sin and death reign upon the earth. At last, at the appointed time, there is a visible symbolic representation of the means of redemption set up in the world in the Passover in Egypt ; the power of the world is broken, and Israel is redeemed from the world and its bondage. Grace has been buried out of sight in humanity, a germ-seed, but with the gracious beams from the Sun of righteousness there has been quickening, and the living germ bursts the cerements of death in which it has been held, ready to live and obey the Lord of grace. The next feast is that of the First-fruits ; but this is a feast to be observed after entering the land of promise. There was a sheaf of the first-fruits given by the people to the priest ; it was waved before the Lord and accepted ; then at the same feast there was the burnt-offering of a he-lamb without blemish, and a meat-offering, and this feast was to be kept as a statute for ever. In this feast there can be discerned the Lord Jesus Christ in possession of all the promises of God ; in Himself the spiritual realisation of all promises. But although in Himself all that is promised, still as man's Representative He is the First-fruits of spiritual life offered unto God from amongst men, as well as the Lamb for a burnt-offering. This thought is expressed in a very concise and beautiful manner (1 Cor. xv., 20—23). "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order : Christ the first-fruits ; afterwards

they that are Christ's at His coming." The Passover feast in Egypt and the feast of the first-fruits seem to complete a cycle, because these feasts were held at the same time of the year ; thus the figure and the great Reality are united together, and Jesus Christ is seen to be the Sun of righteousness bringing Life to a dead humanity, and also as risen from amongst the dead, the Resurrection and the Life by whom the redeemed body must live.

The next feast took place fifty days after the second day of the Passover week ; beginning the calculation from the morrow after the Sabbath that the sheaf of first-fruits was offered. At this feast there was a new meat-offering ; there was to be a wave-offering of two loaves, baked with leaven, which were the first-fruits unto the Lord. With the loaves there were also offered seven lambs, one young bullock, and two rams as a burnt-offering ; a kid of the goats as a sin-offering, and two lambs as a peace-offering. These were to be waved with the bread of the first-fruits, and a day of holy convocation was to be held. This also is a statute for ever to Israel. In this feast there is no difficulty in discerning the coming of the spiritual kingdom of God with power at Pentecost. The first-fruits from amongst men presented to God are here represented by the two loaves ; and the new leaven of the spiritual life of Christ is in them ; the old leaven of the world and the flesh, Egypt and Canaan, is taken away, and that heavenly leaven which shall permeate the mass of humanity is here seen in operation for the first time. The seven-fold diversity and perfection of the spiritual kingdom takes the place of the former Passover Lamb, and in the fulness of the sacrifices there may be traced the completeness of that kingdom which was introduced amongst men at Pentecost. In the perfect burnt-offering, the sin-offering, peace-offering, meat-offering, and drink-offering, there are manifested all that men require for pardon and peace, gratitude and thanksgiving ; and all these being waved before God by spiritual priests, it was evident that not merely had men been redeemed, but they were also saved from their sins. The Passover feast speaks of the breaking away from the world ; the First-fruits, as seen in Christ, of the separation and deliverance of the spirit from the flesh and carnal forms ; and the first-fruits at Pentecost of the great spiritual deliverance of mankind from the world, the flesh, and the devil. In relation to this feast, the people are enjoined to remember they are not to be greedy in the gathering in of the harvest ; but gleanings were to be left for the poor and the stranger. This is the generous, gracious spirit of the Gospel ; there is enough and to spare for all at the Father's table of mercy, and the crumbs which fall from it are not to be the only portion of those who know not the Father ; plentiful gleanings are to be given unto them, so that they may eat of the Bread of Life and be glad.

In the seventh month, upon the first day, there was to be the blowing of trumpets, as a memorial, a Sabbath, and a holy convocation ; the ceremony was for one day only, but it was the prelude, the calling the attention of people to the events that were about to take place. It will be observed that at this time of the year the sun in the heavens *would have returned to the equator again, and thus the cycle of light*

and heat, life and blessing, to men was drawing to an end. The feasts of the sacred year of redemption and salvation were past, and the people, as they were beginning the new order of civil affairs, would be looking forward to the festivities of this season. The feast of trumpets, and the blowing of them by the priests, is seen to be the note of warning for preparation for those great events which were about to take place.

On the tenth day of the seventh month there came the great day of stonement, of expiation of sin, and propitiation with God. This was to be a solemn day, upon which the souls of men were to be afflicted; and if they were not afflicted because of sin on this day, their portion was to be cut off from the people of God; whilst those who did any work on this day were to be destroyed. This ordinance is also a permanent statute in Israel. The blowing of the trumpets, it will be observed, called attention to the time that was rapidly passing away, and to the fact that the great day of account was drawing very near. The day, with its twelve hours, was almost done, and the labourer would be very soon called upon to enter into the holiest place to render an account for the trust confided to him. How will man appear before God and answer for himself in that day? The answer is, By the High Priest, or, rejecting Him, the sinner is cut off from God, and no means of access to His presence will be found. The day of grace will be changed to a brighter day of joy for the redeemed who trust their High Priest; but for the wicked there shall be an eclipse of the sun, the storms will gather around their doomed heads, and the end will be the outer darkness; an awful winter which will not even be lightened by the borealis lights. In the city joy because of the favour of God, and the expiation of sin; outside, in the darkness, the burning carcass of the cursed thing which is not reconcilable to God. The thoughts which arise out of this day of atonement are very serious; they seem to draw near to the men of this generation, asking the awful question whether they have heard the trumpets as they sounded, and if they are prepared for this day of the Lord? The day of grace seems to be almost ended, and the High Priest prepared for His duties, waiting for another moment, to see if any more of the sons of men will come to Him ere the awful hour and moment arrive. If Christians tremble, and yet are glad at such a crisis, such a manifestation of Christ, as High Priest, King, and Judge, what will be the condition of the godless when the hour of anguish comes upon them? Truly, this is the day of salvation, perhaps the last hour of it; men are seen losing their only hope of redemption and salvation, and yet they are, like infants, playing themselves with the visible toys which give them pleasure when they should be in an agony to reach the door of grace before it is shut. If they afflict not their souls before that time, then they are cut off from Israel; and their portion, because they would work their own works, and not trust the work of God, is destruction. To the Jews the day of atonement was the great day of mercy; the one day in the year when sin was expiated, and peace made with God; but now, when the reality seems to be seizing men, it is indeed a day of affliction and trouble, and in the straitness that must come

upon them they will hardly understand the position in which they are placed. "Watch ye therefore : for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning ; lest, coming suddenly, He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."

The feast of tabernacles began on the 15th of the seventh month, and extended until the 23rd ; the first and eighth days being for holy convocation. This is also the feast of the in-gathering at the end of the harvest, and as such it is specially worthy of attention. The name is taken from the booths made of branches of trees, in which the people lived during this period. It was a time of rejoicing ; the great feast of the year ; and the harvest home of the people of Israel. It was also a remembrancer of the deliverance from Egypt, and the house of bondage. In these things there can be discerned a beginning of better things ; there is peace and joy because the nation is accepted by God through the High Priest ; there is gladness because of the harvest that has been accomplished upon the earth ; and the past history of the people of God, from Egypt onward, is the burden of their conversation. At this time the Word of God is studied with intense interest by all classes, and Christ is revealed as King of kings and Lord of lords. The picture is that presented by the great law-giver in his last words : "Israel then shall dwell in safety alone : the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine ; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel : who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency ! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee ; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

CHAPTER XXIV. When this chapter is considered in the light of Christ, and of the conceptions formed as to the former part of this book, there is little difficulty in looking away beyond the pure olive oil and the lamps which were to be kept constantly burning during the long dark night. Spiritual truth is the great reality, the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make men wise unto salvation. In them there is to be found eternal life ; and they testify of Jesus Christ, the Truth of God. But if the Lord gives the Word and Light, and men receive His gifts, it is not that they may selfishly retain His blessings in themselves, change them in their nature and order, but that the light of truth may radiate from man again, reflecting the perfect Image of the Son of man and of God. This is in its fullest meaning a wonderful baptism of "the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father ;" and which, in a wonderful manner, testifies of Jesus Christ.

Besides the pure beaten oil, there is also at this period to be a new presentation unto God, and this is twelve loaves of bread, which are to be put upon "the pure table before the Lord." Upon these pure frankincense was to be put, and the bread was to be before the Lord as a memorial, an offering made by fire. In the period subsequent to the time analogous to the Lord's coming in the flesh, that is at Pentecost, and during the Christian era, two loaves were presented : these

may be taken as representing the Jewish and Christian Churches : but in the good times to come there is to be a perfect nation, as descended from Jacob ; and as seen in the twelve apostles chosen by the Lord. This is in harmony with the blessings uttered by Moses upon the tribes ; it is true Simeon will not be there, but the tribe of Joseph will enjoy both the birthright and the blessing.

Will the people of God be holy, without sin, with the nature changed so that good only will be desired, and evil hated? Not so : the time of the Restoration has not arrived, and thus, though sin will not reign as it has done upon the earth, yet there will be found men whose fathers have been Egyptians, who have loved and served this world, and the spirit of the fathers will not die so easily out of their children. The time is, on the whole, one of peace and prosperity, but there are exceptions, and there may be strife. The Name of God is the sign amongst men of all that they ought to prize most dearly : it is the precious pearl above all price laid up in the casket of the soul, which must not be defiled or spoken against. As with one man so with a nation and the whole world, God's Name is the symbol for all that is true, good, righteous, and gracious, and woe upon any who lightly esteem what is above all estimation. Does the sentence of death seem hard in such a case? To the spirit of an Egyptian or a Sodomite it may do so, but to an Israelite, indeed, the crime spiritually is that of Nadab and Abihu, and of Ananias and Sapphira. It is necessary that the Name should be most sacred, and if men or nations do not see to it that this is done, let them rest assured that the curse will rebound upon their own heads ; and in that era which is about to dawn upon men, in which the spiritual world will lie open to their vision, if they sin, or permit sin wittingly, then they may possibly find that the day has gone past when sin-offerings can be accepted for such things. It may not be easy to see how the Name is to be kept sacred in these days, but with the coming truth, and the increased responsibility, such things will be made clear. Any false sympathy toward an offender in this direction is traitorous ; it is a sentiment which ought not to be cherished or approved of by Christian men. In this day of grace such punishments are not to be ; but when God enlightens the world with His truth, then conditions will be changed ; and at that day when the words " Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin " shall be uttered, men will be ready to reply, with all solemnity, knowing the wickedness of the deed, Amen, so let it be. In that day the moral law shall be honoured, and justice and judgment will be observed amongst men ; and if ever the moral law and its corresponding judgments upon the transgressors are to be matters of fact, it will be when men can clearly comprehend the marvellous mercy of God ; the grandeur of the moral law, and the necessity of punishing offenders, so that men may be warned against doing evil. At that day, upon this earth, only one moral law shall be the standard for men ; and it will not be so often remembered or uttered in the Sinaitic utterance, " Thou shalt not," but rather in those all-inclusive words, " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind ;" and, " Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." These

commandments include the law and the prophets ; and thus conformity to the moral law is comprehended in this one word—love.

CHAPTER XXV. Here is given a message unto Moses which was spoken on Mount Sinai, thus it is for all people, of all nations, who through the mercy of God have by faith become the followers of Jesus Christ, the true Israel of God. In the King there is found the nation ; and the nation cannot be separated from the King in whom it lives. Looking away from the earthly Canaan of the Jews, which can only be a figure of a great spiritual truth, there is revealed a new thought of an important kind associated with the land to be possessed. The Sabbath rest of pure moral life was broken in upon by man when he transgressed moral law ; and the thought is here suggested that after another land being possessed, then after six years the land would rest. The same thought is expanded in the seven times seven years, which brought not merely rest to the land, but also restitution to the wronged and liberty to the slaves. There was a Sabbath rest of moral perfection given to man, but he despised the inheritance, joined hands with the devil, became a rebel, and thus evil, war, struggling, hatred, and murder were the result. Man forfeited all claim to this land, this heritage of moral perfection, and it was impossible that by any means he could win back that which he lost. This land had to be redeemed, even the perfect moral kingdom, and not until some one could do this who was perfect in his own moral nature, could there be any hope of rest. Man's Sabbath was forfeited ; his doom was pain, disease, insanity, hatred, hell ; the condition was an awful one, and yet all that can be discerned is the fact that man despised God's Sabbath. What, then, was the case utterly hopeless? So far as man was concerned it was irretrievably lost ; and God only could say whether recovery was possible or not. The purpose of God's grace, and the history of redemption, are the reply to this most important of all questions for man ; and it would seem that hidden in this figure of the seven years there may be discerned the means of man's moral recovery unto God through the life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Passing away from literal years and the land of Palestine, there comes into full spiritual view the Lord Jesus Christ, the true and pure Joshua, who conquered the whole continent of man's revolted condition in His own body, in His life and death. By sin came death, with its six-fold perversion of man's moral, intellectual, imaginative (power of memory or thought), spiritual, living, and physical nature ; by Jesus Christ righteousness brought a perfect moral life, and all that is subject to it throughout the realm of nature, and by His life and death in His own body, all these perversions met in Him, and were again changed from being perverted and sinful to become holy and sanctified. The pure moral nature of Christ is the altar and sacrifice ; the sin, disease, insanity, death, all that was evil in man, came in contact with Christ : "On Him was laid the iniquity of us all." But the perverted did not destroy the perfect ; the seed of the perfect moral life was in Him, and thus the issue was a renewed life and the resurrection of His body. In this resurrection, and the *subsequent events* of Christ's life upon earth, when the victory had

been fully attained, and the whole land of redemption for man centred in Himself, then, when He appeared amongst the disciples on the Lord's Day, it was with the utterance on His lips, "Peace be unto you." The same thought may be very clearly traced in the Blessings uttered upon the Mount; there is the same gradation, cycle upon cycle, until in the sixth cycle, there is, through the crucible of purifying, the return to a pure moral nature in the words, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." The seventh Blessing is that of the peacemakers, who are "the children of God," and it can be seen at a glance that this is the gracious Sabbath of peace dawning upon the sons of men. Further, viewed historically, the same issue is reached, because the great cycles of the world harmonise with the Beatitudes, and with the life and death of Christ. Adam, or Seth, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ, and the Reformation period, represent these great cycles; and these names express the spiritual conceptions of the six blessings, or, the six philosophical principles which are found in man's moral nature. The issue of all this is that the Sabbath cycle of peace is drawing nigh; and that the Lord, who has been in travail for the world for nearly 6,000 years shall see the fruits of that labour and be satisfied. The Land, Christ, shall have peace, and men will be found possessing abundance through the very bountiful harvest of spiritual thoughts given unto them at the end, or harvest-time of the sixth cycle. In the cycle that is coming the Sabbath of the land shall be meat for man; and assuredly they will fare better under His gracious government than they have done during these years in which they have been doing things out of harmony with His holy will. They will live in peace; grace will be multiplied upon them, and thus the seventh cycle will be a perpetual Sabbath unto the Lord.

With the reference to the year of Jubilee, it will be observed that this is a much larger question; it has to do with the perfect Restoration at the end of the seventh cycle, and thus in its ample bosom it incloses the whole history of man. In other words, grace is the great factor in this grand figure, which embodies in itself so many blessings. To understand the figure, the same line of thought must be carried out as with Sabbatic years, but extending it to the cycle of grace or peace, and of persecution for righteousness' sake, which the children of God have had to endure through the past cycles of history. Jesus Christ, by His word in the Blessing, gives the key to this problem. His life and death, resurrection from the dead, and ascension into glory, manifest the truth in deed. The seven cycles of the history of man, in their internal seven-fold development, give the forty-nine cycles, and at the end there comes the Jubilee, the day of full Restoration to the favour of God, and of enfranchisement into the kingdom of heaven.

It is an important thought that is suggested as to the actions of men toward the Jubilee; in buying, selling, and getting gain; in receiving truth, bestowing it upon others, and in the growth of knowledge and of grace, the eyes must be fixed upon the day of Restoration and of Restitution. During the long, wearisome, unjust interval, men ought to remember that they are entrusted with property, and that only in the righteous and equitable use of it can prosperity and happiness in

the use be gained, and at last a reward obtained. The land, the nature of man, is not man's personal property, it is the Lord's; and it is His by giving it existence, by providing for its cultivation and blessing, and by redemption, when it had been perverted into unrighteousness. If man or men have no claim, no title-deed to show that themselves and their properties are essentially their own, then it must follow that they have no right to sell, pervert, or destroy what is committed for a time to their care, and for suitable and profitable management. The righteous and equitable management of the trust confided to man must not make him covetous or niggardly; for the Lord of the vineyard is a generous, gracious Master, and thus His instructions are that His servants are to be generous and gracious toward the poor, the stranger, and the sojourner; and a brother is not to be made a bond-servant, but treated as a hired servant until the year of Jubilee. During this long period the Levites had the power of redemption at any time; their portion is that of a standing Jubilee, if only they would seek after and obtain this end. History records no Jubilee amongst men; it has been a heavenly vision as yet unattainable because of the way they have been living before God. Does history record the names of any Levites, servants of Christ, who have made use of this privilege which they enjoy? It may be so, because there have been many martyrs and saints who have lived upon earth as if in heaven; and their departure from this earth has been to them as the sounding of the trumpet of Jubilee, the restoration to God and perfect liberty, and to the blessed service of children. To come short of the Jubilee spirit is to remain as a servant redeemed from Egypt; to reach this goal is to be the spiritual children of God, united to Christ, and to be able to say in spirit and in truth, Abba, Father. This Jubilee inclose the Sabbatical year as the germ from whence it springs; in other words, it speaks not merely of the Redeemer, who "is the Head of the body, the Church," but also, and more particularly, "of the household of God; built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone: in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

CHAPTERS XXVI., XXVII. The scene is here changed; it is as if men were about to enter upon the richest spiritual experiences, and then, suddenly, there is darkness. The sun has gone down at noon-day and men are left to grope their way through the labyrinth of forms seeking haply if the Sun of righteousness will once more return to visit a sin-cursed world. It is not necessary to enter into the detail of these chapters; it is enough to find that before the Jews and Israel after the flesh the pure worship of God was instituted, and that they were called upon to keep the moral Sabbath as a sign of obedience, and to reverence the sanctuary of God. If obedient, the blessings of heaven and earth would have been theirs; but being disobedient, their history is a record of the justice and judgments of God; whilst within *it there is traced* the great purpose of mercy which God has been

working out for the salvation of the world, and its restoration to the kingdom of heaven. God's mercy and judgment, truth and faithfulness, are to be discerned in the history of Jew and Christian, yea, of the whole world ; and the day is coming when men will gladly acknowledge that His mercy is great as the heavens, His judgments deep and terrible as sin, death, and hell, and that His truth and faithfulness cannot change.

The Book of Numbers.

CHAPTER I. The Book of Leviticus has specially to do with the servants and means by which men are reconciled to God; the Book of Numbers speaks of a nation in its numbers, order, sacrifices, and laws and it may also be assumed, reveals the history of the holy nation, not merely in a moving, living figure, but also in spiritual reality. The people of Israel in Egypt could not be called a nation, because they were slaves under the heel of their proud master; they may have had permission to worship God, but it was not a worship favoured by the Egyptians; and as for having laws of their own, being slaves they could not even call their bodies their own, or be governed permanently by any laws which they might adopt. The Exodus brought liberty, Sinai brought the law, and after this period they could be said to be formed into a nation. It was upon the first day of the first month of the second year that the tabernacle was reared up in the camp of Israel; and at the beginning of the second month, the ordinances belonging to the nation were given unto Moses by the Lord. In the first month of the first year there was the Passover and redemption from Egypt; and in the first month of the second year, the raising up of the tabernacle in the wilderness. Passing onward in history to the time of the building of Solomon's Temple, when the nation was in its glory, it is recorded that the foundation was laid in the second month of the fourth year of that king, that it took seven years to build, and that it was finished throughout in the eighth month of the seventh year: but the dedication of the temple took place at the feast in the seventh month, which begins with the feast of trumpets and terminates in the feast of tabernacles. In these things there may be traced the development of thought; the second month speaking of the foundation of the nation, the seventh of its dedication, and the eighth of its completion. The redemption from Egypt was in the first month of the first year, the setting up of the tabernacle at the same season in the following year, and after the setting up of the tabernacle, there followed during that month the consecration of the priests, and the giving of the Levitical laws. This may point forward to the second year of the Lord, when, by the coming of Christ, a more perfect Passover was given to men, and to that glorious tabernacle in which God dwelt. If then, the first month, or cycle, is sacred to Levi, to the priests, and man's redemption and salvation, then the second month is sacred to Judah, the ruler: but in Judah there is development, and the issue is in God's perfect time the foundation of a spiritual kingdom in the

great Son of David, of the tribe of Judah; with its dedication in Issachar, the burden-bearer, and its completion in Zebulun, dwelling with God. These are lines of thought which seem to arise out of the development of the holy nation, and it may be well to keep them in view. The seed is to be found in the promises given to Abraham, the external manifestation in the kingdom of Israel from Sinai to Solomon, and the spiritual kingdom in the Christian dispensation.

The nation was summoned to a great census; Moses and Aaron were set in charge over the work, and representatives from all the tribes were called to their assistance. The tribe of Levi was exempt from this census, they were not to be men of war; their duties lay in a different direction, and for the well-being of the people, were of greater importance. The twelve tribes in their several divisions were to be marshalled that they might go forward in God's strength and overcome evil, the tribe of Levi was appointed to pitch its tents around "the Tabernacle of Testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel." In other words, the moral law, grace, mercy, and truth, in all their blessings and benefits, were to be given to the people, from the tabernacle, and through the chosen servants of God.

CHAPTERS II.—IV. Here is given in detail the positions of the different divisions of the tribes of Israel, and their position is stated as it is related to the tabernacle, round about which all Israel pitched their tents. Moses, Aaron, and his sons were upon the east of the tabernacle, the Kohathites on the south, the Gershonites on the west, and the Merarites on the north. Whilst upon the east covering the tabernacle, Moses, and the priests, were the tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; on the south, Reuben, Simeon, and Gad; on the west, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin; and on the north, Dan, Asher, and Napthali. These positions, it may be assumed, have a significance, and doubtless it would be profitable if the meaning could be understood. The Ark of God, with the mercy-seat, is the very centre of the camp; and it ought, also, to be the central point in the microcosm of a man's being. This is the spirit of grace, as yet invisible; but as it is the King's place in the nation, so it is the Lord's throne in the soul of a man. As in the camp of Israel there could only be one ark with its mercy-seat, so in man there should only be one Supreme Lord, who rules not by compulsion, but by loving constraint through the renewed affections of the soul. Moses is the prophet, law-giver, and teacher; the servant who has been placed in charge of the camp, the nation, or the soul, until the time of the unveiling and the manifestation of the sons of God. As prophet he enunciates God's truth; as law-giver, he makes known the moral law and the judgments of God; and, as teacher, he trains men in obedience to the laws of God. The position of Moses is that of authority; he is God's representative in the moral nature, in the world, in the nation, or in a man. His is not the position of the original right of the moral nature to reign over men or nations, but from amongst the ruin of the moral world he is drawn out—Moses—so that as God's servant, set over the house in the days of the minority, the

children might be trained to obedience. His position is not that of a Levite, as a son of Kohath, but in reality he represents the reinstated moral authority of God amongst men. The moral law, or nature, was manifested before grace amongst men, and thus obedience to law must have the precedence, for until the moral relation of obedience to the will of the Creator is complied with, there cannot be the manifestation of grace amongst them. But whilst all these things are seen to be true as related to men, as viewed from another stand-point, Aaron, who represents grace, is the first-born and the mighty power of God to bring the blessing of mercy and truth to man. Only whilst the great truths of God are hidden under symbols and outward forms, and men are carnal and not spiritual, it is necessary for the children that they be kept under the restraining power and authority of Moses until they become spiritual, and are enabled to understand and appreciate the extraordinary birthright and blessing that is their portion. A careful study of the related positions of Moses and Aaron, as viewed from this stand-point, will prove useful; and it is specially worthy of attention by all who are groaning and serving under the legal and ritual spirit. The teaching throughout the whole of Mosaism, in the spirit that has been manifested, is seen to be, if not false, at least perverted from the way of righteousness; it does *not* reveal, that is openly manifest, God as the good or the gracious, but it makes manifest the sinfulness of the children, and their unfitness to enter the King's presence. Wherever the spirit turns throughout the whole of this era there is no liberty: the hand cannot be stretched out to do a simple thing, or the eye to gaze upon the external world, but there may be heard in the conscience the teacher saying "Thou shalt not;" and as for the relationship toward the Gracious One, almost everything that could be done is done to prevent personal access to the mercy-seat. Restrictions, varied and awful, surround the high priest and the priests; and the condition of the soul as it draws near to worship God is dread lest through any impurity God be angry, and if there be presumption, that the fire from the altar will destroy the worshipper. It is not necessary to dwell at greater length upon this aspect of Mosaism, because the Scriptures are full of instruction upon this point; the issue being that Moses and Aaron, moral law and ritual, are the means used by God during the long period of the world's darkness, infancy, and childhood, of pointing men away from themselves to the hope that is hidden in the promises given to men. This is the long, sad, sorrowful period of the world's seeking after the tree of life in themselves and utterly failing to find it; and if this thought is thrown back upon the words uttered to man in Eden: "Thou shalt eat the herb of the field;" "And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live for ever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So He drove out the man: and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." In other words, the poor sinner had *destroyed himself*, and by doing so had actually so perverted his nature

that he was unfit to conceive or know the thoughts of God. But if sinful, certainly not humble or penitent, for nothing would have pleased him so well as to find out the very nature of life and the being of God. This spirit, as may be discerned, has been to a very great extent the spirit of the world, and science, and philosophy, and also of theoretical religion throughout the past ages; but in God's purpose of grace this awful perversion is observed, and it is even utilised as a means of ultimately teaching men their folly, and, it is to be hoped, of humbling their proud spirits. God can save men in the infancy of their spiritual nature by the altar of burnt-offering that has been raised throughout the world; and during the long period of carnal and fleshy conceptions which has been so fully manifested in Judaism and Christianity, there has been pardon of sin through the sin-offering of ignorance; but if men had possessed that knowledge, which they have been trying to find in a wrong direction, by their own strength and wisdom, then the issue would have been awful to contemplate, because they would have been partakers of the seed which has fruit in itself, and not of herbs; or, in plain words, they would have known spiritual truths in their seed, tree, and fruit, and possessing such knowledge of God, their responsibility would be awful in the extreme, and sin committed under such conditions could not be taken away by the sacrifices of a burnt-offering or a sin-offering. Is not this marvellous grace, which, whilst it seems to shut the door of hope to men so as to lead them to think that they can scarcely be saved, is really by such a means keeping them from that destruction into which they would rush; and whilst teaching them their sinful condition, by breaking up their foolish conceits in their own goodness, wisdom, and power, is really leading them onward to the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all the blessings of heaven and earth are to be found? The thought about the herbs being man's food and proscription from the tree of life is the seed-thought of the whole Mosaic work in all its departments. The same thought is found in the life of Abraham, from the time when he said, "Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" through the carnal connection with Hagar, until Isaac is born and weaned, and Ishmael and his mother are cast out to wander in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. It is the same story, under another form, in the life of Jacob during his twenty years' experience in Padan-aram; and the whole of the Sinaitic legislation and the awful mountain of God repeat the same thought in a more impressive and extensive manner.

It can be understood in this way that Moses represents the reinstated, authoritative, moral nature of man, whilst Aaron, as high priest, is a figure, a promise, a sign of the great High Priest. By Moses there is law, guidance, judgments; by Aaron, grace, mercy, and peace with God, as upon the day of atonement; whilst the priests were the means of service, sacrifice, and of intercession betwixt God and men. But when the Levites, even those who were akin to the priests, were not permitted, on pain of death, to presume to touch the holy things, or serve as priests, how much less could any of the common people do so? All this was useful, because it ought to have impressed upon men this great thought, that *such priests and sacrifices* were of no essential

value; for if the high priest required a sin-offering and burnt-offering before he could serve God, then surely through such a service pardon and peace in a permanent form could not reach men. It was the hidden promise, potency, and power in all these visible things that was really valuable; and the sacred Ark, with the tables of testimony, and other things, was really the one point toward which the thoughts of the people should have been turned. In the Sacred Holy of Holies the truth was hidden away from the vulgar gaze; and thus the visible figures occupied the attention of men, whilst the spirit which animated the whole display was very dimly understood. It ought to be remembered that from Moses to Christ, during the age of the world's history, and throughout the whole world, wisdom combined with power was the great thing which men sought after. God permitted men to search thoroughly in all things visible and invisible, until it was evident that they could not find what their souls desired. Men possessed extraordinary powers for intellectual work, and the development in Greece was very wonderful; but since men at that time had to confess that they did not know, and could not find out, God, the Fountain of all goodness and grace, surely the question is at least a suitable one, what is the spiritual and eternal value of all their wisdom? Men took their own way and lauded themselves in the outer darkness; but even then in the divisions that had taken place amongst men there could be discerned "a smoking furnace and a burning lamp." To the proud and powerful, those who were wise in their own conceits, the darkness was as that of Egypt; but to the humble seekers after God throughout the earth, there was a faint light visible, and a smoke as of praise and thanks rising up to God. When men sought their own glory and despised God, He retired from view, so that they might do their will; but when the awful darkness lay upon men and hope was almost gone, then He came forth in His humility, in hidden wisdom, for the salvation of the world. "Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour. They shall be ashamed and also confounded all of them; they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols. But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. Ye shall not be ashamed or confounded, world without end."

Passing from the tabernacle, and the priests and Levites, a moment's consideration may be given to the position of the tribes in the camp and their order of march through the wilderness. Upon the east lay Judah, with Nahshon—that foretells for the captain; Issaachar, with Nethaneel—gift of God—for captain; and Zebulun, with Eliab—God my father—for captain. The standard of this division was the lion of Judah; and in this division was centred the grace of God in power, as a means of ruling the people. It was out of Judah, by the flesh, that the Lord came to win His kingdom; it was by Issaachar, that is, by burden-bearing, that He redeemed His people; and by Zebulun dwelling in them, that they must be made perfect. Nahshon gives the promise of a better King than David; Nethaneel is the gift of God, the King come; and Eliab, who can say, God is my Father, *speaks of the day when the peacemakers as sons of God shall call*

God their Father. The idea embodied in this division is that of the visible kingdom of heaven or power of God ; it was seen in the Kingdom of Judah in figure in the days of David and Solomon ; it was manifested in Jesus Christ in the visible power manifested in His mighty deeds when on earth ; it was seen in the infant Church, and it will be fully manifested when He comes as King of kings, and Lord of lords in that kingdom of peace and righteousness which men are expecting. In the order of march, the division of Judah led in the van ; and it will be remembered that the Lord is given as the Leader and Commander of all His people ; that it was a white horse that was seen going forth in Revelation, when the first living creature said, "Come and see ;" and when heaven is open at the end of Revelation, the King is seen, as the Faithful and True, riding forth on a white horse ; and all the followers of "the Word of God" are seen riding "upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."

The division upon the south of the tabernacle was under the charge of Reuben. The captain of this tribe was Elizur—God my Strength—Simeon came next with Shelumiel—Peace with God—for the captain ; and Gad, with Eliasaph—God that makes perfect—for the captain. It may be suggested that the standard of this division is the face of an ox, or in other words, the patience and self-sacrificing work of God as a manifestation of His grace amongst men. It will be remembered that Reuben dishonoured his father, and thus lost the birthright ; Simeon on account of what he did to the Shechemites got no blessing from Jacob, and the peculiar position of Simeon as omitted from the blessings uttered by Moses has been referred to already ; yet they are here protecting the tabernacle, and united with them is Gad, the spiritual warrior and prophetic tribe. From the names of the captains the following thoughts arise:—That the conscience of man has been through sacrifice set right again, and that he is no longer strong in himself, but in God ; that peace with God has been obtained ; and that a perfect law and testimony, even perfect wisdom will be given to men by the Man Jesus Christ. The position of this division on the march was before the Ark, and after the division under Judah. The position from which the camp of Israel is viewed is from the heavenward position in Jesus Christ, and, these words, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel, the Lord his God is with him, and the about of a King is among them," may be held as expressing God's thoughts of His Spiritual Kingdom and its career. Passing by the tribes, Christ is seen to be the perfect, patient, self-sacrificing Man ; it is through Him as a Man that peace comes to men ; and unto Him all men of all nations will gather.

The division upon the west of the tabernacle was under the standard of Ephraim. The captain of the tribe of Ephraim was Elishama—God hearing, the tribe of Manasseh had for its captain, Gamaliel—benefit or blessing of God, and the tribe of Benjamin had for its captain, Abidan—my Father is judge. It may be suggested that the standard for this division is that of the face of a man, or in other words, the wisdom and knowledge of God, as a manifestation of His

grace amongst men. It is hardly necessary to remember that these are the beloved sons of Jacob, by Rachel, Joseph having received the double blessing. In the tribe of Ephraim was placed the Kingdom of Israel, or the spiritual birthright, and united with Ephraim, Manasseh received the blessing; whilst upon Benjamin there rested the name Ben-oni, which speaks of sorrow and sin, and these bring judgment. Passing by the tribal times, and looking upon the spiritual, as seen in Jesus Christ, it will be remembered that He is the true Joseph, the fruitful, and the forgetful of Self upon whom the birthright rests, and through whom all blessings come to men; and a moment's thought given to His life and death will show that He left the judgment which should fall upon His enemies in His Father's hands. The position of the division of Ephraim upon the march was behind the Ark; in other words, not until the coming of Christ in the flesh, and His death and resurrection did spiritual blessings in the hidden wisdom of God's grace come upon men. The history of the Church of Christ is that of "the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns; with them He shall push the people together to the ends of the earth; and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh," and when in Rome, Papal Benjamin became a Ben-oni, the servant of God, a wolf, then the spirit of Christ in the Church left the judgment with God, the Father of judgment.

The division upon the north of the tabernacle was under the standard of Dan. The captain of this tribe was Ahiezer—the brother of assistance; the captain of the tribe of Asher was Pagiel—prayer of God; and the captain of the tribe of Naphtali was Ahira—brother of the shepherd. It may be suggested that the standard of this division was that of the eagle, in other words the keen, far-seeing, spiritual vision of God as a manifestation of His grace amongst men. The names of the captains suggest that help has been obtained from God by a Brother; that prayer has been heard, and that there is friendship obtained through Him who is the Shepherd of Israel. The Lord Jesus came to the assistance of men; He is their Intercessor with the Father; and He is the Shepherd who watches over the redeemed flock. The position of this division on the march was in the rear; in other words, this division closes up the march of history, and it records and judges the past. To this division, the whole of Israel was in full view upon the march; the eye of the eagle surveyed the whole tract of time and space, and at the end there is produced the record and the judgment: the events recorded in Revelation, chapter xi., 15—19, seem specially to come under this division; but in reality Daniel in the Old Testament, and John in the New Testament, seem endowed with this spirit of eagle-like vision to discern the past and the future, and to utter the judgments and the mercies of God.

The thoughts which have evolved from this brief consideration of the camp of Israel may be stated in the abstract principles in this form: the grace of God, the Ark and its contents, and the mercy-seat, are the very centre of God's grace for man; but during the pre-Christian eras this grace was hidden from men under veiled figures, and it was shown that, once during a cycle of time would this grace

be manifested to men, as upon the day of atonement. The holy place in which the priests served, wherein was the table of incense, of shew-bread, and the seven-branched candlestick, showed that in Christ's body, the Manifestation in the Flesh, men could find an Intercessor with God, Bread from heaven for the soul, and the Light of Truth. In the outer court there was the laver and altar of burnt-offering, teaching that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all men, in all ages, by self-sacrifice, and that it is only by the washing of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, that they can enter into the sanctuary to meet with God, feed on the Bread of Life, and know the Truth; and that only through the rent veil of the Redeemer's flesh by a spiritual faith could men come to know the secret of a perfect moral life hidden in the grace of God. Moses, Aaron, and his sons, and the Levites, surround these abstract symbols; the first representing the moral law re-instated in the power of government; the second the grace of God in all that is holy, true, beautiful, and gracious; and the third in that faithful devotion to such service as would be the means of blessing men in body, soul, and spirit. In the very centre of the camp there is found in symbol, Christ, as known throughout the era of the external world, of the flesh, or visible forms, and of the hidden, spiritual truths; and these represent the whole world in its history as related to God, and as religions in their forms have been related to each other. Around the tabernacle God's chosen servants are found, whose special duty and high privilege it has been during the past ages to minister unto mankind of the manifold grace of God, in morality, truth, grace, holiness, education, medicine, science, philosophy, and all that could make men good, wise, and gracious. Beyond this privileged inner circle, the first-born, elect, chosen ones, there was as upon the east, the grace of the power of God; on the south, the grace of the patience and long-suffering of God with sinful, rebellious men; on the west, the grace of the hidden wisdom and knowledge of God; and on the north, the keen intensive and extensive spiritual vision, which surveys time and space as related to past history.

It may be discerned at this point that a very magnificent view has been opened to the spiritual vision both of a very intensive and extensive kind; in reality it lays hold in its intensive form of the wonderful hidden purposes of God's grace, as they are contained in His Holy Word; and in its extensive form upon the power, patience, wisdom, and spiritual vision of God, as manifested throughout history. Passing by the hidden seed-thoughts in the names of the patriarchs, Seth, Enos, Cainan, and Mahalaleel, which harmonise with the first four blessings uttered by Christ, consider very briefly in what way Abraham, Isaac, Israel, and Joseph embody this same conception of the four-fold division of the tribes as seen in the camp of Israel. Abraham is the new power of God's grace in poorness of spirit, in whom the kingdom of heaven is prefigured; Isaac represents the patient spirit that mourns because of sin, in whom by sacrifice there is pardon, peace, and reconciliation with God; Israel is the meek spirit of a man subject to the laws of God, which is truly the wisdom and knowledge hidden from men through their *pride, ambition, covetousness, and hatred* in

past ages; and Joseph represents in a marked manner, the spirit hungering after truth and righteousness, the spiritual vision of God, as seen in his holy life, and the power he received from God of interpreting dreams. These joined together as one, hold within themselves the fulness of the intention of God's hidden purpose of grace in power, patience and long-suffering, wisdom, and spiritual vision, all that shall be developed as from a seed in future ages; grace is the life-germ instilled into the soul of Abraham; the redeemed powers of his being are the first-born; Moses, Aaron, and the Levites, are the moral law, and ministers of grace and truth to this new and living, gracious, power of God's grace given to men. But not only in the founders of the Abrahamic era is this symbolic teaching found; it is also to be seen in the vision of Ezekiel, in the living creatures with the heads of the lion, ox, man, and eagle; and in the wheels full of eyes with the living power in the wheels. In this complex and very wonderful vision of the seer, the wheels (or Gilgal) are in reality the revolutions of God's purpose of grace amongst men in history; and the living creatures are the principles or attributes of God by which men are taught, by His Spirit of grace, His holy will. Again in the Revelation, the four living creatures "in the midst of the throne and round about the throne," with faces like a lion, calf, man, and eagle, represent the same principles of the manifestation of the grace of God amongst men, the living power being God's Holy Spirit animating mankind in His hidden purposes. It is hardly necessary to point out that the key to all this wonderful symbolism is to be found in the sweet, far-reaching, intensely spiritual words of Jesus Christ as found in the first four of the blessings uttered upon the Mount. Further, the whole of this symbolism and the words of Jesus Christ can be applied to the individual soul in its condition as a recipient of God's grace; in the relative position of the powers of the soul in its service; in the sphere of the moral life, and of gracious service; and in the power, patience, wisdom, and spiritual knowledge which is necessary for the soul in its development in likeness to Christ. In these things there is God's hidden, gracious purpose for the redeemed soul; but in Christ the seed bursts through the shell and life is manifested; in the figure the form is taken away and the Spirit of God in mercy revealed, and thus out of the hidden things of God, as from a seed, there is manifested the redemption of the world. But it is necessary to point out that, not merely is the standing camp of Israel a grand symbol of God's hidden wisdom and work of grace amongst men, the order of march is also deeply significant of the march of history as it is known to men. In front is the division of Judah; this is the figure as found in the Jewish kingdom from Abraham to the days of David and Solomon. The next division is that of Reuben, a period of the world's history from Solomon to Christ, during which the pride, conceit, covetousness, and evil passions of men raged incessantly; this brings men to the Ark of God, that is to the hidden power, patience, sacrifice, wisdom, and Seer of God amongst men in the flesh; the Incarnation of Grace in humanity. The third division is *under Ephraim*, or the Christian era of grace, which ends in judgment

through the Son of the Right Hand. And the fourth division under Dan, speaks of Christ come for men's help, of trust in Him, and obedience to His will, and the friendship of the Shepherd of men being gained. As related geographically to Palestine there may be something in the positions of the divisions as related to history; to the east, or Assyria and Chaldea, God's grace was first given from Noah to Abraham; to the south, or Judah and Egypt, during the second period; to the west, that is Europe and America during the Christian era; and in the future, the north is to be joined with the others in the rich blessings of the grace of God amongst men.

CHAPTER V. Attention is here turned away from the tabernacle and its surroundings and is centred upon the condition of those who are to live within the camp. The camp is holy, sacred to the service of God, and as a manifestation of God's thoughts it makes known what His nation should be; filthiness, uncleanness, impurities of all kinds are to be put out of the camp, and purity and sincerity must animate those who are the followers of Christ. As with the camp of Israel so with the soul, anything that defiles must be thrust forth as unclean and not permitted to touch the redeemed and sanctified soul. As with the soul so with the heavenly Jerusalem, "there shall in nowise enter into it anything that defileth."

If there is transgression of the law of God, a trespass, a sin of ignorance, then there must be confession and forgiveness, restitution and sacrifice, and through these things the redeemed of God will be kept holy. With the spirit of forgiveness there is also to be the spirit of mercy in the spirit of Christ, because only by such a spirit are men justified. The motive is greater than the work, and the spirit of mercy more important than the act of forgiveness; the spirit of mercy is the seed bearing its fruit by natural development; forgiveness alone, without mercy, is but an herb of the field, a mere animal thing suited to man's purposes, whilst mercy rightly understood is a manifestation of the Divine will.

The trial of jealousy is a grand figure of the relationship of the spirit of man toward God; it teaches very emphatically that God holds to the spirit of a man a similar relationship that a husband does to a wife; and thus that any departure from fidelity and sincerity in the affections is a thing most painful to God. This thought is embodied in the second Commandment in the following words: "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God;" and also where God gives Himself the name "Jealous." Therefore from this chapter there is to be learnt what the condition of the soul should be; the relationship of the soul in mercy toward others, and the purity and fidelity of the affections toward God.

CHAPTER VI. There is found in full detail the vow of the Nazarite who is separated from the world and sanctified for the service of God. This is a voluntary act, but it teaches that all self-seeking and self-assertion should be put off, and that in the spirit of Christ, the real Nazarite, there should be a lowly, consecrated life of obedience to

God in all things. As it was upon this condition of soul in Christ that the blessing of God descended, consecrating Him for service, so it must be the same with every soul, or upon a nation, because self-renunciation and obedience in the spirit of meekness, to the will of God, is the true Nazarite spirit. It was upon such a spirit in man, and in nations, that Aaron and his sons were taught to utter the blessing of the Lord in the following words: "The Lord bless thee and keep thee: the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." In this blessing may be discerned the Spirit of the Lord's Blessings in the poor spirit which is blessed and accepted; the sinful, tempted, mournful spirit which requires to be kept by grace; the meek spirit upon which His face shines; the hungry spirit for righteousness which delights in His grace; the merciful spirit upon which the Lord's countenance is lifted up; the pure in heart who see God and unto whom peace is given; and the peace-making spirit which changes the servant into a Son of God, and thus His Name and blessing rest upon every soul that is changed into an Israel of God.

CHAPTER VII. Here is given a full detail of the offerings of the princes of each tribe, as the people's representatives, after the tabernacle was set up for its dedication near Mount Sinai. The altar of God was dedicated by the sacrifices of the people; the offerings were free, thus teaching wherein a true sacrifice rests. Had the gifts laid upon God's altar been compulsory, they would have been an abomination, and not a sacrifice; Christ gave Himself as Altar and Sacrifice for man freely, in obedience to the will of God, a whole burnt-offering, and thus the altar and all that it contained was holy and acceptable to God. By the free-will offerings of the people, the altar, and the national altar were accepted by God, and thus all the people of God were sanctified and accepted on Him whom the altar and sacrifice represented. This dedication of Israel to God being past, Moses as the representative of the moral nature in man and a nation, drew near to God, not by the way of moral perfection, but of grace and mercy; and in Mercy the Lord communed with man, is still communing with man, when he draws near to God by the throne of grace, and there mercy is obtained and grace found to give help in every time of need.

CHAPTER VIII. The consecrated soul and nation possess a method of communication with God, they are instructed as to the means by which the light of truth shall shine upon them. It is through Christ, the Light of the World, the High Priest, and through Him alone. The Lord has been pleased to give to men His Holy Word, perfect in its revelation and manifestation of God's grace, and this is the means which men must use to teach them the way wherein they should walk. This candlestick in which the holy oil of spiritual truth is placed may not be the essential truth; it is form and letter, but it is the pure gold well beaten out by the holy servants of the King; they have not shaped it according to their fancies, but every leaf and flower are all according to the pattern which the Lord showed Moses; in other words,

according to the spiritual influence of the Lord in the souls of prophets, as directed by the Lord the Holy Spirit.

It is in the light of this Word that the Levites are the chosen, elect, holy servants of Christ, and are called upon to serve their Lord. It is not because of any righteousness they possess, but it is through God's mercy that they are called, washed, regenerated, and renewed by the Holy Ghost. Because they have been so chosen, they ought to be always ready, not merely to give thanks for such a mercy, but ready to yield up their whole souls unto Him who has done such great things for them. They are as the first-born, but it is to be in the spirit of *the* First-born of God: they are to be the servants of man for the good of men; and the servants of the nation for the nation's well-being. The position of the servants of Christ is not merely one of privilege, but also one of peril and of duty. On the night of the Exodus from Egypt they were all doomed to death, but they were redeemed; and because they have been redeemed they are called upon in the spirit of mercy to give themselves to Christ as His, and then to the world for His sake. Atonement has been made for them, whilst they have confessed their unworthiness to serve the Lord; but being consecrated to the Lord, it is for them to live in the poor, mournful, meek spirit of the Master, and not in the proud, ambitious, covetous spirit of the world, which is an abomination to the Lord. The redeemed and consecrated unto the Lord are not their own; they have been bought, as if with a price, and thus in the light of His Word, it is their privilege and duty, as sons of God, one in spirit with the First-born, to serve Him faithfully and zealously in all things.

CHAPTER IX. An account is here given of the Lord's instructions unto Moses about the keeping of the memorial feast of the Passover. This was duly appointed at the time of the Exodus, but at Sinai it is brought to remembrance and duly observed. The Passover is a figure of the great Passover held in Jerusalem, when Christ our Passover was sacrificed; He is the true Paschal Lamb, for by His death the destroyer is compelled to pass over all who put their trust in Him. As the Jews have kept up this memorial of their redemption through past ages, so the Christian Church has the Lord's Supper for a memorial feast; and in the sacred emblems of bread and wine there is a continual remembrance of the salvation He brought to the Israel of God. All who would partake of the Passover Feast, or of the Lord's Supper, are called upon to be holy and consecrated to the Lord; but if it should so happen that unclean thoughts, impure desires, and unholy affections trouble the soul, then the question arises, should the unclean draw near to the sacred feast? This question, it will be observed, was one that Moses, as representing law, could not settle; and thus he takes it to the Lord, and the answer is to this effect: that a soul defiled by sin, having been in contact with that which is of the seed of death, and such a soul being anxious to remember the great mercy of God in Christ, is not simply permitted, but commanded to keep the feast in all sincerity and with godly sorrow because of *sin*. Moses, as representing the moral nature in *men*, does not allow the soul to despair because of

sin, but points out what the duty is for the redeemed soul at such a time. But if the penitent, willing soul is welcome to the Lord's table and feast, what can be said of those who wilfully abstain from this gracious memorial feast which is the symbol of God's redeeming love? The answer is plain: such souls are proud, conceited, rebellious, and they despise the mercy of God; therefore, by their attitude, spiritually they cut themselves off from the commonwealth of the holy nation. It is to be clearly understood that the Lord puts no barrier in the way of any soul upon the face of the earth to enter into this sacred relationship with Himself; faith and obedience to the Word of God are essential, but by conformity to these all men are equally welcome and free to partake of the sacred feast, of redemption from the world, and salvation from the lusts of the flesh. This feast of the Passover and of the Lord's Supper becomes the test of obedience and discipleship, or of rebellion and enmity to Christ's cause; the forms and signs may have no spiritual good in themselves, but they indicate the attitude of the spirit and the service which the soul renders, and it is in the spirit which underlies all symbols and signs that there is spiritual contact, and thus blessing is received through a spiritual obedience to the will of God.

The nation consecrated, and in friendly communion with the King, is seen resting in peace under the shadow of the cloud by day and in the light of the fire by night. The will of man is lost to view, and the will of God is expressed by means of this heavenly Protector and Director. If the sun of prosperity blaze overhead, rest in the shadow of the cloud, and there is peace in the soul; if all is darkness around and persecution threaten to exterminate them, the Church of God must keep the eye fixed upon the pillar of fire, and fear not. A long day and night must pass over the nation before it reaches the land of rest; and thus in every trial, the eyes must be turned away from self, all selfish desires abhorred and abandoned, and with one thought ever clear before the spiritual vision there must be the waiting upon the Lord, and moving at the times when He shall be pleased to show the way. This may be very tedious, and oftentimes very unpleasant work; what then, can man do better for himself? By no means; the march of events in history is in the Lord's hands, and they do wisely and well who wait patiently and advance as the Lord by His providences opens up the way. To do anything else is folly and madness, because it shows the strange scene of a creature placing itself in opposition to the will of God, and going forward to seek destruction in the great desert of this world. Perhaps, this is the hardest of all lessons that men have to learn, and they have proved themselves to be very inept scholars; they will not choose the obedient spirit, they will not be patient, and they will not conform to law, and thus they bring upon themselves all kinds of evils. To be able to school the wayward spirit into obedience, calm the restless will into patience, and the soul into conformity with God's will, is surely the very highest education; and yet, it is surely as strange as it is true, that in these days, children, women, and men are crammed with what is named an education which has scarcely any relation to these very important things. The school-master,

Moses, places these things first and last in his school, the things which men make so much ado about being of secondary importance with him ; but in the devil's school, knowledge, science, art, philosophy, anything and everything in heaven or earth, except an obedient spirit, and patience under God's will, are much prized and cultivated. To be right with God is to be right with the universe ; to be wrong with Him and to be His enemy is to be altogether wrong. Surely if men have any wisdom at all, they ought to see that a good, true, and valuable education means an obedient spirit, patience, and conformity in every action to God's will.

CHAPTER X. The preparation for the march by the sounding of trumpets, and the order of march of the different divisions are explained in this chapter. The following thoughts may be worthy of consideration as bearing upon this matter. The trumpets of silver signify the means by which God's purposes of grace are made known to men ; and as the priests alone were permitted to blow upon them, so it is to be remembered that the words of God's truth are words of grace, and that they come to man through the High Priest of men, and by His chosen, gracious servants. The instrument through which God is pleased to make known His will is silver, that is by prophets, and His revealed Word, but they express His thoughts, and thus men ought to be ready to hear His voice in the way that it pleases God to send it to them. The Lord has different sounds which He is pleased to make upon human instruments ; to one it is given to speak to the elders of the people, calling them to their representative duties ; to another the voice is that of a Baptist in the wilderness giving the alarm ; and to another it is given to speak of joyful things upon the days of solemn assemblies, when men with thankful souls praise the Lord for His goodness and mercy, and raise their Ebenezer memorials as the records of His faithfulness. It is important, that they who sound the trumpets be the consecrated sons and servants of God ; and that they give such a clearly-defined sound of the message given to them, that men could not possibly misunderstand them. Is not this the great want of the nineteenth century ? There are trumpets of all kinds to be heard ; and the trumpeters are all sounding what they think ought to be done, and thus in the din of the battle, men are only confounded by the noise, and not by any means assisted in the performance of their duties. This is not like the order of a holy nation, but rather the work of a rabble, in a demoralised crowd ; and it is impossible that amidst such disorder men can realise their duties and responsibilities to the King, to man, or to themselves. The thousands of tin trumpets which men are amusing themselves with must be put aside ; and like rational beings, they are required to turn toward the centre of the soul, the camp, the nation, and the universe, and to listen to the Word of God, and obey its sound. Since God is the Authority which all men ought to accept, it is reasonable and right to listen to His Word and wait patiently for His instructions ; but if men are determined to maintain this earth as a great Bedlam, full of irrational creatures, then it can be done by men continuing in *their selfish and self-asserting, ways ;*

only in such a case their place of temporary confinement will in time become a very hell, and the passions of men let loose will manifest scenes of horror in which devils may be supposed to take delight.

But no, this is not God's purpose of grace for men ; for the devil's head is crushed, and grace is triumphant ; therefore, the day must come when the Word of God will be listened for with earnestness amongst the nations, and the actions of men will be guided by His Holy Will. In due time Israel saw the cloud move toward the wilderness of Paran and marshalled according to the Divine instructions, the nation set forth to seek a place of plenty and of rest. Because the wilderness was well known to Hobab, the beloved-son of Raguel—shepherd of God—Moses requested his guidance and companionship ; this seems to have been at first refused, and then granted, as it is supposed that his descendants are to be found in Israel. Whether Hobab did or did not go with the people of Israel through the great wilderness, may not be so important, but it is well to remember that the Church of Christ has indeed been blessed with the Presence of the Holy Spirit as its guide in all ages. As the Ark of the Covenant preceded Israel to find a resting-place, even so the Lord has gone before His people to prepare a place of rest for them, and the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, is in man and upon His people in all their wanderings. The prayer of Moses when the Ark moved forward, has been the prayer of God's people in all ages, and it is that the Lord would arise, open up their way, defeat their enemies, and give them victory ; and as the night of rest has been falling upon them, their prayer has been that there might be rest and peace under the broad banner of the love of God in Jesus Christ. The march has been a long and wearisome one ; and the prayer of Moses at the time he left Sinai is still the cry of the people of God. Oh, that God would arise, that His enemies might be scattered, and that the glorious victory of the ages might be won ; and, the evening being come, how sweet it will be to rest beneath the shadow of that glorious Cloud, which has been the means of guiding and blessing to men through the ages.

CHAPTER XI. Here is discerned a change ; the Lord has been pleased to ordain all that was necessary for the well-being of the people, in order that they might proceed in their journeyings, and in due time reach the place promised to them. The spirit manifested in the camp is not that of a poor, lowly, obedient spirit, patient and obedient to the will of God, but men proud and lusting, impatient and full of complaints against Moses and against God ; rebellion and discontent seem to be the prevailing spirit, and thus the fires of hell were being kindled within them, producing a spiritual plague of a most grievous kind. At this time the flesh, the carnal nature, set up its hydra-head in the camp, and the cry of the people was for flesh. This was a crucifixion of the fleshly lusts that was unendurable ; and thus in their agonies the mirage of the river Nile, with its sweet waters, the flesh they had eaten so freely and the herbs that they had enjoyed, seemed to them at such a time as the *summum bonum* of human happiness. In Egypt there is all that the flesh can desire in the wilderness crucifixion

of the carnal nature ; which of these will the flesh desire ? Egypt and its gratifications, even with bondage, rather than such an intolerable hunger. Poor souls, poor souls, a sad condition this, and yet it is a very common experience with men who having lost all that the world can supply have not found out that in Jesus Christ there is that righteousness which will fully satiate the soul. This is the horrible position of the soul which has broken off from the world and its gods, but which has not laid hold upon Christ as God ; and thus the misery is intolerable. Behind are the things which are despised and yet loved ; within, a soul on fire, burning in its own lusts ; and, above and before, no satisfying portion upon which the soul can rest. Which will it be, the strong man of grace to take possession, and thus give hope, or shall the devil leave the garnished house, walk about in the desert, tormented and finding no peace, and then return again to the former habitation united with other seven devils, and thus make the state worse than at the beginning ? In this condition men are far from sane ; they lust after former experiences and pleasures, and the vagaries in their souls, the modes of their thoughts, desires, and affections, are all in rebellion against such a change. What was formerly received gave pleasure and enjoyment, but "this manna" does not minister to such tastes, thus the souls are actually starving, and the unregenerate spirits are in an agony. It is not an easy matter to crucify this old Adam nature in man ; and yet literal starvation and pain, as of crucifixion, is necessary to bring down the proud, rebellious, covetous, lusting spirit and its desires. It is a hard death to endure ; and the spirit will cry out for relief ; this is like the cry of the thief on the cross, "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us ;" whilst the gracious spirit rising above this condition, looks beyond the present, and acknowledging sin cries out, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." The soul is in a state of revolt against God, and yet, in the night-time, His manna falls like dew to renew and to strengthen the spirit of grace. How very stormy are the tumult of the desires and passions ; and yet, how quiet the workings of the seed of grace. Amidst such an upheaval it is good to draw near to God, to throw the soul open to Him, and to bear His voice saying, "Peace be still."

But there are two who are specially touched and influenced by this condition of the camp, and these are the Lord and Moses : the former is angry against such manifestations of the fleshly lusts ; and the latter is not merely displeased, but is thrown into an agony because of his intolerable position. The servant is in an awful strait ; upon his shoulders the responsibilities are laid by God, and his duties cannot be performed : he is helpless amid the awful storm that, like a simoom, has suddenly fallen upon the camp, and thus in his affliction he turns unto the Lord. But what a picture meets the spiritual vision as it gazes upon this greatest of the sons of men ! The strong man has fallen down to the very dust, and in agony because of want of power to control this rebellious people, he asks question after question of the Lord, asking why all this has taken place, why he is so sorely afflicted—made to carry such a burden, as if he had conceived such a brood of vipers, and carried them *in his own bosom*, to be roused up by their

horrible cries of "Give us flesh that we may eat?" The agony of the soul of Moses reaches its climax when he tells God that he is not able to bear the people; and if God expects him to carry such a burden then his prayer is that God would give him death for his portion, because such a life is utter wretchedness. Strange and awful picture, and yet what occurred in the wilderness has occurred in history, and times innumerable in the soul of man. The light of the New Testament gives to man a parallel experience, but it also manifests before men a greater than Moses, for in John vi. can be seen in another desert of a spiritual kind Jesus Christ speaking of the bread which came down from Heaven, and telling men that His flesh is meat indeed. In the Old Testament Moses is crushed beneath the weight of his troubles; in the New Testament Christ is found surmounting all such troubles. Even as with Moses and Christ, so with the moral nature in man as it seeks to rule in the ways of Moses or in the method of Christ. The former is intolerable, but the latter is found successful through the grace given. It may be profitable to consider for a moment the questions of Moses in the light of the reinstated, moral nature of man in the government of the soul, and to trace the consequences of forgetting that the moral nature and conscience are under the Lord of grace, and of linking the present with the past, as cause and effect, without bringing in the power of grace to solve such difficult problems. The moral nature is here represented as being afflicted and burdened because of the raging desires and passions which threaten to destroy the soul, and as asking whether it had conceived such a brood of lustings and of carnal desires. Here the question must be asked, Upon whom shall the blame of sin be cast? Upon the Lord, who created man in the image of God, or upon the moral nature which failed in its duties when the hour of temptation came upon the soul? The reply must be, Not upon the Lord, but upon the moral nature which rules man, keeping every part of his complex being under moral law. What then, did the moral nature conceive and bear this viperous brood of passions? Perhaps not positively, by an act of commission, but certainly by omission, in not keeping the subordinate powers under law; and thus, the moral power having failed, it is no longer lord, but servant. Grace reigns, and unto this power must the appeal be made. Should the moral nature seek to rule in its own strength then assuredly the issue must be rebellion, and the condition of the soul becomes a hell in miniature.

What is the reply to this terrible cry of Moses? It is the giving of the Spirit of God in grace and moral power in a seventy times increased ratio; the sanctification of the people, and the giving of abundance of flesh to the people. In other words, the culmination of this cry of Moses is the coming of Christ in the flesh, the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the giving of such flesh that it has been the means of blessing or cursing for men from that day till now. To those who receive Christ in the right spirit He has been bread and meat indeed, but to those who have despised the manna, and used the flesh as a means of gratifying their lusts—as, for example, those who follow Antinomian doctrines—to them Christ has been a Kibroth-Hattaavah for their destruction.

Other two points in this chapter require attention, these being the faithlessness of Moses, who could not believe that God could supply so much flesh for the people, and God's reply, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" and the magnanimity of Moses when the Spirit of God came upon the seventy, and Moses was asked to rebuke Eldad—loved of God, and Medad—water of love, as from the breasts—because they prophesied. In these things may be discerned the condition of the Jews at the time of Christ's coming in the flesh, for faith at that time was almost dead; but at such a time the Lord's hand was to be stretched out in an extraordinary manner. The issue was that the pure spirit of Moses in the Church of Christ was revived, and it was his delight to see so many loved ones of God who could speak to the people, and bring them words of consolation and of peace. As with Moses and the Jews, so with the individual soul and with nations. When faith is low then the Word of God is not believed, and what He promises seems impossible; but when His beloved Son is manifested, and the Holy Spirit poured out upon the Church, then the moral nature is encouraged, and God is praised as the God of grace.

CHAPTER XII. relates the strife or the rebellion of Miriam and Aaron against Moses because he had married an Ethiopian woman. The spirit which they manifest is that of self-seeking and self-assertion, for they said, "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath He not spoken also by us?" This spirit is most deadly in its nature, for it is seen to be completely opposed to the will of God, and to that humble, meek, obedient spirit which is the spirit of Jesus Christ. Moses is here spoken of as "very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth," and as he would not defend himself, or resent this assumption on the part of an elder brother and sister, the Lord suddenly intervened on his behalf to punish the offenders and to uphold the authority of His chosen servant. The three appear before the Lord, and Moses is honoured in a most exemplary way, not as a prophet merely, but as a faithful servant who speaks face to face with his Master. The cloud departed in which they were shrouded, and Miriam was seen to be a leper; and because of this condition she was healed through Moses' intercession, but she was put out of the camp for seven days.

The thoughts which may be spiritually discerned in this incident seem to cast their shadow upon the Jewish Church and its rulers in the days of Christ, and subsequent to that time. The pride of Miriam and Aaron, and their taking offence because Moses had married an Ethiopian woman, is very like the spirit of Scribes and Pharisees, rulers and priests, who said of Jesus that He ate and drank with publicans and sinners. The spirit of self-assertion in Miriam and Aaron, and in the leaders amongst the Jews, is seen to be the same; they, too, were prophets as well as Moses and Christ, and thus not one whit less, in their own estimation, than the greatest and meekest servant and Son of God. In the wilderness there was the visible intervention in the cloud, the symbol of His presence. In the days of Christ, and during the struggle of Jew and Christian, there was no visible cloud, but the

spiritual cloud was there, and the Lord being angry the Jewish Church was seen, when the judgment fell upon it, to be like a leprous thing, cast out into the wilderness of this world, there to wait a cycle of time until it should be re-admitted into the communion of the faithful.

Applying these thoughts to the individual soul, and to the nations, the representation is that of an apostasy most hideous in its kind: it is that of the presumptuous spirit of perverted grace, asserting not merely a co-ordinate power with the moral nature in the sphere of morals, but also the self-seeking, wordly spirit asserting itself, not stopping short of the supreme rule in all things. In the nations this is what took place to a very great extent, and amongst the Jews there is seen the high priest and priests as head of the civil court dictating in things sacred and civil what men should do. But the greatest apostasy of this kind is the condition of the Papal Church during the Dark Ages, where popes and priests declared that all power in earth, heaven, and hell was given to them, and in their apostasy—in fact, by their traditions—rejecting both Moses and Christ, saying that the Lord had spoken by them also. Such a sin, whether by an individual soul or by a class of men, is abominable. It is an awful perversion of grace and truth, and the removal of the cloud of darkness that surrounds the soul of man reveals at once that the sin is a terrible one. It is truly anti-Christ, for it removes Moses from the place of authority in the moral nature, and the Lord Jesus Christ from the throne of the affections, and a hideous image of the devil is worshipped instead. Such a sin must, in the very nature of things, bring about corruption in the nature of man, a horrible leprosy indeed, but, if rejected, it is not for ever, because awful as the sin is it is one of ignorance, and thus the Sin-offering crucified afresh by those who, though named after Christ, are under the power of the flesh and of the world can be forgiven. The principle embodied in this incident can be seen to be, not only extensive in its sphere of operation, but also deeply intensive in its spiritual searchings into men and churches in their representative positions; and it emphasises these thoughts: that grace is not a self-asserting thing; that the Church of Christ should not boast of what it is separate from its Head; and above all, that authority comes to man through the moral nature, by the meek spirit, by the garb of perfect holiness; and only in such a spirit, and thus manifested, can it possess authority in a man, a church, and in the world. Because Moses and Jesus Christ, in their respective spheres, conform to this standard they have authority and the love of man; but if any who say that they follow Moses and Jesus Christ manifest a different spirit then they are measured by the great servant and Master, and they are seen to be what they are in reality—rebels and self-assertors.

CHAPTERS XIII., XIV. In these chapters there is given an account of the choosing of the spies who were sent from the wilderness of Paran to see the promised land, to bring back a report of what they saw, and also the rejection of the people at that time because of their unbelief, cowardice, and rebellion against the Lord. It would seem that these are great cyclical thoughts which point to the great events which

transpired not merely in the wilderness of Paran, but which are equally applicable to the spiritual history of the Christian era. As in the wilderness of Paran twelve men were chosen by Moses to go and spy the promised land, so twelve apostles were chosen by Christ that they might be with Him in His wanderings amongst men, so that they might be witnesses to the world of the spiritual realities laid up in Himself, and which the nations of the earth were made welcome to receive. As the twelve spies brought back a good report of what they saw, and also rich clusters of fruit to show the fruitfulness of the land, so the twelve apostles made known to men the glory of Christ in His goodness, grace, and truth; and all men have been compelled to admit the holiness and beauty of Christ's character, if they have taken the trouble to inquire into His life, teaching, and death.

The points which harmonise betwixt the Mosaic and Christian eras are the objects and the chosen witnesses who were appointed by the Lord to bear a clear testimony to the facts which came under their observation. In the Mosaic era the object is a country in connection with which the promises of God to the fathers were bound up; and the realisation of the inheritance would have been to them, in a sense, the fulfilment of the promises. It is true that the germ-seeds of thought in the promises contained much more, even fruit-bearing seed, but they were not in a position to be able to look beyond a literal fulfilment of the letter of the promises, and thus their horizon of thought was limited by the land of promise. It was not so with the twelve apostles and the people amongst whom the Lord laboured during His ministry upon the earth; the whole aspect of the question has been changed, because the land has been possessed and found to be a shadow, or the form only, of good things to come, and the goodly fellowship of the Hebrew prophets had turned the attention of the people away from a land to a Man, and in Him, at His coming, the promises were to be fulfilled. It will be observed that the external things promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were the things which the children of Israel sought after when they were redeemed from Egypt; but when a spiritual salvation from fleshly, carnal conceptions was revealed, then it was the spiritual thoughts of the prophets, from Samuel to Malachi, which were specially to be considered by the Jews. The report of the spies as to the land was all that could be desired; it was all that God had promised, and their eyes were privileged to see the first ripe fruits of the promised land. As with the spies, so with the twelve apostles, they gave to men, in what they wrote and said about Christ, an excellent sample of what the spiritual condition of promise is; and to be able to possess such a spiritual life ought to have roused the enthusiasm of humanity to the highest point, so that without any delay mankind might be blessed by such a possession.

The words Paran and Kadesh may contain thoughts worthy of consideration; the former means, beauty and glory, the latter, holiness. Now, although the physical condition of the wilderness of Paran and the scenes enacted at Kadesh may not at the first glance seem to have any connection with such thoughts, yet in reality these words express the very conceptions which men require to lay hold upon that they may

apprehend the spiritual nature of the story. This awful wilderness to the fleshly, carnal soul is a desert unfit for life ; a place where holiness is not, but where men are full of lustings, passions, ambitions, and all that is contrary to the well-being of man ; and this is very true as viewed from such a stand-point. But if one would understand the meaning of these words, it is necessary to stand by the side of the prophet Isaiah, as he looks forward to another Paran and Kadesh, and utters the words, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground : he hath no form nor comeliness ; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." As with Israel in the wilderness, so with men toward Christ ; the beauty, glory, and holiness were the spiritual things, and only by the death of all fleshly lusts and passions, in such a place, or condition, could the hidden beauty and holiness be manifested. Whether the place or condition shall be a wilderness, or a place of glory and holiness, does not depend upon the outside relations, but upon the state of the soul ; if the spirit of obedience and faith in God's word of truth is strong, then the external circumstances are not worthy of attention, and the chief desire is possession of that which has been promised, and which has been, in the first-fruits, realised ; but if unbelief, cowardice, and the spirit of rebellion rage in the soul, then it is not possible to become a partaker of that which God has not merely promised, but actually bestowed upon man.

The analogy betwixt the Mosaic and Christian eras run on side by side ; in the former there is rebellion in the camp, and the proposal to make a captain for themselves and to return to Egypt ; in the latter history shows very clearly that in spirit the Church and people of God did the same thing : they rejected the Lord as King, the moral law or Moses as their guide, and the spirit and service of the world was what men desired. At this crisis in the camp of Israel, Moses and Aaron, the moral nature and grace, are seen to fall down before the congregation ; whilst Joshua and Caleb, the spirits of faith and truth, are seen rending their garments, and urging, persuading, and encouraging the people to do what was right. The reply to this noble effort of the true and faithful is persecution, stones, and death ; only they are prevented from carrying out their diabolical wishes by the intervention of the Lord on His servants' behalf.

"The Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke Me? and how long will it be ere they believe Me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they." The Lord complains of the continued provocations of the people, and their persistent spirit of unbelief, even though they had seen the great signs of His power, goodness, and grace in their midst. The Lord had been faithful, true, good, and gracious toward them ; He had opened the way up that they might inherit the promises, and they had witnessed the first-fruits of the land which was theirs if they would only choose to trust and obey Him. Their hour for decision came, and they failed ; their choice was Egypt, not Canaan ;

the world, not Christ ; self, not God ; and thus, in reality, the Lord could not help them, because, as rational, responsible creatures, they had chosen to reject God and take their own ways. But such a decision is seen to be the greatest folly, because they have rejected all that God can give in His goodness and grace, and they have chosen what He had no wish to lay upon them—His judgments. This is a thought well worthy of mature consideration, because it is of very great importance ; the fact being that a man or nation rejecting the goodness and grace of God is, in reality, choosing that awful order of things which is ordained by God for the punishment of rebels. Men cannot possibly get out of God's hands ; if they live under the shelter of His right hand, they are blessed indeed ; but if found on the left hand, then the curse rests upon them, and no power in the universe can change His method of dealing with them. This is the nature and order of the universe ; and God graciously permits men and nations to choose for themselves what relationship they will bear toward Him.

The prayer of Moses at this time, and the manner in which he pleads God's promises, will take the student back to Sinai (*see* Exodus, chapter xxxii.), and his prayer to God on behalf of the people when they rejected God by worshipping the golden calf ; and he also pleads God's own gracious revelation, given during the second period of forty days upon the Mount, as a reason why the Lord should be gracious toward the people. There may be a slight difficulty in the thought that Moses in these instances seems to be the more gracious in spirit ; whilst the Lord is represented as threatening severe punishment upon the transgressors ; but, in reality, the servant in the house of grace is pleading with the gracious Master by means of His own promises given for the chosen people ; whilst the Lord, as Moral Governor and Judge amongst men, is making known the consequences which must follow from men, named a chosen people, choosing their own ways in opposition to the will of God. The judgments of God plead for the destruction by pestilence and the final disinheritation of such sinful, rebellious creatures, and such an end is most certainly only bare justice on account of their transgressions. Had Jews and Christians alike been so treated by the Lord, assuredly they could have no right to complain ; for unto these nations and peoples were given the glorious opportunity of making their choice for the Lord, and in each case they have gone after the world, the flesh, and the devil, and left Him who redeemed and saved mankind. Had it not been for the Lord's most gracious utterance on Sinai, Moses could not have pleaded so powerfully for the people committed to his care ; but seeing that it had been revealed to him that the mercy of God was so great, it was his privilege, as a servant in the house of grace, to keep the Master in remembrance of His faithful words of promise. The issue is that there is pardon granted for Jews and Christians ; and then there follows the magnificent promise, "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." Men were permitted to take their own way, and the issue of their choice must have been destruction, and the final rejection of Jew and Christian from the spiritual inheritance ; but the apparent *defeat of His design* by men will not be permitted to

prevent the manifestation of His great purpose of grace ; for as if upon this black cloud which threatened to destroy the world, there suddenly flashed forth the rainbow of a world-wide promise, reflecting and refracting, as with a halo of glory, His purpose of grace for men. This is the climax of God's purpose of grace toward a man, a nation, nations, and the whole earth ; it is to move onward by a gradual development of His purpose of grace, and He will permit Himself, in each instance, to be thwarted, doubted, denied, rejected, and despised ; but when the consummation of the world's apostasy is complete, then, and not till then, will He be pleased to unveil His gracious thoughts toward a world which has deliberately chosen, under the most favourable circumstances, to reject His will, and the issue is to be such a manifestation of grace that the world will be filled with His gracious glory.

These are thoughts pregnant with grace and mercy toward men ; but there is also the dark cloud of judgment hanging upon mankind during these cycles of rejection ; of God's hidden grace, and man's sustained rejection of the gracious will of God. But what men have done makes manifest their own awful wickedness ; whilst, at the same time, it makes the grace of God to shine forth in a lustre and glory which would have been simply impossible for creatures to comprehend, unless it had been acted out in history before their eyes. The sentence is that the despisers and rejectors of Moses and the Lamb, shall perish in the wilderness ; they will not be permitted to eat the spiritual fruits of God's thoughts, which have the seed in themselves ; but for two cycles they will wander in the desert, living upon visible forms and herbs of the ground, until the race perishes which can be satisfied with such things, and a new generation is raised up that will seek to know the ways of God in truth and faithfulness. A doomed generation must fall in the wilderness ; but in the nation there is sustained the faithful, loving spirit, and a knowledge of the truth ; in other words, within the darkness and the divisions set up amongst men, grace lives, and its manifestations are the "smoking furnace and a burning lamp," the faithful spirits of men who keep up communion with heaven and God's Word of truth, which is the light of the world.

The promised land lay before the people, but they were rejected ; then, in a manner which is characteristic of men in all ages, they were not satisfied with the will of God ; they would go up and conquer the people in their own strength, and thus gain the possession promised to the fathers. They were forewarned of the consequences of their rebellion, but they would not listen to the words of Moses, and the result was a defeat before the Amalekites and Canaanites. This story reveals also a principle embodied in history ; putting the matter very plainly it amounts to this : when God said Yes, go, and possess the land, men, in their perversity, said No ; we will go back to Egypt ; and when God said No, you must not attempt to take possession of the land, then men said Yes, we will, and sought in their own ways and by their own strength to fight against the foe that was in possession, the consequence being defeat and shame. These principles are very far-reaching as bearing upon the actions of men, and it makes manifest

how positively and persistently they have been transgressors of God's will ; but the issue has been the defeat of man in all his self-asserting ways, the temporary success of the spirit of Amalek, which is anti-Christ ; and of Canaan, which is that of a trafficking expediency. It is *not*, as some men would state this subject, that God has been defeated in His work of grace, but rather that the Jacob-supplanting spirit has been in full swing amongst men ; and thus the Lord has been dishonoured and disgraced by His representatives : they have usurped supreme authority on their own account in His vineyard ; His servants have been martyred, and the Heir killed ; and in the name of divine right, they have kept men in subjection to their deceitful, covetous, proud spirits, in a bondage almost, if not altogether, as bad as that of Egypt. Applying such principles to a soul, a nation, or the world, the following thoughts press forward for consideration : that Moses, by the moral law, has done his utmost to regulate the lives of men, and ritual and ceremonies have, in their own way, tried to reflect a little light upon a dark world ; but the time will come when the grace of God will be fanned into a flame ; then the truth of God will be honoured amongst men, and faith will bring down from heaven blessings upon the soul, and upon mankind. The spirit of Jacob will become that of Israel ; the fleshly, carnal conceptions will be changed into spiritual thoughts, and then self and self-seeking will be abhorred, attacked, discomfited, and smitten, even to Hormah, or destruction.

CHAPTER XV. The scene is completely changed ; the storm is past, and once more the Lord draws near to reveal to the people of Israel what their duties will be when they have entered into possession of that land which is still their hope for the future. Storms come and pass away, and although men may not be able to discern any great change in their surroundings, yet things are really changed ; new conditions have arisen, and the whole earth has in some measure been influenced. As in the physical world so in the moral and spiritual sphere. There cannot take place such an event as the rejection of Jesus Christ without producing upon men and nations age-long effects, which succeeding generations are virtually powerless to change or modify. To the Jews their rejection of the Messiah has been a very serious matter, because it has altered their position amongst the nations, making them outcasts amongst men instead of conservators of God's grace and benefactors to the world. To Christian nations the cycle of Christianity has brought a bright morning, a stormy noon, and a darkness like that of Egypt as the afternoon has advanced ; and now men begin to hope that at the evening time the light will burst forth, and that they will again see and enjoy the favour of God. In the spiritual possession which men should enjoy after Pentecost, a new spirit should animate them ; all offerings were to be in the spirit of Christ, that is, of self-sacrifice, and men would require to live in the spirit of gratitude and thankfulness toward God the Father, in that of friendship toward all men of all nations, and in the spirit of humility and holiness. The Jewish wall of separation would be broken down, and *these ordinances*—faith in Jesus Christ and

obedience to His will—may be spiritually discerned as the universal laws of grace for all nations. In this new order of events the people are to offer as a heave-offering the first-fruits of their affections, as an offering to Christ, and in doing this they will sanctify their whole beings, and dedicate themselves in all things unto God. But although this higher revelation is manifested, and there is given in figure what foreshadows the spiritual era after Pentecost, there is still the necessity for the sin-offering for those who sin in their ignorance against God. There is much more light, but the possibility of sinning is acknowledged, and the means is provided which will prevent Christians being cut off from Christ when they sin in their ignorance of His will. Further, if there is this clearer light and also pardon through Christ as the sin-offering, there is the possibility of sinning presumptuously against the Holy Spirit of truth, and this will not be forgiven. Such a soul is seen despising God's Word and breaking His commandment, and for such an one his iniquity rests upon himself, because he sins in the full light of the Gospel of God's grace in Christ. As an example of what is meant—a visible figure, it must be remembered—the story is told of the man who gathered sticks upon the Sabbath; he was found guilty, and stoned to death. In other words, the man sinned against God, who gave the Sabbath as a day of rest, and as a day of acknowledging God as King over Israel. He was well acquainted with the law, and thus He despised the Law-giver and His representative, and so, sinning wilfully, he actually compelled his brethren either to side with God or to take his part. The man was a wilful rebel against God, a disturber of the peace of the community; and sinning, as he did, with a high hand, knowing that he was transgressing the laws of God, and implicating his brethren in his wickedness, whence shall sacrifice be found for such a sin? The question is not one of gathering sticks merely, it is the very complex question of the Sabbath and its meaning in the eyes of God and man; of rebellion or obedience to the laws of the King; of presumptuous sin, in which the creature sets God at defiance, and by implication makes the whole camp of Israel rebellious if it takes no notice of the deed, or loyal if steps are taken to punish the transgressor and to honour God's Name and the King's laws. No sin, when rightly understood, can be trivial; it is a schism in the universe, a setting up of another god in opposition to God; and thus it is a fatal thing under any circumstances. This incident, in its principles, may be compared to those of Achan and the accursed things taken from Jericho, and to the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. It stamps the period as a new departure, in which men are specially warned; and there is judgment upon an offender, so that God's Name may be feared and His laws obeyed. The blue riband upon the fringe of the garment is given as a remembrancer of judgment and mercy, so that men may keep from sin, obey God's laws, and by doing so be pure and holy before God. Holiness is the standard which men are to keep in view in all their thoughts and actions, and to help them in obtaining this end they do well to remember, not merely that they have been redeemed from the world, but also that by *suffering in the flesh* Jesus Christ has brought a full salvation to the

redeemed from carnal lusts. Redemption from Egypt is separation from the world to Christ, but salvation through His death is the way of holiness, and of being saved from the lusts of the flesh. These two thoughts require to be kept distinct from each other, as it is evident they speak, not merely of the development in God's method of restoration, but also of the experience of the soul in its struggles after likeness to God and Christ.

CHAPTER XVI. Here is given a record of the great rebellion under Korah—baldness, or icy—of the tribe of Levi; and of Dathan—laws, or rites, Abiram—holy father, and On—iniquity—of the tribe of Reuben. Passing by the story and figure, which are prophetic, it may be profitable to consider what is the fulfilment of this great rebellion. The thoughts which are developed from the names may be summarised as follows. There is a revolt in the kingdom of God which is headed by a Levite, that is, a servant of the sanctuary and of the Church of Christ, one who has no right whatever to offer incense, or to be an intercessor with God on the people's behalf. Pride and presumption have so influenced this man and his followers that they think they are as holy as Aaron and his sons, and that they have as good a right to act the part of priests. The sons of Reuben, on the other hand, represent the civil power, and thus their conflict is with Moses, who, in their opinion, is a pretender, and not God's legitimately-appointed ruler over the people; they are the sons of the first-born son of Jacob, and it is theirs by right to rule over the people. Of course laws and rites can be brought forward to prove that their claim is just. In their pride and loftiness they will not remain subject to Moses and Aaron, and the end is iniquity, transgression of the laws of God, and punishment. If this figure is thrown forward into the history of the Christian era there will not be any difficulty in finding similar spirits and a like revolt from the ways of God. The servants of Christ in the ministry became corrupt, proud, and presumptuous, and instead of remaining as the servants of Christ in all humility they came out as priests, with even greater power and authority than the priests of the line of Aaron. The revolt in Christian states was not merely a return to Judaism, which would have been bad enough—that is, the supplanting spirit of Jacob—but in the Roman Empire, and succeeding empires, it was a return to the first-born, to the Cain, Ishmael, Esau, and Reuben spirits; in other words, to hatred and murder, perpetual strife, the gratification of the lusts of the flesh, and to the dishonouring of God's Name amongst men. It will be observed that such things emphatically imply the rejection of Christ as the High Priest of men, also as Prophet to the people, and His right to rule as King. These false priests of a perverted Church put aside Christ as the only Light of Men, and the Giver of grace to mankind, and set themselves up in His place as the only mediums through whom grace and truth, light and life, can reach a sinful world. The insolence and pride of the rulers in the State are seen to be intensely Egyptian in its tone, and thus the poor spirit of the Christian ruler is completely lost. But in due time there is punishment; there are *revolutions, or earthquakes, in the earth, and thus the*

earth is seen to swallow up its rebellious, proud, insolent, and over-bearing children, whilst the fire of God's righteous judgments falls upon the guilty, would-be priests, and their portion is to be consumed by the wrath of God. This is a standing warning, a memorial for men in all generations, that they may remember that no one should aspire to be a priest of God. Jesus Christ alone is the High Priest of men, and should a servant in the house of God presume in his pride or pretensions to be nearer to God or Christ than other men as mediums of grace and truth then he is condemned by his words and deeds, and though men may not see the fire descend and consume such presumptuous spirits, assuredly, in the spiritual sphere, this is being done, and God's consuming fire is upon their souls. This spirit of pride and presumption amongst men is a veritable spiritual plague, and even when the judgments of God fall upon a church, or churches, and nations, men will not perceive that such judgments come upon them because of their sins, and thus they go on in their perverse ways. What then? There is the plague following the judgments, and justice demands the extirpation of the cursed brood which will not understand God's ways, ask forgiveness, and strive to be obedient. In such a crisis, Moses and Aaron, truth and grace in Christ, step in betwixt the dead and the living, and through the grace of God the plague is stayed.

There may be some relationship betwixt this plague and the means by which it was stayed, and that strange plague which followed the numbering of the people in the days of David. In this instance Aaron is the one mediator standing betwixt living and dead; in the instance of David it is the sacrifice on the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite that is represented as the means of staying the course of the destroying angel. It was the same spirit in David which proposed the numbering of the people as possessed Dathan, Abiram, and On—that is the spirit in man of pride in his own strength and of forgetfulness of God. This is the spirit of the world which boasts of its inheritance and rights, and which numbers the people by millions as men of war who are fit to conquer the world. All such thoughts are an abominable, spiritual plague, and were it not that the Intercessor has made an atonement, and is ever pleading for man before God, assuredly the issue would be the destruction of all the people because of their sins.

CHAPTER XVII. There is related in this chapter the means taken to teach men the supremacy of Christ over all men and nations; and the following thoughts may be useful in considering this subject. It is to be observed that the strife for the supremacy in the world, for the birthright and blessing, has been in reality, when the facts are fully considered in the light of God's Word and of history, the cause of all strife, hatred, war, and all uncharitableness. The sons of Adam, the first-born, have persisted in their right to the inheritance, even though it has been proved to them over and over again that their right was forfeited by sin; and the sons of Jacob, the supplanter, have made things more complex by their self-assertion of a divine right which they possess, and which with a most deceitful spirit they have

maintained amongst men. The spirits of the world and of the flesh have asserted their right to reign in a thousand ways; these being the Dathans and Abirams of history; and the devil of infidelity and the fulness of iniquity, may be compared to On, the son of Peleth, the destroyer, who also sets up his head amongst men in a different sphere of thought and action. But unto all such powers, which proudly and presumptuously assert their rights, it is shown that the rod of Aaron, the power of the grace of God, His Holy Word, is to be honoured by them as the Supreme Visible Power amongst men. The proof of the acceptance by God of the rod of Aaron is that it shall live. All power is of God, and it may be used wisely and well, or unrighteously; but in His chosen Power, which is to be supreme upon the earth, there will be found life, and it will manifest this life, in the usual method of God's works, by bud, blossom, and by bearing fruit. This is a wonderful sign to men, because in reality it points out the only means by which all disputings, ambitions, and rivalries must be brought to an end. Every power on earth must be tried by this standard, does it possess life in itself, an inherent power of development as from seed to fruit? if so, it is of God, if not, it is of sinful man, and thus rejected of God, and a plague to men. This manifestation of the Word of God as the Supreme Power of God upon the earth will produce great results, because it will be seen to be a sign embodying the Divine Power. And thus the men who have been blind to the judgments of God, as executed by His left hand, will be struck with terror as they contemplate the visible manifestation of the power of His right hand. As the Israelites said unto Moses, "Behold we die, we perish, we all perish. Whosoever cometh anything near unto the tabernacle of the Lord shall die: shall we be consumed with dying;" so men will be brought to understand the awfulness of their transgressions and sins against God and Christ, and be in terror lest the judgments of God come upon them for their destruction.

CHAPTER XVIII. discloses a further development of thought bearing specially upon the Lord Jesus Christ as the High Priest of Israel, who alone can bear the iniquity of the people; and at the same time be responsible for all that is done. Aaron and his sons ought to be viewed as one in this figure, because as High Priest and priests they were the servants of God toward men, through whom grace and truth, light and life, reached the fallen sons of men. Of course such a thing cannot be supposed of Aaron, or of any of his sons, but it is so conceived of Christ, and fully explained in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Levites were chosen as the ministers of the priests; but on no account were they to go near the vessels of the sanctuary or the altar, or if they or any stranger did so they should die because of their presumption. It can be seen that there is nothing of equality betwixt priests and Levites; the former were the medium through whom blessings came from God to men, the latter were servants who were barred from any such communication, and they served the priests as the servants of the people. So it must be with Christ; through Him alone grace and truth come to men; and His servants receive the Bread of Life from

His hands, and dispense it freely amongst the multitudes, who, and hungry, come unto Him. The portion of Christ as High Priest Israel, is the uplifting of the choicest spiritual thoughts, desires affections of the redeemed and saved people, all that is devoted God is offered to Him, and only through Him can they be accepted God. This is the faithful covenant of grace existing spiritually in (in all ages. Through Him all blessings come from God to men ; and Him all offerings and devotions of the redeemed are returned to reject Christ as High Priest, and there is no Conduit of grace from to men ; and if men attempt to draw near to God apart from C they are accursed, and the sentence of death rests upon their h It is not possible that Christ can stand in any other attitude to men ; He must be all that God can do for men on the one hand ; if the first-born, that is the affections of heart and soul, are not , to Him, then nothing less can be accepted. Absolute suprema Priest-King is His claim ; and if there is any drawback from condition, then there is the rejection or the despising of Christ, virtually self, the world, the flesh, or the devil have the suprema the soul, and not Christ. With reference to the law of tithes, ordinance was suitable under a fleshly and carnal rule when men taught by forms, but, as can be seen, it is not admissible in a spi era, when the giving is not so much of the means, but specially o soul, spirit, and body ; and surely if these are given, then it is fol speak about tithes when all that a man is, or possesses, is consec and dedicated to Christ's service. The tithe is not a Christian and tual thought in any sense, it is the conception of the supplanting J in his deceitful, covetous soul, going away from home, and the idea lives throughout the era of Judaism ; but it is a fleshly, c arrangement as compared with the Christian spirit, which cannot less than everything to Christ, since it is fully understood that H redeemed everything, and saved body, spirit, and soul from sin.

CHAPTER XIX. This chapter explains the ordinance of the red h without blemish, upon which yoke had never been laid, which burnt without the camp, and from whence the water of separation purification was obtained. In these things there may be discerned following important thoughts which deserve careful attention. The perfect moral purity of Christ as the one sacrifice for sin for nation of Israel, that is, the people of God in all nations. It prophetic picture of the death of Christ at Jerusalem, when He led forth by Jew and Gentile, bearing the cross of shame. not Aaron, but Eleazar, who figures as priest in this matter ; teaching that by the help of God He offered a perfect sacrifice whole burnt-offering unto God for His people. The blood, how was sprinkled before the tabernacle seven times, thus bringing remembrance the sin-offering for a priest, or for the nation. In burning of the heifer, not only was everything pertaining to the b (except the blood) burnt up, but the cedar wood, hyssop, and sc were also cast into the midst of the burning ; in other words, this *impress upon men the thought that not only is a perfect sin-offe*

required, but the means of grace which men use in their worship and service are also impure, imperfect, and unfit for the perfect service of God. There is a peculiar emphasis laid upon the uncleanness of all who have anything to do with this strange sacrifice: the offering is in every point cursed with sin; the priest was rendered unclean; the man that burnt the body of the heifer was unclean; and the clean man who gathered the ashes of the heifer was also made unclean, until the evening; and this was to remain as a statute for ever in Israel. Sin is an awful thing in God's sight; and had it not been for the perfect moral life of Christ, which was acceptable to God when His body through grace was made an offering for sin, the whole world would have remained accursed, and no salvation could have been found for man. The body of Christ was given up to death because of sin, and all men who had anything to do with that death were accursed; but the blood, the moral life, could not die, and thus His perfect obedience having been offered through the Eternal Spirit, there comes from His death the means by which men are purged and purified to serve the living God. The ashes were kept in a clean place for "a water of separation: it is a purification for sin." These thoughts speak of the resurrection power of Christ; of the gift of the Holy Spirit to man; of separation from all that is unholy and unclean; of acceptance with the Father; and of the cleansing of the soul by God's Word, through the ministration of the Holy Spirit within. The real uncleanness which afflicts man is sin; and thus the only remedy is to be found in Christ's death and resurrection, and the regenerating, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. As the unclean from the various causes were purified at the end of seven days, so the perfect sanctification of humanity will be at the end of the seventh cycle; in the meantime, if any men neglect to use the means provided for their sanctification, then they are cut off from the Israel of God, and they destroy themselves because they will not come to that Fountain which has been opened for sin and uncleanness, and there wash and be clean.

CHAPTER XX. Here is related the removal of the children of Israel into the desert of Zin in the first month; the death of Miriam there; the chiding and strife of the people about water; the striking of the rock by Moses; the rejection of Moses and Aaron because of their unbelief; the message sent to the King of Edom by Moses, and his refusal to permit Israel to go through the land of Edom; and the death of Aaron on Mount Hor. A new phase of prophetic thought seems to be here manifested, and underneath the visible figures there may be spiritually discerned the great events of the Reformation period in Europe. The word Zin has at least two meanings, these being a flower, and a buckler, and under these two conceptions the work of God amongst the nations may be conceived at this time. The dreary winter of death was past, and a new power was felt in the world, the issue being the fair flower of the Reformation at the dawn of the movement from about 1520, until the strife amongst sects, and wars amongst the nations set in about twenty years after that time. As the Lord caused this new life to bring forth *the flowering buds of hope*, so at that time

He was a Buckler and Shield to the reformers until they turned from Him and began to strive amongst themselves. It was at time that Miriam—contumacy, or rebellion—as a visible power in the Church of Christ died; in other words, the forms of Judaism in which as they existed in the Jewish church and in a perverted manner in the Roman Catholic church, as a visible united body, came to an end and from that time until now the visible and the spiritual have separated. In this desert, which gave forth such a blossom, there the awful agonies of thirst upon the people; again in their souls they go back into Egypt, complaining that the promised land had not obtained; that the desert of Zin was not a place of seed, figs, vine, and pomegranates; and they had no water to drink. To such complaints Moses and Aaron have no reply, they can simply fall down before the Lord upon their faces, and it was whilst they were in this attitude that the glory of the Lord was manifested in the camp. The situation of Europe at the Reformation may be fairly represented by the figures; and the subsequent actions of Moses in striking the rock when commanded to speak unto it, reveals the great sins of the reformers amongst men in Church and State when possessing the Rod of His Holy Word, they did not act in accordance with the instruction it contains, but, in a spiritual sense, and thus most truly, they have sinned against the Lord afresh, by their unbelief and disobedience. The history of the Reformation churches and states in Europe agrees with such a figure. Upon the side of kings and rulers and ministers in the Church of Christ, their words of assumption of divine right have been, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch water out of this rock?" and repeatedly have they stricken through His humble followers, who are the Rock of man's salvation. Such deeds were sins of ignorance, for they verily believed that the Kingdom was given unto them in the moral and gracious kingdoms of God on the earth; and although God condemned their actions, yet through the persecution of His people, He sent forth amongst men the Kingdom of Life, by the distribution of His Holy Word amongst the nations and thus, although the Reformation period has been a Meribah of water, it is equally true that the Lord has been sanctified in His people. The time has been one of purification through strife, good and right and wrong, lies and the truth have been wrestling together; thus though the flower of the lovely spring blossom has long passed away, the Buckler of protection has been over the Church of Christ and the nations, and during this cycle the fruit has been gathered which will in due time be manifested fully ripe with the seed brought forth in fruit in itself. Viewed in this aspect, the Reformation is not a dealing of God with men, but as in nature, so in grace these changes are necessary for development, so that the fruit and the harvest come in due time.

It may be observed that the Lord did not instruct Moses to send messengers to the King of Edom to beg permission to pass through his territory; this seems to be a common mistake on the part of the rulers in the Church, and amongst the nations; they get wearied of *their wilderness life*, and would fain find a nearer way and a

pleasant one to the Canaan of rest; but such carnal movements on man's part are of no use, the way to the Canaan of spiritual rest in Christ is not through the assistance which men can give, but by turning away from all such broken cisterns, and following the Lord where He is pleased to lead His people. Any attempt to further the interest of Christ's kingdom upon earth by turning back to, and co-operating with, the spirit of Adam or Esau, the fallen nature within, is a great mistake; there is no love betwixt such opposing powers, and thus it is impossible that they can work heartily together. Men may conclude that vital Christianity cannot pass through the possession of, for example, the spirit of Deism, which was so fully manifested in the eighteenth century; neither is it possible that Christ and Humanitarianism or a Unitarianism, which rejects Christ as the Saviour from sin can live at peace side by side, or have any friendly relationship with each other. This first-born will not allow that he has forfeited his right to the birthright through sin, and thus it is impossible that he can have any sympathy with Christ, who claims both birthright and blessing.

There was another removal of the camp from Kadish unto Mount Hor, and it was there that Aaron was gathered unto his people, and Eleazar, his son, was made high priest in his place. The meaning of the word Hor, is mountain, and also to conceive or show, and thus it speaks of a new condition of the Church of Christ. If Aaron, who represents grace and truth, is taken away from men, so that they may not see him in bodily form, they have cause to rejoice that death does not hide all things, and that help is received from the Lord for carrying out the work that still remains to be done. The venerable forms may pass away from before men, and such departures will cause sorrow; but the inward man in spiritual power is renewed by grace, and thus power is given by God for the fulfilment of duties which are important for the development of the kingdom of heaven. It was a sad duty for Moses and Eleazar to strip the aged priest of the sacred garments, and to leave his body in the Mount; but it was a movement forward toward spiritual things, and thus though painful it was necessary; if the visible things are to remain, the spiritual cannot be manifested, and thus, as with Aaron and Eleazar, so with the visible Word of God in its letter, even it too must die, so that the inherent, spiritual, living power it possesses may be manifested to men. Aaron is the high priest of forms and of the wilderness: Eleazar terminates the wilderness journeyings bringing strife, and also victories, and by him the land is possessed and also divided amongst the people of Israel. In this way it can be observed, that Aaron upon Mount Hor shows to men the past, from the position in which they stand, and he looks back toward Egypt across the great wilderness; whilst Eleazar has his face turned toward the future and the land of rest promised to the fathers.

CHAPTER XXI. opens with the conflict between king Arad the Canaanite who fought against Israel and took some prisoners; in other words, a victory is gained by the trafficking spirit of the world against

the Kingdom of God ; but the issue of this strife is the manifestation of a new spirit in Israel, because there is a spirit of zeal manifested and of devotion toward God, and the issue is the utter destruction of this abominable time-serving spirit of expediency.

There is a forward movement from Mount Hor, the object being to compass the land of Edom, but this place also was a weary wilderness, and the people were greatly grieved and disheartened because of the way. Again there was the longing for Egypt, the complaint that they should die in the wilderness, the want of water, and a loathing of the manna which God gave them. The reply to their complaints is the fiery serpents as the punishment for their unbelief, the poisoned death to many in the camp, and when the people cried unto God, then the brazen serpent was raised up, and all who looked upon it were saved. This occurred during the journey that was necessary to compass the land of Edom ; in other words, it is that sad and weary experience which men have passed through during the past centuries where man has opposed God in so many forms, and it has been necessary for God, so to speak, to circumvent, to go round about the enemy, and by doing so to show man how foolish he has been. But such a movement is not carried on without great discomfort, and thus it has come to pass that the grace of God has not been flowing amongst men ; spiritual life in the Church and State has been at a very low ebb ; and as for the Word of God, the Bread from heaven, strange to say men have been found loathing that which is their very life. Is it any wonder that infidelity, scepticism, even that old serpent the devil, has been at work amongst men ; and through the poisonous thoughts derived from a rationalistic criticism of the Word of God, which treats the Bible as a dead thing, by the utter denial of any God, and by the more subtle spirit which does not know whether there is a God or not, there has been brought about a spiritual condition of Christendom which may be compared to the camp of Israel when attacked by serpents ? For this spirit of unbelief in its many forms which has assailed and almost overcome men there is only one remedy ; and it is to look away from man altogether unto Christ, who is like man, and in seeing Him crucified for unbelief in all its phases, and sins of ignorance in all their forms, by simple trust in His Word, there will be received a new life which will destroy for ever the poison of the devil ; and possessing His spirit of grace men will not perish, but be saved and receive eternal life.

The march was continued until they reached Arnon—rejoicing, leaping for joy, or turbulent. This is the border-land betwixt the Amorite rebel and Moab, progeny of the father ; in other words, most critical times are seen to be approaching, and another deliverance, which may be compared to that of the salvation of Israel and the destruction of Egypt, is at hand. There is an awakening as to the future, and there is begun the uncovering of that future which looked so full of gloom ; the cloud begins to break, but it is with blessings upon the head of Israel, and of judgments upon the heads of the enemies of God. The water of salvation from the Word of God breaks forth afresh, and men are called unto it by God that they may drink and be glad in the Lord. *At this well there is great joy in Israel, and the people sing this song,*

O well, sing ye unto it." What is this but the refrain of movements which have taken place, and the joy of the the Word of God is to them the very Word of life. But it passes onward from the people, and there can be dis-rinces, nobles, and law-giver, all engaged upon the Word of ; to find in it what they require for their guidance in their becomes not merely the life and spiritual joy of the the rulers begin to understand that it is in God's Word, in Living Water, that they will find not merely what will satisfy ous, but also what will be for their guidance in the very intricate duties they have to perform. In due time they h and Jeshimon, and from these points they could see promise which they long to enter. Here they were Sihon—rooting up—the king of the Amorites, who would d upon the onward march, but this power which would aith in God was destroyed, and there was a great victory my. At this point there turns up an interesting historical ch seems to call for a little attention. The capital of Sihon, , was Heshbon, and this word means invention, industry, of building. However, Heshbon, or the arts and sciences, ng originally to the Amorite, but rather to Moab, although overcame Moab and took possession of his inventions. The oabites could not stand before the covetous, proud, over-rites, and thus Heshbon, inventions, and Ar, uncovering, rets of nature, became the possession of Sihon. This spirit ite was successful, not merely in wresting from Moab its itilising inventions and following up the revelations of it also went on to Dibon, or the abundance of knowledge ; things fell into the hands of Israel when the rebellious subdued. Further, Og, and the kingdom of Bashan, with drei—strength—was subdued ; and thus, in reality, there ally discerned the wisdom and knowledge of men, as in l sciences, laid hold of by redeemed men and used y of God ; and the boasted strength of God's enemies the Israel of God, and used as a means of extending His the earth.

XXII.—XXIV. Israel is here represented as camping in Moab, on the east of the Jordan, by Jericho. The king of ad been a witness of the crushing defeats sustained by g, and being greatly afraid sent for Balaam to Pethor, t come and curse Israel, so that he might be assured that he victory over them ; for Balak knew that Balaam was a true thus those who were blessed by him were blessed indeed, who were cursed by him would have a curse resting upon not necessary to go over the story in its details, but it o touch upon the leading points, so that a conception may the spiritual realities which underlie the figure. remembered that the Moabites, through their father Lot, lated to the *children of Abraham*. Lot was the nephew

of Abraham ; and by an incestuous relationship with his own daughter whilst drunk, he became the father of Moab and Ammon. The meaning of the word Lot is covered, or wrapt up ; thus, if there was a mystery of faith hidden in Abraham, there was also the mystery of iniquity, of unbelief covered up in Lot and his children. The children of Lot are found to represent two spirits ; that of Ahab being the rapacious, covetous, blood-thirsty soldier ; whilst Moab represents culture, invention, the arts and sciences, human pride, presumption in the spirit of unbelief, pure intellectualism, and thorough opposition to the Word of God, or to a spiritual religion as is found in the Bible and in Jesus Christ. To perceive that this character of Moab it is necessary to compare the passages of Scripture referring to Moab, and then the spiritual position of Moab in Eden will be apparent. It is the old, old story of Eden, of the woman, the serpent, of the moral nature and the intellect, and of faith and unbelief.

It is necessary to think upon the Christian Church and State, the kingdom of God in its widest meaning, so that an idea may be formed of what this spirit of Moab, of Balaam, and of Balak means ; but they must be classed together as the enemies of Israel, who would, if they could, bring a curse upon the people of God. The spirit is that of intellectualism, of wisdom in the vain conceit of man, of scientific philosophy, and thus of the proud knowing powers in man which set themselves in opposition to the grace of God as it is manifested in Jesus Christ and in the revelation of grace. At a certain period the spirit is seen to be alarmed lest the powers which could subvert the rebellious spirit in men and nations would also turn its hand against Moab and bring down its pride to the dust. The spirit of the priests of this school, to put the matter in another form, can be traced back to Chaldea, the country in which the arts and sciences were first cultivated and from whence all nations have derived them. It is to be admitted that the spirit which has animated those who have been separated after truth, or scientific knowledge, has been, within its sphere, a true spirit ; and thus it is quite right to say that the prophetic spirit of science and philosophy has been a true one, speaking only those things which the Lord has been pleased to reveal unto His servants, and to the honour of such men that they have reiterated the words of Balaam throughout the ages, "I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." But the great failure of this spirit of prophets has been that they have occupied themselves with questions of truth and error, knowledge and ignorance, and they have been too ready to omit the weightier and far more essential questions of righteousness and sin, and of revelation and the grace of God. They have been so far, many of them, true prophets in the sphere of their intellectual vision, and it is a great gift of God to men when they receive power from Him to discover the secrets of nature which are of so much value for the well-being of man. Because this spirit has been, in so many instances, separated from the spirit of righteousness, it has, only too often, been manifested that, as *Balaam*, whilst there has been a determination to speak the truth

hazards, there has also been an inordinate craving after honours, gifts, and the applause of the world. It is here that the prophets of science, art, and philosophy compare so very unfavourably with the prophets of righteousness, as represented by the Hebrew prophets. The former would do their utmost to please wicked men, receiving their gifts, and living in fellowship with them; whilst the latter, caring nothing for gifts, have uttered without hesitation God's words of mercy or judgment, and they have ever been careful to set up righteousness, that is, obedience to the holy will of God, as the paramount duty of every man. To put the same ideas in other words, the Balaam-like prophets are within their own sphere, as used by God for His purposes, true prophets, but immoral men; that is, neither righteous and obedient to God, nor sincerely desirous of the welfare of man; but selfish, covetous, and ambitious, and thus, in reality, wishing to serve the devil and God at the same time. It is unnecessary to condemn such a spirit; it stands condemned by the principles embodied in its actions, and thus it is needless to express another thought on such a subject. The prophetic spirit found in the Hebrew prophets is of another kind; in them morality, righteousness, personal obedience to God, is man's supreme duty; to seek the well-being of their fellows by righteousness is their work; and their reward for many generations was the scorn and hatred of wicked men, and a martyr's death.

It is a fact that this spirit of Balaam, which has existed amongst men throughout the past ages, has gone forth to receive the gifts and to serve in every possible way the enemies of God; and they have done so, not in ignorance, but in their wilfulness, and because of their selfish, covetous desires. But this prostitution of God's gift of wisdom has not proved a blessing to them, for the consequences have always been that their spiritual vision of right and their discernment as to duty have been obcured, and they have gone on in their perverted ways, not knowing that God's messenger of justice and judgment was in their path, and that it has been through the mercy of God that they have not been cut down in their iniquitous ways. How far may self-seeking men go on in such a path, blind to their real position, and yet not perish in their wickedness? God alone knows to what extent such a thing may be done, and yet the creature remain under the influence of God's Spirit; but this certainly is a fact that cannot be doubted, such men may be totally blind as to their spiritual condition whilst the poor creature who is the lowly servant of such a man, no better than an ass, may have his spiritual vision opened, and a mouth and wisdom given to him to utter the thoughts and words of God. Nay for that matter, an ass, a most humble, useful animal, living in obedience to the laws of God, and rendering willing service to man, is a most suitable creature to rebuke such men, who are so foolish as to miss the very aim of their existence, which the poor ass in God's wisdom, performs to the extent of his ability. Further, it is not only true that such men are foolish but, as with Balaam, they oftentimes become cruel towards the creatures which serve them, whilst towards a superior they are not merely deferential but grovelling, mean, and even cowardly in their actions. But it is time to *turn from this prophet* and his adventures upon

the way to Moab, and to consider briefly the prophetic utterances which fell from his lips as related to Israel.

The prophet of intellectualism, after the sacrifices had been offered upon high places departed to see whether the Lord of truth would speak unto him ; in a solitary place "God met Balaam" and gave him a message for the king and princes of Moab. "And he took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the East, saying, Come, curse me, Jacob ; and come, defy Israel. How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed ? or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied ? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him : lo, the people shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel ? Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like His." In this picture the spiritual eyes of the seer are opened, and the vision is seen to be extensive, as from rocks and hills ; it is intensive and exclusive in its kind, for it looks into the history of the nations, and discerns a separated people unto God which is not counted amongst the nations of this world ; and the numbers of this visible, or supplanting, carnal power, working for righteousness, and the invisible, spiritual Israel of God are such that man cannot count them. Space and time are thrown open to the seer's vision ; and the fruition of the womb of history is seen to be innumerable blessings upon this separated nation which is not of this world. With such a vision presented to his spiritual nature, it was no wonder that the covetous prophet gave utterance to the strong desire that had seized upon him, that his death and end might be with the righteous.

Again the prophet of intellectualism received a message from God, and he took up his parable and said, "Rise up, Balak, and hear ; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor : God is not a man that He should lie ; neither the son of man that He should repent : hath He said, and shall He not do it ? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good ? Behold, I have received commandment to bless : and He hath blessed ; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel : the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt ; He hath as it were the strength of an unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel : according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, "What hath God wrought ! Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift himself up as a young lion : he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain." In these words of Balaam the following thoughts may be discerned : the faithfulness of God to His promises ; the immutability of His Word of truth ; the helplessness of man to alter in any way the purposes of God in the world ; the holiness and righteousness of the redeemer in their King ; the presence of the King amongst men ; His power as Redeemer and Saviour ; His power to protect His followers, and to overcome and destroy His enemies ; that the false conceptions and *actions of men* are utterly helpless against the righteous ways of God :

and, that the day will come when men will be compelled to say, "What hath God wrought!"

The third vision and parable runs thus, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar-trees beside the waters. He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters; and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were, the strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up the nations, his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." The thoughts which arise prominently in this vision so full of poetic beauty are the sweet peacefulness and prosperity of the kingdom of God; the heavenly blessings that are poured out as if in bucketfuls upon the blessed of God; the extension of Christ's kingdom of peace, truth, and righteousness amongst the nations; its exaltation upon the earth; success against the enemies of God; the glorious power of God manifested amongst men over the world, the flesh, and the devil; and the supremacy and establishment of Christ's kingdom in power amongst men.

Such blessings upon an enemy was not what Balak had expected, and thus he was angry that Balaam should have uttered the words which he did; and being anxious to get rid of the prophet and of the whole matter, he would fain have dismissed Balaam and sent him back to his own country; but before this took place, the hand of the Lord came upon the prophet, he "heard the words of God and knew the knowledge of the most High," and in this state he uttered the prophetic thoughts, found in chapter xxiv., 17—24. It is not necessary to quote his words, but if the following thoughts are compared with them, then it will be seen that God spake by this man, and gave wonderful thoughts to this bad man. The first thought that arises as the prophet speaks of seeing "him, but not now," is the obscuration of the intellectual power in the world, as it fades away before the Light of the World. He perceives that the radiant Star out of Jacob, Jesus Christ in the flesh, and the Sceptre out of Israel, the power of his kingdom of truth and righteousness, extends until it diminishes to a very minute part, the power of Moab or the intellectual authority amongst men. The destruction of the children of Sheth may be conceived of as representing the symbolism that exists throughout the Bible, and in all the ancient religions of the world, and which must vanish away; because when the truth shines in all its perfection, then the figures which are put in the place of truth must be destroyed, so that the truth may be fully known. Edom, that is man, shall be the possession of Christ; but Seir, the spiritual possession of Esau, and to whose people he was united, a wicked deceitful race, shall be the possession of Christ's enemies; in other words, the judgments of God will fall upon His enemies; but Israel will be valiant for truth and for righteousness, and thus possess the dominion over the world. *The eyes are turned toward Amalek, or*

the perverted spirit of man, and his doom is that he perish for ever ; the Kenites or strength as of iron, who have their nest in a rock, that is the boasted strength of man is seen to be wasted, and thus the sword is changed into a ploughshare ; Asshur—darkness and ignorance—is taken captive by the Light of the World, and thus the light of truth removes all chains and gives freedom to mankind. "Alas ! who shall live when God doeth this ?" not the proud philosopher, the imperious, conceited man of science, the dilettante lovers of art, and the men who boast in the strength of armies and navies, swords, guns, and horses ; but these must give place to the light that will come by ships from the West, and at that day the darkness that has brooded over the world, will vanish away, and anger, wrath, and all uncharitable feelings, shall pass away from amongst men for ever.

The following thoughts arise out of the consideration of this passage of Scripture : as suggested, Moab represents the power of intellect in man, which has been, during the past ages, the chief power in the realm of unbelief for exalting man, knowledge, and understanding. It is this power in man that sets itself up, seeking to be a god in knowing good and evil : and throughout the ages it would not be subject to the moral law, that is to righteousness, but has constantly sought its own glory in self-seeking, and by doing so, rejected the mercy of God and despised His grace, and has also been guilty towards man and the lower creatures. It is the original gift of God to this power that it should be active in the discoveries of the secrets of nature, and ready in inventions for the good of man ; but the rebel spirit, by the desires which are represented by the Amorite, takes possession of such knowledge, and thus the intellect remains poor and unsatisfied, even though it ministers to the corrupt desires of the soul. This thought under a different form is shadowed forth in the ante-diluvian world, in the serpent in Eden, the descendants of Cain, and especially in the family relationships of the boasting Lamech and his children. As the children of Israel overcame the Amorites, so the spirit of grace in a man, and amongst the nations, will overcome this spirit of unbelief in its manifold phases and developments, and thus the intellect which has soared even unto heaven, and could not be satisfied except by gaining every form of knowledge, will be cast out from its self-asserted position, made subject to grace, and compelled to conform to moral law. Another thought worthy of consideration is the peculiarity of this story as bearing upon intellectualism in all ages ; the means by which it became the possession of the nations ; and the strange way by which this prophet of science and philosophy, or of intellectualism, is made to prophesy the means of its own destruction, and of the success of God's grace amongst the nations. For it will hardly be doubted that the covetous, ambitious prophet of Aram, the king and princes of Moab, and the wicked Amorites really represent the attitude of the powers referred to, as found portrayed in history ; and if the ultimate success of Christianity is not attained, it is virtually in possession of the field, and thus it is impossible that these powers can again regain their ascendancy amongst men. It is worthy of observation that the four-fold parables or visions as relating to Israel cover the great eras of history ; the first giving

the seed-thoughts ; the second, the visible manifestations as in Jesus Christ ; the third, the era of peace ; and the fourth, the final issues of the whole struggle, showing the complete supremacy of the kingdom of God amongst men, and the overthrow of the kingdom of evil. It may be interesting to observe that the greatest success of the intellectual labours of men in the sphere of thought, known as evolution, has really been the means of its own crushing defeat. The great truths which have been discovered as bearing upon development, or the order of nature, led Agnostics too far for their own safety, and the issue has been that intellectualism has been found to be a very suitable servant under strict moral law, but otherwise a useless thing, nay, far worse, a desperate, perverted, imperious, self-willed, despotic master, unfit to range at liberty unless in charge of a responsible master. The proud creature has been caught in its own snare ; and from henceforth it must be content to serve and not rule ; to be the slave and not the master. The spirit of unbelief has had a long period of power in which it has used every available means to work out, unknown to itself, the mystery of iniquity ; the spirit of faith, by grace, in lowliness, and meekness, has been under the heel of the tyrant for the same length of time, and the issue laid before men is the mystery of grace. The proud intellect which ruled the world is cast down to the dung-bill ; whilst the spirit of grace and obedience to moral law, is raised to the throne of the world. It is a true saying and worthy of the fullest consideration as being the central thought of all true knowledge, " Blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

CHAPTER XXV. explains the condition of Israel in Shittim, their whoredom with the women of Moab, and also the sin of the people of Israel in worshipping Baal-peor. It may be suggested that this is a continuation of the history of the kingdom of God ; the matter referring to Balaam, Balak, and Moab being a vision or parable for the ages, the interpretation of which synchronises or falls in with the spiritual development of the kingdom of God at this point of history. The covetous Balaam, though unable to curse Israel as a prophet, yet certainly did not fail to give such advice as would tend to bring the people of Israel into subjection to Moab, and this was accomplished by fornication and idolatry. Passing by the prophetic figure, what seems to be the spiritual reality here is the spirit of Moab as found in science and philosophy in its contact with the Word of God ; and the sin of Christians who drink from such a stream of perverted thoughts, full of the spirit of unbelief, and permit faith in God and His Word to become as a dead thing. That the spirit in Israel should fraternise with the spirit of scientific infidelity in the world is a thing that would not be expected ; but it is only too true that such an event has taken place, and the consequence has been that divisions and strife have abounded amongst men. It may be difficult to understand what the worship of Baal-peor was, but Peor means " cleft " or " division ; " and thus the worship is given to a lord that is divided. In Psalm cvi, 28, it is written : "*They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor,*

and ate the sacrifices of the dead ;" division and strife bring about spiritual death, and thus in reality where unbelief has reigned, and the spirit of strife has been in operation, the spiritual sacrifices have not been unto the God of the living, but unto the dead who could not receive sacrifice from men. But the climax of this perversion was reached in the action of Zimri—my pruning vine—who brought Cozbi—a liar, or sliding away, a woman of Midian—strife—into the camp, in the sight of Moses and all Israel, who were seen weeping before the door of the tabernacle because they saw such a shameful act committed by an Israelite. It may be difficult to give an interpretation to this incident, but it seems to point to that spirit of unbelief in criticism in the Church of Christ which has been so active, pruning away and cutting up the precious Word of God, and by such actions virtually saying that God is a liar, and through such deeds causing an awful sliding away from the spirit of faith in God's Word, which is the essential thing that is necessary in a Christian and in a nation.

But at this time, although the perversion was great and the deeds shameful, God did not permit the wicked to go unpunished ; the courageous Phinehas, full of faith and under the protection of the Lord, killed the fornicators, and thus the plague was stopped amongst the people of God. It was because he did this, being zealous for the Name of God, that upon him was conferred God's covenant of peace, and the covenant of an everlasting priesthood was given to him and to his seed. This incident is deeply interesting because of the prophetic lines of thought which meet at this point, showing that a greater priest than Aaron and Eleazar should arise, who would be the means of making an atonement for the people, and who would also bring in an "everlasting priesthood" with a covenant of peace. The true Phinehas, more bold against sin, more full of trust in God, and who was always under His Father's protection, will come amongst men and put down this adultery with the spirit of worldly conceit in its own wisdom, and that fornicating spirit of strife and false criticism which is so abundant at the present time ; and upon Him and His priestly kingdom there will come the blessings of peace and prosperity amongst the nations. This is the change in the spiritual world for which men are even at the present time longing and waiting. The people of God are helpless in the current of evil by which they are surrounded in society and in the Church ; it is painful to have to stand by and to see sin rampant in the land, the Word of God despised, and men disgracing themselves—yea, even destroying themselves through their infatuations ; but there must be patience, calmness in waiting and trusting the Lord Jesus Christ, and in due time He will put His enemies to shame and bring in the spiritual time of peace amongst men.

The order given by the Lord to Moses should not be forgotten by every Christian ; this spirit of false wisdom, of serving the dead and not the Living, must be abhorred ; and the spirit of strife which has been so rampant amongst men must be put down. Every man must see to this, for such a persecution must not be of one man against another, but of every man against this wicked, abominable spirit in *himself* ; and if the spirits of infidelity and strife are vexed and cut off

at the fountains of thought in men, then assuredly the covenant of peace will soon be ratified, and the kingdom of peace will be established upon the earth.

CHAPTER XXVI. In this chapter may be discerned the beginning of a new era ; the wilderness life is at an end, and preparations are being made for taking possession of the land promised to the fathers. There is a census taken, and unto those who were numbered in the plains of Moab the land was about to be divided. There was at this period in the camp of Israel only three men left of all those who as adults were numbered in the desert of Sinai ; these being Moses, Joshua, and Caleb. At the end of the history of the conflict of these thousands of years, there remains to men the moral law, as God's authority amongst men, the truth of God, or His immutable will as related to His grand purpose of grace for the salvation of men, and the faithfulness of God to all His promises throughout history. Spiritually, as a matter of fact, these are the great realities which are emerging into greater and still greater prominence every year ; and all history, sacred and profane, from all quarters of the world, are ministering unto men, to manifest clearly to them that the Word of God is Truth ; that His faithfulness cannot be questioned ; and that His authority amongst the nations by the moral law has never been lost sight of, though there have been repeated efforts made by men to subvert God's authority in the world He created and redeemed. Law, truth, and faith, order and authority, a true method of order, and belief in the Law-giver and Ordainer of law are not dead—they are really the vital powers in operation which cannot be destroyed ; and although the imperfect moral order, as represented in Moses, and found in operation in man and the nations, cannot pass into the land of promised rest—being an external, visible, carnal thing—yet the great prophet will not be lost to mankind. The veil of the flesh will be left upon the mountain, and there Michael—like to God—the archangel and the devil may dispute about the fleshly, carnal figures, which is his body, whilst the man—the spiritual man—will be far away, changed from being a servant, and in a new form, like a new bud of promise, as a subject of grace and a son of God, he will not reign by carnal observances, but live within that permanent moral order which the Lord Jesus Christ has ordained and established. It is a pleasant thought to think thus of the great law-giver, whose frown has kept the nations in awe, and whose mighty words have made the greatest despots tremble. To conceive the idea of approaching such an one and to find him a meek and lowly child of the Heavenly Father ; as gentle and lovable as the Lord Jesus ; and as holding forth his mighty arms to those who draw near to him ; this is a transforming thought of great magnificence ; and yet this is what ought to be expected, because grace must reign, and to no one could such an order of things be more acceptable than to the mighty, yet meek Moses—the greatest of the fallen race of Adam.

CHAPTER XXVII. gives the story about the daughters of Zelophehad, —the shade, fear of *submersion*, or of being burnt—who applied to

Moses that to them also there might be given a possession among their brethren, so that the name and position of their father's house might not be lost in Israel. To their request the Lord granted them an inheritance, and made a law that property should be held by daughters as well as by sons. The spirit that may be discerned in this matter may not be the woman's rights' movement in all its fulness, but it certainly extends to this thought—that there is to be removed from women that shadow which has been cast upon their lives during past ages throughout the world, by proud, selfish, cruel, licentious, and godless men, and that they are to be considered in many senses as the equals of men, as friends and companions capable of possessing and using their lawful rights in a righteous manner, and not the slaves of the imperious wills or licentious passions of men. Under the shadow of the law-giver was this right conferred upon the Jewish women; under the gospel of Jesus Christ women have possessed even greater privileges, and in that day which is dawning upon the nations, this great privilege will be conferred upon women in all the nations of the earth. In the East the women groan under their debased condition and their ignorance; but the spirit of Christ is brooding over them, and to them also will come an enfranchisement into the rights and privileges which their Christian sisters enjoy.

Following the marvellous change in the world which brings about the restitution of the rights of the weak, and their protection under law in the spirit of grace, there comes the Lord's command that Moses shall go to Mount Abarim—passages—and from thence view the land that was given to the children of Israel; and when this end had been attained then he would be gathered unto his fathers, his labours amongst men being at an end. The hour has come, and with the trial comes the grace necessary for such a duty as resigning his position as leader and ruler over the people. The spirit of the man and his prayer are in every way worthy of him. He had been a stern, faithful servant, and had often to deal with the people of God as if they were wolves instead of sheep; but these days had gone past, and in resigning the rod of authority his prayer is that the God of the spirits of all flesh shall place a man in charge of the people with the spirit of a shepherd to watch over the flock, who will be able to lead them into the fresh pastures of truth and righteousness. In reply to this prayer Joshua—the Lord, the Saviour—is placed in command, and upon him there is to rest the authority of Moses, combined with the spirit of Jesus Christ. In these figures there may be discerned the passage from the spirit of authority which has ruled men in the past to that of the Christian spirit of peace and love, grace and truth, which will reign over men in righteousness. The spirit of Judaism, in its carnal, fleshly figures, is seen to be passing away, and in its place there is revealed the spirit of Joseph, who was persecuted by his brethren, and who frankly forgave them. The birthright and the blessing of grace and truth have fallen upon men at last, and it is in the King of kings, Jesus Christ, that all men must find the true Shepherd of Israel, who will lead His beloved Joseph like a flock, and through whom the light of truth will flash forth upon men.

s XXVIII., XXIX. Under the figures of the feasts and unto God there is manifested the spirit of the new era about men. The spirit is to be that of self-sacrifice, in other the grace of God, for grace shall reign over men in all here is to be maintained amongst men a continual worship of God in a spirit of joy, thanksgiving, and praise. The rest is to be doubly blessed to men by the thoughts of redemption, and, of course, they will be the means by which the world will be blessed through the grace and truth of God in them. The beginning of the manifestations of the grace in the world, and in man's soul, are not to be forgotten, but remembered, because these are the revelations of God's love to this sinful world and to every soul, and thus worthy to be remembered by the redeemed. Redemption from the power of the law is not to be forgotten; it is the great day of the Lord, when, as the Lord said to Moses, He took the chains from off the wrists of the people who were under despotic men, and gave them a great deliverance in the glory of His Name. Along with the feast of first-fruits is to be the remembrance of salvation from the lusts of the flesh, and the glorious victory over inward corruption through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, because His life and death are the means of the individualisation of this awful struggle of the serpent bruised His heel, the fleshly tabernacle in which He dwelt, but at the end He, by His perfect moral life and ministration of grace, overcame the serpent's head, and in due time rose from the grave the first-fruits of sin, death, and hell—the first-fruits from amongst men. The first day of this month, the beginning of the civil year, introduces a new feast, beginning with the feast of trumpets, in which the great victory of Christ are made manifest to men. On the first day of this month, after attention has been called to the new events, there is the day of Atonement, in which men are to be brought back to the past in all its sin and shame, with confusion of face and with their guilt in the face of heaven, and through the high priest's prayer will be the assurance of forgiveness, and of acceptance through Jesus Christ, the Atonement. On the fifteenth day of this month there begins, and continues for eight days, the feast of tabernacles, with its manifold sacrifices, decreasing as the days pass. This, also, is the last great feast which lasts for a cycle of years, and thus it speaks of happier and holier days upon this earth for men. The last day of this feast is the great day of the Feast of Trumpets. Upon it the water was drawn from the well of living water, and sent down the temple whilst the trumpets were being sounded. This was done to acknowledge the God in giving rain, and prayer was made for rain at that time. Her words, this is a picture of that blessed time which may be discerned as advancing toward men, when there will be such an outpouring of God's spirit of grace upon men as the world has never before seen. "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture saith, shall flow rivers of living water."

CHAPTERS XXX.—XXXVI. Here may be discerned the following thoughts as bearing upon the future, in the kingdom of God, before Israel will enter upon its possession. There will be a willing spirit to give unto the Lord; not indeed as by vows in the past times, but rather by personal consecration of body, soul, spirit, and possession unto God for His service. The days of tithes will be forgotten, and men will wonder at the extraordinary selfishness, the deceitfulness, of man, and his vain conceits in thinking that a proportion is God's due of man or his property. This Jacob-supplanting standard will be utterly condemned, because it will be seen to be utter folly that the creature shall be seen condescending to offer unto his Creator and Redeemer one-tenth of body, soul, spirit, and property when the Lord not merely owns the whole by creation but also by redemption. This can be seen to be a wrong standard altogether for consecration or for service, because all that man is or possesses is the Lord's; therefore he is only occupying the vineyard until the Lord returns, and then he will not be called to account for tithes, but for the whole of God's property intrusted to his care.

Before the great law-giver and schoolmaster departs from amongst men there is a work of judgment to be performed, and that is in the destruction of the spirit of strife in its five-fold sphere of operation in man and in the world; and also by the death of the immoral Balaam that prophet who has ministered to the pride, conceit, and covetousness of men in past ages. In this war, "the Word of God," as a sharp sword, will smite the enemy, and at that day those who are on the Lord's side will be able to say that there is not lacking one of the precious promises or truths of God toward His servants and soldiers in this warfare of putting down the spirit of strife and of immorality.

In the request of the children of Reuben and Gad to retain possession of the land of Gilead—the heap of testimony—there may be traced the spirit of seeking to be at rest and be thankful, which is no unknown to men. In the testimony of the letter of God's Word, in the successes of the arts, science, and philosophy, there are excellent pastures for those who love carnal things more than spiritual realities but this is not well-pleasing in the sight of God's servants who desire to enter into a complete salvation and perfect wisdom in Jesus Christ. Upon condition that they would not give way to this self-satisfying spirit, and that they would go forward in a self-sacrificing spirit with their brethren, they were permitted to take their choice and to remain on the east side of the Jordan. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." In the day that is coming the spirit, and not the flesh, will be supreme; Christ's wisdom, and not man's conceits.

The journeyings of the children of Israel from Egypt are in all forty-two; in other words, six complete seven-fold cycles. It will be an interesting study for some one well versed in the meaning of words or names, and who will love such a study, to find out whether in these names there is in reality embodied a history of the world in epitome; a record of the great movements in history where the God of Israel has gone before His people leading them through the terrible wilderness in which they have been tabernacling so long. It will also be

g to observe if there is not merely the initiative of all the acts of history, but also if the movements harmonise with the words uttered by Christ upon the Mount, but ever advancing in the path from the lower to the higher development. It is enough to see that these things are probable, and that upon a mere glance at the record of march there can be discerned a harmony in the direction of the march. Supposing this to be the case, it will be seen that this record of names would be of the highest value as bearing upon the events of history.

In the words of the Lord to Moses there are found instructions as to what was required of them when they took possession of the land of Canaan, its boundaries and its divisions; but there is also a warning that those who were not obedient in all the things He had commanded the land would be punished, and that judgments and blessings would come upon them. The priest Eleazar and Joshua were appointed specially to superintend this work, and to choose one man from each tribe; in other words, grace and mercy to be the supreme rulers in men and nations, and faith, peace, and every other blessing of God which rules in the hearts of men in the light of God's grace are to be employed in this

work. Instructions about the cities of refuge, and the inheritance of the land, would seem to carry away the thoughts beyond the visible world, and there, in the spiritual world, may be discerned the Holy City, the Refuge of the soul, by whom all things are sanctified and beyond the Lord Jesus Christ there appears at the end of the New Jerusalem, the city which hath foundations whose builder is God. As none were allowed to take shelter in the cities of refuge who had committed wilful murder; so only those who were saved by accident, or sinners through ignorance, go into the Holy City, the redeemed shall enter and be for ever safe, because the High Priest, that era will never die, but those that sin wilfully against His grace, kill the souls of their fellow-men, and destroy themselves, will be sent away from the Holy City, and the Avenger, the sword of justice and judgment, will follow hard after the

deeds and inheritances amongst men are very important affairs, and do well to be careful that no injustice shall be done in such

But it may be suggested that the marriage of the Lamb and the Church at the great jubilee, and permanent possession of the inheritance in Christ is of greater importance. Blessed are they who are not merely called to the marriage supper, but who respond to the call and prepare themselves for that great event.

The Book of Deuteronomy.

CHAPTER I. The words of this book are the last words uttered by Moses, or dictated for the people of Israel in the plains of Moab. The events contained in the history of the wilderness journey are clear before his vision, and guided by the Spirit of God, he speaks, it may be conceived, not merely to his own generation, but to the men of this age also, upon whom a similar experience has come. Viewing this book in such an aspect, the thought arises that deeply interesting as the recital of these thoughts was to the people of Israel, who were about to lose their great leader, and to enter the land of promise, it is even of greater importance to men now, if they could listen with a spiritual apprehension to these words, which may throw light upon the past, and upon the method of God's dealings with men. The time is clearly defined when he began to write; also the events that preceded the writing of the book; and as already suggested, it harmonises in the historical development of the ages with the present age, and very near the present time.

Time, place, and circumstances having been stated, there is seen the eagle eye of this chief amongst men taking a retrospective glance backward to the beginning of this wilderness period of history, and it rests upon the rugged Horeb and the message which he received from God, at that time, to depart from Sinai and to take possession of the land which the Amorites and Canaanites had taken as their possession. But it will be observed that such a statement really contains the principles embodied in the story of Eden, the flaming sword, and man sent out to till the ground, and by doing so, to learn the meaning of the promise that the Seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. It is the great mission of Moses to put down the rebellious spirit in a man, and amongst the nations; and to overthrow the trafficking spirit which would seek to serve two masters, self, or the lusts of the flesh, and God at the same time.

At the beginning of the wilderness journey Moses had told the people that he could not rule over them alone; their numbers were like the stars of heaven; although his prayer is that they may be multiplied a thousand times more, yet he could not bear all their burdens and their strife, and it was because of this arrangement that many rulers had been appointed for the purpose of assisting him in his work, with full instructions as to their duties. In this statement may be discerned the appointment of kings and governors, rulers and judges, in the State, and also the re-institution of the authority of the moral law in the

individual soul ; because all government by moral law, in man or the State, is under the spirit of Moses, God's great servant in the world. To the proposal of Moses all men agree, but it is useless to say that justice, equity, and righteousness, have not been earnestly sought after in the world or in man ; if it had, it would have been well with them ; but seeing that they have been disobedient, the spirit of Moses cannot be blamed ; the blame rests with men who have known the will of God, as given by His servant, and have not been obedient.

From Horeb to Kadesh-barnea, to the very borders of the promised possession; through a great wilderness, the people of Israel were led by Moses, and at this place the twelve spies were despatched to search the land, and to bring back a faithful report. This they did, and said, "It is a good land which the Lord our God doth give us." But they were afraid of the enemy, who had possession ; because of unbelief there was fear of man ; they would not listen to the words of Moses when he rehearsed what God had done for them in the past ; and thus they were ordered to turn back into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea. Again they were rebellious, and would fight against the Amorites, and were punished ; and only Joshua and Caleb had the promise given to them that they should enter the land of rest. The Israel of God is seen as rejected by Him, doomed to wander in the wilderness because of unbelief ; and for a period fleshly lusts will prevail, but at the end the land will be possessed by faith and truth, which will continue to live amongst men.

CHAPTERS II., III. reveal a brief sketch of Israel after the rejection, from Kadesh-barnea until the time that the people were encamped in the plains of Moab, prepared to take possession of the promised land. At the first they move toward the Red Sea, and for a long time encompass Mount Seir ; but they were fully instructed that they should not meddle with the children of Esau, because Seir was given unto Esau for a possession. Passing from Mount Seir they came to the wilderness of Moab, and they were commanded not to contend with this power, because Ar had been given by God for a possession to the children of Lot. In that country the Emims—fears of terrors—dwelt in times past, as the Horims had done in Mount Seir ; these being of the races of the giants which had formerly occupied the country. From Kadesh-barnea to the brook Zered—change of dominion, or plan of power—the time occupied by the wanderings in the wilderness had been thirty-eight years ; and during that period the hand of the Lord had been upon the rebellious until they were destroyed. Further, the children of Israel were to be brought into contact with the children of Ammon, of the race of Lot ; but as with Edom and Moab, so with Ammon : they were not to meddle with this power, who had taken the land of the Zamzummims—wickedness of wicked men—for God had given them a possession also in that place. They were to advance against Sihon, the Amorite, and Ug, king of Bashan, and their lands having been taken, they were to be possessed by the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. At this time also Moses rehearses how they are to take possession of the *promised land* ; and makes known

his own prayer to God that he might be permitted to "see the good land that is beyond Jordan." He was not permitted to take possession; he did see from Pisgah the promised land in all its fulness; but upon Joshua was the charge laid to lead the people into the promised land of rest; and at that time they were in the valley of Baal-peor. The thoughts which arise out of this very brief glance at the wilderness journey may be seen to take a negative form, until near the very end of the cycle, and only then were Israel to be active in fighting against the Amorites and the inhabitants of Bashan, as preparatory to the great movement of taking possession of the land of promise. Israel was rejected; this people had been led to the very margin of possession of the promises, receiving the birthright and the blessing, but through unbelief there was a turning back toward a world which has been like a Red Sea of blood, through the hatred, strifes, murders, and wars which have been carried on upon its surface amongst men. There is not a return to Egypt, but there is the close relationship to Edom and Seir, which represent the same spirit. Israel is the kingdom of God, Esau or Edom the kingdom of man in its pride of power, and in the boasted strength of its strongholds; and as Edom and Seir were united as one people this shows that the spiritual pride and power of man have been linked with the lustings and iniquities which this race represents. During the early part of the long cycle of rejection, Israel was constantly related to the despotic powers of this world; but the time of Israel's wanderings was not to be engaged in meddling with the powers of this world; rather the time was given for the purpose of destroying fleshly lusts, and for preparing for the day when the promises of God were to be received and possessed. The spirit of Moab is that of invention and industry, the useful sciences, and the arts; that of Ammon, the pursuit after glory in the most barbarous form which it could take, the art of war, and similar occupations. Esau represents the spirit of Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, in their pride of power and the strength possessed; Moab, civilisation and refinement in society, as seen at repeated points in history; and, Ammon, that blood-thirsty spirit which is not limited to the barbarian methods of war, but which advances from arrows, spears, swords and chariots, to the rifled guns, torpedoes, and every invention which would make the killing of men a science. With such things the Israel of God is not called to be specially interested; these things will be manifested until men find out their madness by the punishments which follow such wicked ways; as, for example, when the Amorite takes away from Moab the fruits of his industry and inventions. The thoughts of Israel ought to be grace, mercy, and peace upon men; the manifestation of truth and justice in all their dealings with men of the world, and the issue would be that this leaven of the kingdom of God would in due time leaven the mass of the nations, and bring about the era of peace amongst men. But though Moses could see all this from the hill of observation and contemplation, it was not to be his spirit, but that of Christ, which should bring about the restoration of peace to the world. In the meantime, men are found at a spiritual Baal-peor, in the valley of division, strife, and contention, worshipping many gods, and not as

ly to take possession of that land of promise which is
d to view.

V. Moses begins his exhortation to the people, presuming
in a position to understand the thoughts he will present
the children of Israel had been given for their guidance
judgments, which Moses had taught them in order that
might live and possess the promised land. But, neither
eration, nor amendment was to be permitted upon the
nts of God, given to Israel through him. They had seen
d had done because of Baal-peor, and the awful plague
royed the people. Those who had gone astray were dead,
who did cleave unto the Lord were still alive. In the
God's laws is found wisdom and understanding; and of
who will hear and obey God, it will be said, "Surely this
is a wise and understanding people." Unto the people of
ve received His Word, and to whom He has been so high
people ought to be truly great. Possessing so righteous
tes, and judgments, they ought to be the wonder and
f all the nations upon this earth; and since such privileges
d such responsibilities, the least that they can do is not to
odness of God, nor to depart from Him who is the life of
of nations, but carefully to teach the rising generations in
the Lord. This was the great object which God had in
eb, for the people were gathered together there that they
o fear and obey God, and so be able to teach their children
d seen. At that time, when the glory of God was mani-
e fire, clouds, and thick darkness, men saw no form or
voice declared unto them the moral law, the holiness and
d, and His anger against sin. The same object is kept in
e laws and judgments of God; they teach that obedience
ng and is its own reward; and that disobedience brings
hich is the consequence of sin. This thought is of
ortance to men that God is not a visible figure but a
ity; and thus only spiritual worship, communion, and
f any value before Him. That they might turn away from
ns of men and be trained in truth and righteousness, was
ect of redemption; and the furnace of Egypt ought to
e means of a purifying process upon their souls, so that
ecome the inheritance of the Redeemer, and in due time
is manifestations of truth and righteousness. This was
ect in view for the people of Israel, in God's dealings with
heir training had proved to be a very serious matter for
se for their sakes, on account of their sins, the instrument
n had failed in glorifying God in the spirit of service. If
so strict to mark iniquity and to punish it in His most
red servant, and would not permit Moses to enter the
d because of one sin, then surely the people of God should
eful to keep in remembrance the holiness of God, His
o the honour of His Name, and His government in truth

and righteousness upon the earth. If the Lord would grant them to enter the promised land, then it was for them to be careful lest they should forget the laws of God, and by falling into sin, they would find that "God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God." These thoughts read as if they were written for this age as much as for the nation of Israel; the great principles which are enunciated are of the deepest importance, and well worthy of more elaborate attention being paid to them. They touch the very roots of individual and national life, and it can be plainly seen that it is only by conformity to the will of God that there can be true prosperity in a man or in a nation.

At this point Moses is led to speak of the perversion of Israel in the flesh, and of the consequences which would follow from disobedience and idolatry. There would be another rejection, a scattering amongst the nations, to be followed, if there was a seeking after God, with restoration to His favour. There is judgment with God, but He delights in mercy, and thus He is faithful to His promises made unto the fathers. It must be admitted that the privileges of Jews and Christians, yea, for that matter of all the nations of the earth have been very great; for all have seen His judgments in the world; His signs and wonders in favour of the redeemed. But unto Israel, redeemed and saved, has been specially granted the manifestations of mercy and judgment, and the people of God ought to know that "the Lord, He is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else." Happy the soul, and the people, found walking in the ways of God's commandments, obeying His laws, statutes, and judgments; this is their duty and privilege; and in obedience, conformity to the will of God in all meekness, there is found a three-fold blessing which will not be easily broken.

A three-fold blessing: this seems to throw some light upon the appointment of the three cities of Refuge upon the east side of Jordan, viz., Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan, and also the reason why this number was appointed at this time. It is necessary to remember the extent of the spiritual kingdom of God to which the people had reached at that time; and to which, it may be added, the people of God in Christendom have not as yet attained in their own spiritual, practical experience. The history of Israel, so far as Moses has explained it, from Egypt, or Horeb, to Baal-peor, may be expressed in the three Beatitudes of Christ referring to the poor, the mourning, and the meek spirit; and Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan may give an expression of the same thought. Bezer seems to speak of the light of grace entering the soul, thus changing its condition from the darkness of Egypt to the light of truth; Ramoth is the high place upon which the sacrifice of sorrow on account of sin has been raised up, and through which by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, there is comfort and forgiveness; thus representing the wilderness period; and Golan speaks of a revolution in the soul, a change of government, in other words, the meek spirit which desires to obey the laws of God. Here again the wonderful teaching of Christ comes in with a beautiful harmony of thought; because, spiritually, the next blessing is Christ, in whom all the promises are centred; and to reach Him, and truth and righteousness, there must be not merely the spirit of meekness in obeying law, but also a strong desire for truth

and righteousness as the portion of the soul. Emptiness of self, sorrow because of sin, and meek obedience to the will of God are very important, but during this long cycle of perversion the kingdom of God has not in real spiritual power got beyond this point. The next movement in history is for possession of the fourth blessing in Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER V. This chapter shows a return in thought to Mount Horeb and to the covenant which God made with the people at that place; and all Israel are called to hear, learn, and obey the God who had dealt so graciously with them. This covenant, Moses reminds them, is a personal matter, not to be thrown back upon the fathers, but a reality for themselves, who had heard God talking to them out of the fire, from the awful Mount into which Moses as a mediator had entered on their behalf. The thoughts uttered by God on that day were his relationship to Israel as God and as gracious Redeemer of the world, and its bonds; His supremacy as God, the necessity of a pure spiritual worship; reverence for His Name, as the sign for God; the necessity of an outward expression of allegiance to God as King, by observing the Sabbath; the mutual relationship of parents and children in love; and the duties relating to the sacredness of life, of purity, of property, of truth, and of the spiritual condition of the soul, suitable for a servant and Son of God. The Ten Commandments were uttered out of the midst of the fire, cloud, and thick darkness, with a great voice; and after they had been spoken by God, they were also written by Him upon two stones which were given to Moses. This terrible manifestation of the power, majesty, and holiness of God, made the people greatly afraid; they were afraid that the fire of God's wrath against sin would consume them, and thus they chose Moses to be a mediator with God, on their behalf, promising that the words God spake unto him would be obeyed by them. To Moses there was a veritable drawing near to God by a forbidden path; because all Israel was commanded not so much as to touch the Mount, lest the fire of God should destroy them. Moses is here a figure of the Mediator who spiritually received into His own soul the awful fire, who was covered as by a cloud; and who in the awful darkness of His forsaken condition, cried unto God and received no answer. In figure, Moses is not merely a mediator for the people, but also a sacrifice for sin. The picture is a visible one of what men must not do; and Moses is a figure pointing out the means by which the flaming sword would be sheathed in the Man, Jesus Christ, through whom the tree of life would again be made accessible to men. In Eden the moral question is represented by the tree of life and the flaming swords which protect it: at Horeb it is represented by the giving of the two tables of stone, and by Moses who receives them from the Lord and breaks them in his anger, he being unfit to give to men anything more than the figures of things, whilst Calvary represents the spiritual reality in the dying Saviour, and His spiritual agonies in that awful darkness which no man can comprehend. What the people said as to a mediator was acceptable to the Lord; and into this covenant relationship of grace, through

a mediator, He was pleased to enter in figure at that time. In words, representation of one for all, and of substitution, make a result of Horeb; and it is through Moses in this capacity that He has been pleased to work during the time of symbols and ceremonies. The head of the people is in the Mount with God; the people in tents; when the head comes down it will be to give laws and judgments to the people as God's prophet and ruler over the people; whilst they are to be ready in their acceptance of God's laws and in obedience to His holy will.

CHAPTER VI. Moses passes from the objective picture of Horeb to its surroundings to the important subjective relationship of the individual or of a nation, toward God. The condition is that of subjection to the law of obedience to commandments, statutes, and judgments, which is known to the people who stand in a covenant relation to God. The object of all these ordinances is that men may be brought to their state before God; that His fear may constantly be before their eyes, and that the rising generations may be educated in the knowledge of God's laws, and in obedience to His righteous will. It is upon these conditions named that God will grant prosperity, according to His promises, in that land which renders unto men blessings more precious than milk and honey. But in order that men may clearly understand the thoughts of the Lord, it is necessary that the most intense desire of the soul should be drawn out toward Him when He is pleased to speak; the spirit is, so to speak, to bend down to the ear of the prophet's body, and forgetting all the other organs of the senses, listen inwardly to what will follow the words: "Hear, O Israel." The thought presented to the waiting spirit is the unity of God; and thus without any equal or rival in the universe. Creatures may try to contend against, and even rival, the Creator, but this is utter folly; it is like the silly moth, destroying itself at the burning flame, or like the man trying to destroy the sun by obscuring itself in a fog; the light is on, and the moth destroys itself, or the sun shines, and the fog is dispelled, but there is no comparison betwixt God and a creature; the supreme Lord of the universe. The creature should fear the Creator so that there may be no transgression of law; the redeemed one should love the Lord the Redeemer with every faculty and part of the being, because this is, in reality, what the Lord's love is to His sinful, erring creatures. Such a redeemed one ought, above all things, to treasure up the words of the Lord in his soul; and thus the affections, make known the love of God to others, especially to the children, so that they may love God, and serve Him. This privilege of receiving the truth, and of dispensing its blessings, is to be used in every condition of life; it is to be like a sign manual in every act, as the light of the countenance, and it is to surround the whole man in thought, word, and action. Such a state of the soul will not only bring God's blessing, but, what is of greater importance, such a man is blessed, and most prosperous, independent of all outward countenance. Putting this in spiritual language, it speaks of the well of living water of God's grace in the soul; of the kingdom of God in its development.

from the seed in the germ to the perfect tree with its fruit; and, to the children God is pleased to give what will fulfil the happiness of man; because, as man may conceive of God as desiring to create rational creatures in His own image that there might be a responsive affection betwixt the creature and Creator, so the parents and children will stand in a similar relationship. The goodness of God should so operate upon the creature that sin would be an abhorrent thing; and the grace of the Lord Jesus should so influence the redeemed that love would constrain genuine loving obedience; but history speaks of rebellion against God, and of despising and rejecting the Lord the Saviour, and these things come through forgetting God, and serving self with its many idols. The Supreme is a jealous God; and, surely, it is no wonder that this should be His Name. It is an awful thing to think that a dependent creature should dare to lift up its puny hand before Heaven, and in the hearing of the harmonious universe produce a discordant noise, putting the music of God's thoughts and actions out of tune. What would men think of a man who, in the presence of his sovereign and the assembled court, would stand up, denounce his king, despise his majesty and authority, and insult the wisdom and power by which he was surrounded? Men would say that the man was mad; but if they knew that he was intellectually sane, their shame that such a scene should take place would be intense, and instead of sympathising with such a creature, the deepest dungeon or death would be considered as a fit punishment for such an offence. If in the visible world such a thing would be utterly condemned by loyal subjects, and no pity found for the hardened rebel who would play such a part, then, surely, it is a much more terrible thing in the spiritual court of the universe, before the King Immortal and Invisible, for puny man to lift up his hand, and to cause such a scene before angels and men. It is true that men love to think of God under other names, which are also true in their relations; still, this is an awful truth that the Lord is a jealous God; that in Him there is not merely anger, but it is also true that this anger kindles up as into a flame, to destroy all that would oppose His righteousness in the universe. Such a spirit be far from every redeemed soul; and instead of tempting God to bring punishment upon the soul because of sin, there ought to be diligent obedience in all that is right and good, so that in due time the enemies of the soul, and of God, may be cast down and destroyed. The effects of a consistent, holy, obedient life in a parent will be that the children will inquire into the meaning of what they observe, and in response to their questions, the facts of history and of experience are to be made known unto them. These thoughts may be summed up in the words, bondage in Egypt and to sin; redemption by the mighty power of God's mercy to Israel; and His judgments upon the wicked; guidance and the blessings of God through life; obedience to the gracious will of God; and in the remembrance of these things, and obedience to the will of God, there is such a righteousness as will make men happy in this life, and which will bring eternal felicity hereafter.

CHAPTER VII. An objective law for man and nations is manifested

in chapter vi. ; the subjective state of the soul as related to the law of God is considered ; and in chapter vii. the relative positions of Israel to other idolatrous nations, or of the redeemed, gracious spirit to the sinful soul, are pointed out. The enemies of Israel, and of the soul of man, which possess that which is promised, as the inheritance of the neck, are seven in number ; in other words, a complete cycle of evil, or of devils, from the proud spirit, that is self-sufficient, round to the horrible condition of self-deification where self alone is god, king, and all that is wicked. Such were the wicked Canaanites, the descendants of Ham ; and these are the enemies in man, if not in active operation, yet, assuredly, in possession, and under suitable circumstances for developing the evil seed within these would be the abnormal manifestation of man's life. This complete manifestation of the devil in its germ-seed, in its flower, or in its fruit-bearing seed, is to be abhorred by Israel, and by every gracious soul ; as the devil and Christ cannot be welded together in bonds of amity, so it is impossible that men or nations can serve the devil and Christ, and find such a service peaceable, pleasant, and prosperous. The whole of the self-seeking brood is accursed, unholy, wholly given up to the service of the devil ; therefore, it is simply impossible that the self-sacrificing can have any delight in such things or thoughts. The people of God are holy, and specially chosen by God ; upon them His love is set, not because of their numbers, or their strength, but because He loves, and because He is faithful to His promises. "God is love ;" and He has been faithful to His promises ; and these facts having been made manifest in Jesus Christ, surely men may be content to humbly accept His love, and trust His faithful Word. If they do so, then redemption and salvation are the results of justification by faith, God's way of righteousness ; and men will know in their happy experience that the Lord is God, the faithful and true, and abundant in mercy toward those who love and obey Him ; but, also, that He is a just Judge, punishing those who despise His Word, and are disobedient. By faith in, and obedience to, the Word of God, every blessing is obtainable ; and power will be received to put down every form of evil ; but if there is want of faith, and disobedience, there will be consequent weakness and unfitness for the duties of life. God alone is the strength of men, and of nations ; and in His power all enemies shall be overcome. Nay, more, the day will come when there will be the perfect sanctification of men, and of the nations ; and sin, in its seed and manifold forms, will be detested, abhorred, and cast out, because it is known to be a cursed thing.

CHAPTER VIII. Here the thoughts of the prophet are turned away from the objective law, the state of the soul as related to it, and the moral relations toward others ; and the attention is turned toward God, the Lord, in whom man lives, and to that obedience to His holy will, which nourishes life, and is the only means of blessing. The thought is here contemplated that all the Lord's dealings with men are for their good ; so that they may be made humble, or poor in spirit ; and for the purpose of proving them, that is of making manifest

what was in their souls, so that the carnal things and thoughts might be subdued, and that they might attain to a meek spirit, by which they would be willing to keep His commandments. In this training which God puts His people through, He graciously permitted them to suffer hunger; but this treatment was truly salutary, because only by such dealings could men be brought to understand the strength of their fleshly lusts, and what a crucifixion was necessary to bring their souls into subjection to God's will; but whilst He was starving the fleshly, carnal desires, He was at the same time feeding the gracious spirit with manna; so that they might know that life is not sustained by bread only, but, in reality, by the Word of God, Jesus Christ, who is the Life in the soul by grace, and the Life to the soul by His Word. In such an experience the righteousness and truth of God changes not, for these are garments that endure for ever; and by this new life within, and a life of righteous actions, men show that their feet are not wearied, and that the divine life is one of peace and pleasure, of joy and hope. The external life of discipline, and the internal life of grace, may seem to be opposed to each other; but the difficulties that may arise are not to be considered as working for evil; they are to be fully considered, and it will be seen that the chastening is parental in its nature, and that all things are, in reality, working together for good to the humble and the obedient. Because this is God's intention toward His children, it is their simple duty to obey, love, and fear Him; and they will, without any doubt, be brought into the glorious spiritual inheritance in Jesus Christ, which is figured forth in a land blessed by its position and condition; in its manifold products; and in its hidden stores of riches. All that is in Christ, and thus in God, manifested, is for man; and in Him there is bread in abundance, the new wine of gladness without stint, and the oil of joy without measure. In Christ a perfect moral life is found to be treasured up; from Him streams of gracious thoughts flow toward men, which make the soul to rejoice in the love of God; and in Him fountains of truth and righteousness remain veiled. If men were only in the full possession of these blessings, and the fleshly lusts all subdued, then they would surely be able to bless the Lord for such a feast, and such a prospect; but, as yet, it is not so; these thoughts are but glimpses of what man will enjoy when the heaven within the soul is in harmony with the heaven in which he will dwell. But at this climax the scene is changed, and the warning, "Beware that thou forget not the Lord," rings upon the ear. If the blessings of God in such abundance become a curse and not a blessing, and the proud, vain spirit begin to think of its own self-sufficiency, power, and strength, and ascribe to self all this prosperity, then the issue shall be that the corrupters, and the ungrateful, the proud and the deceitful, "shall surely perish. As the nations which the Lord destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the Lord your God."

CHAPTER IX. Israel is again called to listen to the words of God, by His servant; and to think upon *the words* which he is pleased to utter.

There can be discerned a change in the course of the prophet's thoughts, and in prophetic language he speaks of going over Jordan that day to take possession of the promised land. By this movement there will be a change of government, because Moses cannot cross the Jordan to enter upon the promised inheritance, and thus the leadership will be under Joshua. The seer looks upon a prophetic cycle during which men will pass from under His rod, and the restraint of law, and enter upon a spiritual possession in the spirit of Christ. They are to meet and overthrow the Anakims, that is the sons of Anak, who had possession of Hebron, the place where the bodies of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were at rest, and which would be the portion of Caleb, the faithful follower of God in the wilderness period. The movement, it will be observed, is that of faith against unbelief; the struggle is to be a spiritual one; and around the faithfulness and truth of God the great battle would be fought, and by God's grace won by his followers. In this day of grace the Lord was about to manifest Himself in a new method; not by signs and wonders, as in the past; but as "a consuming fire," to destroy the evil spirit of unbelief. The work was to be in a remarkable manner that of God's Holy Spirit, and thus the people are specially warned against spiritual pride and presumption; and against false conceptions of their own righteousness; because the promises and all that they represented were not given to men or nations for their goodness, but on account of wickedness, in themselves and in the world, so that the grace of God might be manifested. Not on account of what the redeemed have been in any past age, can they put forth any claim upon God for righteousness on their own behalf; but it has pleased God to manifest His grace toward men, and to be faithful to His word; and although they also have been rebellious, and become as bad as the accursed seed of Ham, yet His mercy endureth, and His faithfulness has not failed. The people are called to "Remember and forget not" the provocations in the wilderness, and the idol worship at Horeb, when the Lord was so angry with them that He would have destroyed them. But whilst they were turned aside into idolatry, God was preparing for them a manifestation of a perfect moral law, engraven upon stones prepared by Himself and written with His own hand, as manifested in Christ. It was at this time also that the justice of God pleaded for the destruction of these idolaters, and only through the intercession of their Mediator were they spared. Is not this a concise conception of the Jews and of Israel during the cycle of the rejection in Canaan, when they gave themselves up to idolatry, to the love of money, and to work wickedness? The descent from the Mount is a grand figure of the coming of Christ in the flesh under the protection of Moses whose spirit ruled the Jews; and the breaking of the stones a manifestation of the awful wickedness prevalent amongst men at that time, when the perfect, moral Son of God should die, be put to death by man. The intense beauty of these figures is to be found in the contrasts, as for example the deeds of men in their awful wickedness, and the gracious purpose of God in sending His Son to die for men; the condition of the Jews in their terrible abandonment in sin, and the Son of God hanging upon the accursed tree; the Holy One of God

suffering in the sight of men, and thus the testimony of God against men, despised, put to shame, and crucified to the death. If men could do such a thing, were they not demoniacs, devils indeed, who were utterly lawless and given up to works of iniquity? Because of their sins Moses had to fall down before the Lord during another period of time; whilst the people being spared through the intercession of the Mediator, were compelled to drink of the evil of their own ways, even of the judgments of God upon the nation of the Jews. Pride, unbelief, and disobedience, yea, even open rebellion against the King, has been the history of this people from the beginning, even unto the end; and thus the Jews cannot say that it is on account of their righteousness that God will grant them an interest in Christ, the consummation of all the promises of God.

CHAPTER X. In this chapter the prophet reveals the means by which man will again receive that moral nature that was destroyed by sin; it is to be done by the Spirit of God upon the living, redeemed soul of man, as if by God's own hand. The Christian, for this is the Christian era prefigured, is to have upon his own soul a transcript of what was in Christ, and that is the perfect moral law of God. To hold this testimony of God an Ark was prepared, and when Moses came down from the Mount the two stones were placed there in the holy of holies. They are no longer in the Jewish Ark of the Tabernacle, but in Christ, and it is unto this pattern, that all His followers are called to conform their thoughts, words, and actions.

At verse 6 there seems to come an abrupt change in the vision of the prophet, and it is very difficult to trace the connection with what goes before and what follows after, more especially when reference is made to the book of Numbers, where a different account of the place of the death of Aaron is given. In Numbers it is distinctly stated (chapter xx., 23—28) that the people journeyed from Kadesh and came unto Mount Hor, and it was whilst Israel was encamped there that Aaron went up, died in the mount, and was buried there; and in chapter xxxiii., 38, the same thing is stated again, and there is no mention in the same chapter of anything very striking occurring at Bene-jaakan, Moseroth, Gudgodah, or Hor-hagidgad, and Jotbathah. It will be remembered that the book of Numbers speaks particularly of the Kingdom of God in its manifestations amongst men, and of the kingdom as it is related to the visible order of things; and thus the vision in Numbers is from a stand-point which differs from that of the book of Deuteronomy. As related to man it was near Mount Hor where the encampment of Israel was when Aaron was taken away from amongst them, and Eleazar—the help of God—came down upon them; or to put the matter in another form it was at the time of the Reformation that the visible Aaronic ceremonial order of things was broken up, and upon the Reformed Churches there came the spirit of Eleazar, or, help from God; and from that time until now, the thoughts of Christendom have been centred more upon the Reformed Churches in their aggressive work than upon the Papal Church at Rome, with its ceremonies. Realising that this is the thought embodied in

the book of Numbers, the question arises as to the meaning of verses 6—9 in this chapter, where suddenly, the prophet leaves Mount Horeb and speaks of journeying "from Beeroth, of the children of Jaakan to Mosera: there Aaron died, and there he was buried; and Eleazar, his son, ministered in the priest's office, in his stead. From thence they journeyed unto Gudgodah; and from Gudgodah to Jotbath, a land of rivers of waters." The thought that arises here is that these things are meant to teach very important truths; these being that after the ascension of Christ there came upon men, not merely Beer—a well; but Beeroth—wells; in other words the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the seven-fold plenitude of power as found manifested in the early Church at Jerusalem. And further it is necessary to remember that Bene-jaakan, or the children of Jaakan, brought under observation, are the descendants of the grandson of Seir, who possessed Mount Hor and Edom, before Esau. In other words, there can be spiritually discerned the death of Aaron by the abolishment of Judaism; and the open doors of the Christian Church, into which the Roman Empire, the true spiritual descendants of the Bene-jaakan, are freely admitted, whilst in the Christian religion there is a true Eleazar—help from God—to all who accept Christ as Lord and Saviour. The removals ending in the camp at Jotbath—a land of rivers of waters—speaks of the success of Christianity in the Roman Empire; what was Beeroth—wells—is turned into rivers of grace, and by this power was Pagan Rome overthrown. Again, the reference to the tribe of Levi seems strange; but it will be seen that this spiritual thought may be discerned, that the priesthood of the order of Aaron is at an end, and that all Christ's chosen ministering servants are sons of Levi, who are intrusted with His Word, minister unto Him, and bless in His Name; and to all the ministers of grace, the Lord Jesus Christ is their inheritance, and not a promised land. It is not necessary to attempt to harmonise the statements in Numbers with those words in Deuteronomy; the latter touch the spiritual life in man; the former the visible form, or the body, and thus both are true within their own sphere, although man may not be able to understand all the relations which exist between them.

It may be suggested that verse 10 requires to be linked with verses 18 and 25 of the 9th chapter, or in other words, the rebellion of the Jews and their spiritual idolatry; the rejection and despising of Christ; the words: "I fell down before the Lord as at the first forty days and forty nights," "Thus I fell down before the Lord," &c.; and, "I stayed in the Mount according to the first time forty days and forty nights; and the Lord hearkened unto me at that time also, and the Lord would not destroy thee," show that there is a continuation and development of the events beginning with the advent of Christ at the end of the first cycle of forty years. The leader of Israel is commanded, it may be presumed, after the first flush of Christianity was past, and the spirit of Christ was ebbing away in the Church, to take the journey and go forward to possess the land promised to the fathers. The thoughts in verses 12—21 breathe the spirit of the Christian era; the prophet is translated out of the region of forms and ceremonies.

and spiritual truths of a universal kind fall from his lips. Israel is called upon to consider what the Lord requires of them who have been so highly favoured, and the reply is, Godly fear, obedience, love, and a perfect service in all that is good. And surely such a service is most reasonable, for the universe is the Lord's and all that it contains. The wonder really is that God should care for such a rebellious people; but His delight is in the fathers, the lowly, mourning, meek spirit seeking after righteousness, and because of these He has a chosen seed in the earth beloved by Him. Since upon them had fallen this wonderful love of God, surely a higher circumcision than a cutting of the flesh ought to be rendered unto Him, even the cutting off of all impure thoughts in the affections, so that the holiness of the Lord may be the stamp or seal upon the soul. The Lord God is not merely the Holy One of Israel, but He is also the mighty King and the awful Judge, who weighs the actions of all men irrespective of position or condition, and when men are unjust toward the orphan, widow, or stranger, then He is on their side and against the unjust oppressor. Because God loves the stranger, the outcast prodigal far away from His house of grace, even so Christians are called upon to love those who are strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and by loving actions try to win them to God. Under all circumstances men are called to fear and serve God, to cleave unto Him in faith and love, and to swear by His Name—that is, make His Name the most sacred sign that can be used for any purpose. All this is required of the Christian because God is the object of all his worship and praise, the only One who has done great and terrible things for the redemption and salvation of His people. If the family of Jacob went down into Egypt in number seventy souls, and had become in the days of Moses as numerous as the stars, how much more has the Christian Church prospered in the world until it has become like the sand upon the sea-shore—innumerable? Thanks, eternal praise and thanks, to the gracious God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who has in His abundant mercy done everything for the strangers to bring them into His house of grace, and who has given to the children so many rich blessings at the feast of His love at His own table. To men there is shame and confusion of face, but to the Lord thanksgiving, worship, and praise.

CHAPTER XI. Here the prophet turns from a contemplation of God's dealings with men and what He requires from them, and his attention is directed upon Israel as the object of the goodness and mercy of God. Because God is all in all for men, therefore it is the right thing that men should choose that He should be everything to them and in them, and such a consecration of the being should be manifested by love and obedience. Those to whom he speaks are not ignorant of the mighty works of God for their redemption from the world's power, in all its terrible strength, as manifested in Egypt and in the Pagan Roman Empire; and they are also cognisant of the facts as bearing upon the great fleshly, carnal rebellion in the wilderness, under Dathan and Abiram, and in Christendom under the Papal Roman Empire. For as the earth opened her mouth in the wilderness and

swallowed up the rebels, even so the same thing has happened during the Christian era, and the Papal Roman Empire is extinct. The terrible power which threatened to destroy moral law and liberty, the grace of God and spiritual freedom, lies in the dust before the eyes of men, and in that liberty and freedom which men now possess they are sitting under the beneficial effects which have come through the great judgments of God upon wicked men. If such mighty powers of the earth are found lying crushed, broken, helpless and hopeless underneath the strong hand of God's judgments, then surely the Israel of God ought to be wise to understand the will of God, obedient to His laws, and strong in His strength to go forward to the great possession within their reach. The land of the promises, into which God is about to bring men, is not like Egypt, or as a garden of herbs, but it is a blessed land of mountain thoughts which reach unto heaven—seed-thoughts bearing fruit with their seed, and of deep, fertile valleys of grace which reach the inmost soul of God and man. It is a land upon which the Holy Spirit of truth will descend in refreshing showers, and the loving care of the Lord will be constantly upon it. If there is obedience the blessing of heaven will surely descend, so that in due season the Word of God, the joy of the soul, and the unction of the Holy One may rest upon men, and blessings in their kind fall upon the lower creatures; but if there be disobedience, then there cannot come the blessings of God upon man or beast. If men will prize the favour of God, then the Word of God must be loved and treasured up in the soul; it must be the sign of authority in all their actions, and the means to holiness in the fear of God. The Word of God will also be the great means for educating children in all the duties and relations of life, and under all circumstances, and through such conformity to the will of God the blessing of multiplied days, even as the days of heaven, will come upon the earth. Through obedience every enemy will be subdued in the soul and in the world, and no enemy will be found that will be able to stand up against this kingdom of truth and righteousness which will be manifested upon the earth. But, behold! this is the day of a great crisis, because once again the Lord is about to set before men the blessing and the curse, good and evil, truth and error, and permit them to choose which they will take. What will be the choice of men in this day of merciful visitation? Surely, through His grace, the blessing He is ready to bestow, and not the curse which He is not willing to give, but which He cannot keep back if men will to be rebellious against His holy and righteous laws. The prophet assumes that the blessing is chosen by men, and surely it will be so with this generation, through His abundant grace granted unto them. But men must stir themselves up and realise their critical position, and the necessity for an immediate decision if the grace of God is not to be given to them in vain. A trumpet voice, as from the heaven of heavens, is certainly required at this time, so that men's thoughts may be turned from the innumerable questions which take up their attention, and that they may decide fully and unreservedly for God, truth, and righteousness. As with Israel, in the days when they entered into *the promised land*, and placed the blessing upon Mount Gerizim and

the curse upon Mount Ebal, so now these spiritual mountains appear amongst men ; the blessing is about to be received, and the curse to be burnt up by means of the great Atonement for sin. There must be a renewed consecration unto God of all that man is, or that is manifested in the nations, and there must be separation from sin through the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a comforting assurance in the words of the prophet as to the certainty of the possession, and the obedience of the people. May God grant in His own time, to His people, this great spiritual blessing of a knowledge of Christ in all His fulness, and of obedient, faithful souls ready to do His will. If men get these things they will be rich indeed, and as they will possess the kingdom of God and His righteousness it must follow that all other suitable blessings will be granted unto them.

CHAPTERS XII.—XXVII. The contents of these chapters are the statutes and judgments which were to be enforced in the land of Canaan, and during the period of subjection to the spirit of Moses in the soul and in the state. Such statutes and judgments have been useful in their time, and they have been the means of educating men to higher conceptions of the truth and of the ways of God. But the issue intended for all such teaching, such laws and judgments which are in their nature imperfect patterns—the figures of better things to come—is their abolishment when the perfect moral law and gracious Will of God are fully manifested. These statutes and judgments are not good things in themselves ; they are not by any means the most perfect that could be devised, but they represent what became a necessity in consequence of sin—that is, a human means of obedience and of punishments, and human representations of the means of grace for the salvation of man. To think of these statutes and judgments as being God's perfect method of justice and judgment, of the moral law and of grace, would be an erroneous conception ; rather they should be looked upon as representing the spirit of the Jacob, or supplanting kingdom, which is, in a sense, a perversion, a fleshly, carnal idea of the things of God. It is worth while remembering that the whole system of Mosaism or Judaism is covered by unbelief, and it is seen prophetically, as in Abraham and in Jacob ; in action throughout history, the story is repeated again and again of Hagar and Ishmael, of Jacob and Padan-Aram, and also of Jacob as by his sons through the handmaidens. The cycle in prophecy and history is that of fleshly, carnal things, and of external figures ; but the Spirit of God is in them, pointing toward spiritual realities, and leading men who seek to be spiritual in that direction. All the carnal figures find their fulfilment in Christ in the flesh, in whom the spiritual is also fully manifested ; and it is by Him that the figures vanish away and the spiritual realities become spiritually discernible by men. Such a conception having been formed of this portion of the book of Deuteronomy, it is not necessary in these days to study the statutes and judgments which were applicable to past ages when men were dominated by the lusts of the flesh. These statutes and judgments were not engraven into stone, so that they might remain permanently as a testimony for or

against men, but they were written upon plaster and placed upon Mount Ebal, so that in due time they might vanish away from before men. Side by side with these statutes and judgments there was placed the altar for burnt-offerings and for peace-offerings; and thus it is plain that the Atonement, which brought peace on earth, has also at the same time blotted out the handwriting of the Mosaic ordinances which were written against man; and He has taken them out of the way by nailing them to His cross of shame. From that time, in the spiritual realm of thought, there has been a continual triumph over the curse and sin; and through such a freedom, gained by spiritual emancipation, meats and drinks, holy-days and Sabbath-days, have lost their external authority and power, because such things are mere shadows, the body, the spiritual reality, being Christ. "For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh."

CHAPTER XXVIII. Blessings are here enumerated which follow as the consequence of obedience to the will of God—these being prosperity in the city and field; increase in children, and in the flocks; abundance in the store-room; success against enemies; and to be established as the people of God, possessing the manifold blessings of heaven and earth. But if there is the spirit of disobedience, then the varieties of the manner of cursing which will follow and overtake the transgressors of God's laws are numerous and grievous in the extreme. The chapter is one long black list of judgments terrible to read, awful to contemplate, and such as ought to make the transgressor think upon his ways; because, of a truth, it is seen to be an awful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Mercy and judgment are brought face to face in the words blessing and cursing, and it is evident that the merciful Saviour, so beneficent, is also the terrible Judge bringing upon the rebellious the fruits of their own doings. It is not to be supposed for a moment that the Lord God takes any pleasure in causing judgments to fall upon the rebellious; but, in fact, He has no choice, when men have deliberately chosen their ways, but to bless in conformity with law, or to punish because of rebellion, pride, stubbornness, covetousness, and all wickedness. It is a wonderful contemplation to think of the love of God in Christ; and how the curse is turned by Him into a blessing, containing all blessings for those who trust, love, and obey Him; and it is a strange study, painful yet profitable, to ponder upon the judgments of God upon those who despise His love and reject His mercy. Surely men ought to "fear this glorious and fearful Name, THE LORD THY GOD." This is the Name specially used throughout the whole of this book, and thus it may be taken to indicate its spirit and purpose. The Lord, or Jehovah, is the Covenant God of Israel, whose *mercy, truth, and faithfulness* are inclosed in this word; but the Lord

thy God speaks of the merciful Saviour, if men will have it so ; if not, then they are grasped as in a vice in an order of nature ordained by God the Judge, and judgment and not mercy is the order of nature, the dealings of God, toward rebels who despise His grace. This may be considered as a very awful representation of the Lord God ; but it is true that His Name is glorious and fearful, and such being the case it is not for men to quibble about such things in their foolish conceits, but rather to hasten in all lowliness, humility, penitence, and meekness of spirit to His feet, so that His glorious mercy may be shed down upon their heads, and the fearful judgments restrained from working their awful work. What pride and conceit must be in man when he would dare to create a god for himself according to his own foolish conceptions ! Surely rebellion or madness could hardly be carried beyond this mark, when the creature presumes to call God a liar by denying His revelation given unto men. This chapter is an awful picture of the judgments which follow sin ; but the cloud is not without a silver lining, for as yet there is a rainbow of grace turned toward men ; and if they will but take shelter under it, the cloud will bring blessing, even showers of blessings ; but if His mercy is rejected, then the dark night will close in upon the soul, the sun of grace will go suddenly down, and the question may be asked, if not answered, By what means will mercy turn back the judgments of God which are the fruits of wilful disobedience to the laws of God ?

CHAPTERS XXIX., XXX. contain the covenant made with Israel in the plains of Moab ; this being a separate covenant from that which was made in Horeb, after the people left Egypt. Moses begins by calling all Israel to hear, and by rehearsing before them what the Lord had done on their behalf in Egypt and in the wilderness. But although they had seen these visible manifestations of the power, majesty, grace, and glory of the Lord, yet strange to say they had never received, because they had not asked in faith, and thus the Lord was unable to give them such a gift as the spiritual vision which could perceive, see or hear, the spiritual works of God in His ways of mercy and of judgment. During this long period Israel had been led by authority, and a written law, that is by the spirit of Moses ; and yet spiritually they had been clad with righteousness, and shod with that which is a preparation of the gospel of peace. The true bread, living and new, had not been their portion ; and as for the new wine, the strong drink of the kingdom, they had not seen or tasted it ; had they realised all that they did receive, as well as what had not been partaken of by them, then they would really have known that the Lord is their God. They were, however, beginning to get a foretaste of the kingdom by their success against Sihon and Og, whose lands had become the inheritance of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. Such a foretaste was not all that they were to inherit, but it was like a rich cluster from Eshcol, and it embodied this thought, that a poor and lowly, penitent, meek, and obedient people, were ready to go forth in the Lord's way, under His guidance, to take possession of all that had been promised. In such a spirit all Israel stands before *the Lord*, strangers included, ready to

enter into covenant with the Lord their God; and His object is that He may establish Israel as a people for Himself, to be their God according to the promise and the oath given unto the fathers. But the view expands, and the prophet taking a wider conception of Israel, includes within the bonds of the covenant those who were not present with them that day. Again, thinking of the sinful state of men, and the deceitfulness of their souls, he speaks of one who will "bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart to add drunkenness to thirst, the Lord will not spare him." In other words, this covenant is not based upon man's obedience to an external written law, but upon the secret thoughts, which are in reality the motive power of action; and the punishment or judgments which will follow such offences under such conditions will be so terribly severe that men will be astonished, and in wonder ask why the merciful God is so terrible in His judgments? The reason is not difficult to find, they have wilfully forsaken the covenant of God, and become idolaters, thus dishonouring God, rejecting His grace, and despising His mercy; and under such circumstances it is right and just in God to bring His judgments upon the transgressors. What then, is not God unjust, or at least does He not take men at an advantage, when He keeps back from them His secret thoughts; giving to them such a bare revelation which can certainly save, but which will not permit men to judge of the righteousness, truth, goodness, and grace of God? Oh, thou lying, deceitful spirit of the ages, when was the right given to thee to judge thy Creator and Judge? Shame upon thy pride and subtlety, thy vain conceit and immeasurable impudence, that thou shouldst dare try to blame God because of thy cursed unbelief. Come down to the dust at once and for ever; kiss the rod that is held up to punish thee, and in all humility and meekness of soul acknowledge that God is truly abundant in mercy, else He would not condescend to reveal His grace unto thee at all. Truly, Lord, it is meet that the secret things of Thy creation, providence, and redemption should be kept back from sinful, rebellious men as long as it is Thy pleasure to retain them; and, since in Thy grace Thou hast been pleased to throw open the door of mercy for men, they ought to be truly grateful, most thankful for such a manifestation of grace, and seek to be obedient in all things to Thy revealed will.

The prophet in vision looks away beyond the long cycle of blessing and cursing which would come upon the people of God, and he sees the penitent souls scattered throughout the nations awakened to their state of rebellion and banishment from the presence of the Lord their God. A new spirit enters into them and they return unto the Lord; and parents and children are seen seeking to be obedient to the laws of God. When such a change is made manifest, then the captivity will be at an end, the compassion of the Lord will be poured out upon Israel, and there will be a returning and gathering unto God from all parts of the earth. At that time there shall be a realised possession of the promises of God as found in Jesus Christ, and through Him great blessings will come upon the Israel of God. Then men will not strive *in their own strength* to circumcise their souls, but the Lord their God

I do it by the manifestation of His grace and truth ; and because of a great spiritual change the responsive love of man toward the Lord will be seen and known. Israel will live in the sunshine of the favour of God ; whilst the enemies of Israel will feel the curse, the consequences of their sins, falling back upon their own heads and crushing them to the dust. At that day Israel will be seen obedient to God's will, and blessed in all the blessings of God in Christ. Such is the nature of the blessing and the cursing, the time of reigning and the time of subjection, the day of obedience and the night of disobedience and rejection, and also the morning of the restoration to the favour of God. But during this long period men are not left in the darkness, as heathens, neither does God cut them off from His love and mercy ; they hold in their hands God's commandments, and if they are so inclined, they can turn to His Word and learn His holy will. Yea, so faithful and gracious has God been, that though men have foolishly been thinking of a heaven beyond the clouds, of a sun which men could not reach ; and of a revelation of grace beyond the seas which they were longed to find and could not obtain ; yet all the time the precious Word of God has been in their hand, mouth, and soul, and yet they would not exert themselves to crush the nut that they might get the kernel, break through the figures that they might seize the animating power within, or pierce beyond the letter and lay hold of the living spirit. At this point the prophet seems to have reached the climax of thought and language as means of influencing human creatures to think and act as in the presence of God ; and his words, " See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil," throw the sole responsibility of men's actions upon themselves, because he can do no more to help them in fulfilling their duties. It is the last great effort of the mighty soul of Moses to bear his testimony to Israel as to their duties and responsibilities ; and looking up to heaven and around him upon the earth he calls these two as abiding, though silent, witnesses to his words of truth and righteousness. Choose, choose life, the intense utterance, the motherly cry of anguish as if in travail, of his devoted servant of God to Israel ; because only through such a voice can the favour and blessing of the Lord God come upon a man, a nation, or the whole world. As then in the flesh, so now in the spirit, Moses is travelling in anguish amongst men, breathing out his very soul to bring them to the point of decision for God and Christ, truth and righteousness. Can men afford to let another, perhaps the best, golden opportunity slip out of their hands of taking possession of the promises of God in Christ ? The thought is an awful one ; and if men have left in them a spark of grace, any sense of responsibility, they will surely, as if in an agony, yea, even as of a bloody sweat, seize, clinging to God and His dear Son in this awful crisis that is come upon them and the nations. Choose, choose life in Christ, and then the world will live, men will be saved, Christ will be loved and adored, and God glorified ; but if there is no choice, no decision, or if the decision is for death and not life, then what would the issue be ? But no, the prophet does not at this point contemplate such a choice by man ; therefore may God grant wise and understanding spirits to all His

children, and His own Spirit of courage and fortitude to all His servants. Then, as the hour approaches when men will have to stand face to face with eternal realities, and taking heaven and earth to witness their choice, they will as with one voice, which will shake the heavens and the earth, choose God, and then Christ will be possessed by men, and the kingdom of truth and righteousness will be manifested.

CHAPTERS XXXI., XXXII. These chapters reveal the final public utterances of the servant of the Lord God to all Israel. These are not his last words, for he gives a parting blessing to the tribes, but rather his latest official words upon the day that he was one hundred and twenty years of age. To read such thoughts as if they came from a mere man would be a very foolish, near-sighted thing to do, although they are truly valuable even in such an aspect; but if the vision is extended, and the spirit of Moses as manifested in past ages throughout the world is cherished, then a truer conception of these thoughts uttered by him may be received, and conceived, by men. The man, or the spirit, stand under the open heavens with the eye as clear and the vision as strong as when he was in the court of Pharaoh; and with his strength as great as when he drove the cowardly shepherds from the well of Jethro the Midianite. Through his experience in the desert, a more glorious vision had been received, for the spiritual vision had been purged, and the strength of God was known to and trusted by him. From, as it were, a spiritual Pisgah, the kingdom of truth and righteousness lay exposed to his view; and, perhaps at this time he knew why it was not meet that the servant should lead God's Israel into their possession. When he says, "I can no more go out and come in," it is not meant that his power as servant of God is gone, but rather that the time has come when the servant must give place to the Son and Heir; and that the fleshly and carnal forms must give place to spiritual realities. It is not Moses, or his spirit, that is to break the infidel, spiritual power beyond Jordan, but the Lord God is to go before the people in spiritual presence by His Word, and Joshua, Jesus the Saviour, is to be their visible leader. As they had conquered Sihon and Og, so would they destroy their enemies on the other side; and it was for them to be strong and full of courage, for the Lord would go with them and He would not fail them in their duties. As the people were encouraged, so the leader was sustained in his enterprise by the spirit of Moses resting upon him; in other words, the spirit of Christ in man must not be downcast at that of visible authority *seems* to be passing away, for in reality the authority of moral law is not put away, there is a change from the visible to the spiritual, and this change must give strength, and not take it away. Serving under the spirit of Moses men look out from themselves upon a visible standard, and as it stands or falls they are influenced; but when the spirit of Christ is possessed, then the strength and courage are within, and the standard cannot be brought low by men. This seems to be the thought embodied in the following verses, which speak of the written law delivered unto the priests, and which *at that time*, was placed in the side of the Ark of the Covenant. *N* longer were the people to look unto Moses as the fountain of law, or t

it of Moses as the authority in moral things ; but rather, turning
 oes and his spirit, the will of God was to be found with the
 servants of God, and hidden in the sacred place of the soul of
 At this point also Moses referred to the cycle of seven years,
 time of release which would take place at the Feast of Taber-
 and gave instructions that at that time the law of the Lord
 be read in the hearing of all Israel, women, children, and
 s, so that they might learn to fear and obey God in the land of
 session. In other words, the end of the sixth cycle, which is
 , is that of spiritual release, and surely in that day the multi-
 pon multitudes in all lands that will read and listen to God's
 ord will be truly like the stars in the heavens, or the sand by
 shore, innumerable. The time is also of importance, that is
 of Tabernacles, after the Day of Atonement, in the first month
 ivil year ; in other words, when the kingdom of Christ in truth
 teousness is manifested amongst men, and He is acknowledged
 of kings and Lord of lords. At the fourteenth verse there is
 actual transference of authority from Moses to Joshua ; and
 t this hour that "the Lord appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar
 ad." But this coming in glory to Moses and Joshua was only
 , and not the great reality ; because unto the man Moses the
 s revealed that there would be an apostasy from truth and
 usness ; a day of darkness in which God's face would not be
 account of the wickedness of the people whom God had chosen
 known His will amongst men. For this reason Moses is called
 write a song for the people which they would teach their
 ; and that song would be a continual witness in their own
 of the faithfulness and truth of God through the generations of
 d of their own apostasy and idolatry. Of the rebellion, apostasy,
 try of Jew and Christian it is not necessary to write one word ;
 carries in its bosom a complete record of the ingratitude of all
 eir utter corruption and spiritual perversion into the darkness
 blackness of open infidelity, and thus an open confession of
 what is required, and not excuses or comparisons as to degrees
 Confusion of face, penitence of soul, prayers for pardon, faith
 Word, and obedience to His will, in the spirit of Christ, are
 en require, and not to be talking about others or themselves.
 mercy that all men should unite to pray unto God, and all upon
 e level, upon the dust, before His mercy-seat. It is for grace,
 ce alone, that men must plead at such a time, because if they
 speak about justifying themselves, or condemning others,
 still in the gall of bitterness, bound by iniquity, not knowing
 rilous state before God, and the awful corruptions in their own
 Not for our righteousness, O Lord, for we have none ; but for
 of Thy great grace and mercy, hear, forgive, and accept Thy
 children.

ong, written by Moses, as instructed by God, begins in its
 verse by calling upon the appointed witnesses, the heavens, and
 b to hear the words of his mouth. What is this in the highest
 ions of the words, *but calling the visible and invisible universe,*

the body and soul of man, to bear witness to the truth of God? Truth, that is God's doctrine, is a pleasant thing, gentle and soft as the dew or the rain as they fall upon the parched herb of the field or on the thirsty grass, withered by the east wind. Truth is precious and also a mighty power, because it makes known unto men the Name of the Lord of grace, and of God, as He is known in the universe and in man. Nature and law speak of the greatness of God, and surely responsive, rational, moral creatures, ought to be ready to acknowledge and praise Him of whom they testify. But God is considered as a rock, and His work as perfection; and His method of action or of manifestation is that which a sound judgment will adore. He is the God of truth and equity, of justice and of righteousness. The perfect Moral Law-giver and King is the picture presented to man in these thoughts about God. At verse 5, the prophetic vision is changed from looking upon the All-perfect, and the eyes are turned toward the rational creature He has made. Exposed to view, man is seen as corrupt, perverse, crooked, and thus unrighteous. Is this a suitable requital for the goodness of God? and can creatures who would act in such a manner be considered as wise? nay, is there not seen terrible ingratitude when the children turn away from such a Father who has created, redeemed, and saved His offspring? Are the redeemed of God rational creatures? then they ought to consider the ways of God toward His people, because the whole of His dealings with men, in providence and grace have been that He might bless Israel. Throughout the whole of history this imminent thought is being worked out before men; and it is His purpose of grace and mercy, so that men might be redeemed and restored to His favour. It is this inherent thought found in history which gives to it an organic unity, and thus what the tabernacle was to the camp of Israel, that is the purpose of grace and the mercy of God in history. The portion which God chooses in this world is His own people; and it is within Jacob, that is the fleshly, carnal figures of things, that His inheritance is to be found. The position of the chosen of God, when He took him in hand was a desert place; yea, man had become like a howling wilderness where beasts of prey ravened to destroy. But the grace of God when it was implanted into humanity made a change, because then the Lord could watch over this new Israel power, and He could lead, instruct, and keep, even as the apple of the eye that which had become so precious in His sight; yea, even as the eagle cares for and trains her young ones, and teaches them to fly in the open heavens, so the Lord has been unwearied in His efforts upon His people, not permitting them to bask in the sunshine of a comfortable earthly rest, but ever bearing them up to higher spiritual thoughts and experiences. They have not been like the serpents grovelling in the dust, but like eagles looking upon the Sun of righteousness, and soaring far above the foolish conceits of earthly men. Their portion provided for them has been as honey and oil taken out of the rock; God's richest blessings, drained from the most unlikely sources, even from persecution, cursing and reviling; their affections have been nurtured upon the choicest thoughts of God's Word; and their spirits have had libations of pure love and grace of God. How good, gracious, and merciful man

Lord and God be when He is pleased to bestow such great care upon sinful men, and so many blessings upon the unthankful and un-
l. The selfish creatures were so far true to their Lord as long
were needy, but Jeshurun—righteous—became fat, self-sufficient,
steous, and then forsaking God, despising the Rock of salvation,
was the downward path of sin and shame, until the sacrifices of
lections were given to devils, and not to God. When the Rock of
on was despised and God was forgotten, then the method of
rd's dealings was changed, and He despised them, hid His face
them, provoked them to jealousy and anger with their vain
ations, and brought them into disgrace by making them subject
olish nation which had not known God. They moved God to
sy with their contemptible things which were not gods; and
the fire of His anger was once kindled against them, they were
to endure the consequences of their follies by the awful judg-
which surrounded their paths. They would not take God as their
nd Friend, and thus they actually made choice of His judgments
were upon them as a scorching fire, hunger, poison, the sword,
rror. Here the Lord stops; judgment has followed the despisers
jecters of His mercy until they are humbled in the dust, and
re fail to turn again unto that God so long forgotten, and to that
ho was so full of compassion in the days of old. The sword of
is still drawn, and the thoughts of the Judge in this direction
be complete disintegration of the nation, and to cause their name
st men to cease for ever; but the hand of justice is restrained,
ercy pleads for the down-trodden and the penitent; another
of God is seen raising his proud head to boast of what he had
nd that the Lord had not done such things by His providential
ents amongst men. What kind of a people are they upon whom
as bestowed His richest blessings; and when they rejected Him
spised His Son, followed them with such judgments? They are
s, without wisdom, and they do not possess a good understanding
fear of God. It would indeed be a good thing for them if they
isdom and understanding, for then they would be able to look
d the present order of things, and to consider what must be
ter. How is it possible that the people of God could be overcome
enemy, except the Lord had first turned to be their enemy, and
them up to punishment? But the rock in which the nations of the
put their trust is not like the Rock of Israel; and this is a matter
which even God's enemies are in a position to judge for them-
. The vine of Israel supplies men with "the pure blood of the
" the wine of God's grace and mercy, which will make men
nd joyful; but the vine of the nations is a cursed thing, bitter as
oissonous and full of venom. And yet these things, though they
ly theirs, because they choose them in preference to God's wine
ce, they are also in reality, and in the highest sense His, stored
im, and sealed up as secret things amongst His treasures. Men
oast of their power and wisdom, and what they can do, but above
ound them, in all things, God is, and vengeance and recompense
is work, His strange work. Proud, boastful man stands as upon

a terrible precipice, in due time the foot slips, and there is seen upon calamity hastening in upon him like vultures upon the prey. Such is the end of the wicked who lay their hands upon the power of God ; but when He sees His people powerless, then His mercy brings a change in the method of His dealing with them ; and as a result He inquires as to their gods which were their strength, unto whom they had offered their sacrifices and drink-offerings. If they are real gods why do they not in such an hour give protection and help ? The Lord shows the vanity of all forms of impostures, and of all kinds of self-elected deities ; in other words, putting the thought : " If transgression of moral law is so easy, sin so profitable, and selfishness in its varied forms so satisfactory, then let the gods defend themselves, which is your god, whom you have served so faithfully ; and deliver you out of My hands. Here the view given of the power of God is truly magnificent ; His enemies are subdued under His hand, and their gods as if ground to powder are scattered like chaff before the wind, and His chosen people are silent in His presence, because they have no god that can help them. The Lord seems to rise, and a challenge to the universe had been unanswered, and also to subvert the creatures that they had been guilty of the greatest folly, for there is no god with Him in the universe. Death and life, in their order, are His ordination in all their manifestations ; and the mercy that is used to heal is also by His appointment. Seeing then that the whole of nature, in the highest possible conception, is God's work, when men find a deliverer who will stand before God and take them out of His hand ? This God lifts up His hand to heaven, and by doing this is His oath to them, that He is the ETERNAL. If this will not give them satisfaction, and they persist in their unbelief after such a sign granted in His gracious condescension for their sakes ; then, oh ! what a most awful thought, the whetted, glittering sword of justice is drawn, and judgment without mercy shall be upon the wicked. The scene is suddenly changed, and the prophet having seen the enemy God destroyed, calls upon the ransomed nations to rejoice and praise unto God for their great deliverance, and the marvellous shown to themselves. " Great and marvellous are Thy works, O Lord Almighty ; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Wilt thou not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name ? for Thou only art God, for all nations shall come and worship before Thee ; for Thy judgment are made manifest."

At this point the song comes to an end, Moses having in a wonderful manner, as may be discerned, scanned the history of the world, and made known to men the great purpose of grace, the principles of the government of God amongst the nations. The conception and execution is truly divine, because it begins with the Creator in His moral greatness and majesty as the God of true righteousness ; then follows a description of the folly and sin of man by his ungrateful actions in transgressing God's holy laws. The power of God as the means of man's salvation and blessing, and God's care over His redeemed is exquisitely portrayed in the beautiful *used for this purpose*. The double-dyed ingratitude of man,

choosing death instead of life, but of despising and rejecting the mercy of God, and the judgments of God which follow, because their actions, are very terrible things to consider, because they are the chosen of God in a light that is very painful and most useful to them. But of all the conceptions known of God's dealing with wicked men, of the assertion of His own sovereignty in the law, the punishment that must come upon unbelievers, and His mercy upon the redeemed, surely none can surpass the thoughts as they are expressed in the latter part of the song. It is at this point that Moses joins with Joshua in teaching the people this song ; in impressing upon the people the great importance of obedience to God ; for this is the main thing, it is the very life of men, and it is by obedience that life in Christ will be obtained.

And now the summons to depart has reached the great prophet of God. Mount Nebo must receive the great prophet, and hence the visions of God will be thrown open to his view. From the mountain top his outstretched arms are extended over his beloved people into whom he has been a true father and a faithful shepherd. He is not where his body rests, or who may strive about it ; this is the glory of Jeshurun has been really transfigured, he has entered the promised land, and in communion with his Master, he is no longer a mortal, but a gracious son of God.

The Gospel according to Matth

CHAPTER I. The book of Genesis contains the seed-thoughts of the kingdom of God in very much the same sense as a seed contains the germ from whence there will be developed the tree and its fruit with the seed in itself. The four books written by Moses which describe the Exodus from Egypt, the giving of the law, the building of the tabernacle, the consecration and service of the priests of God, the history of the nation, and a review of the goodness and grace of God and the wickedness of men, are to be compared to a tree which has grown to its full dimensions, but it is found to be a seed because there is no manifestation of the power of reproduction in the fruit-bearing seed. The book of Exodus manifests the kingdom of God's mercy by Moses in the redemption and deliverance of the people from Egypt, and also His judgments upon Pharaoh and Egypt on account of their wickedness ; but the massive figure quarried out in humanity appears only for a time, and then vanishes away by the redemption of the Jews amongst the nations of this world. The kingdom of mercy by Moses is not the abiding, fruit-bearing kingdom of God, and thus men are led to look into the kingdom of mercy in Christ's spiritual kingdom, to see whether in it there will be found that which will satisfy the soul.

This book opens by tracing the lineage of Jesus Christ from Adam down to "Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ;" and it will be observed that the genealogy is traced through the royal tribe of Judah from Abraham to Jesus. This is an idea found here of limitation, specially in two points, these being the relationship of Jesus Christ to David and to Abraham. The glory which surrounds the head of Abraham is that of faith in God's promises and of obedience to His will, whilst the brows of David are adorned with the wreath and crown of the victorious king who has subdued all his enemies. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Heir of God's promises, and upon His head must rest many crowns, for King of kings and Lord of lords. The genealogist sums up the generations into three divisions of fourteen generations each, being from Abraham to David, from the seed of the visible king unto the day of its glory ; from Solomon to Jechoniah, the day of glory until the day of shame and desolation in the captivity from Salathiel to Christ, the day of restoration to another and a day of spiritual glory. It may be worthy of notice that from *Salathiel to Jesus is thirteen generations, and thus, in the spiritual Christ*

resurrection life, there is to be found the King of the line of David who is David's Lord.

The Incarnation and birth of Jesus Christ are stated as matters of fact, and related to these facts there comes to men as a revelation the objects which God had in view in this Immaculate Conception in the Virgin's womb. There is the giving unto men a Child who will save His people from their sins ; and there is to be a fulfilment of prophecy that in this Child, Emmanuel, God will be with us in this world. The first was duly fulfilled by the birth of the Child, and at that time named Jesus ; the second came virtually to pass at His baptism and initiation into public life, and above all in the giving to men of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. The former is the Man in His perfect moral nature, obedient in all things to the holy will of God ; the latter, the anointed, lowly, gracious Servant of the grace of God to men, ministering as Mediator betwixt God and men for their salvation.

CHAPTER II. records the visit of the wise men from the East to Jerusalem to worship and offer gifts to the new-born King ; the trouble which was felt in Jerusalem when King Herod heard of the birth of Jesus ; the deceit of the king ; the joy of the wise men when they found their King ; the flight into Egypt ; the massacre of the infants in Bethlehem ; and the return of Jesus from Egypt to Nazareth. These things may be taken as representing the kind of welcome which the King received when He came to claim His throne and His kingdom. From a far-off land there came to His feet the wisest and purest of God's worshippers, rendering up unto their King, as His right, the wisdom they possessed, and with their intellects bending low at the Babe's feet they also gave to Him their affections and their spiritual worship. But with Herod, the son of Edom, the crafty and cruel son of man, the pretender, the matter had a very different aspect, because if this was the long-promised King, then he must bid farewell to his power and glory. The subtle Idumean would have killed the Infant without delay, but God interfered and hindered his diabolical designs, and by flight the child was saved. But if the King was saved the monster at Jerusalem could not bear to be mocked, and thus to make sure that this one Child should be slain every babe in Bethlehem two years old and under was condemned to death. Then began the bloody persecutions of the Christian era, the foolish attempt to kill the Son of man and the Spirit of God with a sword. It was in vain, for the Son of God was in Egypt and safe ; whilst in Ramah, the high place of God upon the earth, there was the bitter cry of sorrow ; Rachel, the new Church of Jesus Christ, had begun to suffer in its members, and the wail Ben-oni was already heard amongst men. Even as Moses had been delivered from Egypt and fled into Midian, so here the spiritual seed is taken back to Judea, and as a Nazarene, a separated, sanctified One, He lived in the village of Nazareth.

CHAPTER III. There is heard in this chapter a new voice in the wilderness of Judaism. It is in very deed a desert place in which the streams of grace are almost *dried up*, and only in unfrequented spots is

there to be found a few small oases which manifest that the reign of grace is not quite extinct. The world is one huge spiritual desert, and the heavens are draped in threatening clouds; and thus men look around them, and they are afraid of coming calamities. There is the voice of abundance of rain, but the mercy and the judgment which will change the aspect of such a wilderness will not fall from one cloud, but from a succession of clouds as they pass over men. The voice of John is a stern and an earnest one, and the message he utters is that of repentance toward God, because the kingdom so long promised is about to appear. To this preparer, breaker up of the Lord's ways multitudes flock as if aroused by a voice from heaven, and with confession of sin they are baptized as repenting souls. But if the children of God flock to be washed from their sins, and to seek after the coming kingdom, there will also be found amongst them Pharisees and Sadducees, hypocrites and unbelievers who are more anxious to court popularity, and to swim with the tide of public opinion than earnestly desirous of clean hands, pure souls, and of being obedient to the will of God. Unto such the Baptist speaks with scathing words as to vipers, who destroy life, asking why they were fleeing from the wrath to come? If honest in their purpose, then let them bring forth fruits which would demonstrate a change in their life, and no longer be trusting in their descent from Abraham, because God would reject such as they were, and out of those who did not possess life, the Mosaic revelation of grace, He would raise up faithful children to the glory of His Name. The time for all pretensions had come to an end, and the unveiling of God's providence had shown that the axe of God's justice was laid down to the root of the tree from whence they had sprung, and if the fruit was not good, then it would be condemned and destroyed as a thing only fit to be consumed. The Baptist had come amongst them with the cry to repent, and to bring men to external ablutions as teaching cleansing of the soul; but the coming One is drawing near with a baptism—such as men had never before witnessed, for it would consist of a new spirit, or of the Holy Ghost in a man, and a power, as of fire, to burn up and destroy sin. This Mighty One will come amongst men like the wind into the threshing floor; He will separate the good and the evil, the useful and the useless; and the wheat will be stored in the heavenly garner, but the chaff will be burnt up at His awful coming. Whilst the Baptist was thus speaking of the past, the present, and the future Jesus came from Galilee to be baptized, and presented Himself before this son of the wilderness, so that His baptism might be effected. Upon these two men there rested the spirits of heaven and earth, of Moses, and of Christ, the Son of God. At this meeting on the Jordan, Moses and Joshua once more stand side by side, and upon the gentler spirit there is placed the charge of the people of Israel. What was at that time a figure betwixt two men becomes a great reality betwixt John and Jesus; and thus, when he knew who it was that asked baptism, having seen the appointed sign, and having filled his own soul with a vague conception of the greatness of Jesus, his reply is that he requires to be baptized of Jesus, and not that Jesus should be baptized of him. This is true, and Jesus admits his confession.

for the whole Mosaic law and ritual required the baptism of fire that it might be purified from its fleshly, carnal surroundings ; but the time for such a baptism is not yet come, whilst the hour for the baptism of Jesus so that He might become the Heir of all the past ages was fully come. Jesus, after the baptism in the Jordan, the open heavens, the descending Spirit of God, and the voice from heaven, was the consecrated King, and the beloved Son. Upon the Head of redeemed humanity there had fallen the baptism of the past visible dispensation, and by this sign He was united to the past. Out of the water He represents a regenerate, spiritual seed, and to Him, as the Head of the spiritual Israel, the doors of heaven were thrown wide open ; there was also the descent of the Holy Spirit, the consecrating power of God for His work in the spirit of meekness, and obedience to law, and above all things He was revealed as the beloved Son of God, in whom God is well pleased.

CHAPTER IV. Here is recorded the departure of Jesus into the wilderness ; the fast of forty days and forty nights ; the temptations, which were three-fold in their nature ; the Lord's victory over the enemy ; and the ministration of the angels. " We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." The Lord was consecrated to His great work of Saviour by a cycle of fasting passing over Him, and then He was questioned as to His position and power. He was taken at a disadvantage, even in a desert place, and hungry ; what then, shall the Son of God, in such a trial, think, say, and do, all that is right in God's sight ? The first temptation is a subtle one ; it is the insertion of a doubt into the Lord's soul as to His Sonship, and the question of His power as based upon that relationship. These two thoughts seem to be linked together, and at the first glance, the power is thought to be the correlative of the Sonship ; but this is a delusion and a snare, because the Sonship of grace and the right to reign as King in such a kingdom, does not depend upon physical power, but weakness ; not on authority, but submission to the gracious will of God. If, then, the Lord had manifested His power instead of submission, then, lo ! the sign of His power would have been changed into a serpent ; and because of unbelief and want of trust in His Father, there would have been sin against God. The Lord knew that the Word of God is spiritual food, and that any questioning as to the Holy Will of the Father is as the poison of the serpent. Again, in the second temptation the Lord is represented as placed on a pinnacle of the temple, and challenged by the adversary, if He is the Son of God, to cast Himself down ; because in the Word of God it is stated that God will by His angels preserve Him from hurt or danger. The reply of Jesus is, again, " It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." These words are specially linked with the word *Massah*, and thus they lead the thoughts back to the desert of Sin, and to the rock in Horeb. Unbelief, pride, and presumption, are linked with the temptation ; and if the Son of God should give way to either it would be made manifest that in *Himself* there is no fountain of spiritual

truth to satisfy men, but rather that He would make manifest the leprous hand drawn from the bosom in which sin exists, and which requires the Holy Spirit to take away sin. Further, the third temptation represents Jesus upon an exceeding high mountain, and from that place there is revealed to Him "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." These are offered to Jesus upon the condition of submission to the devil, to evil; but Satan is banished from the Lord's presence by the decisive thought that worship and service must be given to God alone. Ambition, soaring ambition, is the temptation, and it is the spirit that breathed in the cursed Amalek that is the tempter in this instance. The sovereignty which the devil would give is that which would stand up against God, and would seek to sit upon His throne; neither the devil nor man are kings, they are merely usurpers for a season, with limited power; whilst, in reality, above devils and men God reigns. Had the Lord been tempted by this hateful offer, it is evident that the kingdom of God in peace, truth, and righteousness, could not have come upon men, but in its place there would have been the turning of God's pure water of life into blood, and thus no salvation for men. It will be observed that the three temptations run in the spiritual sphere of man's being; the first harmonising with the fourth blessing of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, the spiritual bread of God's Word; the second, the blessing of mercy by which the Holy Spirit of God is given to men; and the third, the blessing of the pure in heart, who in their purity see God.

It may be said that the heavens are now, in a sense, opened to men, because they have seen the meek One receiving the spirit of Moses and Israel as found at its highest elevation, immediately before the crossing over Jordan; and also here they see Jesus over the Jordan, and in possession of the promises. He is the King of grace and mercy, who can see the face of God because He has overcome the wicked one by His faith, in weakness, by humility and patience, and by obedience and true worship. From this struggle He goes forth into the world as from the presence of God, the Son of God, yet having God ever present with Him, and strengthened for the work to which He is now called. When Jesus knew that John had been cast into prison, this became to Him as the signal for beginning the manifestation of the kingdom of heaven amongst men. The Sun of truth and righteousness arose upon the people, sitting in the darkness; and where the shadow of death was hovering over men for their destruction, there the light was manifested, and the shadows banished from the earth.

The message or preaching of Jesus at this period was in words the same as that of His predecessor; repentance is the narrow gate by which men enter the kingdom of heaven; and the King could not grant unto sinners any other means by which they could find peace with God. No repentance for sin, then no salvation; no turning back from the world, then no means of getting to heaven. It is true the kingdom is at hand, but if it is not sought for by men turning toward it, how can they be saved? The calling of Peter and Andrew,

James and John, that they might become fishers of men, points out God's purpose of grace: His work has begun, and attended by these disciples. He set forth on a tour throughout Galilee, teaching, preaching, healing diseases, and casting out devils. The King has power, not, indeed, as men think of power, or as the devil tempted Jesus to seize power, and wield it for selfish purposes, but it is the very power of God's grace that He manifests, so that the works of the devil may be destroyed. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."

CHAPTERS V.—VII. The laws of the kingdom of grace, or what is so well known as "The sermon on the Mount," is found here. To the carnal eyes the few thousands that surrounded Jesus on this occasion was all that could be seen; to the spiritual vision the scene is very different, because it is at this point, so far as the thoughts and principles which rule men are concerned, that history is brought to a focus. In the ages before Jesus men are seen looking forward with intense earnestness to this point in history where perfection in truth and righteousness would be manifested; and from that point onward to the end of the ages men will be found looking backward with their thoughts fixed upon Him who is the express Image of the Father. He is seen sitting as the gracious Law-giver of the world, Moses having already been manifested as the moral law-giver amongst men, and all things being ready His disciples, of all nations and ages, draw near to Him. But it is not as a Law-giver, possessing the authority of the sword and of the State, that He is found sitting upon this mountain of spiritual thought; it is as the gracious Teacher who so far transcends Moses by His new method of imparting righteousness by grace and truth, that the great law-giver vanishes from sight as the pale light of the moon and stars disappears when the sun rises above the horizon. The laws which tend to regulate conduct in its outward actions, as guided by a written code, came by Moses; and with it there was this great end in view, that the fleshly, carnal lustings and conceptions of men might be subdued, restrained, and brought into conformity to the will of God; but when Jesus speaks it is not for the purpose of compelling obedience, it is to give to men spiritual principles or gracious laws which are to become the great motive powers in the soul. He does not supersede the laws given by Moses, or cancel them; but leaving the whole Mosaic legislation in force as suitable for a time, and for conduct in the moral sphere in man and in the State, He tries to put into men's souls a manifestation of the kingdom of grace, as it had existed in germ in the patriarchal age, and in figure in the Mosaic ritual and worship. The thought, it will be observed, is that of a spiritual development of a very marvellous kind; and whilst it is the means of concentrating the kingdom of heaven to the very smallest capacity, that of an individual soul, it also provides for a development so magnificent that it will embrace the whole world. The first state or condition of the kingdom of heaven on the earth may be compared to a living oasis in the great desert of the whole world; and in this infantine state heaven is thought of as a place far away from

this earth and man ; the world and all it contains is given up to the devil and sinful man ; it is the place of darkness, and only where God is by His personal presence, in the light, is the kingdom of heaven. The great development under Moses changed this aspect of thought ; and thus, whilst the world is left in its infantine state, there is found in the elect nation a place where God dwells, and written laws which inform men as to their duties and privileges. This, it will be observed, is a very great advance upon the first conception, because it makes the heavenly kingdom a realised thing, and in the nation in its corporate capacity God dwells as the very Centre of its life, and the Author of all its actions. The third great development does not put aside or cancel the nation and the visible order of things, but in a man there is found concentrated the kingdom of heaven ; and it is by this change that the visible order loses its authority and power. Thus, it must follow that this Microcosm of God's kingdom of heaven will embody in Himself all that was in the infantine conception and in the Mosaic ideal. This is exactly what the Lord Jesus claims, and what must be conceded to Him. The heaven so very far away to the little child is come down from heaven to earth, and the figures which are historically found in the nation meet in Him, and thus He is the Heir of the promises and of the nation. But having converged the rays of the kingdom of heaven into one focus, one Man, it is simply impossible that concentration can be carried further, and thus the spiritual becomes ruler ; men are not converted by nations, but by single souls, and from Jesus Christ by individuals, by a spiritual order of development the whole world will be transformed into the image of God in Jesus Christ.

It is now clear enough why *the* Law-giver gave His laws as a Teacher ; His realm of government is in the very soul and by the spirit, and thus He receives disciples who have been pupils under Moses, who have been taught obedience, and not self-willed rebels, who love the world or seek to follow the lustings of the flesh. To those who have the spirit of disciples—humble, obedient, and willing to learn His method—He opens His mouth in words of spiritual wisdom, and they are blessed indeed who are privileged to listen to His gracious voice. As already pointed out, the Blessings uttered by the Lord Jesus are in reality the kingdom of heaven in a man, when a man's state of soul harmonises with the thoughts embodied in them. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Kingdom of Heaven in the Microcosm, because in the state of His soul and the actions of His life and death there is found manifested all that harmonises with His own magnificent conception. The blessings uttered by Jesus Christ are also the order of the kingdom of grace, or its laws and the method of its development ; thus it is from this point, and this point alone, that men can survey the universe of thought—specially as related to the Bible, which contains the history of redemption, but also as related to creation and providence, and to the human soul—because only by the key of grace can the wisdom of God in these departments of knowledge be known by man. Jesus Christ, as the Divine Teacher, emphasises *the thought* that spiritual conditions are all-important for spiritual

disciples ; and if His disciples will only begin at this fountain of Divine Truth, they will find that this knowledge is divine power, because it reveals man to himself, men to each other, God to men, and in fact it terminates in the universal heaven of glory where all is gladness and joy. To say that such words should be written in letters of the purest gold is to say but little in their favour, for there are many thoughts which deserve such pre-eminence ; but it is not too much to say that they are the very concentration of divine wisdom ; that they have been written not merely by the hand of God, but also that His marvellous love dictated them ; whilst they are, it may be said, written as if with the precious blood which issued from the pierced heart of Jesus Christ on Calvary. The value of the blessings uttered by Jesus Christ cannot be estimated by man, and they cannot be compared with any utterances in the Bible or out of it. As Jesus Christ is the Object toward whom all men look that they may be transformed into His image—to become like God—so by spiritual contemplation they can look toward these words, and by becoming conformed to their teaching, it will be found that the kingdom of heaven is being built up within their souls. There cannot be any mistake as to the position of Jesus Christ amongst men if these blessings are understood ; because men can see at a glance that this world and all men are in the darkness of sin and unbelief, whilst He is the Sun, the Light of Truth—bursting forth as it were from heaven upon the world and men—revealing not merely Truth, but also manifesting that every form of unbelief and sin is as the darkness, and contrary to the holy, wise, good, and gracious will of God.

From the conditions of blessing, the perfect kingdom of grace, Jesus turns to His disciples in whom this new power from heaven is about to be manifested, and by two striking figures He makes known to His followers what they are to be and what they are to do. This internal spiritual power conveyed to them is an indescribable quality which must permeate their whole beings, even as salt is savoured and savours ; and it is to be a radiant power like light which will throw the blessing of light upon a dark world. But His disciples were not to misunderstand His mission ; it was not one of destruction, but of construction ; it was not to add a little more to what had gone before, but it was to fill up all that was required, so that the perfect kingdom of God might be at that time manifested amongst men. This being His mission to men, and His disciples having been called to join Him in this work, they must be careful as to their teaching, so that this fulness might be clearly apprehended and also taught by them. If they fail in this very important condition of being docile disciples, and through their foolish conceptions teach men an imperfect Christ and kingdom, then they would be little in His kingdom ; but if as obedient disciples they should learn their Master's thoughts, obey His words, and faithfully teach others, then they would be great in His kingdom. They were not to take self-righteous men as their example, as the Pharisees, because such men, proud in spirit and conceited in their own power and wisdom, were so ignorant of the kingdom of heaven that they had not even *crossed its threshold*.

The kingdom of grace is a spiritual permeating power within the soul, and a radiating light giving power in the life; it is not a destructive thing, but a complete and perfecting system, and by such conceptions the disciples were to think of it. It is quite true that the spirit of Moses, the servant, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, the Master, might appear to be in opposition, but they were not to permit such a thought to blind their spiritual vision; for although it had been said by Moses, "Thou shalt not kill," it would be of far greater importance for them to know that if anger and foolish thoughts and words were subdued in the soul, and the spirit of love cherished, then the regulation of Moses would not be required. The seed of murder is found in the unforgiving spirit; therefore draw not near to the Altar of reconciliation in prayer for forgiveness until there is the gracious spirit of forgiveness toward others. This state of the soul is deadly, it shuts the door of heaven to the soul, and the spirit of a man that hates his brother is blind, groping for heaven and not finding it. As with hatred, so with adultery, to permit the soul to be stained with fleshly lustings is the germ of hell in the soul, and at any expense, no matter how pleasant or precious the offending lust may be, cut it off; for the pure soul and communion with God is surely more valuable than sin and its pleasures, which bring death and corruption. As with murder and adultery, so with oaths, the pure truth is what the disciples of Christ should observe, because truth is immutable, and any departure from it is to be condemned. Oaths are for binding men who cannot be trusted to speak the truth, thus they spring from evil, and the sooner they are abolished by all men who speak the truth the better. Moses taught men that the judgments of God are "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;" and as a just thing, this is right. But His disciples must not permit justice to be the supreme ruler in the soul, else the spirit of grace must return to heaven, from whence she came, and give up all hopes of ever redeeming the unjust and the unholy. The cry for justice, or the resistance of oppression, are not to be even mentioned in the soul of the Christian or the Church of Christ; but in the spirit of grace there will be granted forgiveness to the smiter, submission to the unrighteous and unjust, obedience to the tyrant, a giving of alms to the beggar, and lending to one who may desire to borrow, if the Christian is in a position to do such things. These things may appear as impossibilities to many men, but they really embody the very Spirit of Jesus; and when He was upon earth and under the Pagan Empire, such things were to the mass of Christian disciples matters of every-day experience. This spirit of grace must not be mixed up with the moral order of men's duties; neither should it be taken as the standard for modern self-governing States. By the former, man in every position is taught his duties toward his fellow-men, but how his fellow-men may act toward him is another question; and it is still a more complex question whether a man will seek justice, or in the spirit of Jesus Christ grant forgiveness to the unjust. By the latter, the Christian and the citizen are brought much nearer to each other; and it is through this almost indefinable relationship that men are sometimes greatly puzzled as to their duty in certain cases. The spirit of Jesus

within the soul pleads for mercy ; the spirit of Moses and of moral order speaks of justice ; both set up a righteous claim, and they may even seem to be opposed to each other ; how, then, can such a matter be decided ? As yet, grace reigns in the Christian and in the Church of Christ ; therefore the teaching of Jesus is to be followed in the private sphere of the soul and of the Church ; but when men are rulers or judges in the commonwealth—representative and responsible officers of the moral order—then, officially, justice as between man and man is their duty. There is nothing in these principles, as applied to a private Christian or to the Christian Church, contrary to moral law ; the whole argument is based upon the thoughts of justice and mercy. If God had sought justice, then men were inevitably lost ; if men *will* be sternly just toward each other, then God cannot move men upon the lines of His grace, and the salvation of the race is impossible. God is merciful and gracious, therefore man can be forgiven, and so become obedient to moral law ; if the saved will join God in this work of mercy, grace, and forgiveness, then the world will be changed, and men will be brought to love and obey the moral law. The climax of this thought is reached in the gracious ones being taught to love their enemies, to bless them that curse, to do good to them that hate, and to pray for persecutors ; but in doing this they are not doing something new, for this is the Father's thoughts towards the rebellious, and it is seen fully manifested in the words and actions of the blessed Jesus Christ. Therefore, as the Father's thoughts and the Son's words and actions are the perfect manifestation of grace, so men to become perfect must have this objective reality of thought, word, and action made subjective in their own souls in gracious thoughts, and reflect the same by word and deed, and thus the kingdom of heaven in the soul and amongst men will be perfected.

The warning note, "Take heed," begins the 6th chapter, thus showing that a new sphere of thought is entered upon and also that the subject is an important one. The 5th chapter lays down the great principles of grace which cover the whole kingdom of thought ; it shows where this kingdom is to be found and how it is to be known or manifested by men ; and also it explains in what sense, and by what means the kingdom of grace becomes regnant, so that the issue shall be perfection in the likeness of the Father through the Son. In this chapter the realm of thought is in man ; and the study is the disciple seeking after likeness to the Master, or being conformed to the kingdom of God and righteousness. The disciple of Jesus must not be ostentatious in giving alms, for this is to glorify self ; but it is right to give with a pure motive and with modesty, for the good of those who require such gifts. If the object is vain-glory this reward may be attained, but it is not alms-giving, for this has to do with the Father's will, the gracious spirit and help to a needy brother ; seeking self-glorification is sin even in alms-giving, it is only acceptable to God the Father when as His child a part of His gifts is given to one of His children.

Prayer should not be a matter of form or pretence, of vain words, or hypocritical show ; it is a spiritual matter in which communion of the soul with God is the all-important thing. *Such prayer must be secret in its*

actions whether in the secrecy of the soul, at the family altar, or in a public assembly ; for unless God's Spirit touch man's spirit, and man's spirit respond to God's Spirit the exercise is vain, and there is no prayer or communion with the Father. It is well to remember that the Father knows what things the child requires, even before he ask them ; and it is in this spirit that prayer should be offered. The Father is in heaven, in other words, in and above this kingdom of grace manifested by Jesus. But although so gracious toward sinful men, still holy, and thus separated from them by His Name, or the known manifestations of His holiness, wisdom, goodness, and grace. Here is His kingdom in the universe in its unity ; but sin has produced diversity, and thus there are found two or more kingdoms. His will is good in heaven, it is just, good, and gracious on the earth, and men cannot pray for anything higher for themselves or for the world. The Father's Bread for man is Christ, because His bread was to do His Father's will ; possessing Jesus Christ all things are possessed, and thus the will of God is the Bread of Life to all his creatures. Up to this point the angelic host might join with man in prayer, but there follows a petition for pardon which is limited only by the action of the forgiving spirit. The Father's mercy is boundless toward men, and thus the more they forgive the more they get of His grace. There is dependence upon the Father for wisdom and guidance, and for deliverance from the power of evil ; and it is because He is the Fountain of mercy that unto Him must be ascribed the right to rule, the power to determine, the method of service, and the glory of the blessed results. The contrast in this prayer as to God and man may be summed up thus. The Father is in the home of grace waiting for the prodigal, orphan children ; the holy Father and the unholy children ; the Father's kingdom and the rebellious creatures ; the perfect will in all that is good and gracious, and self-will which is idolatry, sin, shame, and death ; the Father's Word as bread, and the recipient children ; the forgiving Father and the forgiving forgiven children ; the light of the universe, the children following the light on the way to the Father, and to the heavenly condition in which the glory of God the Father through the Son and Holy Spirit is the supreme desire of the soul. It may be further suggested that this prayer will be seen to be in perfect harmony with the spirit in the Beatitudes, only in them the key-note is struck at the opposite end. God begins His work in man in the poor spirit and ascends to God, whilst man is taught to begin with God and to descend to man's condition. Thus the blessing of peace is in harmony with the Father in heaven ; of purity with the hallowed Name ; of mercy with the kingdom of grace, God's highest kingdom in the universe ; of righteousness with the doing of His holy will in the earth ; of meekness, for this is man's daily bread, by and in which the soul can be nourished ; of penitence or mourning because of sin, for only through this spirit can sin be pardoned ; and of poorness in spirit, because it is only the humble spirit that will be led or guided by God, and thus delivered from evil.

Fasting is commanded by the Lord Jesus, but not with a sad face ; because true fasting is penitence on account of sin. The former if carried far enough might engender religious pride, and bring

commendations from men ; the latter will maintain the poor, humble spirit, and through this, there will come the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit upon the soul. Self-sacrificing charity, spiritual communion with God in prayer, and the lowly, penitent spirit are righteous conditions of the soul ; and these speak to men of their spiritual relationship with their fellow-men, of the relations of the spirit toward God, and of the state of the soul.

Alms-giving or charity, prayer, and fasting describe the conditions of the soul as fit for receiving the kingdom of heaven and righteousness. In other words, there may be spiritually discerned in these three thoughts the poor spirit, the mournful soul that can find comfort in God alone, and the meek spirit keeping the body and soul in subjection to the will of God. These things fit the spirit to seek after treasures ; but they are not to be such as this world can supply. The treasures in the heaven of God's grace are the imperishable riches which no thief can steal or time destroy, therefore the children of grace should earnestly desire these things, setting the affections upon them, and this wisdom of God in Jesus Christ will be a treasure indeed.

Treasures are good if they are useful, but failing any use to which they may be applied, such accumulations of physical wealth, or wise thoughts, would be of no value. The thought which flashes forth here is a marvellous one, and it will bear to be considered for a little because of its exquisite beauty. The treasures received into the soul have, in the heaven within, changed their mode of manifestation, and they flash forth in one exquisite unity, which is here named light. Up to the point of gaining treasures man is absorbent ; at this point he becomes radiant, and the kingdom of heaven is seen flashing forth in all its beauty as a means of mercy to others. The one avenue of the senses by which a man's spirit can, so to speak, sally forth to discover the beauty of the external creation is the eye ; therefore, it is not merely a recipient organ, but also, and emphatically, the means by which the power within is seen to flash forth, expressing the emotions of the soul. With the blind there is want of expression, a darkness covers, veils up, the glory within ; but by the eye the spirit speaks, and like light, the varying emotions of the soul can be expressed. If there is singleness of purpose in a soul, the radiating thoughts harmonise with the state of the soul, and there is light or truth. But if the spirit be estranged from God, and the devil of self reign within, then there is refraction, perversion, turning out of the righteous lines of truth, and there is darkness. If the good and gracious thoughts of God the Father are so refracted, bent out of the straight lines of righteousness and truth, then how awful must the darkness be in those who live in such a blinded condition. The Lord Jesus has given to man the treasures of heaven, light or truth ; and the supreme truth of God is grace and mercy ; His saved ones who receive the treasures of His grace become surcharged with this divine light, and in the spirit of grace and mercy they seek to be the means of blessing to others by bringing the light of truth and mercy into contact with their darkened souls.

The question of supremacy in the soul is introduced here under the figure of two masters, *God and Mammon* ; and the impossibility

of serving both is conclusively shown. This touches upon the blessing of the pure in heart ; and it can be seen at a glance, that so long as self, or any idol, possesses the throne of the soul, commanding its desires and emotions, it is impossible that God can be seen by the spiritual vision ; for if the spirit of grace is in subjection, then peace is impossible, and not until grace in the Father is supreme, can there be peace in the soul. What are the great rivals of God in the soul of man ? Are they not what men can eat and drink, and the necessary raiment for the body ; in fact, the lusts of the eye and of the flesh, and the pride of life ? But surely the children of God in Jesus Christ should not be so irrational as to place themselves below the level of the irrational creatures and the plants who have no power of thought. To the former, the Father gives what is necessary for their wants, and the latter He clothes with wonderful beauty. If then God has so ordered nature that plants with their flowers are beautiful, and the lower creatures are bountifully supplied, then surely His saved children might trust Him for their temporal wants. If they do not trust the Father, then surely they are not His children, but orphans, far away from home, and like the Gentiles who have forsaken and forgotten God. This is not as it ought to be ; therefore, the first and all-important privilege of a son of God is to trust fully and implicitly his Father, seeking first and above all things, conformity in the soul to His kingdom of grace and mercy, and then the things which pertain to the bodily life will be given to the redeemed child by the Father in heaven. Let there be no carking cares and trouble about to-morrow ; every day brings its own blessings and duties ; therefore, above all things, get heaven into the soul, so that there may be fitness for, and harmony with, the kingdom of heaven.

The perfect kingdom of heaven as an objective conception is found in the 5th chapter ; the subjective ideal in the soul of man in the 6th chapter ; and in the 7th chapter, the method of the Christian life is considered as it is related to mankind. The word judge in this instance should not be limited to the idea of pronouncing a judgment upon one who is supposed to commit a crime, but rather it embodies the idea of the man within the soul, rational and responsible, considering fully, carefully, and conscientiously every thought that shall be uttered and every deed that shall be done. It is not the moral judge in court of conscience as to right and wrong that is here specially addressed, but the Christian spirit of grace, obedient to Christ, which reigns over the moral order, and which for the time, in all things lawful, must be subservient to the gracious ruler, who is not a judge but whose judgment must be constantly used in every word and deed. The judgment in this court is not justice, but mercy and charity ; the measure is not "an eye for an eye," but forgiveness unto seventy times seven. According to the judgment and the measure given to men, so possibly it may be with the judgment and measure of men ; but men are not the perfect standard, therefore they are specially referred to, but the Lord teaches here the same thing as is conceived in the petition, "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors." Beware of fault-finding, because this

found in the fault-finder is hypocritical and detestable, the ungracious, unmerciful, and uncharitable spirit is as a great beam, blurring the whole vision, and surely a man ought to see that his own spirit is in perfect harmony with the gracious will of God before he begins to find fault with a brother. There is nothing wrong in trying to help a brother to see the truth clearly ; but, "thou hypocrite," be first perfectly certain that the fault is not in thyself, and that thy fault-finding is charitable towards thy brother. Men should not be rash in judgment or fault-finding ; they ought to be particularly careful that no cause of offence or uncharitableness is within themselves ; and even after these things have been settled, they are to think upon the condition of those whom they judge, or find fault with, and consider carefully whether it will be a wise and truly gracious thing to speak unto them. An unclean dog, selfish and self-asserting, may be roused to fury by reproof ; the most exquisite pearls of the gracious thoughts of God, if offered to sensual creatures, may have no attraction or beauty in their sight, and thus instead of good being done, the holy and beautiful things of God may be despised, and evil done rather than good. The thoughtful, charitable Christian will wait until the unclean and the sensual have found out by the judgments of God that they are wrong, and then a word in season may be a blessing to such souls.

This is very trying and very difficult work ; and it would seem to limit the active services of men to a very great extent. Very true ; it makes a man think what manner of man he should be himself before he undertakes the very serious duty of reproof or teaching others. But if a man could only conceive of, and act in harmony with, such a spirit, it becomes evident that this power would be intensified a thousand-fold. Such a man would not be a novice, but a saint ; and thus a true messenger of Jesus to men. Such a man would know the depths of iniquity in man, and also the grace of God in Jesus Christ ; and thus although the former might cause despondency, the latter would produce hope and trust in God, and by faith great works would be done.

What is the spirit of this kind of disciple and servant of Jesus Christ ? It is this great thought, that God is faithful and true, good and gracious : and thus it is his privilege to ask and receive, to seek and find, and to knock, being assured that heaven's gate will assuredly be opened to bless men. If earthly fathers respond to their little ones, giving them what is good, then assuredly the good and gracious Father will bless His children. Therefore, because this is the order of nature in sinful men, and in the Father in heaven, toward His sons, so let them act in faith toward all men, being certain that if what is good and gracious is asked of God it will be granted ; if they search after His truth it will be found ; and if they knock at the gate of heaven asking admission it will be opened. These are God's thoughts toward His sons ; and such ought to be the children's thoughts toward each other ; and that such should be man's conception of God's ways of dealing with men, they may clearly understand, if they will only study carefully the law, the prophets and the teaching of Jesus Christ.

It will be seen at a glance that the Lord in His teaching has been working from the centre to the circumference ; from the very principles

which animate the Father in heaven in His perfection of Being, and the Son in His teaching and work, out into Christian man, and through men influencing the world, so that it may be drawn within the mighty influence of His kingdom of grace. The margin of the stream of grace is seen in the outward operations of Christian men, and the contact with the world is reached in the words "Enter ye in at the strait gate." The way of salvation is open for men, but it is strait, very narrow at the entrance; only the poor in spirit and the contrite and penitent souls can enter; there must be the giving up of self and self-seeking at this gate; and self-denial and self-sacrifice are required from those who walk in this path. In the road that leads to destruction many men are found, and there is no difficulty in following the downward stream in its onward current; but to love Jesus and to be obedient to His teaching is to run counter to the stream of humanity, and thus it is a very difficult thing to do. The straitness, however, is only in the gate, or method of entrance, and the path is narrow only as related to this life; but beyond there is heavenly expansion, mountains radiant with light and joy, a very universe of delight to the redeemed. As related to the broad way it is the reverse; the current of life is foul with the plague of sin and death; if there is pleasure and hilarity, there is plenty of dust and more than enough of frivolity; the sun shines as for a moment, but the clouds and the storm are gathering upon the path, and it is seen to converge, becoming narrower and narrower, until it ends in the grave and the second death. The strait gate pulls man up and makes him inquire into his pride and pretensions, and there is safety; the broad road gives plenty of room for sin, and there follows condemnation; blessed are all they who are brought to walk in the narrow way which leadeth unto eternal life.

Men are earnestly requested to consider carefully the words and actions of their teachers, because there are those who pretend to be like sheep in self-giving for man's good, whilst all the time they have the nature of the ravening wolf, and are in everything self-seeking. Men are to be known by their actions, which are in reality the fruits of their thoughts; and they are to set this down as an incontrovertible law; thus as a good tree will have good fruit, and a bad tree bad fruit, so a gracious soul will bear the gracious fruits of God's Holy Spirit, whilst the bad man, unregenerate, will bring forth the works of the flesh and the devil. The disciples are ignorant and they are required to wait patiently until they learn about the different seeds and their fruits in their cycles; but the Lord Jesus by His divine discernment perceives from the germ in the seed what the fruit must be. The Lord stands at the roots of principles, or seeds, and He sees through the whole development before growth has begun; the disciple must see the principles developed, the seed growing after its kind, and not until the ripe fruit is manifested can he say that he knows the science of its development and its cycle of life and reproduction.

Is such knowledge as the Lord possesses, such wisdom as He manifests in His teaching, of any value? Does it really constitute a difference betwixt the Lord Jesus Christ and all other men? Assuredly

it does, and it is the very highest proof which the greatest men will accept as a proof that He is the Son of God, in a sense that no other man can be. It is because of this fitness of Jesus Christ as the Revealer of the Father to men, that when He introduces Himself as Saviour, King, and Judge, men are not startled by what He says, but weigh more and more carefully His utterances because they show His personal relations to sinful man. Having shown that there is only one way of life; that there are false prophets; that every seed grows after its kind; and that His disciples must follow this method of study; He proceeds to lay bare the pretensions of men and their claims, and his position toward them. The entrance to heaven is not to be gained by pretensions, but by obedience; and it matters not what men may say, if they do not obey the Father and follow Jesus Christ they are rejected by God. What good can result from a man saying that Jesus is Lord, if all the time self and self-seeking is the real master within the soul; or to say that they have been great preachers and exorcists when their lives have given the lie to their words, and men have seen that they have been possessed by devils themselves; or to boast of their wonderful works when the devil of pride, self-conceit, and of self-glorification could be seen looking out of their eyes, playing amongst their words, and exulting in their actions? Their professions bring condemnation and not salvation; because such men are self-righteous, and instead of being saved through faith by grace, they think that they are able not merely to save themselves, but also many others upon whom their hands have been laid. The Lord's words, "I never knew you," make an awful chasm in the scene, and it is made manifest that salvation is not attained by pride, self-assertion or self-glorification, but by the poor, penitent spirit, and by obedience to the gracious will of the Father in heaven.

"Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock." Jesus Christ's sayings, and obedience to them, are salvation; and they are so because of their relationship to the Father. They are true and righteous, good and gracious; God's own thoughts of mercy toward men; and thus the man who builds his soul upon God's faithful Word can never be brought to shame. They who reject Jesus Christ, or merely hear His words and are not obedient, are foolish, because they build upon their own foolish fancies, or the conceited thoughts of men, which are like a sandy foundation. But when the crisis of the soul or the world arrives, and there is a judicial inquiry into the righteousness of men, then the judgments of God will overwhelm the false professors and their end will be destruction. The kingdom of truth and righteousness is one, it rests upon God and therefore it cannot fall; the empire of evil is built upon iniquity and lies, and it is self-repellent in every part; a disintegrating influence is found in every part of its structure, and thus, although it may appear stable as the philosophies of Greece, or strong as the empire of Rome, it must fall down, and great the fall must be of a building which has taken over forty centuries for its erection. The former is like the new Jerusalem in all its beauty and splendour; the latter like the tower of

Babel begun by Nimrod, strengthened by Nebuchadnezzar, and finished by the spiritual Babylon; the end being confusion and every evil work.

CHAPTER VIII. The scene is here changed from the mountain of grace and truth, upon which the gracious thoughts of God are revealed, and where men are brought spiritually into communion with God through Jesus Christ, to the plain of suffering, sin-stricken humanity; and the first object that catches the attention is a poor leper, an outcast from society. In the leper there is found the sign of the leprous, impure, unholy soul, and so far as man is concerned, lost to society beyond any means of remedy. What leprosy is in the physical organism that sin is in the soul, and thus the Lord is brought face to face with sin in its lowest depths, and disease in its most revolting form. The question that arises when such a scene is presented is a practical one: Will the Divine Teacher show Himself to be not merely the King of Grace and Truth in the mountain of spiritual thought, but is He able to grapple with, and overcome, the consequences of sin in its manifestations in man? It is evident that this is required, else His teaching will become a dead letter, and men will not be, in reality, one whit better for the wisdom He possessed. This thought ought to be emphasised, because it matters not how wise doctors may be, unless they can relieve or heal their patients it is far better they should die without them. If there is no remedy for sin or disease, then let men say so plainly, and not mock poor sufferers, by causing them to hope for what is unattainable, and cause them to put their trust in a lie. If the kingdom of grace, circled in the blessings of Jesus Christ, is only the most magnificent of human conceptions, but without power to work for man's salvation, then it would not only be the most glorious mirage ever conceived; it would also be the most abhorrent to men, because, so to speak, it raises a cup brimful of mercy to the parched lips of a soul in anguish, and then, instead of a blessed draught of grace, which would be as new life to body and soul, the cup and its contents would be a mere phantom, and thus the higher the hope the more terrible the reaction and the fall. If there is no heaven or hell, and this life is everything, then men might be schooled to enjoy or endure what it gives; but to think that men might be lifted up as if into heaven in thought, and then to find that the conception was false, would be simply intolerable. It is this inimitable conception of the wisdom of Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount that lifts men so far up that they can put their trust in Him; and it is through faith as a means in a man that His power is exerted upon the sinful children of men. The leper was found poor of spirit, penitent because of sin, and faithful as to the Lord's power; and thus, no sooner was there the free communications of grace and faith betwixt Jesus and the leper than there was healing and cleansing. What is the secret of such power? It is the same as the secret of the wisdom; they are the complement of each other, and though neither can be comprehended by man, they harmonise, and the soul is satisfied. The man was commanded not to tell any one of his cleansing; this is a sign for the priests, the ministers of the grace

of God in the nation, and it was given to them as a testimony that the King of grace was in their midst.

The scene changes from the plain to the busy streets of Capernaum, and there is seen a Roman centurion pleading with the Lord on his servant's behalf. The Lord seems to interrupt his prayer by the words, "I will come and heal him;" but this prayer of faith of the centurion, and the response of Jesus, is the means of drawing forth the great faith of the soldier, who, rising far above visible relations, spiritually discerned that the Lord was the Ruler within the unseen world of life, health and disease, and able to counteract and destroy what was contrary to the laws of life and health. It matters not how much the man believed, as bearing upon spiritual thoughts; he had laid hold of this thought that Jesus possessed power over disease; that He was Master within this sphere, and to his faith there was an immediate response of healing power. The greatness of the centurion's faith is made a matter of comment by the Lord, very much to the disparagement of the Jews, who had possessed special privileges; and it indicates that a new sphere of gracious operations are about to be entered upon in other quarters of the world, amongst men who would be found suitable to sit down with the fathers of Israel; whilst their children, on account of their want of faith, would be cast out into the darkness to find out, by sorrow and affliction, their awful guilt in despising their Messiah.

The scene of healing is again changed, and this time it is in the house of Peter, whose wife's mother was sick with a fever; He graciously touched her hand, the fever left her, and she arose and ministered to those who were in the house. The day drew near its close, but His labours in healing increased; many of the devil-possessed were cured, the evil spirits were cast out by His Word, and all the sick healed; and these things were a fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah, that "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." The Lord, as the Healer, is the thought specially held up for consideration in this section of His blessed work, and it may be suggested that the classes of persons and the forms of diseases have their special teaching. They are not merely beneficent works of healing, but they are also signs and even parables which require careful study. The outcast leper is a sign for the unholy and disobedient Jew; the centurion's servant racked with pain, a sign for the Roman Empire, which was about to receive the kingdom of heaven by a strong faith, in great fulness, and without any visible vision of Jesus or touch of His hand; whilst Peter's wife's mother is a sign of the Church in its feverish condition, which requires the touch of the Healer so that the fever may pass away, and it may become a ministering servant amongst men. These things may be considered as permanent signs of a perverted, disobedient people; of a people in great pain because of affliction, and thus ready to receive the Healer and redemption; and of a Church troubled with feverish excitement and unfit to fulfil the function to which it is called for the salvation of men. The special parabolic teaching may run more in the direction of history, but in the meantime, this phase of the subject will not be touched. *The chief thought in connection with this*

subject is that the kingdom of grace is not merely the highest wisdom of God, but also His greatest form of power; and that the manifestation of both the wisdom and the power have for their object the overthrowing of the kingdom of darkness within the soul, and the destruction of the effects of sin. The question is not one of miracle and of the supernatural; it is of this method of nature known as the kingdom of grace, of the order in which it works, and of the fitness of this kingdom in its manifestations to attain the end in view, which is the restoration of sinful men to the favour of God. As a matter of fact all the kingdoms of God in their essential wisdom and manifestation of power are superhuman; men may know the scientific relations, the method of their operations, and by doing so they can appreciate the wisdom and power that is manifested, but beyond this perception of the wisdom and power of God men are really helpless in their knowledge or in their actions. If men could only think as God or in the way that He has manifested His thoughts in each of His kingdoms, there would be any darkness or unbelief in the souls of men; but failing this, there must be in proportion to the ignorance and self-assertion not merely scepticism, but also enmity to God. If men say that they are sinners, and that the kingdom of grace or mercy is not required, then it is simply impossible that they can understand the order of nature in its seven-fold cycles, and they never will, in such a spirit, attain divine wisdom, to righteousness, or to harmony with the will of God. To put this matter in another form, let it be supposed that disciples of natural science ask their teachers the very important questions: What is the essential thing named force or matter? why is it that force or matter possesses power? what is the essential thing named life? why is it that life has power to lay hold of inorganic matter and change it into an organised product? What would the reply be to really intelligent, honest men, who have carefully and fully studied these matters? Would it not be, We know absolutely nothing of essences or powers referred to; and we have almost, if not altogether concluded that we never can know anything about them? These things are not within the sphere of science, which has for its work a knowledge of the relations of manifestations; we are assured that if we limit ourselves to this sphere of relations we will do right, but should we be to speculate upon what seems to be inscrutable, what is not scientific and is not within the sphere of reason, then we would become unscientific, and make ourselves the laughing-stocks of an intelligent community. As with natural physical science, so it must be with the psychological, moral and gracious sciences; the essences and powers which related manifestation lie beyond the human reason, and it is folly to attempt to explain them, and it is a mark of insanity to deny their existence. Following this course of thought further, the utter inability of a sceptical, materialistic philosophy to explain the method or order of nature in all that is manifested and by men is seen; the attempt is hopeless, the fabric is built upon a worldly, carnal conceits; it is of the earth and earthly, and thus falls when the judgments of God are sent forth against it. God's wisdom, power, and knowledge, or science, are not so, and the

conflict in God's Word upon this point. It is asserted in many ways that God possesses this hidden wisdom which men cannot know; that the power is in His right hand to execute all that is in harmony with His wise, holy, righteous, good, and gracious will; and that in His left hand there is stored up His strange, hidden, wise, powerful, and awful judgments, which He executes upon the unrighteous. At the same time, the knowledge of the method or order of nature can be known by men, and it is their highest wisdom to live in harmony with what is named the laws of the universe. If this train of thought is distinctly followed and clearly understood, then the disciple of Jesus Christ will not in his future studies give himself any trouble as to the hidden wisdom and power found in Jesus Christ, but, rather, his attention will be turned to the consideration of the thought, whether the words and works of Jesus manifest a method or order of nature which is fitted in every point to produce man's restoration to God, heaven and holiness. It has been seen that the Sermon on the Mount fully meets this requirement in every particular, as it embodies all that is necessary for man to know so that He might love and obey God. The manifestations of healing power touch the leprous soul and body; the intense agonies of the restless spirit and diseased body; and the feverish perturbations of His own followers in their wilful ways, when instead of the ministering service in the spirit of meekness and love, they cause strife and divisions amongst the brethren in the family circle. But as if these three signs were not sufficient, there was given a manifestation of the plenitude of His gracious power upon all kinds of disease of body and disorder of the soul, and over all these He was Master to the glory of the Father in His heaven of grace amongst men.

The result of this incontestable evidence as to a kingdom of grace amongst men, and a mighty power in the kingdom to produce the required results, ends in the emphatic question which may not be shirked, Art thou going to follow Jesus—the King of grace, in this most blessed mission amongst men? If Yes, then do so as a true disciple, giving unto Him every power possessed by thee; because, since thou art saved by Him, thou art not thine own, but His and the Father's in Him. If thou art inclined to say No, and would fain leave the decision of this question over for a short time, then understand and realise, that thou art hereby charged with rebellion against thy lawful King, with despising His grace, and rejecting Him as thy Saviour, Friend, and King; and it is at the peril of thy soul, judgment, and of eternal death, that thou art permitted to move in thought, word, or deed, from the spot until the decision is made, and the choice for God, Christ, and heaven, or self, sin and hell is registered. This is the moment of crisis of God's Word to thee, O soul; therefore, choose now whom thou wilt serve, Jesus Christ thy King, or thy hateful, rebellious self. This was the hour of decision for the Scribe; but although his pretensions were great, it is doubtful whether he decided to follow the Son of man, who as King of grace, had no possession, but had emptied Himself, so that others might be filled. A disciple reluctant to leave home, and a dead parent, but who has already made his choice, is not permitted to have his own will; his duty is to be a faithful disciple of Jesus, a

servant of grace, and as grace ministers to the living, not to the dead, therefore he must follow Jesus, and not the ways of the world, or of friends. As Jesus came amongst men not to do His own will, that is what would be pleasant and profitable for Himself, but to do God's will, so His disciples are not to seek their own pleasure or profit, but to serve as ministers of grace in His house according to His example and will.

There is a change of place and scenery, and the Lord is seen asleep in a ship, whilst all around there is a storm raging, and the disciples are overwhelmed with trouble and fear. In their extremity they turn to the Lord Jesus saying: "Save, Lord; we perish;" and rising in His majesty He reproved them for their want of faith, rebuked the warring elements, and there followed a great calm. It was little wonder that the men marvelled when they perceived the effects of His words of power upon the external world.

When they had landed in the country of the Gergesenes, a scene, not less terrible in its kind than that of the raging winds and strong sea, met their view in the two demoniacs. But they seemed instinctively to know that they were in the presence of the Master who has power over all devils; and they knew that the day of judgment was come upon them. They petitioned that they might be permitted to enter the swine, and this power being granted, the issue was the destruction of the swine, the healing of the demoniacs, and the rejection of Jesus by the Gadarenes.

CHAPTER IX. Jesus is again found in His own city, Capernaum—the place of consolation, and also of repentance—and there was brought unto Him a palsied man, carried by his four friends. Jesus perceiving the faith that had prompted the deed, instantly responded to it with the words, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." There were Scribes present who heard His words, and who judged in their own souls that Jesus had blasphemed, when He uttered them. They did not speak, however, and thus there is revealed a spiritual power of thought which the Lord possessed; and it was to their thoughts that He responded by the question as to their evil thinking; because, it is surely as easy to forgive sins, as to cause a palsied man to walk; and to prove that He possessed the power to forgive sin, the sign of a palsied man healed and walking was given unto them. The Scribes were speechless; Jesus was a mystery to them; they kept silent, but the people marvelled and glorified God, because such a work of mercy had been done in their midst.

At this time, Matthew was called to follow Jesus; and like a true disciple, he instantly obeyed and followed his Master. Whilst Jesus sat at meat in the house of Matthew, the Pharisees who watched Him were shocked that He should be found in the company of publicans and sinners. His reply to them was that the sick need a physician, and not those who enjoy health; that mercy is the highest will of God, and not receiving sacrifices upon an altar; and that His mission amongst men was to bring sinners unto a gracious, forgiving God.

At the same time the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus, asking why they and the Pharisees should fast, whilst His disciples

fasted not? His response is, that there is a fitness in their fasting, for had they not lost their master? and as for the Pharisees, as they had not yet received the hope of the nation, it was also suitable that they should fast; but for His disciples who had found the bridegroom that their souls desired, why should they in the hour of their gladness pretend to a fast, which would not have been so in reality. This was a time of feasting and joy, of gaining knowledge and strength to His disciples; but the day would come when they would lose the bridegroom, and then the days of fasting would come. The disciples of John did not understand His mission; but if they would study the parables of the worn-out garment, and the old bottles and the new wine, then they would understand that His work was not reformation in the spirit of Moses and Elijah, but regeneration, and thus Mosaism in its forms must pass away before His kingdom would be established.

Whilst speaking, Jesus was interrupted by a certain ruler worshipping Him, and praying that He would come and lay His hand upon his dead daughter that she might live. Jesus followed the ruler, and in the way a woman who had been diseased for twelve years touched His garment and was healed. Her faith was amply rewarded, she was encouraged by His gracious words, the cure was confirmed, and she was made whole. Entering into the ruler's house, the mock mourners were commanded to give place, as their labours were premature, the maid not being dead, but asleep; but they with unfeeling insolence laughed Him to scorn, on account of what they would assume to be His ignorance of their profession. They were put out from the sacred presence of the Life of the world; by His touch, the life returned to the sleeping organism, and the maid arose. This marvellous work made His Name famous, and no wonder, because it showed that He came not merely to destroy the workings of the devil in all their perversions and methods of manifestations, but that He actually possessed the keys or authority over hell and death, and by means of these keys, every secret in the universe lay open to His vision.

Again He is seen walking in the way of mercy, and there is seen following Him, two blind men who cry for mercy from the Son of David. He enters a house, the blind men stand beside Him, and He asks whether they believe that He can do such a thing as give sight to the blind; their simple, trustful answer is, "Yea, Lord." They possessed a true faith, their eyes were opened to see the face of their merciful Benefactor; and though He instructed them not to say anything about their cure, they could not keep back the words of praise to Him who had opened their eyes.

In the way a devil-possessed, dumb man was brought unto Him; and the power of Jesus in this case made the multitudes marvel, and say, "It was never so seen in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils." At this point, once more, the special cases pass into the general stream of mercy; and Jesus is described as going about doing good; teaching, and healing the sons of men. The individual stream of mercy pours forth in a copious flow of the blessed water of grace for thirsty souls; but there are multitudes yet unsaved and unhealed. His soul is drawn out in compassionate

tenderness toward the wandering sheep who have no shepherd ; and turning to His disciples, He instructs them to pray the Lord of the great harvest field of the world that He might send forth labourers into the harvest.

CHAPTER X. Here the Lord Jesus is seen deputing gracious powers to His twelve disciples, and sending them forth to carry on and extend the kingdom of mercy amongst men. His instructions are those of the King of grace and mercy to His ministering servants ; they are important, and it is necessary to give them brief consideration. They were not to go to Gentiles or Samaritans, but to Israel ; in other words, the time was not yet come for the spiritual manifestation of Christianity : Jesus was in the flesh, the Jews had not made their final choice ; the dying embers of the sacred fire upon the Jewish hearth were to be gathered together so that the followers of Christ might be prepared for the spiritual era about to dawn upon men. This is the laying of the foundations of the gracious kingdom of Christ ; it is where Mosaism meets with Christ's spiritual kingdom in its outward organisation, and there is the dove-tailing of the two dispensations, thus making them one in Jesus Christ. It is not the spiritual order first and then the visible ; but as it is in the order in nature, first the visible and then the spiritual. This movement is not purely spiritual, therefore it gives to men in the twelve apostles the forms of things within which the Spirit will in due time take up its abode. To this the words of Christ agree, for the disciples were not to preach that the kingdom had come, but that it was at hand ; very near indeed, but still, even as then, so now, forms, mere forms, are not the kingdom of mercy, they are only the earthen vessels in which it exists ; and men must put out the hand of faith to lay hold of that which is so close at hand before they will find it. The disciples received spiritual power to heal the sick and the broken in spirit ; to cleanse the leper and leprous souls ; to give life to the dead and moral life to souls ; and to cast out devils and change men from being devils to become the sons of God ; these gifts were freely given, therefore they should have been freely used. As His disciples and followers, serving God in His Spirit, temporal things were not to occupy their attention ; their ministrations to men was of mercy, and if they ministered to men faithfully of His grace, men would be found to give freely of what was necessary for the body. The apostles were not to go from house to house in one town, but they were to find a suitable place, abide there, and do their work of mercy. If their message of mercy was despised and rejected, then their duty would be to leave such people to the consequences of their fatal choice. The spirit in which they were to go forth was that of meekness and wisdom ; and they were to expect reviling and persecution in their self-sacrificing work. But whatever position of peril or difficulty they might be brought into by their faithful ministrations of mercy, they were not to be cast down in spirit, but to do their duties faithfully as the Spirit of God the Father would instruct them. They were not merely to expect persecution from the world, but also that their dearest friends would become their bitterest enemies.

and that they would be hated for the sake of Christ's Name. Persecution and hatred must not dry up the spirit of mercy within, but rather there must be patient endurance to the end, so that there may be a perfect salvation. When persecuted in one place they had liberty to flee unto another, ever remembering that the disciple should follow the Master even unto death. The fear of man is to be eschewed and the fear of God cherished. An open confession of the truth is to be made at all times, and upon no account is the Master to be denied before men. The first effect of the kingdom of grace and mercy will not be peace, but bitter war in families; but this is as the cross to the followers of Christ, and it is for them to bear it patiently if they would be worthy of Him. To seek life by shirking such duties will be to lose it; but to lose life in the King of mercy's service is to find eternal life. They go forth carrying blessings to men, and they who receive them receive Him; but if they receive the disciples merely as prophets of truth and righteousness, they will get their reward; and should any gracious soul have compassion and give unto Christ's disciples even a cup of cold water, assuredly they shall not lose their reward.

CHAPTER XI. In chapter x, the new form within which the spirit of Christianity was to be enshrined is presented to view; in chapter xi. the form of Mosaism and also its spirit is discerned as vanishing from the sight of men. The twelve apostles had gone forth to initiate the new kingdom; and as Jesus was busy in His words and deeds of mercy there came unto Him two disciples of John the Baptist with this message, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" The spirit of Moses, the prophets, and the Baptist is strong in the direction of moral righteousness, that is, of truth, obedience to law, justice, and judgment upon the wicked; and only dimly visible, hidden away under rites, ceremonies, and forms, could men discern the spirit of mercy. What John expected was a kingdom in the spirit of Moses, and it was no wonder that he fretted, was weary and disappointed, because there was no appearance of the visible kingdom which he had set up in his own imagination. The spirit of John was working in one direction, in the order of visible things; the spirit of Jesus was moving wily forward in another direction, but with very little outward manifestation, and in this way John could not understand Jesus. But Jesus sympathising with John in his lonely condition, and knowing that the end would be to His forerunner, who was even then enduring tribulations, brings men into the kingdom of heaven, and the kingdom into the world; sent by his messengers a message suitable for his condition, and might be the means of consolation if he would think upon Jesus's words, "Show John again those things which ye do hear and see, but which he blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not stumble at Me." Could John at such a time look beyond the words and discern their spirit? To do so might have been difficult, but Isaiah foretold so to a very great extent, and thus it was possible that the Baptist might be led to ponder upon the words of the evangelical

prophet. Could he only by thinking *again*, by revising the whole his thoughts in the light of these words, guided by the Holy Spirit, to conceive of blindness being removed from men so that the light truth might reach their souls; that lame, weak-kneed spirits might be made to run in the way of God's laws; that leprous souls and bodies might be cleansed; that the deaf ears might be unstopped and brought to listen to God's Word; that even the dead might live again, be raised up by another spirit within, which would be stronger than death; and if the gospel was preached to the poor in spirit, ready to receive the kingdom, then how could the work of Jesus be in vain? These words may have touched the soul of the Baptist in his lonely dungeon; and not being offended at his Master, this may have been him not merely the last glimpse of sunshine upon earth, but also his change from the flesh and from visible forms into spiritual life (crossing the Jordan, in figure, for he was then on the east side), a glorious Sun of spiritual truth that would arise upon his soul to no more. For men the Mosaic vision of visible things was passing away, but the last of the prophets when translated might become one of the first of the saints, only such a change is not in the spirit alone and visible things, but of Christ and invisible realities.

The disciples of John departed with the gracious message to the lonely prophet; Jesus seeks to rivet the attention of the multitudes around Him upon the critical condition in which they were placed, from which they could not extricate themselves, and for which they were become responsible personally and nationally. Two great waves of divine blessing had in rapid succession burst upon their heads; in John and Jesus the spirits of Mosaism and of Christianity had been presented to their view; and the time had now come for their decision to be men, or to remain like foolish, spoiled, ignorant children, who selfishly look after their own personal interests, and care nothing for the welfare of others. The words of Jesus bearing upon John are like the voice of a trumpet challenging men that they might arise and think. He forces into their thoughts pictures which are the very opposite of the portrait of John the Baptist, so that they might be compelled to compare the pictures with the original. He asks them what they had gone into the wilderness to see? Was it a reed, a weak thing shaken by every wind, or a smiling, deceitful, foppish courtier, who had as many faces as the classes with whom he met? No, would be the instant response of every listener, John was no weakling to be shaken by the fear or favour of men, and he was faithful in reproof of wickedness. What then; if John was not like a reed, as so many of that generation had proved themselves to be, and not a courtier seeking the favour of men, like the Herodians and others, then the man was the servant of truth and righteousness, and thus a prophet. This conclusion is the right one, therefore Jesus instructs them in the fact that John was the messenger going before the King, their Messiah; that John was the greatest of the prophets; and yet that the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist. John had come and the pageantry of law and ritual, the order of visible things, was vanishing from sight; but this setting luminous star had brought the dawn of spiritual

d at his disappearance the old things would pass away, and order become manifested. The surface might appear quiet but a catastrophe be apparent; but in the spiritual world it was as if wise thoughtful men were in an agony to know the truth; and an intense desire to know and obey the will of God they were to possess the kingdom as by force. Did they know anything of this spiritual power operating upon men in their midst and all men? Did they feel the burning fire which was testing every man as to the past and the future? and could they not see that Satan was at work separating the chaff from the wheat? The end was upon them, and they perceived it not; for John with the old spirit of Mosaism, was shut up in the prison of Herod and soon thus other Elias would depart from amongst men, by a jot of fiery persecution to death, to report to the King, the Invisible, their rejection of Him and the message He had sent them. Elias had again come to another Carmel, the vineyard of Israel had heard the cry, "How long halt ye between two opinions?"

God had been glorified in their midst by a fire from heaven more glorious than that which had burnt up Elijah's sacrifice, and the works of His beloved Son; and as with the Israel of old, as the strong tide of emotion had flowed and as suddenly it had ebbed, and the result must be the same as with ancient Israel. The message had fallen upon their ears: but they did not hear; the Lord had shown them their position, and they would not understand; more than that it did but impress upon them the great importance of His words "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

The message had fallen upon the Jews as a nation, for they have been blinded by their unbelief, and by despising the Word of God, caused Satan to act upon them as altogether unfit to be His servants for the salvation of the world. His service required men of intense spiritual power who could think upon the past and present, on Moses and Jesus Christ, and would stand fast at any sacrifice lay hold of God's truth and righteousness, and prize them as if they were to be gained, only by exertion of strength that a man possesses. God's men must have no master but Him, and to serve Him they must give up everything that is desired, and be contented. The kingdom will be possessed, but only those who are contented in faith, who love the truth, and who have cut off every carnal lust, are competent to follow the King in this warfare. The generation of Jesus Christ; but the generation He was speaking of could only be compared to children, who knew nothing of the serious, responsible, spiritual things of life. They loved to be amused, and if the amusement provided for them did not come up to their expectations, then they would become sulky and give no response to what was presented to them. John had come to them as a prophet; but he was so rude and uncharitable, calling them by such names as sinners, and even telling them that the respectable sons of Israel were required to repent, that they might be saved; and then His words were so coarse and uncivilised that he could not even eat and drink with the Jewish society. They did not like John, nor the part that he played, and in *their opinion* the man was possessed with the

evil. As for the Son of man, His acting was of a different kind ; but when He went to the other extreme from John ; He paid no respect to the established usages of society, to classes and persons, but when He was invited to the house of publican or Pharisee, sinner or saint, He would go, and by doing so committed the grave mistake of appearing to make light of sin and by implication would make out that all men are equal. Such a man cannot surely be a saviour of society, but rather, when so very free in giving His company to all who invite Him, no better than a glutton and a wine-bibber. Generations of men pass away, but the spirits which animate them continue to live ; and it is not uncharitable to think, or even to say, that the great mass of the people at this day are exactly upon the platform pictured by the Lord, and they are not one whit further advanced in their knowledge or in their methods of judging the servants of God. They cannot be justified by any means, by their criticisms upon God's servants, or by their self-appointed standards which they set up ; but the highest wisdom is justified in sending unto men these apparently extremes of character, if for no other reason than this, that men might be brought to think upon what such men say and do, so that the Word of God might be studied and the kingdom of heaven's mercy found.

The day of mercy, the hour of crisis, the moment of judgment, and then, woe, woe, woe, to the rejected and condemned. The holiday attire must be laid aside and sackcloth and ashes will cover the body ; the day of exaltation in unexampled privileges passes quietly and quickly away, and the night of descending as if into hell comes slowly round. The day rich in blessing and toleration flies past and the night of intolerance of unbearable judgments, moves steadily forward. The great and shining light of John ; the blazing sunshine of the word and works of Jesus Christ are gone, and the awful darkness draws near. For those who in the day of mercy had received mercy there is no judgment ; but for those who had rejected mercy, judgment was at the door and for a season the sweet voice of mercy would be heard no more.

Under such circumstances what is the hope of man ? It must lie in the sovereignty of the Father, and in His wisdom and power. The wise and the prudent among men have erred, they have deceived themselves and others ; but the Son of God never deceived any one ; and it is in His hands that all things are delivered by the Father. He is the way to heaven, the Truth in heaven, and the Life of heaven, therefore may freely trust Him, cast all their cares and troubles upon Him and find rest in Him and peace. Only in doing so it is essential that there be subjection to His will, learning of Him, resting in Him, and as will be found that His will is not grievous to bear and that the things He imposes are indeed light, when His gracious spirit animates the soul. The Saviour's invitation was, as it were, the tender farewell to the Jews who had heard him speak these words, and who would not accept His gracious offer of mercy ; and this is His voice during the Church era, they have been to men a very fountain of spiritual blessing ; *means* of transforming men into the likeness of Christ and to that *and lowly* they have given rest of soul.

CHAPTER XII. The Lord Jesus and His disciples are again seen together ; it is the Sabbath-day, they are hungry, and as they pass through the corn they pluck the ears and eat. The Pharisees observe this and bring a charge against them for doing an unlawful thing. It does seem that they carry the letter of the commandment to its utmost boundary when they interpret this action as a profanation of the Sabbath, and therefore Jesus proceeds to reason with them by showing that God's bread is not selfishness and hatred, but mercy; and that in the work of mercy the Sabbath is set aside, and men are free of blame for what they do. If when David was hungry it was not a sin to give him, and those who were with him, the shew-bread which was the portion of the priests, then mercy was greater than ritual ; and if priests offer up sacrifice on the Sabbath, thus doing work, was not mercy greater than the Sabbath ? They knew the sacredness of the temple, but in their midst was a greater than the temple at Jerusalem. The Pharisees had made a mistake in not understanding the words "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," and thus they had been guilty in seeking the condemnation of the innocent ; "For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath-day." The Pharisees were not able to give a reply to such thoughts ; they strike at the very root of all their ideas, and thus they take a little time for reflection. But the scene is quickly changed to the synagogue in which there was a man with a withered hand ; and here the Pharisees renew their attack by asking, for the purpose of accusing Him, whether healing might be done on the Sabbath-day ? The appeal to their own interests, and the decision in His favour—that a sheep might be taken out of a pit on the Sabbath—is carried forward to disease of body ; and it is concluded that the healing work of mercy is a righteous thing, and that it may be done on the Sabbath-day. The contention of the Pharisees was for a form and a sign, and for obedience to the letter, *in the spirit of strife*, therefore they were anti-sabbatic ; the principle enunciated by Jesus looks away beyond the visible form, and seizes the conception not merely of the Sabbath, but also of the Christian idea of peace and rest in Christ. The Sabbath is nothing of itself, it is a sign of the state of rest or of harmony with the will of God. Once men possessed such a blessing, but they lightly esteemed what was so valuable, and by disobedience it vanished from the world, leaving care and toil instead of peace and rest. The seventh day was set apart for the worship of God and for communion with Him as the feast of peace and the rest of the soul ; but instead of the day being made a means for a gracious and merciful end, even the salvation of men, and bread for their hungry souls, it became an idol to which incense was offered, and a means of strife and cursing instead of blessing. Hidden under the form of the Jewish Sabbath and the services of the temple at Jerusalem there was to be found the promise of a true Sabbath of peace and rest ; but true peace and rest would be found in One greater than a visible temple, and in a kingdom of mercy which would bring in a true Sabbath-day. The question then, and throughout the whole Christian era, is not specially one of moral law, though this is also true in its place, but of mercy, of drawing the sheep of God out of *the pit into which they have fallen*, of feeding

their hungry souls, and of rendering unto God a gracious service worship and praise, and of works of mercy toward men. This is Jesus Christ's conception of a Sabbath feast; and in figure, it enlarges in the Sabbath of weeks, which will bring peace and rest to a troubled world; and beyond the Sabbath of weeks, or the millennium, there comes into view the day of jubilee, when all the ransomed will be restored, and the eternal Sabbath of peace, rest, and harmony with the will of God will begin. In the meantime the invitation of Jesus "Come unto Me," &c., is the key to this Sabbath question; because only in Him that men can find a Sabbath—rest—for their souls—it is well to remember that "the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day."

The Pharisees had failed in their purpose, and being grievously offended because of their open discomfiture before all the people, they met in council to devise some means how they might destroy Jesus. His words are words of peace and rest, and of mercy to men; their thoughts full of envy, jealousy, hatred and murder. The devil was roused at last; the serpent has raised his head; and with such a flood of wolves running after one poor Lamb, there is small chance indeed of escape from such enemies. Jesus knew the spirit of the men and their intentions, and thus He withdrew from the place so that they might have time to reflect upon their sinful ways; but although hated and persecuted, and removing from one city to another, where He might be more welcome, He continued the same ministration of mercy, only more quietly, requesting those that were healed not to make Him known. In Jesus was fulfilled the prophetic utterances of Isaiah, who by the Spirit of God had spoken of such an One who would possess the Spirit of God, and who by meekness, gentleness, and knowledge would bring a great victory to the cause of God; for "in His Name shall the Gentiles trust."

There was brought to Jesus one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb: the Lord healed him; the people were amazed and said, "Is this the Son of David?" The common people judged truly; but the Pharisees, when they heard such a thought suggested about Jesus, took the very opposite extreme, and asserted that His works were done by the power of the prince of the devils. This blasphemous assertion drew from Jesus a full exposition of the folly of this assertion, and a very strong warning to the Pharisees of the extremely dangerous position they were in. They were not consistent in asserting that Satan had become divided against himself, because no soul, city, house, or nation divided against itself could possibly stand. If the idea that the devil would not seek to destroy his own power was conclusive, then there was the alternative view which was worthy of consideration, which was that the Spirit of God was operating by Jesus; and if this was the case, then the kingdom of heaven had come very near to them. The question is one of power; on the one hand, the devil-possessed who was in possession of the house; on the other, a power stronger than that of the devil, which could enter right into the secret places of man's being, bind the devil, cast him out, and retain possession. Theories may be spun out that will make black appear as white, and a lie to pass for

the truth ; but the plain facts are that though the devil is strong, God's grace is stronger, and it has gained many such victories over the devil. They who are on the side of grace and mercy are with Jesus Christ in His work of regeneration ; but they, who by lies and blasphemous thoughts oppose Him in His work of mercy, are the servants of the destroyer. This assertion that Jesus Christ is in league with the devil is an abhorrent one ; still, if men should in their ignorance even conceive such an idea, there is forgiveness, but if they say what they believe to be a lie, and act the part of the devil in malice, envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness, then they do indeed shut the door of mercy against themselves, and, having trampled under foot the means of their redemption, by what means can they be saved ? It is no use quibbling about degrees of sin, or what the unpardonable sin may be ; the important thought for all men is this, find out exactly what the seed, the tree, and the fruit is ; if good and gracious, it is well ; if corrupt, then it is condemned, and no man can reverse the sentence. From poisonous vipers men expect poison, and not anything good ; and it is the same with the soul of man if unregenerate, evil and evil only will be the issue ; whilst if regenerate by grace, then good treasures, gracious thoughts will be manifested. There is no means by which the order of nature will be bribed to tell a lie ; it is true to the letter, and only sophists who love not the truth set themselves against facts ; they are foolish, because they deceive and destroy their own souls, and surely even an infant could see that no profit can come from such actions.

The Scribes and the Pharisees sought a sign from Jesus, perhaps pretending that if something marvellous was done, that then they might be inclined to listen to His teaching. His answer is that no sign shall be given to such a perverted and evil generation, except that of the prophet Jonah, and the facts of his history were already known to them. They desired a visible wonder : He speaks to them of death and a resurrection. They speak as if they wished to believe, but He knew their secret thoughts, and the fact was that they were more rebellious and degraded than the people of Nineveh, for they repented when Jonah preached to them. Judgment, not mercy, were His words in their hearing ; folly and not wisdom was their choice ; and the men of Nineveh and the queen of the south would condemn these sign-seekers who would not see such signs of wisdom and power as had not been granted by Solomon or Jonah. Their state had become extreme ; the unclean spirit had gone as if into a desert place, seeking for rest, and had not found it, because it had been seeking in the wrong direction ; disappointed, restless, demoniacal, what could the miserable wretch do but return to the garnished, reformed, cleansed house, taking other seven devils along with it even more wicked than itself, and the end must be the perfection of wickedness, a complete manifestation of inmorality such as the world had never before that time witnessed.

Whilst thus engaged with the Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus was informed that His mother and brethren desired to speak with Him ; but He extending His hand toward His disciples, claims them as His

nearest of kin, not according to the flesh, but by spiritual affinity. The day for earthly things, and forms had passed by; the lower powers of being which minister to the higher must fall into the shade, and every power must be concentrated upon the spirit of obedience to the Father's will. The flesh is as nothing, but those who do the will of God are united in Christ to the one family in heaven and earth of which God is the Father and Head, Law-giver and King. It is at this point that the cycle of thought in this chapter ends by revealing unto the disciples of Christ that the spiritual Sabbath of rest is found in perfect obedience to the will of God the Father. Whilst, on the other hand, by the sign of healing and dispossessing the devil, blind and dumb, He manifested His merciful power upon men who could not see the will of God; who were dumb and could not utter His praises; and who devil-possessed were turned away from God. There is a more terrible sign in this chapter, and it is the condition of the Scribes and Pharisees who in their enmity to Christ had taken the fatal step of despising and rejecting Him, and thus their last state was indeed almost as bad as it could be. Did they still possess the power to hear? the one special sense which could be utilised as a blessing to them? It is an awful thing to think that men can be so insane, possessed with the devil of self, that they should hate the holy Saviour; so blind to truth and righteousness, that they cannot discern betwixt light and darkness; and so dumb that they are unable to thank God for His mercies, or acknowledge His sovereignty over them. How can God help those in such a condition if they will not listen to His voice, and will persist in taking their own ways and thinking their own thoughts? The judgments of the Lord are terrible judgments indeed, but the worst is this, that men prefer to go forward in such a path, bringing down judgments upon their own heads, whilst Christ is doing His utmost in the kingdom of mercy to bring them to himself and to God.

It may now be discerned that chapters v., vi., and vii., lay the foundation of the kingdom of mercy in its objective laws, or principles, which lead men onward to the perfection that is in God the Father; in the kingdom of mercy and the righteousness which is by grace, subjectively, as found in Jesus Christ; and in the order of life or active relationship toward men by Christians as brethren, or as estranged from God through sin; and this is a manifestation of the kingdom of grace, not only in its poor spirit, but also in its fruition in all heavenly things. Chapters viii., ix., present to view the kingdom of mercy in its power over sin, in its objective, subjective, and active forms, and thus the principles manifested harmonise with the words, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Chapters x., xi., make manifest the kingdom of grace in the objective principles set down for the guidance of the subjects of the kingdom of grace. The subjective state of the soul so that there may be perfect obedience to the will of the Father and of Jesus Christ, is beautifully expressed in the thought of laying the heavy burdens of life on Him, and in the subject taking up His easy yoke and thus finding rest of soul. The active portion is fully developed in chapter xii. where the Lord Jesus conforms in all

things to the will of His Father ; whilst the Pharisees are seen as wilful rebels against God, and as servants of the devil ; and where the kingdom of grace and mercy is manifested as a spiritual realm by the spiritual union existing betwixt Himself and His disciples, whilst carnal, fleshly affinities are emphatically set aside. This portion will harmonise with the words, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

CHAPTER XIII. By advancing to this chapter, there can now be discerned to some extent what it spiritually represents ; it is nothing less than the hidden wisdom of the Father, "things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." When the high and holy principles of the kingdom of grace are to be enunciated to the world, men are called up as if into a mountain to commune with God. When the kingdom of mercy in its power of healing is to be revealed, man must descend to the plain, to cities, to the stormy seas, stand by the insane and paralysed, mix with publicans and sinners, and pharisaic hypocrites, learn about secret troubles, stand by the bedside of the dying and the dead, listen to the cries of the blind, interpret the signs of the dumb and be moved with compassion because sinful men are seen as sheep without a shepherd. When the meek spirit of obedience to the will of the Father is to be studied, then the servants of Christ are seen going forth bearing unto men this kingdom of mercy, and the instructions they have received from the King must be considered. The cry of the lonely prisoner in the dungeon, persecuted for righteousness' sake, must be heard uttering the weary cry, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth." The perfect subject of the Father's will, and also the all-glorious King of meekness and of grace must be accepted and served. The true Bread from heaven which gives power to the paralysed arm must be eaten, so that there may be strength to go forth amongst the subtle, devilish enemies of God, and in the spirit of Jesus Christ to raise up upon the earth a new brotherhood, a family of the Father in heaven. When men would seek after the hidden things of God's wisdom and power, then the place for study is by the sea-side, where the boundless ocean of His mighty works may be contemplated ; the glorious expanse of the heaven above, considered and Himself adored ; and the unseen world within the soul pondered upon so that God may be feared and obeyed. The wise Newton compared himself as like to a child upon the sea-beach gathering a few shells from the great ocean of the fulness of God's wisdom and power ; but in this chapter there is One seen sitting upon the sea and giving forth to men the wisdom of God hidden from them for ages.

"He spake many things unto them." It would have been a good thing, if one could only have been so privileged as to sit at His blessed feet on that peaceful shore, there to hear divine wisdom, in the sweetest, gentlest, and simplest words, utter the very thoughts of God the Father ; to look into His serene and lovely face, and to drink in every varying expression as He uttered such marvellous thoughts. It does seem as if with the utmost confidence a humble scholar might freely

ask this Teacher any question : and it would be so delightful to listen to His answers, and even to receive His gentle rebukes because of ignorance. Upon the sea of knowledge, of the hidden treasures of God's wisdom He sits : and as the man Jesus, any one could draw near to Him with confidence. But it does seem that it is more difficult to enter within the veil, to see the throne, the glory and the radiating light of heaven : and yet, surely the latter is preferable to the former. Upon the sea of thought and word the visible form and parabolic teaching cover the spiritual conceptions, and it is often found difficult to pass beyond the figures and to reach the spiritual thoughts ; but, if the Holy Spirit opens up the understanding, touches the spirit within, and thus links heaven and earth together, more valuable glimpses, but only glimpses, of spiritual realities may be obtained.

The parable of the sower gives an objective presentation of the kingdom of grace in the world. The seed is the Word of God which has been sown broadcast upon the earth ; it has come fully and freely unto all men in all that manifests the kingdom of grace and mercy. But it is not received by all, because some men are altogether unprepared to receive such teaching, their souls being more like a highway or byeway upon which men travel, that is given up entirely to custom, routine, and the ways of this world. They may be likened to the heathen at home and abroad who are sunk in sensualism, in ignorance of divine things, and have no desire whatever to receive the gracious and merciful words of Jesus Christ. The seed of the kingdom touches such men, but it never reaches the inmost soul ; the sensual desires of the body and proud ambitious thoughts of the spirit, like so many vultures, surround the man and the Word of God is forgotten, swallowed up by these creatures of the earth. The second class are not quite so sensual as the first ; the Word of God is received by them and for a time it is a thing of joy ; but their realisation of the Word has been very superficial, a thing of the surface and not of the soul, of sweet reasonableness and polish, but not of life and death, heaven and hell, sin and holiness. The real man within, the hard and stony heart, has not been broken, and thus when there is trouble and persecution because of the Gospel, such disciples draw back. The cross becomes an offensive thing to them ; they love beauty more than holiness, science and art more than truth and righteousness, and thus they prove themselves unfit for the kingdom of mercy, mere professors of divine wisdom, truth, and righteousness, and not doers of the will of God. The third class represents those known as prosperous men of the world, and who receive the Word of truth ; but many idols are set up within the soul such as a great name and fame, or to become wealthy ; these masters thrust out the Lord and His Word, there is no room for Him to reign in such a place, and thus the garden of the soul becomes a wilderness, bringing forth thorns instead of the pleasant fruits of mercy. The fourth class are those who truly and sincerely receive into their souls the seed of God's grace, by the Word of God, in due time it germinates, grows after its kind and brings forth fruit in the spirit of mercy. This parable is of all the parables most important to man, *because it is the one which opens the kingdom of heaven to the soul*

which the kingdom of grace is brought into the soul, and the Lord shows its relative importance in His sight by adding the words, "I have ears to hear let him hear."

It is to be discerned a break in the story at the 10th verse, by the disciples asking the Master why He taught by parables? His reply to the disciples it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, but the uninitiated this knowledge was not given. Men are invited to enter by the parable of the sower, and if they seek to enter in, the kingdom will be thrown open to them and the grace of God will reach their hearts. But if the story is used as a toy, for amusement, and not for instruction, then they remain in the darkness, and they are not initiated into the light of God's truth. That the Lord is right in this matter is clearly shown, because, as a matter of fact, it is impossible to teach men or women spiritual things who are not prepared to know truth; the self-sufficient and self-satisfied, who are self-seeking, are, of all classes, the most hopeless as related to spiritual things. To those who have entered the gate of the palace of truth and have received a single ray of divine light, it is not so; they have the germ-seed of grace, and to them there will be given in due season; but those who do not possess this beginning of grace, and despise what is proffered unto them, then the very power to receive will die away within them. It is because of this relationship as he is, to divine things, that He speaks in parables; for they who are wise in their own conceits say that they both see and hear, but in reality, they do not see, hear or understand the thoughts of God. In all such men the prophecy of Esaias is fulfilled: they think they hear and see as well as any man can possibly do, but since they do not understand spiritual thoughts, or perceive invisible realities, they are gross sensualists, carnal men, unconverted and unhealed. It is only with those who have entered the palace of truth and righteousness that their eyes see, and their ears hear; and those to whom the Lord Jesus have come have been blessed above the prophets and righteous men of past ages, for they strongly desired to see, hear, and understand the wisdom of the kingdom of heaven. It is hardly necessary to point out that the words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," are fully expressed in this first interpretation and explanations.

The second parable of the field, the good seed, and the enemy sowing tares, is also an objective picture of the kingdom of heaven in the present, but the position is changed, and instead of the seed being sown, two kinds of seed are brought into notice, and there is each developing according to its nature from the seed-time to the harvest. In these thoughts there are to be seen the world, the good seed, grace sown by Jesus Christ; the devil's seed of selfishness and sin, and in due time their fruits according to their kind. The servants of the householder, Christ's servants of grace, are to see that evil should be found side by side with good, and they should, in their ignorance and impatience, root out the evil by force. This is not the Lord's method of working; He permits both good and evil to grow according to *their kind*; but the day will come when

judgment will fall upon the evil, and punishment be awarded to evil-doers ; and at that day the righteous shall shine as the sun in kingdom of truth and righteousness. This also is a very important parable for the servants of Christ, therefore, "He that hath ears let him hear." In this parable the words, "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted," is the hidden principle that may be spiritually discerned ; because during this cycle of seed-time, development, and till the harvest, the servants of grace have to endure persecution and trouble, and it is only at the end that the sorrow and mourning pass away, and the comfort, joy, and peace of heaven are realised.

In the third parable, the kingdom of heaven is compared to the mustard seed, which, although so small in its beginnings, grows so large as to become a place of shelter and safety for the birds of the air. In other words, although the kingdom of heaven, in the spirit of meekness, is of very small importance at first, yet it possesses great capabilities of growth, and, in its own place, it becomes a blessing, a shelter and hiding place, and a protection against evil. Although the meek of spirit have been despised because of their lowliness, they will not always remain so, for theirs is the earth and its fulness as an inheritance.

In the fourth parable, the kingdom of heaven is likened unto leaven put in meal, which operated until the whole of it was leavened. In other words, the leaven of the kingdom of grace is considered as put into the soul or into the world, and it works after its nature until the whole capacity of the being is changed from sin and corruption to holiness, truth, and righteousness. The third parable shows the transforming power of grace in obedience to the gracious laws of Christ ; the fourth manifests the transforming power of God's Word of grace, which will not rest until man is changed into the image of God as manifested in Christ. It is a blessed thing to hunger after righteousness and truth ; the promise is that the soul will be filled.

At this point there is another break, and it is seen to be at the fourth blessing, which has been the great secret anxiously sought by men throughout the ages. At that time Wisdom was speaking to men in parables and they did not understand ; the children, the multitude, were sent away, and the Lord accompanied by the disciples entered the house. This change is a figure of a spiritual reality in the kingdom of heaven ; it is that of the change from the kingdom of heaven as objective in form or letter and subjective in thought to the kingdom in its outgoing merciful activities. Thus the suitability of the exposition of the second parable at this point is very interesting ; it is for the followers of Christ in merciful deeds, and not for men who are comparable to babes in the kingdom of heaven. In the fifth parable the kingdom of heaven is compared to treasure hid in a field, and the Christian having found this treasure and being overjoyed by its preciousness, is seen as selling everything that he might possess what is so valuable. At first sight there may be a little difficulty in discerning how the spirit of mercy, which seeks the salvation of others, can be likened to *hidden treasure* ; and yet it is truly so, because it is not till men find Christ *very precious* to their own souls that they will really place a true value

on themselves. When they are one with Christ joy fills the soul, and when they go unto Him, give themselves unto Him, in fact, sell everything, even their own selves; and then being thoroughly consecrated

His service of mercy the field becomes theirs in reality, and as followers of Christ they go forth into the world making many rich, and not increasing their own wealth in proportion as they bestow gifts of grace upon others. These things, though paradoxical, are proved true by the experience of many Christian men: of course, it is only the initiated that can understand such things; the infants and children in grace will do well to remember that they are not far enough advanced to comprehend such difficult problems. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

In the sixth parable the kingdom of heaven is compared to a pearl of great price, which a merchant having found, he sold all that he had that he might be the owner of it. This expresses the thought of unity, completeness and perfection. Where is the man who would not renounce all the precious pearls of truth, wisdom, and righteousness he possesses if he could only place in one object, Christ, for example, all that can be possessed by men? The fifth parable by the treasure may point out the manifold graces of the spirit of mercy; the sixth concentrates everything precious into one full orb of holiness, truth, and righteousness, and possessing such a pearl, what else could men desire? It is true that the words, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God," run in harmony with the perfect moral nature of man; but it is equally true that the object of the kingdom of grace is the restoration of man from his fallen, corrupt state to holiness, truth, and righteousness in the image of God.

In the seventh parable, of the net and the fish caught in it, there is given a picture of the end of the age, the coming judgment, and of the punishment which will fall upon the wicked. The Lord asked the disciples whether they understood the parables; and their response was, "Yea, Lord." If, therefore, men are instructed in these mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, it is their duty to act not as disciples following masters, but as householders; and out of the divine treasury under their charge to give forth unto the children of the kingdom new and old things. These parables have been oftentimes repeated by men; His wisdom and His mighty works have been the subjects of admiration and astonishment; but what of that? He was only a carpenter's son; He had no right to possess such wisdom, no authority to utter such thoughts, or to do such mighty deeds. "They were offended in Him;" "and He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." As then, so throughout the ages; men could not deny the facts of the wisdom and power of God in Jesus Christ; but the lowly Jesus Christ is an offence; the cross a terrible stumbling-block; and through the unbelief of those who know His Name, and all about Him, as they have thought, His mighty works have not been manifested amongst men as they might have been. It is to be hoped that the days of unbelief are near an end; that the days for parables and dark sayings are past, and that Jesus Christ will be recognised and trusted as the Wisdom and *Light of God to men.*

CHAPTER XIV. The scene is here changed, and once more the high places of this earth are observed and princes and prophets pass across the stage. The man who had preceded the Lord as His forerunner had been put to death by the cruel Herod through the cunning and craft of his paramour and her daughter. For righteousness' sake was he condemned, no, not condemned, but foully murdered, because he had, as God's servant, said unto Herod, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." The prophet had gone home to the King's palace; from the solitary dungeon to the fellowship of the just, made perfect through suffering; "and his disciples came, and took up the corpse, and buried him; and they went and told Jesus." This is one concrete picture of the world in kings' palaces and amongst the rulers upon this earth; and superstitious fears, weakness, licentiousness, pride, vacillation, a false sense of honour, a spirit of revenge, profligacy and injustice, with many other forms of wickedness, may be laid to their charge; and in the background the persecution to the death of God's prophets who were bold enough to tell such men that their cruel, sinful deeds were unlawful. The other picture is the great desert of the wilderness of this world; a merciful Saviour seeking the lost ones, and multitudes, weary of life, oppressed by wicked rulers and hungering for something that will give rest, peace, and happiness going forth to seek Jesus Christ. Seeking souls and a merciful Saviour soon meet, and as He looks upon such a scene, His soul is moved with compassion toward them and the healing powers of His grace flow forth amongst them.

But the day of mercy was drawing near its close, and still the poor souls hungering after truth and righteousness sat at the Lord's feet, drinking in His words; and they could not think of tearing themselves away from this Jesus who was so truly their King, though He wore no royal robe. They knew that they could trust Him; they saw that He understood them and their pitiable condition, and by this hidden living link of sympathy there was communion betwixt the multitude and Jesus. But the silence which breeds such sympathetic hopes was interrupted by the disciples, who told Him that the place was a desert, and that it was necessary to send the people away that they might buy food for themselves. Buy food! poor souls, there was none in the places from whence they came, in kings' courts, or in the priests' palaces and houses; and if Jesus could not give them any then they must starve indeed. What a contrast is the scene in the wilderness of Sin, and this scene in a desert in Galilee; there a starving, rebellious mob, with a leader almost in despair because of their wickedness; here patient, waiting souls whose only trust is in God, for men can do nothing for them, and Jesus so calm and full of power as with a divine majesty He says, "They need not depart; give ye them to eat." The disciples did not possess much, but the Lord by "looking up to heaven," and blessing what was in store, gave unto the disciples, they gave to the people, "and they did all eat and were filled." Mercy: the bread of the world; the broken bread of life; there came out from Himself that which could satisfy hungry souls and which would sustain and give nourishment. Thanks and praise be unto our God and Father for His mercy in Jesus, for this is the only power in the universe by which men can be changed so that they also

may become merciful. The special feast of mercy is past and the night with its darkness is falling upon men : Jesus constrains His disciples and they take ship to go to the other side, whilst He remains with the multitude to give them His benediction and to send them away in peace. The people being gone the Lord retires to the mountain top to pray, whilst the disciples are upon the stormy sea tossed about by the waves. In the early morning Jesus draws near to them walking on the sea, and they thinking that they see a spirit cry out with fear. But the Lord comes not to cause fear, but joy, and thus through the storm there come the words, "Be of good cheer : it is I ; be not afraid." Peter anxious to be near His Lord asks permission to go to Him upon the waters, and this being granted, he tries, fails, begins to sink, and cries, "Lord, save me." Immediately the Lord comes to his succour : and when He comes into the ship the wind ceases. This manifestation of the majestic power of Jesus so overcomes those who are in the ship that they fall down at His feet giving Him worship as the Son of God. When the ship reaches Gennesaret, the people come unto Him from the country round about bringing with them those who are diseased ; and there is such faith manifested by them that by touching only the hem of His garment they are made whole.

It may be suggested that the court of Herod, the desert place with its multitudes, and the dispensation of mercy by the disciples, are signs of great realities in the kingdom of mercy. The coming of the Lord in the early morning is prophetic of the great work of God upon the sea of humanity in Christendom. The history of mercy is the history of the world ; and thus whilst the concrete signs speak of classes they also speak of cycles of time, and of the conditions of the people and church of Christ. Two great movements are prefigured by the two storms on the sea ; the first being the time that Jesus was in the ship and asleep whilst the storm was raging. This event happened early in the Galilean ministry soon after the remarkable interview with the centurion, and thus it may point to the great movement within the Pagan Roman Empire which ended in its downfall, and the erection of a Christian Roman Empire under Constantine. The latter movement where Christ is seen coming walking on the waters to the help of His disciples seems to point to the glorious method of Christ's coming to men in all the great movements in the kingdom of mercy, as for example in the Roman Empire and during the Reformation period when the Papal Governments were overthrown and Protestantism became the form of religion of about one-half of Europe. It is well to remember that this cycle of mercy is a cycle within a cycle ; because the whole of the work of Jesus Christ falls into this place in the history of the world ; whilst, also, it should not be forgotten, that all history and revelation as viewed from the God-ward stand-point is one great cycle of mercy. This chapter may thus be considered as a unique one, because it expresses the principles of mercy, in the cycle of mercy, as manifested in the great scheme or purpose of God's grace and mercy toward men. It will be granted that truer concrete pictures of the conditions of men in history could not be given. Herod and his court with its surroundings make known the position and condition of the ruling classes. The murdered

prophet shows forth the fate of the servants of God ; the mourning and the sad story of the Baptist's followers, the condition of the lovers of truth and righteousness. The masses of the people are seen as in a great desert, oppressed by kings, pillaged and persecuted by their shepherds who have become like wolves ; but they have found the merciful, compassionate Saviour of men, as well as the ignorant, unbelieving, unsympathising followers of Christ ; and the Bread of God is seen as given to men for the salvation of the world. The dispersing multitudes ; the disciples of Christ and the Church upon the stormy sea of this world ; the Majestic Being who can walk upon the storms which surround men and can bring unto them spiritual peace and rest in Himself, the Son of God, is another marvellous picture to study. And above all Jesus is seen as the great Healer of man in soul and body ; the Fountain of mercy, so that if the sinful who are sick do but touch the hem of His garment, by faith, they are made perfectly whole.

CHAPTER XV. The scene is again changed, and another class of people surround Jesus, calling in question the actions of His disciples who are not careful to observe the traditions of the elders, and they are counted as transgressors, because they omit to wash their hands before eating bread. The question of the Scribes and Pharisees makes known their standard of right and wrong ; and the example that they give of washing hands shows plainly that external ablutions for the body were of greater importance in their sight than the cleansing of the soul from sin. The Lord Jesus brings a counter charge against them of a much more serious nature ; because, He asks them why, through their traditions, the laws of God were transgressed by them in the first and simplest duties of a child toward a parent, through their receiving of gifts which ought to be used in the support of those whom God had by the order of nature left to their care. By doing so, they were vain worshippers of God ; they were in reality idolaters, because unto men, and their opinions, was their worship given, and not unto God ; nay more, they could not serve men and worship by their traditions as they were doing without at the same time disobeying the laws of God, and thus they were guilty of disobedience to God, and of evil worship, that is serving the devil and not God. The Lord Jesus having exposed their folly in thus putting the traditions of men above even the simple natural laws of God to which the instinctive affections would prompt a man as the right thing to do, He turned to the multitude, and asked them to hear and understand a simple truth which the Pharisees and all men ought to know. This important truth was, that the things which go into a man, by food, or by the organs of special sense do not defile the soul ; but that the thoughts which come out of the soul are in reality what makes a man unclean and vile in the sight of God. These thoughts ought not to have been new to the Pharisees if they were students of the law and the prophets ; and it may be fairly assumed, that it was because Jesus gave them a regular home-thrust on the point where they felt their weakness that they were so much offended by His words. They were struck dumb, for they could not reply to His grave charges against them. Purity in God's sight is based upon a meek and

humble obedience to His holy will, and holiness is not to be found by washing the body, but by purifying the soul from all its uncleanness by faith in Jesus Christ, and through the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit.

The very interesting story of the Lord's visit to the coast of Tyre and Sidon may have an important bearing upon this question of purity, that is of the change from the immoral to the moral state of the soul. The principles are clearly laid down in the first incident that the opinions of men, and mere washings of the body will never cleanse the soul, and it is shown by Jesus that humility, obedience to law, and the cleansing of the soul, by faith in God are really what men require to gain such an important end. It is not mere fancy therefore to find in this departure of Jesus to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon (away amongst the Canaanites, the accursed descendants of Ham, the figure in Old Testament Scriptures of the possessor of the promised land, and thus of the soul of man in its state of subjection to evil passions), a return of the power of God's grace to all mankind to bring to them purity of life. The Lord by this movement leaves the Pharisees in their uncleanness, and departs to seek amongst the despised and hated Canaanites a people who were waiting for His coming. This is a visitation, not to the sons of Japhet merely as represented by the Roman Empire and the centurion; it is the day of merciful visitation to the children of Ham, upon whom the curse has rested for so long a time. The merciful and holy Saviour is drawn away toward these outcasts, and it will be profitable to observe the manner of His dealings toward them as illustrated by this touching story.

A voice is heard crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." This is the cry of the soul when it has fallen from its proud position, and finds that the devil reigns and not God, and that there is no power within to redeem the soul from the enemy. To such a cry the Lord answers not a word; not that He has no pity, for His bowels of mercies are yearning to grant grace to the poor suppliant. Since the Lord is silent, and His servants, as His Word, are saying, "Send her away," what can the troubled soul do, but look up pitifully into His Own face, there to read whether the sentence would be executed or not? He speaks, but it is in a strange manner (for He will not bid the contrite spirit go away), about being sent to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" and the soul, the hungry soul, makes its own interpretation of the words, and if it cannot be a wrestling prince, at least, it can be a worshipping suppliant for grace, and utter the pitiful plaint, "Lord, help me." Help, what help would be meet for such an one, for surely the despised and hated by God's people cannot expect that He is going to take the pure Bread of God's Word, and to give it to one who was unholy and unclean, even like a dog? What ought the reply of a soul in anguish, seeking mercy from the Fountain of grace to be, but the very words of this woman? "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their Master's table?" There can be no question whatever about the uncleanness and unholiness of the soul of man; and that man has no just claim upon God is also quite true; but a sin-stricken soul will

not speak about justice, it thirsts to drink of the stream of mercy, thus the face of the awful Judge is not seen; but with the eyes on the ground, and the hands touching His blessed feet, there is confidence in the Merciful One, that crumbs of grace will fall upon the suppliant head. There are dogs unholy and unclean, which devour all they get from widow or orphan; and who in their pride say to others, "Stand aside, for I am holier than thou." To such dogs there is no mercy whilst they remain in such a state of soul. But there are also Caleb like dogs, faithful in heart, and humble of soul, which will destroy the infidel Anakims, and seize the Hebron of God, truth and faithfulness. The lines of spiritual thought that meet around this woman and her daughter are deeply interesting, because they reveal so clearly the workings of the regenerate nature, the seed of grace in a soul, or in a nation, until the blessing the Lord wishes to give is actually bestowed. The woman came crying unto Jesus in the spirit of Jacob; and this was a spiritual Jabbok where the Lord and the woman wrestled until the blessing came upon her head. She came in the spirit of Rachel saying, in a sense, "Give me children, or I die," and she follows Rachel in her actions, by her carnal conceptions of the mercy of God in Christ, by thinking it was to be got for much crying; in reply to which she got not a word, and also in that wrestling petition, "Lord, help me." But it is not through Dan or Naphtali—judgment or wrestling—that the blessing comes, but through Joseph—that is, by faith or trust in God and obedience to His will. It is through such a faith and by such a trial that the soul gets its desire; and this is the real cleansing of the soul from the power of the devil. By such a change from uncleanness to holiness, there is the state known as being pure of heart; and in this condition the son of God the Father can see His face in holiness, truth and righteousness. The change is a marvellous one; it is from having the devil's face constantly before the spiritual vision as a tormentor and ever prompting to devilish actions, to peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, and to sit in the sweet sunshine of God's face as revealed in Jesus Christ. There is not a very long time betwixt the conditions, but the means of deliverance is the mighty power of God in Jesus Christ.

The scene is changed again from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon to a mountain in Galilee, and at this place and time the Lord Jesus manifested great healing power. So great indeed was His gracious power manifested, that the people were astonished when they heard the dumb speak, saw the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind with their eyes open, seeing the wonderful things of God, that they glorified the God of Israel. But to unloose the tongue so that it may be free to speak, to restore maimed parts so that the organic power may be complete, to give health and strength to the limbs that the man may walk in the ways of God, and to open the eyes of the man who is standing are simply gracious restorative actions, the bringing back of body and soul into a fit condition for receiving knowledge and to enable the creature to obey the will of God. This is the house empty, swept and garnished, thus made fit for a holy tenant; but the Lord will not stop here, He is moved with compassion for the multitude in their

iting state, for three cycles of time, during which they have had thing to eat ; He will not send them away without the Bread of Life, that they should faint and never reach their home. Blessed Jesus, Thy compassions never fail, and Thy sympathies have ever been toward the weary, the sorrowful, the waiting multitudes of men. In response to the compassionate thoughts of the Saviour, the disciples say, " Whence could we have so much bread in the wilderness as to fill so great a multitude ? " They seem to think that their Master is getting unreasonable to expect that they are going to feed so many people when they have so very little for themselves. Surely it would be folly to take out a little they possess, which will keep them from starvation, and to take so small a quantity to a hungry multitude. Self is first with the disciples : with the Master, it is the hungry multitude. They are moved by the spirit of self-seeking, and they seem to think that it is a grievance to them that so many helpless creatures should be thrown upon their care, when they were not able to supply their wants. They had forgotten about Elijah and the woman of Sarepta with the barrel of meal and the cruise of oil ; and also of the five loaves and five thousand ; and thus the Lord requires to ask what they do possess so that He might help them with their work. At this time they had seven loaves and a few little fishes, and thus in reality they were two loaves richer than they had been upon the former occasion when the Lord blessed their bread and distributed it to the disciples and people. These seven loaves may speak to men of the seven-fold perfection of the manifestation of God in creation and grace amongst men ; and this miracle is found at an analogous period in the history of a soul, or of the world, that is when men are passing through this crucible, so that the impure spiritual man of the soul, or the scientific, theological, and philosophical ideas which have held sway in the world, are being tried and purified, so that men might see the spiritual conceptions of God that they find, not merely that they have been selfish, and wrong in their methods of understanding the will of God, and unfair toward the multitude, but that the Master must call them to account for what they do possess, and by receiving it from them pass it through His Own hands, so that they may be blessed and a blessing to men. This is a far reaching prophet-parabolic miracle ; places, times, and states of soul, are opened up to view and almost instinctively, that is spiritually in the things of God, a man seems to understand that the Lord speaks not merely to His disciples upon the mountain of Galilee, but even more emphatically to the disciples in this very day of grace, upon the mountains of Zion. Christendom, saying, " How many loaves have ye ? " Have the disciples of the Lord during the past three centuries made a thorough, and faithful use of gifts of grace and mercy, of wisdom and understanding placed within their reach ? If not, then it is time to stop tambling about not being able to do their duties by the multitudes ; let us bring all that they possess to the Lord ; He will give thanks to His Father and our Father, over such a glorious feast ; and when it is broken and divided amongst men they will find that there is no want and no waste in the universal kingdom of heaven ; and that after all men have eaten, and are filled, that *there will still remain seven baskets full,*

not of refuse, but of what will feed the hungry world for many generations. At present men possess seven loaves of God's Bread of Life. What they possess is sufficient for the multitudes waiting to be served; and when these have been served, there will not be want, the loaves will have developed into baskets, and thus, in proportion to the next blessing and distributing may be expected to be amongst nations in a greatly increasing ratio. The breaking up of the bread may be supposed, will be past, and thus blessing and distribution will remain to be done amongst men.

CHAPTER XVI. In this chapter the Pharisees, in league with their enemies the Sadducees, are found tempting the Lord by asking "a sign from heaven." His reply to them is, that as they are accustomed to look to the setting and rising sun in the heavens, and by these prognosticate the weather, so they ought to be able to discern the sign which were around them on every hand. Because they were wickedly turned away from their spiritual affiance with the God of Israel they were seeking after signs, but unto such men only one sign could be given, and that was the sign of the prophet Jonas, which, if they desired to search into its hidden meaning, would speak to them of death and resurrection, and of a rebellious people who, when they heard the prophet of God, repented of their sins, and were spared the doom that was about to fall upon them. It may be observed that the response of the Lord to His enemies is now much more severe in its tone; it was evident not merely that the Pharisees sought His death, but they had actually joined hand in hand with the sceptical, rationalistic party in the country so that Jesus might be destroyed. The sign of open avowed enemies joining hand in hand was a sign that could not be misunderstood; Jesus it meant that the time was at hand, and that it was necessary they should prepare for the great event which was lowering in His sky, speaking of foul weather. The Pharisees and Sadducees did not desire a reply to their temptations; they had become devils, not seekers after truth, and thus it was time that the Lord should depart for a season from their midst.

The retreat was to the opposite side of the lake, into the wilderness where the disciples could not find bread; and remembering their neglect, they were somewhat startled by Jesus' warning voice to them that they should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Their thoughts being preoccupied with bread, it was so very strange that they should take His words as a reproof for their carelessness; but He rebuked them for their weak faith and ignorance in thus misunderstanding Him, because although it was quite true that He had been speaking about bread, it was of a kind which was not with malice, hatred, unbelief, and all uncharitableness. They were ignorant of the meaning of the repeated ministrations of Jesus, and thus He had to tell them plainly that it was not the body which was occupying His attention and should not be occupying theirs, but thoughts and words, the doctrines of His own Word of life to them. If they were permeated with the doctrines of grace they would be perfectly safe; but if the

Pharisaism in its varied forms which built upon the traditions of men ; and Sadducism, which was the spirit of unbelief, to enter their souls, each leaven would certainly work out their own results in due time, and in accordance with the order of such powers. It is stated that the disciples understood the words of their Master ; and it would have been well if the disciples in all ages had been careful not to imbibe these spirits which have been so fully manifested amongst men throughout Christendom.

Another change takes place, and the Lord along with the disciples is seen in the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi. The disciples have been brought into close contact with the great power of this world, so that by a contrast they might be able to discern the mission of Jesus Christ unto men. The disciples had been a considerable time with their Lord and Master, and thus it was time, when the separation was so near at hand, that He should draw from His followers a confession of their faith, for the purpose of strengthening and assisting them in their work in the future. Up to this time no formal bond, fully understood, existed betwixt the Lord and His followers ; they believed Him to be the Messiah, and they followed Him, but He had not in a definite way explained the nature of His kingdom unto them, and they had gone forward with Him, in the flood of His successful work, thinking of Him as being openly acknowledged as the King of Israel, the Son of David, at an early period. He clearly discerns the Cross, and over it the writing : " This is Jesus, the King of the Jews ; " but they were dreaming of thrones and earthly honours for themselves and their friends. It was time that the disciples should be led to think upon the future and its shadows, and thus the fitness of the question, " Who do men say that I the Son of man am ? " To this question the response is varied, for the opinions of men were very vague indeed about the Saviour ; in fact, the people listened to rumours and repeated them, and thus no reliance could be placed upon their thoughts on such a subject. Having proceeded so far, the next step was to draw out their own thoughts upon this subject, so that their objective confession might be a standing witness against them. To His question as to their own opinions, the ready Peter said, " Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. " This confession made by Peter is said to be a revelation from the Father, and not a thing discerned by the fleshly, carnal spirit ; and upon this confession of Jesus, as the Messiah expected by the Jews, according to the promises given to the fathers, and of His Sonship, as possessing the Spirit and Power of God, the Father of grace, would His Church be built, and hell would not be successful against it. Unto Peter were given the keys of this kingdom of heaven upon earth, and it would be his privilege to admit men into it, and to act with the Lord's authority within the kingdom of grace in His Spirit. These things were not to be disclosed to all men ; they were facts which the disciples possessed, and it was not the time for making known to men the things revealed unto them.

This revelation of the kingdom as if at hand, and the choice of Peter as, in a certain sense, possessing authority over his brethren, may have caused a considerable amount of curiosity amongst the disciples as to

the method of the setting up of the kingdom. The Lord had lifted their hopes as to a kingdom and authority ; but after doing so, necessary to lead them away from their vain hopes, and to point them that suffering, not honour, lay in their path ; and that death, as they thought, was to be His portion. This kind of kingdom was not the sort of thing that Peter desired, and thus he was enough to rebuke the Lord by saying that such things should not come, and not happen to, Him. In his turn, Peter is strongly re-named as Satan for thinking and speaking in such a spirit, but these thoughts did not savour of the grace of God, but of the ambitious spirit of men.

The Lord had chosen His path, and it was that of obedience, suffering, shame, self-sacrifice, and death ; in one word, the cross by which flesh and all its carnal lustings is to be crucified. His followers also choose for themselves to follow Him by the way of the cross, self-sacrifice in obedience to Jesus, or by taking their own way. They must be taught that if a disciple of His tries to save His life by sparing himself, this will prove to be his death ; whilst if they give up their life in following Him, they will in reality find this to be the highest life. It can be no profit to a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul ; the true gain is by the redemption of the soul, for a man cannot find an exchange apart from Christ. They were not discouraged because of this view of the kingdom of heaven ; for beyond the clouds of sorrow and suffering, the valley of the shadow of death, there would be another coming in glory ; and it would be at that time that rewards would be administered to the faithful. They were not to be cast down if the kingdom should be long in coming upon them, because time in its cycles is a comparative thing with the Lord in the spiritual world, and thus the spirits of those men by whom He was surrounded would not die out of the world until the coming of the Son of man in His kingdom.

CHAPTER XVII. Men are here introduced into another world of thought ; it is as if suddenly the dross has been cleared away from the surface of the refining pot, and the refiner, looking into it, finds a perfect image reflected from the purified metal. The days of the fierce strugglings of conflicting opinions are at an end, men, previously gracious men, no longer see as through a glass darkly, but they are face to face with the past, present, and future, and in Jesus Christ there is transfiguration. The companions of the Lord Jesus on various occasions are Peter, James, and John, in other words, the reigning spirits of the Church in all ages. Peter represents the first doorway, the narrow way, by which rebels and sinners are admitted into the Church, the world of grace ; James is a figure of Judaism, James or Jacob the supplanter, that is the Jewish economy in all its fleshly forms, carnal ordinances and observances ; and John the spirit of the Church in its love to Jesus and of obedience to His will. To the figure, Peter represents the outer court of the Gentiles, into which the proselytes from the world were admitted to see the great altar of sacrifice and the laver for ablutions ; James is a figure of the

which the priests of Judaism ministered by the lifting up by the shew-bread, and by the seven-fold lighted lamp sacred inclosure, these things being emblems of spiritual Bread, and the truth of God in Jesus Christ ; and John the Holy of holies within the veil, where was found the hidden manna, the rod that budded, and the tables of The place is as "a high mountain apart," and there He gazed before them : and His face did shine as the sun, and was white as the light." This is heaven ; not indeed out as related to the spiritual state of the Lord : the Man no longer a man amongst men, but the fleshly form of the had concealed the glory so long is rendered subservient to power within, and there is an effulgence of truth from His righteousness from His body and raiment which is very new to contemplate. To those who were with Him, His light was not a fierce thing, painful to look upon, but soft, inexpressible, holy, beautiful light, which whilst it agitated, did not hinder their making comments upon it. It is at this point that Moses and Elias are changed, into a spiritual likeness to their Lord ; they appeared, to not as the sun, but as planets, or as moons, which reflect beauty which emanate from the sun ; Moses and Elias with Jesus, specially upon the topic of the decease at In other words, the fulfilment of the purpose of grace servants of the Lord had been engaged upon, in spirit, for generations. The three disciples were observers of all that and they were the eye-witnesses not merely of the majesty of the subjection of Moses and Elias to their King. It is at history that Moses, who represents the law, lays aside the rod and enters into the presence of His Lord as a spiritual son of the same time Elias, the representative of the prophets of and truth, resigns his place as the servant of the King sent forth amongst men to call them to the law and the to be prepared for the coming of the King. The King grace, truth, righteousness is come, therefore Moses and his train in this hour of His coming in His kingdom. The prophets are exalted amongst men and the time of their rived. The words of Peter, "Lord, it is good for us to be fervent expression not merely of Peter, but it will be the chance of millions who will be privileged to realise this n of the Lord Jesus Christ in their own souls amongst His most holy Word. The Lord Jesus Christ will not ver despised and rejected by men ; but as King of kings forth all glorious before men ; His Word will not always d letter, but the living Spirit of truth will transfigure every Scripture, and then men in their holy joy will say to the each other, "It is good for us to be here." But let men nal conception of Peter as to the tabernacles in which the and Elias are to dwell ; these must no longer be circum- shly forms as by tabernacles and temples made with hands,

but rather in the souls of men, within which the Lord must rule supreme by His gracious Spirit, and the law and the testimony be honoured and obeyed in harmony with the highest will. Whilst Peter was speaking, it may be because he thus spoke, in his ignorance, giving glory to Moses and Elias by placing them in the same category as the Lord Jesus Christ, they were enshrouded in a bright cloud, and out of the cloud a voice came, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." What means this voice to men but this emphatic thought, cease at once, and for ever, from comparing "the Beloved Son" with any servant. Moses and Elias are nothing, and they desire to be as nothing amongst men, therefore learn this lesson and keep it in the memory, that God is pleased, not with Moses or Elias, but in Christ: "*Hear ye Him.*" This word from God the Holy Spirit, out of the Shekinah cloud, must penetrate into the very spirits of men, and when it does so then men will fall down before the King and be afraid because of their follies in the past; but though men deserve punishment because of their foolishness, yet if they will only open their eyes, being touched by the Word of God, they will find that the Lord Jesus Christ is not angry, but is gently saying unto them, "Arise, and be not afraid." Then, when the spiritual vision is made clear, Moses and Elias, and all men, will have vanished from view, and Jesus only will be loved, honoured, and obeyed by men.

The vision upon the holy mountain was not a thing for all the disciples to know at that time; and not until after the resurrection were these disciples to reveal to their brethren what they had seen, but this may be discerned as a beautiful allegory, applicable to all times and to all nations. The descent from the mount was occupied by the disciples asking the Lord why the Scribes said that Elias must first come? the Lord's reply being that Elias had come, that they had not known him, that they had done unto him as they pleased; and that as it had been with the forerunner, so also it would be with the King. At the foot of the mountain, upon the plain of human life in this world, another vision is opened up to men, and it is the very opposite of the one upon the holy mount; there it was transfiguration into righteousness and truth, here it is an awful departure from God, so that the world is more like hell than heaven. Up yonder all was right, down here all seems to be going wrong because of the Lord's absence. Those who have their loved ones in trouble suffer most intensely on their account; the devil-possessed are like to destroy themselves; the enemies of the Lord are glad because the disciples of Christ are helpless to do good; and the disciples having failed in their Master's absence, they also are cast down because of their weakness and the disgrace thrown upon them. The Lord appeared, the King of peace and purity, full of grace and truth, and then the father of the lunatic child fell upon his knees, "saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic and sore vexed: for ofttime he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to Thy disciples, and they could not cure him." Fallen humanity in its lowest form of debasement, the temple of the Lord as a den for devils to dwell in, is the very striking feature in this strange story. A being less helpless to help

itself than this child could not be seen, for it was so devoid of reason as to attempt to destroy itself by fire and water. Is not this the very consummation of spiritual perversion, of infidelity in its most advanced forms? A moral insanity so great that the Author of moral law is unknown, and His moral laws trampled under foot as of no value. At one moment rushing away to drink of the waters of an eternal death, denying that there is any hope for man or immortality beyond the grave: and again rushing to the opposite extreme of a fiery infidelity which would destroy the works of God as of no value. The lunacy expresses the moral insanity and the sore vexedness, the awful, uncontrollable agony of an irrational kind which causes such unhappiness, but can find no means of escape. Is not this something like the child of the ages, as found amongst men in this nineteenth century? the boasted spirit of the age which has gone on from one position to another until it is "lunatic and sore vexed," now rushing into one extreme of thought, and then into another, not knowing what it is doing, simply because it has no law, no knowledge of law by which it can be guided. Why this terrible weakness in the Christian Church that it could not exorcise such a devil? The Lord's saying is this, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to Me." The Lord rebuked the devil; it was gone; and from that hour the child was healed. The power of the King is still in mercy in response to the cry for mercy. He comes to manifest the power of His grace, but this is done by destroying the devil of unbelief, and by giving peace to the troubled souls of men. Why was it that the disciples could not cast out this devil? and why could not the Christian Church cast out the spirit of unbelief that has been raging so fiercely in Christendom so long? Because of unbelief. In other words, the devil was not merely in the child; but to a certain extent, the same devil was in all those who had anything to do with him; and thus Satan could not cast out Satan, and unbelief could not destroy unbelief. The power required for this work is faith; that sort of faith which is meek, recipient, and obedient to the will of God. As a grain of mustard-seed will not grow up into a tree in a day, but follows the methods of nature, so men may grow in grace and power, even until they are able to remove mountain thoughts which are opposed to the will of God. By such a spirit all things that are lawful and right can be done; but such a possession as had seized that child, or has laid hold upon men in this age, are not common things, they are in reality the climax of the devil's work amongst men, and only by prayer unto the Lord, and fasting, that is keeping the flesh and its desires, the spirit and its pride, in subjection, can such a manifestation of evil be destroyed from amongst men.

Linked with these incidents there are the repeated words of Jesus as to the betrayal of the Son of man, His death, and the rising from the dead on the third day; and because of this statement the disciples were exceedingly sorry. It may be suggested that the spiritual relationship here would not be observed by following the narrative, because there is no definite information as to the time when the Lord told His disciples these things, *but by linking the condition of Galilee, the*

unbelief of the disciples, the rebuke they had received, and these things together, there was good cause for sorrow, because of what was before them. The world was possessed with the infidel spirit; the disciple of Christ was tainted with the same unbelief; and the remedy was to be found not in men, but in the Lord, who, although so powerful to exorcise the devil must, in the hour of darkness that was approaching as a Son of man, in His body, be brought for man's salvation into subjection to this very devil He had cast out. Since He is privileged to possess the power of overthrowing the kingdom of the devil, it may be expected that the devil will use every power within his reach to crush this dreaded enemy. The seed of the serpent will bruise the heel of the Son of man; but the Son of God in His gracious, peace-seeking work will not die, but, in reality, He will crush for ever the serpent's head. The work of Jesus in healing the lunatic son, and His words about His own death, are seen to be complementary thoughts; in the first He is seen crushing the devil's head under His heel; in the second the serpent's fang has entered His heel as the dragon's head is bruised and both these constitute the work of redemption. The Son of God is there in spiritual power, and the Son of man in agony and shame; but beyond the eclipse that was coming upon Jesus and His disciples, there could be discerned the risen Son of righteousness radiating upon men through His death the blessings of heaven. The blue rays of the wisdom and power of heaven were not sufficient to bring light to men these must blend with them the red rays of a man's life and death, and only thus will the favour of God return unto men. The Son of God and the Son of man can make an atonement for sin, so that infidelity may be destroyed; but unless the Son of God be there in His grace giving Himself as an atonement, this is impossible, and there could be no forgiveness of sin.

The incident relating to the paying of tribute is an interesting one because it touches upon very important questions as related to the Church and the State, and also to the principle upon which men ought to give of their substance. Peter is here a representative of the Church in the world, and of the spirit which follows the Levitical method of giving for the Lord's service rather than in the spirit of Christ. The answer of Peter to the tribute collector, as to His Master paying tribute was, Yes. But when he came into his Master's presence, he is met by the question, "Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their own children, or of strangers?" Peter replied, "Of strangers." Jesus responded, "Then are the children free;" but he was then instructed, for fear that offence should be given, to go and take a fish in whose mouth a piece of money would be found, and he would pay for both Jesus and Peter. Children, that is free men, sons of God, ought not to pay a compulsory tribute or custom; they are free; strangers and subjects to despots may be compelled to pay tribute to kings, because it is for their benefit that a government exists, and through it they are granted protection. What then; how shall the Son of God and of man and His Church, by its representatives, act in this very perplexing position in which they find themselves? It is evident that the King in the State cannot say to free men under constitution

law. You must pay so much ; but by their representatives, free men, the children of the State, say how much they are willing to give ; the Christian Church cannot begin to speak about tithes, and lay down a law that every member shall be compelled to give a certain sum. They are neither strangers nor subjects, but sons of God, and thus such a method is not in the spirit of Christ, the Son of God. How should a son of God, by grace, act if the State or Church should try to compel tribute ? Shall he stand upon his dignity, speak of injustice and robbery, and cause strife and contention in State or Church ? The Lord seems to say do not act so ungracious a part, take what God graciously and freely gives, and pay willingly what is demanded. If a son of grace and of God cannot do such a thing as this graciously, then he is not a freeborn child of grace ; he is in bonds, and serving under carnal influences. Grace reigns so that sin may be subdued, therefore act graciously and justly ; and when freemen possess the earth, then tithes and tributes will be abolished, and men will live in peace like the children of God under the King and Prince of peace.

CHAPTER XVIII. The sons of God are the free children of the kingdom of heaven, and in obedience to the laws of grace they ought to live in peace amongst each other, and even if they happen to find themselves in their relations with men outside this kingdom, they are still to be gracious, and not to imitate the men of this world. This must have seemed a strange kingdom to the disciples, and thus in chapter xviii. there is the inquiry, " Who, then, is greatest in the kingdom of heaven ? " The reply of Jesus, by word and deed is to this effect : Gentleness is true greatness ; and conversion and meek obedience by the lowly spirit is necessary as a means, not merely of entering the kingdom, but of remaining in it, and of partaking in its blessings. The graces of humility, penitence, and meekness are the garments of a gracious child. Those who excel in such graces will receive the most of the spirit of grace, and thus they will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. True greatness in grace lies in being conformed to the image of Jesus ; in Him is the kingdom in all its fulness. Therefore the more open and free the communications betwixt Jesus and the soul of the child of grace, the likeness to Jesus will become the more perfect. To receive one child of grace in His Name is to receive Jesus. It is to be in sympathy with Him in His work and labour of mercy and love, of joy and peace, amongst men ; but to do anything that would offend one who lives in His spirit is to commit the most awful crime which it is possible for man to commit. To jeer at the humble, mock the penitent, be unjust toward the meek, and to take away the Bread of Life from a child of grace and of God, is the sin of despising and rejecting Jesus Christ in His little ones, and this offence is most grievous in His sight. A special warning is given to men upon this point ; and He says, that proud men are not to think that though apparently unprotected that they are orphans. So tender is His affection toward them that a special messenger of mercy waits upon them, revealing unto the Father the state of His children, and to the children the love of the Father.

For this purpose, to show the love of the Father and His Own love for the lost, He told to them the story of the lost sheep. Men or angels are not to suppose that because a little one has gone astray upon the mountains that therefore the Lord of mercy does not care for it, but in reality the affections of the Father and the Saviour are more drawn out toward the lost one than toward all those who are in perfect safety. The pathos and love of heaven are beautifully expressed in the words: "If so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more over it than over the ninety and nine which have not gone astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." Even the Good Shepherd cannot save all the straying ones; but if they will permit Him to do so, this is the greatest joy that Jesus can find in the universe.

If it is so with the Father in heaven, and He is so full of forgiveness toward those who sin against Him, then surely those who have found mercy and grace to help them ought to manifest the same spirit toward their erring brethren. But the "pure in heart" who have seen the face of God in mercy will find that there are brethren who will not hear, and will not be reconciled. In such cases the spirit of mercy must be manifested before suitable witnesses, so that the man may have no cause for complaint, and failing to win a brother back to the spirit of Jesus in this way, then there is no other course but to lay the whole matter before the brethren in the Church, and if the self-willed man will not be gracious and forgiving, then he cuts himself off from the commonwealth of grace and mercy, and he is in reality a heathen man, and not a Christian. The power of the Christian Church within this sphere is not limited; but there must be no mistake as to the power of loosing and binding. It is not arbitrary in any sense, but it works according to the laws or method of grace, and not in obedience to the will of man. The Lord confirms the actions of His servants because they act in His Name, and in His spirit of mercy; nay, more, if in this spirit of grace and mercy, of self-sacrifice and thorough conformity to the spirit of Jesus men ask anything, it will be done for them by the Father. But men require to consider carefully all that this means, because instead of the Lord's will being crowns, thrones, and power over men, it is to be homeless, so that others may get a home; to endure a Gethsemane of suffering, so that others may not suffer; and to be crucified, so that others may be saved. If men—two or three—are met together to think, speak and act in such a spirit, then, as with the three children in the fire in Babylon, the Lord is in their midst to bless them, and to grant an answer to their requests.

The apostle Peter, the representative of the visible church, asked the Lord whether he ought to forgive till seven times; and to this the Lord's reply is that virtually there must not be any limitations in this respect. The method of mercy is to forgive without limit so long as the transgressor repents, asks forgiveness, and acts in conformity to the spirit of grace and mercy. To show this very important truth as related to man and God, Jesus told the story about the king who graciously forgave his servant ten thousand talents, whilst that same servant who was forgiven so much would not forgive his fellow-servant,

but cast him into prison. They were both the king's servants, and subject to his laws ; therefore it follows that the man who *was* forgiven so much did not merely sin against his fellow, but against the master, who had a prior claim upon the servant : but specially against the gracious king who had given such an example of mercy and forgiveness. The proof of gratitude, and of likeness to the king, was to act in his spirit : but, seeing that he was altogether without mercy, it required no reasoning to prove that the man was utterly without grace, and thus judgment, and not mercy, fell upon his head. As with this king in the story, so it is with the heavenly Father and King of grace, there is forgiveness for ten thousand sins if men will only be gracious and forgiving, but, if they will not forgive their brethren and fellow-servants, and choose to act like devils, and not like Jesus, then they destroy themselves and God cannot forgive them, even although it is His most intense desire to do so.

CHAPTERS XIX., XX. In chapter xix. a new departure is discerned ; the great revolution of the cycle of the spirit of Christ in His out-going thoughts and works of mercy in Galilee are at an end ; and He is seen to be entering upon the work of mercy in Judea. The darkness is gathering around His path, and the graces of patience and obedience to the will of the Father are, of all things, what He requires amongst those who were His irreconcilable enemies.

In the coasts of Judea He was met by the Pharisees who came tempting Him upon the questions of marriage and divorce, but asking specially whether it would be lawful that a man should be permitted to divorce his wife for every cause ? The Lord's reply is to the effect that in the beginning there was no such thing as divorce ; that the marriage union was meant to rise above filial affection, and that those so united were not two, but one ; therefore, if one by the ordinance of God, it is not right for a man to divorce his wife. The Pharisees could not fail to see the righteousness of the Lord's argument, but they went on to press Him to explain why Moses had given them a commandment to give a wife a writing of divorcement and to send her away. The reply was that Moses did not give them such a law as the good and gracious will of God, or specially for their good ; but because their fathers had been so selfish and sinful, they had been permitted to do this thing which was not allowed at the beginning. But the time had now come when this perversion of law should be altered, and from thenceforth, only for one cause would divorce be lawful. The Pharisees did not question the righteousness of the Lord's statements, but the disciples seem to have thought that such a measure of justice would be a very serious thing for men. This idea of the equality of a woman with a man, as one in body, soul, and spirit, and thus one in all things, was a hard saying to the disciples. He did not reason with them upon what they did not understand, but rather showed them that the teachable spirit of the child, of love, and of ardent service, should be cultivated, and then in due time they would come to understand the things which He had uttered in their hearing. The supreme thought in this incident is the unity of man and woman ; of Christ and His Church ; of God the

Father and all His family. And the root question is this, ought to be divorce betwixt a man and his wife ; a schism betwixt Christ a Church, or in any portion of it ; or separation from God the Father any of the members of His family in their moral perfection redeemed by grace? The reply is that only upon one account divorce, schism, or separation take place, and that is when there is fornication, as in family relations, the spirit of pride and selfishness in the Church, or of spiritual idolatry and disobedience in the Church of God the Father. This is a hard saying and very difficult to receive amongst men ; nevertheless, "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." But it ought not to be forgotten that the man who divorces his wife unjustly is unmerciful ; the man who causes strife and hatred in the Church of Christ is ungracious ; and the man who in pride and disobedience turns away from God the Father, is a rebel against the divine will.

Little children were brought to Jesus ; upon their heads His blessing rested, His blessing and prayer were for them. The disciples were ungracious by rebuking the innocent children. But in their turn the disciples were rebuked by His words which take away the kingdom of heaven from such a spirit of intolerance, and give it to the true and loving, little ones who have been persecuted. His hands filled with blessing rests upon their heads, and they are blessed indeed.

The story of a young man who would work as a means to gain a life makes known the conflicting spirits found in man and in Christ. The unregenerate spirit would obey moral law so that it might be his due, a thing owing to him because of his works. He does not say one word in condemnation of obedience to moral law as the youth was not satisfied with his attainments, and wished to do what was yet lacking to make him good, the Lord opened up to him a way of perfection by grace and self-sacrifice, and how by giving up earthly treasures, in such a spirit, he would gain heavenly treasures. But the young man did not understand what he wished to get, or the means of its attainment, and thus, as if struck down by the thought of such a complete self-surrender of everything to the Master, "he went away sorrowful : for he had great possessions." He had treasures on earth, therefore, he was unlike the Lord ; he loved these treasures more than the love and mercy of God, and chose them, therefore the Master was his god ; his own covetous will, and not the meek will of God, ruled his actions, and thus he was not a follower of Jesus. So he sought the kingdom, and yet to turn back ; so loving, and yet it is possible he was lost, because if the covetous, self-seeking, proud spirit persisted and rejected the meek spirit of Jesus proffered to him, the kingdom must be the kingdom of darkness and not of heaven, even to that time so good, loving, and lovable.

The words of Jesus to the disciples as to the great difficulties which the rich find in entering the kingdom seemed an advantage to the disciples ; and thus they seem to say, if the rich have every advantage, have such difficulties, "Who then can be saved?" To this question the reply is that salvation is an impossibility to men apart from the grace of God, and that it is only

men will work with God in His ways that this matter becomes possible at all. If, then, it is so difficult for rich men to give up their treasures to follow Jesus, what will be the portion of those who forsake everything and follow Him? The reply of Jesus is that they which follow Him during the regeneration in the spirit of mercy, that unto them will be given power and authority when the Son of man shall sit upon His throne of glory; and every one who becomes His follower in self-sacrifice will receive an hundred-fold, and inherit everlasting life. But they are to be careful as to their spirit in this matter, because those who think themselves first may find themselves last; whilst the last—the humble and the meek—will find themselves first in His kingdom. To illustrate this matter, He uttered the parable of the labourers; which shows that all men are admitted into the kingdom of heaven upon equal terms; that all men are paid the same amount or reward; that those who had served all day thought that they deserved more than those who came in at the eleventh hour, and being of this opinion they were discontented, and complained against the Master because He did not give them more than they engaged to serve for. In other words, the entrance to the kingdom is a matter of grace, for it is the Master who calls the disciple, and not the disciple the Master; it is of His grace that He gives unto the late comers the full payment, and gives the same without any injustice to those who came early in the day. The Lord is righteous, and the discontented servant unrighteous; this spirit is not a good one; therefore let men beware of the evil, covetous, self-seeking spirit, for it is not in harmony with the kingdom of grace. They who think that they should be first because of what they have done will find themselves last, because of their selfishness and self-conceit, and they who are satisfied with being last, and magnify the grace of God by which they are saved, they will be found first in the kingdom of grace. But if there are first and last in the kingdom, there is also an outside and inside of the kingdom; therefore let men remember that "many be called, but few chosen."

The Lord Jesus knew where He was going and what He was going to receive, and thus upon the way to Jerusalem He told His disciples what the Son of man was going to endure. Mercy had its claim upon Him, and thus His choice was to endure persecution and death so that His kingdom of grace and mercy might be an open kingdom for all men.

But if it was so with the Master, it has not been so with His most intimate followers, because the spirit of Judaism, of Popery, and of Protestantism has always been turned away from grace and mercy toward power and authority in Church and State. The sons of Zelodæe had obtained an abundant portion, and yet they were not satisfied; an inordinate ambition had fired their souls, and thus pre-eminence above all other men was their desire. They came to the King of grace asking for something which they did not comprehend; their thoughts were fixed upon power and authority, whilst their Master's spirit was pondering over the shame, pain, suffering, and death He was about to endure. These two disciples had a wish to reign by power and authority with Him; but *their words to Him* meant the awful cup

which He must drink, the baptism of agony in the garden, and shameful death ; and thus He asked them whether they were able to drink of His cup and to share in His baptism. Their answer, their ignorance, was that they were able. He informed them that they would indeed drink of His cup and be baptized into His baptism ; but power and honour amongst men were not the things which He possessed at that time, but it would be given to them for whom it had been prepared by the Father. The desire to gain power causes strife and thus the ten were turned against the two brothers because of their pride and self-seeking. The Lord at this point makes it very plain that the disciples were erring very greatly in their conceptions of the kingdom of grace ; and thus He tells them that it is not like Gentile kingdoms, it is in the spirit of the Son of man who came to minister grace and mercy unto men, and above all to give up His Own life as a ransom so that the lost ones, torn away from the Father's family, might be brought back again.

There is a departure from Jericho—in other words, from the accursed spirit of this citadel of unbelief ; and at this point of His journey great multitudes were found following Him. The multitudes were formal followers who had come for the purpose of doing honour to the Prophet of Nazareth, of whom they had heard so much, to enjoy a holiday, and to be honoured by following the current of popular opinion. But, unobserved by the multitudes—sitting by the wayside, and friendless—there were seen two blind men who had been aroused by the commotion around them ; and so soon as they heard that Jesus was passing by, they began to cry out for mercy from the Lord, the Son of David. This behaviour of the blind men was not a pleasing thing to the people of Jericho ; it was really too bad that these two men should disgrace their town, on such an occasion, by showing to the Prophet that there were blind men in their midst who could so far forget the good manners as to cry for mercy. They rebuked the blind men, and asked them to keep quiet ; but the men, who knew what they required and from whence it could be obtained, were not to be put down by the clamorous crowd of self-conceited people. Their cries increased in their intensity, and their hunger for light could only be satiated by receiving the blessing of an open vision. The Lord was pleased to listen to their cries, and He opened their eyes, being moved by compassion toward them ; and they, having received their sight, followed Him. The realm of thought is also a spiritual vision in man and in history, as the great blindness and darkness of rebellion and infidelity are being rolled away. The multitudes who would honour Jesus Christ, the Prophet of Nazareth, have no sympathy whatever with the earnest souls that are seeking the light of truth through the gateways of mercy. As the Lord came to Jericho not to be honoured by men's lips, but to give sight to the blind, so even at this day multitudes may be praising the wisdom and mighty works of the Prophet of Nazareth whilst He has in reality come to unveil the hidden things of God to the spiritually blind, so that those who were made blind through their unbelief and sin might be enabled to look up into His blessed face and in it to see the Image of God shining forth upon men.

CHAPTER XXI. The triumphal entry into Jerusalem speaks of the coming of a greater King than Solomon the peaceable. The meek King of peace has come, but it is to a visible Jerusalem and a rebellious people who will to-day shout, "Hosanna in the highest," and to-morrow, "Crucify Him." This entry in state, amidst the applauses of the multitudes, is a sign for men; it calls attention to His claims, and commands men to turn aside for a moment from their usual duties and consider who this is upon whom the affections of the people have been cast, and unto whom they render their highest devotions. To those who know, love, and serve Him, He is King of meekness and peace; the King who will reign in truth and righteousness; to the multitudes He is "Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee," a Man to be listened to because of His wisdom; but they are not able to see the King, the Lord of David, to whom they must bend the knee and render obedience.

But the triumphal entry was only a means to an end: He came not to be praised by men, though this was His due, but to cleanse the temple of God which had been desecrated by them. The house of God was given to men to be a place of prayer, of communion, and fellowship with God; but He found it to be a den where thieves lived, and where the devils sought their own ends and brought about the destruction of men. To put an end to these things was the mission of Jesus Christ, and thus He purged the temple and healed the blind and the lame. The peaceful Son has come to the Father's house, but before there can be peace there must be purity; and before man can see and understand the thoughts of God and obey His will, spiritual blindness and lameness must be taken away. The temple having been purged of the open and avowed spirit of the world and of fleshly things, there still remained the serpent of unbelief and hatred, with all the venom of evil under its tongue; there was a sudden visible reformation, the manifestation of wonderful things, and the delightful voices of the children moved by the spirit of God, crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David;" but the Sadducees and Scribes were sore displeased at the turn things had taken, and they asked Jesus whether He heard what the children were saying. His reply is a quotation from the 8th Psalm—a psalm of David—in which the Psalmist praises and glorifies the "Lord our Lord" as the Lord of creation, providence, and redemption, but chiefly as the Messiah unto whom the dominion over all things is given upon the earth. By His appropriation of the praises of the children in the words, "Hosanna to the Son of David," and the question whether they had not read this psalm, it is clear that He meant them to study His words and actions in the light of prophecy, and having done this, He left the temple and went to Bethany.

The day of the entry and visitation of the temple was one of mercy. The next day when He revisited the city it was one in which by signs judgment was prefigured upon profession without the necessary harmonious works. The Lord had planted a fig-tree in Jerusalem, and it had been growing for a long time: it made a great profession of fruitfulness, seeing it had so many leaves, so He being hungry for the fruits of righteousness and truth, drew near to it, so

that He might eat and be refreshed by the way. He drew near to the fig-tree, but although it made a great profession there was no fruit and thus the blasting sentence went forth from the lips of the King—"Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth for ever." The fig-tree of Judaism thus judged, and being cut off from the Fountain of Life, soon, very soon withered away. This is a sign for every man, Jew and Christian all who profess to know and serve God; for the day of privilege will come to an end, and then judgment without mercy will be the portion of the godless professors who do not obey the gospel of the gracious God by bringing forth suitable fruits of grace, truth, and righteousness. This is the power of Jesus Christ as King and Judge; and Jesus informed His disciples that if they were faithful they would see far greater things than the death of a fig-tree because it had not fulfilled the function of its life. Men have seen Judaism, the Roman Empire and the Papal power in Europe, great mountains, removed from their lofty places of prestige and privilege and cast down; and men will see the power of evil overthrown and cast down as if engulfed in the sea, if there is only prayer, faith, and obedience to the will of God.

How long will men continue to rebel against God and persecute His servants? Just as long as they remain His enemies, seek their own glory, and are permitted by God to go on in their paths of sin and rebellion. The Man who possessed the wisdom, power, and grace of God, teaches men that He is God's Servant by word and deed, and no sooner does He begin to do so than He finds His enemies, and the enemies of God and man, asking His authority for being a teacher and a worker of mighty works. As none are so blind as those who will not see, so there are none more wicked than those who reject the truth wilfully because it does not agree with their pre-conceptions. The authority for Judaism is Moses. The authorised teachers of Judaism and its mighty workers are the priests, Pharisees, and Scribes. Therefore, unless teachers bow down to Moses and his accredited followers, it is clear to such men that they do not possess any authority for what they do, and thus they have no right to teach or do mighty deeds. The position of these men, and all like them, is a false one, and it is one which the prophet and law-giver of Israel rejects, because he plainly told Israel that a greater Prophet would arise than himself, and to Him they were to listen and be obedient. That the words and works of Jesus far surpassed the words and works of Moses might have been discerned by these men if they had been honest in their inquiries; but coming to Jesus as they did, magnifying Moses and depreciating Jesus Christ as much as they could, because they did not wish to believe in an unknown Galilean, they were prejudiced, and thus unfit to judge upon the evidence that lay before them. The rulers came to Jesus asking Him from whence He derived His authority? He said unto them that He would answer them if they would first answer His question as to the baptism of John—whether it was of heaven, that is by the authority of God, or was it of man, and thus without any authority? There is no trifling here on the part of Jesus. He is intent upon bringing them to the Fountain or Author of all authority, and thus the question as to *John's baptism* involves the greater question of obedience to the

of God when it is known. What good could result from such men in so many words that He is Messiah if they refused to allow His claim? And this is the great test in that they must either accept or reject John, and by their choice they will accept or reject the authority of heaven. They find themselves in a dilemma, and they are so, for this simple reason, that they do not honestly seek after the truth in righteousness as the guide to their actions. Thus they cannot say that John was the servant of God without condemning themselves and acknowledging Jesus as Lord, or if they deny that John was a prophet, then the people are stirred up against them. There was no work of conscience, no sense of right and wrong, subjection to the will and authority of God amongst these men, but a despicable time-serving spirit, an unwillingness to submit to any authority, and thus it was that such men could fairly judge upon the Lord's claims, and the authority by which it was supported. If they could not come to a decision, and decide upon the claims of John to be a prophet, how were they able to consider and pronounce a judgment upon Jesus' claims to the Messiahship? They tried to avoid a decision, but it was in vain. They had rejected God's authority as Lord, and thus it was time for Him to utter in their hearing as their sentence which had fallen upon them. The Lord, by the parables, points out their guilt in this respect, for they were the first-born son who had promised so much and had done nothing; the Pharisees, Gentiles, godless publicans and harlots, were like the first-born son who had repented and become obedient to God. They were also like the husbandmen who had been given a vineyard, but they had been found unfaithful because they had not rendered unto the Lord what was His due. They had not brought forth the fruits of righteousness, dishonoured their Lord, destroyed His vineyard, and the decision at last reached was that they might kill the Lord, so that the inheritance might be their own. The Lord may be said to be pausing at this part of the parable, and looking at the people, He appeals to them as to the consequences of their choice, and the instant response is condemnation and destruction of the wicked men, and the giving of the vineyard to others. The Lord then only changes the figure of speech, and asks them, but what will the Scribes and rulers, if they had never read the prophecy in Isaiah of the stone being rejected by the builders, and yet becoming the corner stone of God's temple? They had condemned themselves as being unworthy to possess the inheritance of God, and it would be taken from them; but in the meantime the door of mercy is still open if they will fall upon or before the Lord, if their pride be broken down, they would be saved, if not the destruction was inevitable—judgment without mercy would fall upon them. The rulers discerned that the parables were against them, but wilfully blind they sought His destruction, only they were somewhat restrained because of the people who believed that John was a prophet.

CHAPTER XXII. In this chapter the Lord begins to speak parables, and His subject is the kingdom of heaven amongst us. This kingdom is compared by Him to a certain king who had marriage feast for his son, and who after preparing everything suit for the feast, sent forth his servants to call those who had been bid to come to the wedding. These subjects, so highly honoured, behaved in a very strange manner, for the invitation was despised by them, they would not go to the feast. The king was not willing to take offence at such behaviour, and thus another invitation with full particulars of the feast was sent out; but this time they seem to have become even disrespectful in word and deed to the king's servants, some of them went so far as to insult and kill his messengers. The issue was that the king turned from being gracious toward such rebels and punished them with the greatest severity. The purpose of the king was not frustrated by the folly of his subjects; they sin brought destruction upon themselves, whilst he extended very wide and to the most unworthy, his invitation to the feast. In due time the feast took place, and the wedding was fully furnished with guests. In this parable there may be discerned the general invitation given to all men, the special favour of God for the Jewish nation, the despising and rejection of Jesus Christ by the Jews, and the awful punishment which came upon the nation. But the purpose of grace was not frustrated by the Jews rejecting their Messiah, because this was made a means of sending the gospel to the Gentiles, and from amongst them there have been found those who have accepted the gracious offer of salvation, and with a humble spirit they have been found at the table of the gospel feast of mercy.

The marriage feast being ready and the guests gathered together then the king entered the room to see his guests. In the company there was one found who had been so proud and foolish as to reject and despise the wedding garment provided by the king. He was asked why this had taken place; but the man being guilty was speechless and from the feast he was cast out into the outer darkness. This picture presents the self-conceited man who thought that he was quite good enough in himself, and worthy to sit down at the feast. The Lord invited by His grace all sinners to His feast of mercy. This man was righteous in his own estimation; but when the light of the King's face shining with righteousness and truth falls upon such a one there is consternation, and the judgment falls upon the proud heart with awful force. It is true that many are called to the feast of God's grace, but those who hear the call and wish to obey must always remember that the redeemed are a chosen people. The door of the kingdom is open for all, but those who enter must be clothed not with their own goodness but with a poor, humble, penitent, meek, righteous, merciful, pure, and peace-seeking spirit, for by these things are men chosen as the followers of Jesus, and not by their own estimation of themselves.

The Pharisees showed their intense enmity and hatred to Jesus by joining with their enemies the Herodians, so that they might catch Him in His conversation; and they are seen to manifest the subtlety of the

devil by keeping back from the conflict whilst they weave the net within which they hope to catch Him. The words of praise which were uttered by the speaker, before the critical question was brought out, may be compared to the saliva of the serpent; it is simply loathsome to see men praising others so that they may gain an advantage, and by gaining power in such a manner to bring about the destruction of the person praised. The praise of men, even when honest and truly meant, ought not to be tolerable to, or tolerated by, a Christian man; why should the creature receive the incense of praise and the adoration of men, when all praise and adoration is the due of Him who has redeemed men by His grace; and who by His Holy Spirit gives unto them wisdom and guidance for their duties? The man who praises a brother, by straining thought and language to express all the good that can be said about him, places himself in a dangerous position; because there is a danger that more than the truth will be uttered upon some points, and less than the truth upon others. Why should a man make himself a liar and dishonour God, that he may please a creature of God who, whatever his works may be, if he is honest, will confess that in his works he has failed of his highest hopes, and that but for the grace of God he could have done nothing that is good? Why should a Christian man be tempted by a brother to think of himself more highly than he ought, and thus lead him to lay hold of the devil's hand, which will be sure to bring trouble upon the soul; or if through the grace of God he understands that such words of praise are not suitable, nor commendable, why should he suffer pain because of such a misplaced kindness? Within the Christian sphere such things should be not merely discountenanced, but utterly abhorred; brethren should love each other both well and wisely; and surely there can be little wisdom in so praising a man as to cause him to think that he is a god; or by causing a man intense pain and shame because a brother is disgracing himself, and dishonouring God. The question which the Pharisees put to Jesus as to the lawfulness of giving tribute to Cesar or not, they thought would place Him in the position of either disgracing Himself with the Jewish people, or of committing Himself against the Roman power; and thus the Lord in an instant discerned their wickedness, and the vileness of their hypocrisy. Did they deserve to get an answer to such a question, put in such a spirit, when they were not seeking after the truth, but seeking His destruction? By no means; and thus it can be observed that the Lord did not answer them according to the divine wisdom within Himself, but in conformity with their own thoughts. He does not seem, upon the surface at least, to touch a divine principle, but rather takes them at their own valuation. His question as to the image upon the coin, which they all accepted, and used for current social uses, is to them a sign of their subjection to Cesar in such things. If then they had accepted this position, let them be faithful in that sphere of external relations; but at the same time they were not to forget that God had also a claim upon them. The reply is to enemies, not to disciples, and thus the want of the Christian principle, which is brought out so clearly in connection with Peter and the tribute money. The peculiarity of the answer is that it

seems to favour the idea that a man can serve two masters, God and Cesar, which the Lord in another place declares to be impossible. These men were not in a position, and had no desire to understand Christian principles, therefore they were left to grope in the dark, and to annoy themselves and others about the sphere of each power; or where God was supreme, and where Cesar had his rights and was supreme. The Lord does not lay down this law, "Render therefore unto Cesar the things which are Cesar's; and unto God the things that are God's," for Christians, because with the Christian the Father is supreme in all things, and grace reigns; and, by grace, not by supremacy over God, but by any right on the part of Cesar, apart from God, the Christian can be gracious even toward a persecuting Cesar.

The next conflict was with the Sadducees, the freethinkers of that time, who were unable to comprehend or to reason out the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead. The method in which they present the matter to the Lord as to the woman having seven husbands, in this world, and admitting resurrection to be possible, the question whose wife would she be in that state is seen to be in a sense subtle enough, and yet absurd in the conclusions arrived at. Jesus informs them that the rationalists err for want of two kinds of knowledge; the one being that which is within their reach, the Holy Scriptures; and the other which they could not understand, the power of God. As touching the first point they made a mistake in carrying forward present conditions into the spiritual world, which are not identical with man's present state and as related to the second matter, they ought to remember that God speaks of the patriarchs in the words, "I am the God of Abraham," as if living in Himself, and God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Rationalists who think that they can know everything by means of the reason may study this parable with much profit; and it will teach them that the wisdom and power of God are not limited by these ideas, but that in Jesus Christ, the Resurrection and the Life, men will find all that they require to know. Righteousness is not found by scepticism but through faith in God and obedience to His will, and thus the Lord was pleased to show the Sadducees their ignorance, but He did not reveal unto them His grace in the new spiritual life in the soul and in the world.

The Lord is again tempted by a lawyer who had made the law of God his study, and the form of the temptation is as to the great commandment in the law. The Lord replies by a text from Deuteronomy, vi, 5, as bearing upon man's duties toward God; and from Leviticus xix, 18, as bearing upon man's duty toward his neighbour; and he stated that upon "these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Again it will be observed that the Lord replies to the man's thoughts and words, and not to the highest wisdom in the kingdom of Heaven; they were all by their attitudes toward Himself unfit to enter the kingdom of Heaven, and thus His replies are limited by the mode of their questions and the spirit in which they are asked. It is quite true that perfect love to God and love to a neighbour, would fulfil the law, but these being impossible, men require, not a law that they are unable to obey, but mercy and grace, so that they may be changed and enabled by God's Spirit to fulfil the law. Therefore, when Moses and the prophets incite

men to reach this standard it is not as some men expect that they will do so at once ; but that in the attempt they will fall on Jesus Christ and be broken, and then in Him they will aspire after conformity to law in the spirit of grace and of Christ.

The tempters are silenced ; they have not found a single point at which the Invincible One can be touched, so they must draw off their forces, and try some other means of gaining their diabolical end. But the Lord having been questioned by them, and having answered all their subtle queries to their satisfaction, becomes the Questioner, and expects that they will answer Him. They tempted Him, in return He will try them as to their knowledge of their Messiah ; and thus the questions as to what they thought of Christ, and whose Son He would be ? They readily replied that the Messiah would be of the line of David. But if David in spirit by the Spirit of God called the Messiah his Lord, how could He be his Son ? The Pharisees could not answer such questions, they were not spiritual, and thus they knew not the thoughts of God's Spirit. As David in the visible kingdom had subdued all his enemies, and was king over a united country, even so Messiah as a King in the spiritual world would overcome all His enemies and bring about unity amongst men, purity, truth, and righteousness amongst the nations ; and thus in the spiritual sphere, the Son of David would be the Lord over the father. In the order of development in this world, it is the visible first, and then the spiritual ; but as the visible has a spiritual, invisible cause, it follows that the spiritual in God and man are always in harmony, though for a time, for higher ends, the spiritual is subjected to the order of visible things.

CHAPTERS XXIII.—XXV. The Lord spake to the multitude of the people and to His own disciples, teaching them that the Scribes and Pharisees were the representatives of Judaism, and therefore it was right that they should observe and do what the law of Moses required ; but they were not to be followers of these men in their wickedness, hypocrisy, tyranny, love of praise and of distinction. They were not to be aspirants after the praise of men and to be called master, because the Christ, their King, was their Master, and they were all brethren belonging to one family. They were not to call men their father in a spiritual sense, because the God of all grace alone is the Father in heaven. The greatest among the brethren, by God's gifts or by the Holy Spirit's graces, are not to become masters, but rather to take the position of humble servants, because if a man will exalt himself he shall be abased, whilst the humble will in due time and in a righteous way be exalted. If this spirit and method of life were followed by all men, the kingdom of heaven would be in their midst ; but it is not so. It has not been so in the past, and thus it is not the kingdom of peace, truth, and righteousness which men find manifested in this world, but the kingdom of evil in which evil works abound. The Lord pronounces grievous woes upon the men who pervert the truth of God and righteousness, and who walk in the ways of wickedness. They are accursed when by their pride and hypocrisy they shut the door of the kingdom of heaven against men, will not go in them-

selves, and hinder others who wish to do so. They are self-sufficient, instead of being poor in spirit, and they are condemned by God. A woe rests upon such men when instead of being self-sacrificing they devour the widow's portion, and in their self-conceit show off their own goodness. A woe rests upon all men who seek proselytes of an ism of any form, instead of bringing men to the truth and to meek obedience to the will of God. Such men are self-seekers, and those who follow them become worse than their masters in the hellish art of selfishness in its manifold forms. A woe rests upon all men who, as the guides of others in the way of truth, are satisfied with a stereotyped faith or ritual, and who become so blind that they are unable to discern the relations of truths. Such men are apt to make truth and religion to consist of trifles, whilst they neglect faith in God and justice and mercy toward their fellow-men. In God and the kingdom of heaven all truth is to be found, and the importance of things must be judged, not by traditional beliefs, but by their relations between God, Christ, and men. A woe rests upon those who would glorify themselves by their strict obedience to ritual and ceremony, whilst forgetting the spirit of mercy, which is the supreme law with God for men. A woe rests upon men whose souls are impure, and their actions full of self-assertion, and every form of iniquity. A woe rests upon those men who praise themselves for their own good deeds, who whitewash each other, and at the same time they are self-deceivers, being in reality full of iniquity, instead of being the children of God. A woe rests upon those men who, whilst with the one hand they build tombs for martyred prophets for their own glory, are busy on the other hand persecuting those in their midst who are animated by the holy spirit of the prophets. They fill up the measure of their fathers to the brim, and because they do so bring a generation of a serpent brood; upon them must come the judgment of God, and there shall not be found any means of escape in that day.

In the past there had been sent unto Israel prophets, wise men, and writers of the Word of God, and their portion had been persecution. Even from the days of Abel onward unto Zacharias, who was killed between the temple and the altar, it had been the same story of disobedience to God, hatred of His servants, and their persecution to death. The Son had come at last, in whom all things were centred as the Heir, and upon Him would fall the same persecution, so that the cup might be filled to the brim. This persecution was carried out against Him who had the greatest compassion toward sinful men; but the hour had come upon Judaism, and the temple, which was its glory, would be left desolate. The long dark night of separation from God's house was about to fall upon the Jews, and they would never find rest or peace for their souls until the time should come when they would say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord." This is a quotation from Psalm cxviii., following the words about the stone which the builders had rejected, and thus the fall and the destruction of Judaism is linked with the restoration in mercy, when those who rejected *their Messiah* will turn unto Him, and find that in Him is the kingdom of heaven.

CHAPTER XXIV. In this chapter there is found the departure of Jesus from the temple, and through this movement as a sign, men can discern the beginning of the desolation upon the Jews, and the desecration of their visible temple by the departure of the Invisible from the sacred shrine. The visible things of men must fall away until not one stone is left upon another; and in the place of external signs, which men have admired so much, there will be manifested the spiritual temple not made with hands, which is built, not by the aggregation of stones upon each other, but by a spiritual organic development. The disciples were greatly interested in the Lord's statement of the downfall of the temple, and when sitting upon the Mount of Olives they asked Him the following questions: "When shall these things be?" "What shall be the sign of Thy coming?" and "What shall be the sign of the end of the world?" the Lord's counsel to them is that of warning, because of deceivers who would come as pretenders to be Christ; that they should not be troubled because of wars, famines, and other things coming upon the nations, for these things would only be the beginning of sorrows. If the external world was in convulsions, they would not expect to escape trouble, because upon them would come persecution and the hatred of nations for Christ's sake. Because of such persecution within the visible fold there would be offences, betrayals, and hatred amongst brethren; the wolf would get into the fold in the shape of false teachers who would deceive the people and lead them astray; and as evil would be rampant in the Church, the love of the followers of Jesus to their Master and His cause would become very cold; still those who were faithful and patient under such conditions, would be saved. The gospel of the kingdom would be preached in all the world for a witness against men; and after this had been fulfilled the end would come.

The first section ending with the 14th verse may be understood as referring specially to the external world amongst the nations, whilst the second section, from the 15th to 28th verses, may be considered as bearing upon the Christian Church. The place considered is the temple of God, within which an abomination is set up as prophesied by Daniel. As the words—whose readeth, let him understand—come in here, it is well to refer to Daniel ix., 27, and see what his words are upon this point. They are, "He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations He shall make it desolate, even until the consummation and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." It may be suggested that these words point to the confirmation of the covenant of grace in Jesus Christ by His life and death; by this confirmation of the reality, all the sacrifices and oblations in all nations, not merely the Jews, because these things were in the outer court, came to an end; and from that time onward desolations would abound upon the earth, and spiritual abominations would be manifested until the consummation. Under such conditions, when the Church of Christ would become like a den of thieves, and as a cage full of unclean birds, then let not the Lord's people who praise Him look to man for help, but to the mountains of God's grace; let not those who

are upon the place set apart for watching and prayer descend and burden themselves with the things of this world; and let not those who are engaged in God's service in the field, trouble themselves about what other people think of their labours. That will be a sad time for the children of grace who are mere babes; and also for those who give them nourishment, the faithful ministers of God's Word. Prayer was to be made by the Church that the strength of the persecution should not come when there were long nights of darkness in the souls of men and no nourishment to be found in the way; nor upon the Sabbath day of rest in Christ, when the rest of the soul should be broken up by estrangement from Him through any evil thing being done. In such a time of awful trial, such a tempest of evil as the world had never previously seen, Christians would require, however fierce the storm might rage around them, to find nourishment in God's Word, and rest in His love, else they would never pass through it. As God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, so in the furnace of affliction there have been found drafts of consolation and the staying power of the Lord's hand to rebuke the enemy. These were to be dangerous days of false teachers with their signs and wonders; they would deceive men on all sides, and but for the grace of God the chosen servants of Christ would also be deceived; but to all invitations to worship a visible Christ they were to pay no attention whatever; it was their privilege to know spiritual things, and thus they could wait until, amid the darkness, the lightning flash of truth would arouse men to look for the coming of the Son of man.

The third section, verses 29—31, passes from the Church of Christ to the spiritual condition of the world; and there is seen after the times of tribulation upon the Church an awful moral and intellectual darkness covering the earth. Infidelity in its various forms will shake the very heavens in which men live, and in the awful darkness men will not know where to look for guidance and support. But these things will suddenly vanish away by the appearance of the sign of the Son of man, His Holy Word shining forth upon an unbelieving world with all the glory of the sun; then because of sin men will mourn and turn unto God, and the Son of man will be seen coming with power and great glory to reign over men.

When shall these things be? Learn from the fig-tree, and from nature in its yearly changing cycle; there is first a long dreary winter of darkness, trouble, sorrow, and weariness, but the spring will come, and also the harvest. All the things that Christ has said will surely come to pass in His own generation of the Christian era; but men are not to trouble themselves about times and seasons which they cannot understand: rather they must be watchful that the day and hour of justice and judgment shall never come upon them. Remember Noah and the Flood, with the judgment upon the ante-deluvians; remember that there is a thief constantly on the watch to steal away the life of grace in the soul; remember the service which the Lord has been pleased to intrust to His servants, and see that there be fidelity to the Master, and gracious treatment in a meek spirit toward fellow-servants; remember the wedding to which the Lord's followers are graciously invited, and be prepared to enter with Him at any hour when the summons may come; remember

abilities for gifts and graces conferred, and use them for His will for the good of men; and if these things are remembered, there shall not be any fear for the judgment day, the great white throne, the judgment of quick and dead. Watch and keep the soul safe by a watch in Christ; watch that the devil of self do not destroy the watch that every duty toward men may be in harmony with the will of God; watch for the coming Bridegroom of the Church; keeping the truth shining brightly within, be prepared to give a cordial welcome, and to enter upon the promises which are all

Amen, in Christ; and watch that His gifts and graces be secured in the kingdom of His mercy, so that there may be joy at the coming when He utters the words, "Well done, good and faithful thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Men do not listen to these warnings, for should they forget God and live in loving and serving the world, in a moment they may be taken

and they forget the value of the soul and the necessity for their own safety over its interests, they may be robbed of the most precious things they possess; if they forget that they are servants obedient to their Lord, and act wilfully, then in an unknown hour the position of a slave will be lost, and chains and a dungeon may become the portion of the slave: if they forget Him who has been the Hope of men for all time, there will be a shut door and unavailing regrets; and if they are negligent or sloth in serving God in His kingdom of mercy, they will be for the unprofitable servant the outer darkness and punishment.

CHAPTERS XXVI.—XXVIII. Here seems to be a new departure; the work of Jesus are finished, and the key-note given by the Lord is the reparation for the Passover, the betrayal, and the crucifixion. Jesus knew the course that events would take, and calmly, in due season, preparation was made. At the same time His enemies were in consultation as to the means by which they could get Jesus out of the way; but they could not see clearly in what way they could do it; their wishes; only this, they strongly desired that it should be done on the feast day, so that things might be done quietly. In the meantime Jesus He foresees clearly the course of events and is prepared; rulers everything is uncertain, they wish for His death, but if it can be done quietly, then so much the better. The scene is suddenly changed from Jerusalem to Bethany; from the presence of God who seek the Lord's death, to the house of affliction, sorrow, and the grace of the Lord. In the house of a man who was once leprous and sinful, but now a friend, the Lord takes shelter for a moment of repose and consecration before the final struggle would come; and it was whilst He was in Simon's house that the same man came with "an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and anointed His head as He sat at meat." Up to this time the Lord had been conceiving as pouring out upon men the riches of the treasures of heaven. He had poured out His soul upon men, so that they might be saved and consecrated for the service of God; and

surely it was a meet thing that one man who had been cleansed from sin should give Him shelter and refreshment, whilst one loving might also be found to pour upon His blessed head the precious ointment of her grateful affections. Would it not have been most shameful amongst all the Lord's hearers, not one should have been found willing to give Him shelter under his roof at such an hour; and not a woman whose soul, overcharged with love, could be so broken as to give expression to the intensity of the affections by anointing His head? The Lord was anointed, consecrated for His death and burial, and it was by the hand of a woman; for she alone seems to have instinctively felt what His position was, and her whole soul was drawn out towards Him. The ointment was merely the external figure for the spiritual state of the woman; and thus to the Lord her emotions were a foretaste of that rich feast, that anointing which must rest upon His mystical body in the fulness of time. The disciples who were very near to the Lord did not discern the workings of her spirit and the intercommunion of thought which passed betwixt the Lord and the woman; and when they spoke of waste, and were indignant that an ointment so valuable should be put to such a use, and not sold and the money given to the poor. Truly Jesus was the very last to seek anything for Himself; there was a fitness in this action which could not be valued by men who were, in their grievance, troubling the woman who had wrought good work upon Him, forgetting that His departure was at hand, whilst the poor would be with them always. It is as if the Lord would say, "I have poured out upon you all the treasures of God's grace: the alabaster box of most precious ointment has been broken upon your heads; and I am now empty, so empty; and in a few hours even the face of My Father will be turned away from Me. Must I depart without realising that My work has been blessed; and must I enter upon the awful hour that is before Me without any anointing from the redeemed ones to help Me in the awful struggle? In the future you will be with you, and what you do to them will be done for them; but in the meantime, let My overburdened, thirsty soul drink draught of refreshment from this redeemed soul which is in such deep sympathy with Me. This ointment and anointing is for My burial; it is the sacred means by which I am to be kept sanctified when I am surrounded by devils, and the powers of hell are set against Me." The Lord was consecrated for His work by the Holy Spirit resting upon Him in the shape of a dove; but for His death and burial the anointing and consecration is by human hands, because it is only through such a medium that the Holy Ghost could anoint Jesus for such a work, rather, for such patient suffering. This is the memorial set up in the Gospel and preached throughout the world; that the Lord was consecrated and anointed for His death and burial by human hands, by a loving, consecrated woman; and all those who are animated by the same spirit become partakers with this woman in her work of love upon the body of Jesus.

The woman loved her Lord, and would have given her life for Him almost as freely as He was going to die for her; but the betrayer was consumed by a spirit of selfishness and covetousness, and he was

such a scene to betray his Lord to His enemies. The price, the agreement closed, and from that hour the opportunity wanted to commit the awful deed of giving up the Lord into the hands of the enemy.

It drew near; the time of Jesus was at hand; and the feast having been prepared, the Lord with His disciples sat down to partake of this feast; but the feast, the communion, was not to be without the presence of Judas, and thus the Lord made known that there was a traitor in their midst. The disciples were sorrowful at such a revelation, and they began individually to consider whether they were to do such a deed. His answer was that the man who had dipped with Him in the same dish, should also be the man to betray Him. The Son of man would depart according to the will of the Father; but there would rest a curse upon the betrayer; and it would have been better that such a man should never have been born. The gracious warning was given to Judas that he should refrain himself from taking the fatal and final step; but the Lord was around his soul; his desire was to gain money, and thus he saw how disastrous this foul deed would be. When the hour was gone from the presence of Jesus, then He instituted the ordinance by which they would be enabled to remember His death for them. Upon the bread a blessing was asked, it was broken and given to His disciples with the words, "This is My body." Afterwards thanks were given over the bread, and it was given to them with the words, "Drink ye all of it: for this is the blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." Of the consecrated Bread of heaven Jesus said, "This is My body." In other words, that which can be distributed amongst men is the Word of God. By this Word of what is blessed, the giving and receiving of the poor penitent soul, the meek spirit, and the seeking after truth and righteousness, there is communion and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ in His words and by His Spirit. It is the giving up of the soul to accept the grace of God; it is to find out that the soul is not pure, and unfit for His presence, and yet to make a way for Him to cross, that He may take up His abode in the soul; it is to be yoked and to be so broken in that ready obedience will be given to the monitions of His holy will, and it is to be disciples in the love of grace, truth, and righteousness in all that is in harmony with the Kingdom of grace. The wine which He gives His followers, and which has been passing throughout history the same words, "Drink ye all of it: for this is the blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." To drink of the wine cup is as nothing, but to drink of the mercy, of purity, of peace, and of patience under persecution, it, this is much indeed. The bread and the wine are mere symbols; the realities are the subjective heaven of grace within the soul, and the active manifestation of the same in the actions of life.

Men may be deprived of the symbols by self-asserting, ignorant; but if they love the Word of God, and get it transformed into a spiritual being, they are really living upon God's Bread, broken for man's salvation; and if they go forth in the spirit of Jesus seeking to bring others to Him, they will assuredly be drinking of the new wine of the kingdom of heaven. At this time the Lord could not drink the cup of mercy; for the day of judgment had come upon Him; not until another day would He be able to communicate with those chosen in that which would be the greatest blessing to them, but most awful curse upon Him. The supper being ended, a hymn of praise was sung unto God, and then the little company slowly went on their way to the Mount of Olives. On the way, or when there, the Lord began to prepare them for the critical hour that had come upon them, by telling them that they would be offended on His account that night, for the Shepherd would be smitten, and then the sheep would be scattered; but they were to remember that after He was risen from the dead He would meet them again in Galilee. Peter heard all that the Lord had to say, but strongly affirmed that although he should die with his Master, he would not deny Him; and so also said all the disciples.

The Lord Jesus and His disciples descended into the "place of Gethsemane," and leaving the disciples—taking only Peter, James, and John with Him to be witnesses of His sorrow—He advanced among the trees, and under the shadow of these the hour of the passion began upon Him in its most intense power. To the disciples generally the Master—wise, good, and gracious beyond any comparison to the favoured three He was seen in the hour of the transfiguration when from His person there radiated forth the light of righteousness and truth; and in this hour also, when He was encompassed as darkness of hell, and in His intense agony said unto them, "My exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; abide ye here and wait for Me," He was alone, and yet He would fain realise the presence of these three by His side; He was called upon to struggle with the serpent as it threw its venomous folds around His soul; whom He was redeeming, and all whom they represented, and who had some sympathy with Him at such a time. The Garden of Gethsemane was at this time changed as if into a tabernacle; and the disciples were in the outer court of the Gentiles, sitting for their Lord; the three chosen ones were in the holy place thither that they might be able to sympathise with, and to understand, the work of their Lord; and the Lord Jesus, the holy of holies, there to meet God and to answer for them before the mercy-seat. It was night; the Lord Jesus was sitting near to God as the High Priest of men, but without the sin-offering. As man's representative, as a man, His heart heard; all was darkness, or if there was light, it was like the lightning flash upon Sinai, and not the mellancholy Shekinah over the mercy-seat. The Urim and Thummim were silent, and at that time the Lord Jesus was alone in the world; for God's face and favour were turned away from Him.

in this hour of the passion ; holy angels could not comprehend this awful mystery of the Son of God being treated as if He were a sinner ; and the ministers and servants of grace amongst men never knew what it was to be thus separated from God, and rejected and despised by men at the same time. But this Son is a true Son of God ; though He does not see, He can trust, and He can cause His will to be subject in all things to the will of the Father. The cup is as poison, utterly to be detested and abhorred, and yet it is placed to His lips that He might drink it. The Holy One must be numbered with the transgressors and named by a name which cannot be even conceived by such an One without horror ; and it is in submission to the will of divine grace and wisdom that all this has to be endured. "He became sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." If the man is made a Son who will obey God, then how much more is the blessed Jesus, the only and well-beloved Son of God, who was enduring for others what was their due, and with a will fully resigned to the righteous, gracious will of the Father in heaven, able to say, "Not My will, but as Thou wilt." The first trial being past, He came to His disciples, and found them asleep ; He specially reproved Peter for not striving to watch with Him for one hour ; and it was necessary that they should have been watching and praying because of the temptations by which they were surrounded. God's spirit of grace in man has been willing to watch with Jesus Christ, but the carnal nature has been at all times weak and unfit for the duties it has been called to perform. For three times did the Lord Jesus agonise in the darkness and alone ; He is here seen treading the wine-press of the wrath of God, and of the people there were none with Him. He came to Peter as to the representative of the visible Church upon the earth, but he was asleep ; and thus the gate of the fold was thrown open to the enemy of men, and He had, so to speak to wrestle with the enemy not merely for Peter in the fold of the world, but also for James in the fold of Judaism, and on John's behalf in the Christian Church. He had to endure all that the world, the flesh, and the devil could throw upon Him in that hour ; and because of the negligence of His servants who were set to watch with Him, His agonies were increased through their carelessness and want of faithfulness. When the struggle was over, He came to His disciples with the words, "Sleep on now, and take your rest." His passion brings their peace ; His watching their sleep ; His wrestling their rest ; alone He stood in the breach of broken law, and when men, His own followers, knew it not, He brought their salvation from the powers of the world, the flesh, and the devil. The first temptation in the wilderness, before His mission began, found Him at the end of it a conqueror over the world, the flesh, and the devil ; this temptation in Gethsemane is of a different kind, and yet He emerges as a conqueror out of it also. In the first temptation He is seen to be Lord over all the powers which govern men in their actions in life ; in Gethsemane His conquest is of a different kind, and the issue of the struggle seems to be how He could give Himself up to the power of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and remain true to God and righteousness. The first temptation

manifests the perfect moral Man, obedient to God in all things; able to live in conformity with moral law and the laws of grace; in this agony in the garden is the wrestling of the gracious Son of God within His own soul, conforming in thought to the utmost to all that the grace of God can think of as a means of man's redemption. Look at the agony in the garden from this stand-point, there is much for in the words of Jesus, "Behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." The thought that emerges here is a genetic one as expressed by the words, "How shall I give Thee up?" The Father may be thought of as looking upon this work in its awful condition of immorality in every form, and asking Himself how the Lord Jesus, the Holy One, shall be permitted to go forth on a risk being defiled, hated, and destroyed by men; the Lord Jesus in this scene has to face this matter on His own account, and the question is how His body and soul shall be given up to such contumely; and the same thought can be applied to the Church of Christ throughout the ages, but more especially during the Christian era, for it has been given up to the will of a cruel world, to the care and awful cruelty of an apostate Church, and to be despised, rejected, trodden under foot, and treated with contumely by infidels and by those who love pleasure and choose it for their sole good. The love of God for His sinful children brings with it a Gethsemane of sorrow in the giving up of the Son of His love to such a death for men. All figures fail to represent clearly the essential thought of redemption, which is that, if men are to be saved, God is required, by His own order of nature, to come personally into contact with sinful men, and not merely to restrain His power and justice over them, but in utter gracious helplessness to give Himself up into their hands that they may work their evil will upon their Creator and King. Oh, this is an awful giving up—too awful to contemplate; and yet is not this the very mystery of grace and the mystery of iniquity? It is no wonder that men should doubt the thoughts of God when they are told that the Creator and Majesty of the Universe emptied Himself of all glory, took upon Himself a human form, became subject to law, manifested His kingdom of grace, subjected Himself to the hands of rebel creatures, and thus, by being despised and rejected, crucified and put to an open shame on the face of this world, He made this the means of man's redemption. The story could not by any possible means be a human invention; it is the very antithesis of man's ideas and desires; besides, it is the only means by which men could be brought to know the love of God toward them for their redemption, and thus it must be true. This aspect of the passion will bear consideration, more especially in the genetic sense already referred to, because it is here that the magnitude of the passion is to be found. The passion begins not on earth, but in heaven, in the very heart of God—in the thought how man can be given up to destruction or saved; in the thought that God by His grace—His beloved Son—must give Himself up as if a lamb were given up to be destroyed by wild beasts, and as if poisoned to death by serpents. These figures present to men what they dread and abhor, but these are not analogies which can possibly express the relationship of the Creator

His creatures ; and yet how strangely human this love, which my—a very passion in God—to redeem the sinful sons of men. ul wisdom of God as found in the manifestation of this love in Jesus—whereby, as if in One human being, the agony and passion ming love in God and man is concentrated into one soul at this he world's history and in Jerusalem—will also bear to be cared. The Man Jesus Christ is the central Person in history from all the love of God radiates upon men, and toward whom all the ctions of men concentrate and discharge themselves. The garden emane is a reality to Jesus Christ and to all men ; for it is the cene of the real passion carried on in the Church of Christ in all ages. e Man Jesus endured in His agony in the garden is the same as His Holy Spirit has endured in the Church ; and as with the when with Jesus on that eventful night, so with the followers t—they have been asleep, and they have not been watching ir own spiritual interests. God the Father has provided His man's redemption ; God the Son, known as Jesus Christ, has ed that love in its fulness in His passion, cross, and death ; Holy Spirit, in man, has endured the passion by being crucified id put to an open shame for the redeemed ; and all the time e been sleeping, not realising their awful danger. What credit a place to the account of man for his share in this glorious mercy and of grace ? Absolutely nothing ; because the work is its inception in heaven, conception and execution in the world, s manifestation in and by men ; and the followers of Jesus e redeemed, have failed in all ages to sympathise intelligently Lord in His great work of redemption. To God must be e praise and glory for the manifestation of His grace and truth men ; to the sons of men, shame and confusion of face for elessness and indolence, and even for their betrayal of the o the hands of His enemies. But men cannot grasp the great , which meet around Gethsemane ; they feel as if they were ep ; and when His sorrow touches their souls, it is not so strong e them from their drowsiness—they slumber on and permit Him e with the enemy and to work out salvation for them. Thanks God for His unspeakable Gift to men in the gracious, patient, , self-sacrificing Jesus ! may He be pleased by His Holy Spirit ine the souls of men in this very important subject, so that ratitude and praise may be rendered unto God for His love to

strayer and a multitude with swords and staves came with the r and power of the Sanhedrim, to arrest Jesus ; and the sign idas gave to those who accompanied him was that whosoever l, the same was the One to be taken prisoner. The sign was th the words, "Hail, Master," and in a moment the Lord was nds of His enemies and bound. The followers of Jesus were by this sudden attack, and Peter, to show his power, drew a id smote off a man's ear ; but for this he was rebuked by the io informed him that such a method of service was wrong, and would bring its own judgment ; and that He was not deficient

of power if He wished to use it, but if He were to do so, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled. The power of man is to be successful against the Son of God; the visible Church of Christ is to misunderstand its source of power and take to the sword which will bring its own punishment; whilst the Lord restraining power, and by being subject to His enemies, will fulfil the Scriptures. The King of peace stands amongst armed men bound, and at this crisis all His disciples forsook Him and fled away.

The scene is changed to the high priests' palace, and before an earthly priest and judge, the High Priest of men, and the Judge of the world stands arraigned. They had been busy trying to find witnesses against Him, so that He might be put to death, but they had failed, and thus the words of the high priest, "I adjure Thee by the living God that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God," are to be made the means of His condemnation. There is no false issue here; it is a bold challenge by His enemies as to His claims, and His response is as clear that He is the Messiah; and that the man acting as His judge would see Him as "the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." A plain answer to a direct question, and yet it is made the means of His condemnation; and from that hour He was given up by His enemies to be the sport of the wicked men by whom He was surrounded.

The power of wicked men, and of the darkness, was for the time supreme on earth; for the Lord Jesus had been betrayed, bound as a prisoner, arraigned before unjust judges, condemned to death for speaking the truth, and also spit upon, buffeted, smitten with the palms of the hands, and mocked as a false prophet; and the terrible simoom of hellish power moved onward in its course until it encircled Peter in its fierce onward career, and he was so struck down, and became such a helpless creature, that he repeatedly denied his Master in the palace of the high priest.

It may be suggested that there seems to be a break at this point, and that in the 26th chapter there is, so to speak, a cycle in the subjection of Jesus to man, and apparently of good to evil, but in reality, the success of the kingdom of grace in its own peculiar sphere. There is to be seen the Lord Jesus, the lowly and poor in spirit, looking forward to His betrayal and crucifixion as the Son of man; and also the assembled rulers of the Jewish nation who, in their self-sufficiency, pride, and hatred of Jesus are determined to put Him to death. At Bethany—the house of affliction—there is seen the cleansed leper and the penitent spirit; and the rendering up of the tribute of the human affections unto Him who is the Saviour of the soul; and at the same place, the selfish disciples who grumble because of a waste, on man's part, of what might be more usefully employed in other directions. On the one side there is the altar accepted by God upon which there is seen an offering which is acceptable in His sight; on the other side an altar dedicated to strife and covetousness which is an abomination in the sight of God. The betrayer was self-conceited in his estimation of how the money and ointment ought to have been used, but his next step is to betray his meek Master to His enemies. The

self-seeking man throws aside all laws of morality and grace, all considerations of thankfulness and gratitude, that he may get thirty pieces of silver; whilst the Lord in gracious submission to the will of the Father, commits Himself unto God. The feast in the upper room at Jerusalem and the eating of the Passover by the Lord with His disciples, speak of communion and fellowship with God in truth and righteousness; whilst the presence of the traitor, and his apparent satisfaction with himself, shows that he was self-deceived and in the bonds of iniquity. The Lord's Supper is in symbol the message of mercy to mankind; but for the Lord, who was about to be betrayed into the hands of sinful men no mercy could be found. Dark Gethsemane reveals the One pure of heart, preparing for the encounter with sin and death; and in the surrounding darkness there may be discerned His disciples in two companies, asleep when they should have been watching, and overcome by the enemy, when they ought to have been on the alert against their subtle foe. The betrayal manifests the King of peace, and the Son of God as a prisoner in the hands of men; and thus truth and righteousness are betrayed into the hands of God's enemies. The scene in the high priests' palace is that of the persecution of the Righteous One whose possession is the kingdom of heaven; and the attendants of the priests are the revellers and mockers who basely persecute the Prophet and High Priest of God. It is in this succession of scenes that the relations of the Lord to His Own people, Jews and Christians, are to be found. He was hated and rejected by the Jewish rulers, betrayed by a disciple, left alone in His agony by His friends, forsaken in the hour of humiliation by His followers, persecuted by the man to whom he had given authority in the Jewish Church, and denied by the man who was the representative of the visible Church, with cursing and swearing. He came to His Own people whom He had chosen, and set apart for His service, for the glory of God and the good of men, and all alike, without any exception, failed to stand by Him in the hour of His rejection by men. Neither Jew nor Christian have any cause for boasting, they have been alike faithless, selfish, disobedient, blind to the truth, and workers of unrighteousness. Man's guilt would sink him into the lowest hell, were it not that this Man proved Himself to be faithful unto God, self-sacrificing for His followers, obedient to the gracious will of God, clear seeing as to the truth, and righteous in all His actions. Men cannot do without this Jesus Christ, He is the Saviour of the world, the King of grace, and the King of kings.

The Lord Jesus had passed through a night of agony, and the early morning saw Him bound, and being led away by His fellow-countrymen, His own subjects, to be delivered up to the Roman power. The counsel of the Jewish nation had decided against Jesus; and as a blasphemer, an impostor, a pretender of royalty, He was to be delivered up to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor.

The miserable Judas, when he saw the fatal consequence of his wicked deeds, saw also the awful sin of which he had been guilty, and filled with remorse he took the money back to the priests, the price of innocent blood, and made confession of his sin. But the rulers had no conscientious scruples upon *such a matter as the innocence and guilt of*

Jesus; what they desired above all things at that moment was His death, and they would not give up the advantage they had gained because Judas felt the stings of remorse for his part of the work that had already been accomplished. The money was the price of blood, a life, and thus it could not be put into the sacred treasury; but they could do an act of charity with the money, and by buying a field bury strangers in, they might ease their conscience a little of their portion in this matter. The miserable traitor ended his life in the world by suicide; they prosecuted and persecuted Jesus to death, and their testimony as to their guilt is the field or brand of blood which remains upon the Jews until this day.

The Lord had been permitted to depart from amongst His immediate friends and followers through their carelessness; He had been despised, rejected, and condemned by the fleshly, carnal rulers in the nation; and at last He stands before the representative of the world-power, to see what the world will make of this Man who, although meekest and most gracious of men, has found more enemies than any other man that ever lived. The King of kings stands before the fickle, self-seeking Pilate, and his question to the Royal Prisoner of grace is "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" The Lord's reply is very brief: "Thou sayest." But when the rulers of the Jews accused Him to Pilate then He was silent and did not deign a word of reply against the charges of these men, or the question of Pilate as to the things they witness against Him. This behaviour of Jesus, so unusual for a prisoner, caused the governor to marvel greatly; he saw that this was no common Man who was thus accused by His countrymen; meekness and grace rested upon His brow, and even a Roman governor could marvel at the calm majesty that remained unmoved under such a torrent of accusations.

The governor was in a dilemma; he saw that the man was innocent and that the Jews were acting unjustly in their passion; he would divert their attention a little, and by placing the innocent Jesus and the notoriously guilty Barabbas side by side, he would permit them to choose which should be set free. They were compelled to choose a nation whether they would accept Jesus or Barabbas.

The governor was on the brink of committing an awful crime, and as if in pity for the man a warning message was sent to him even from heaven. Mercy would strain its powers and use every means so that all men who have to do with the death of Jesus shall not do so without due warning; and thus the message of the governor's wife is in reality the mercy of God telling him to beware in what manner he acts towards this just Man.

The decision of the Jews rings upon his ears by their choice of Barabbas to be released, and for the crucifixion of Jesus. Pilate washed his hands, reiterating the innocence of Jesus, whilst the Jews cried out "His blood be on us and on our children." The king of crime was chosen by the Jews; the curse of blood was drawn down by them selves upon their own heads; whilst the Holy One was rejected and His blood was to be upon them as their curse for many generations.

He appeared as a King; He was here seen as the King of grace and covered with the scarlet robe; He was the King of men in every

form of tribulation or distress and He wore a crown of thorns, the sign of the fruits or consequences of sin amongst the sins of men ; He carried in His hand a reed, the symbol of complete self-abnegation, powerless to hurt any living creature. Men in mockery bowed the knee and called Him King ; they spat upon Him to show their respect for Cesar and their contempt of Him ; and this scene being over, He was led away to be crucified.

Golgotha is the scene of the crucifixion ; upon the cross they offered Him vinegar mingled with gall, but He would not drink it. They crucified Him ; but His garments they valued, distributed, and for His vesture there was a casting of lots ; and having done this they sat down and watched Him. Strange thing for men to do ; and yet, is not this repeated in the deeds of men in history ? The Christ they have crucified with their strife and evil deeds, and yet they have been anxious to get His Word of Truth, and they have been like gamblers about His vesture lest there should be any schism or rending of that which was His covering. What strange inconsistencies men have been guilty of during the Christian era ; the Christ in His Spirit, which is the real Bread of Life, has been crucified continually, kept on the cross for centuries and yet men have thought themselves Christians when they have been dividing His garments of truth and gambling through their speculations as to His robe of perfect righteousness. " He was numbered with the transgressors ;" a thief on each hand enduring the agony of crucifixion. The passers-by revile Him with their witty sayings ; the chief priests and rulers mock Him, saying, " He saved others ; Himself He cannot save," and even the miserable sufferers on either hand in their agony cast His words about being the Son of God in His teeth. At the mid-day hour darkness covered the land ; and about the ninth hour, when the light began to return upon men, there arose to Heaven, yea, throughout the universe, the loud and woeful cry, " My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ?" This required to be a loud cry, so that it might reach the souls of men ; so that they might think of this awful forsaking of the Son of God and find in it their own salvation. As those who heard Jesus on that day did not understand Him, so it has been from that time onward ; one loving soul gave him a drink with a sponge : a gentle reminder that upon the earth there was one man at His side whose soul had been touched with the spirit of mercy, and this was to the Lord a joyful sign ; it gave Him strength to utter a last inarticulate cry of joy ; the soul was gone, and with this awful rending of His soul and body there was a rending of the veil of the temple, and a rending of the rocks in the earth. It was not a thing to be wondered at, if when the Temple of God, the Holy of holies, was thus exposed to mankind, there should have been the throwing open of the Holy of holies to men in the visible, carnal, figurative temple, and also an earthquake which would rend the rocks, for the world, the universe, is the temple, the garment of God, and thus it may be easily conceived of as acting in sympathy with the Creator at such an hour.

The hour of the greatest weakness and of the greatest anguish was the ninth hour ; then *the crisis had come* and the perfect sacrifice had

been offered. The giving up into the hands of sinful men, obedience unto death, were accomplished ; and between the cry of forsaking and the cry of dissolution was the extreme moment of abnegation. The cry of dissolution, the rending of the veil and of signs bespeak spiritual power, and it was the cry of dissolution joined with the earthquake that made the centurion say, "Truly this was Son of God."

The darkest hour was past ; the timid disciples began to think of their Lord who had been crucified ; and filled as if by a new spirit Joseph of Arimathea (or the new light which came from the death of the Lord), begged His sacred body from Pilate and laid it in a tomb hewn out of the rock ; a large stone was placed at the door of sepulchre, and Mary Magdalene and the other Mary sat watching sepulchre.

Not yet are the enemies of Jesus Christ satisfied ; they are afraid that He will rise again from the dead, or that His disciples might do that He did so, and thus they ask that a watch may be set to prevent any such thing taking place, and permission being granted, the watch was set, and the sepulchre with its stone duly sealed.

But when the Sabbath was at an end, and the dawn of the first day of the week was come, then there was an earthquake, the descent of an angel from heaven, who rolled away the stone, and sat down upon it. His face was radiant with light, and His raiment white as snow. The keepers were terrified by such a visitation, whilst the two Marys were encouraged by the voice of the heavenly messenger. Already the Lord had risen from the dead, and they were invited to draw near and where His body had been lying, and instructed to inform the disciples that the Lord would meet them in Galilee.

The women were favoured not merely by the angelic messenger, with the Lord's revelation of Himself to them ; His salutation is "Hail !" their response, to fall at His feet to worship Him, and to listen to His blessed words as to the message they were to bear to the disciples.

The story of the chief priests, the way that they bribed the keepers to tell lies, and their promise of protection show the position into which the rulers of the Jews had fallen ; bribery and corruption are the weapons against a resurrection of righteousness, and by lies they would put down the truth.

The King comes once more unto His disciples in a mountain in Galilee a high place, in a new cycle of time ; they saw Him, and those who believed worshipped Him as God ; but there were doubters even in the company.

The King drew near unto them, and His resurrection words are "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

In this brief sketch of the delivery of Jesus into the hands of the Romans, His trial, crucifixion, death, and resurrection, it may be

suggested that two cycles or divisions will be found; the first cycle ending with the lowest condition in which He was found; and the second beginning with the shout of victory at His death, and ending with His supremacy in heaven and earth.

The first scene is that of the rulers of the Jews taking the lowly Jesus bound as a prisoner, and handing Him over to the Roman governor, that the sentence of death might be given upon Him by the Roman power. The powers of the world, of the flesh and of the devil stand arrayed on one side against the Lord's anointed; and on the other, the poor in spirit, the gracious Jesus stands alone. The second scene presents the awful picture of a ruined soul in conflict with its companions in crime; the cry of innocent blood in his conscience was not endurable, and thus the end was self-destruction. "It had been good for that man if he had not been born." The self-sacrifice of the Holy One is a sacrifice well pleasing unto God; but for a man to betray the truth for money, having been forewarned as to the deed and its guilt, and the crime being chosen in preference to confession of sin and sorrow, this sin brings remorse, a repentance of horror, but not of godly fear and forgiveness. This is the awful hell within a man which is unendurable; it is sinning against the light of truth, and trampling under foot the grace and mercy of God in Jesus Christ. Here no man can speak a word of comfort; all is darkness, and the only words that keep ringing in the ears are, "It had been good for that man if he had not been born." The King of grace, full of meekness, is seen standing before the visible regal power of this world; on His brow, holy dignity and calmness rest; on that of Pilate, care, annoyance, and astonishment. The Lord submits without a word of reply to His false accusers, whilst the governor with the power of Rome at his back is unable to determine what he should do under the circumstances. The Lord is seen as if in a cyclone, Himself the centre of the tempest, and yet He is calm and trustful, whilst all around Him are being driven onward in a course which they would avoid if they were to act up to their honest convictions; but being without a rudder or compass in the conscience, they are unable to direct their course, or even to act in a rational manner. This is a mystery of iniquity, no matter what name men may give to it. Call it the power of the devil, of hell, or the tumult of the passions; it really means, that a power which is not a man's will acts upon his spirit with an overwhelming force, and it is because of former weaknesses through giving way to sin, and through not possessing an authoritative law within the soul, that men, or nations are driven onward to destruction. The proud who are full of selfishness go on in their self-seeking path never satisfied until they shall conquer and possess the earth; but in their onward march they set so many conflicting powers in operation that they derange existing conditions; thus they are sowing the wind, but it is to find themselves encircled with an awful whirlwind carrying devastation in its path, and the issue of all things is that the Meek One and His followers, when the tornado of sin has swept past, will inherit the earth. The choice betwixt Barabbas and Jesus Christ can be discerned to be the great choice for the Jews of which the trial to possess Canaan or to remain in the

wilderness was a sign. As they had chosen to be rebellious and not to enter into the land of Canaan in the days of Moses, so at this time they chose Barabbas as their representative and rejected Jesus Christ. By rejecting Jesus, and asking the release of Barabbas, they may have thought that they would get rid of the Anakims of trouble which seemed to be in their path; but in reality they were rejecting grace, truth, and righteousness, and choosing hatred, lying, and all unrighteousness for their future portion. The message of God to Pilate through his wife is a final message of mercy to a man on the brink of a precipice; but the visible world had stronger claims upon his soul than the invisible, and thus the gentle message of God through a wife was lost in the tumult of the people, and the execrable, unmerciful cry of the mob, "Let Him be crucified." The Pure and Holy One stands amongst men, a spectacle for the universe; and there may be seen on one side of Him, a weak, selfish, suspicious governor trying to wash his hands from blood-guiltiness, and upon the other an infuriated people filled with madness invoking upon their own heads and upon the heads of their children the awful curse of blood, the brand of outlawry from the presence of God. Their choice is the notable, wicked Barabbas, a man accursed by the laws of God and man, and they reject the "Pure in heart," who is permitted to look upon the face of God. This is an awful insanity, but it is not limited to the Jews, because the history of the world and of nations manifests the same horrible choice, if not of a man from a prison, without question of men who by their ambitious purposes and self-seeking ends have brought the curse of blood upon men, and also of many other grievous sins. The King of peace, the most blessed King of men, was arrayed as if with the curse upon His head, and impotence in His hand; and the treatment He received was shameful in the extreme; yet as this is the method of grace and mercy it is seen to be in harmony with the highest will of God. They require to be sons of God in very deed who can see through and beyond these things, so that they may bend low with deep humility, and lowly, loving admiration at the feet of Jesus; and at the same time to be able to see through, understand, and detest the pride and selfishness that surround earthly rulers. Jesus is King by His innate royalty of nature in thought, word, and action; the kings who have governed men have as a rule been base, selfish, despotic, and cruel, and no matter what their robes have been, they have not been true kings over men, but rather knaves who have sought their own selfish ends. Surely men ought to be glad when the King returns in peace to offer Himself once more as the Ruler of this world. The persecutors, and the Persecuted meet at Golgotha, and upon His head and body, His spirit and soul, there fell persecution, reviling, mocking, darkness, agony, and the forsaking of God. His position, as viewed from the human stand-point, was an awful one, and yet every true, honest, obedient, God-fearing man would say, without hesitation, that His is the position that ought to be chosen in all meekness and submission to the will of God; and that the work of His persecutors is truly accursed. The Man Jesus is seen to be the Most Blessed, even when accursed. It is not what men do to Him that affects His character; but why He endures, and why they persecute.

The men who cursed the crucified Nazarene brought a curse upon themselves; and a blessing fell upon Him and upon those united to Him by faith. The cloud which surrounded Jerusalem burst in judgment upon the Jews, and in mercy upon Jesus and His followers.

The third cycle in the subjection, the passion of Jesus, may be conceived as beginning with the reception of the vinegar in the sponge, the merciful response of a bystander, after He had uttered the words, "I thirst." The work of mercy was accomplished, and ere He left the earth a response was given into His own bosom. As the sun was breaking through the clouds in the visible heavens, so the clouds were passing away from His soul and He could utter the cry, not of forsaking, but of the committal of His spirit into His Father's hands. There was another utterance, "It is done," but this was in calm confidence, and then there followed the great inarticulate cry of joy, as the Spirit of Jesus left the body to receive the reward of His mission and passion. This was death, but not the death of one compelled to die; because even at this hour He was not exhausted; He had power to lay down His life at the right time, and also the power to take it again when it was right to do so. Therefore it is worth while to consider that the death of Jesus was not the most awful moment of His experience, but rather, as His Father's smile had returned upon Him, a moment of spiritual joy; a death with power, and thus a victory in the world beyond the senses. This power of God which transcends the senses, is the link betwixt the heaven of God and the actions of men; and it is seen moving the spirit of the mournful disciple of Arimathea, by giving him courage to beg the body of His beloved Lord and Master. The acceptable sacrifice has been offered to God for men, and for a time the temple will be cared for by loving souls, and placed in a sacred place until the hour of the resurrection. The scheming of the Jewish rulers was useless; they were breakers of God's law, desecrators of His holy temple, selfish and self-seeking in all their actions; their day of grace was past, and no matter what they might do to hide the guilty past, they would find that the judgments of God were slowly and surely surrounding their path so as to bring upon them the awful curse invoked upon themselves and their children. But what shall be said of the resurrection? Is not this messenger from heaven who rolled away the stone a glorious embodiment of truth, with its flashing face and spotless robes of purest righteousness? At the next visit of such an angelic visitor those men may well tremble who have been engaged in unrighteous deeds. But fear not, ye who seek the blessed Jesus who has been crucified afresh by men; He is not dead; He lives and reigns, and He is calling upon His disciples to meet with Him, and to receive His benediction. The Word of God, the Faithful and the True, God's Truth, Grace, and Righteousness, in all His fulness, is about to visit men, therefore let them be prepared to meet their Lord and Saviour. He will reveal Himself first in a special manner to those who in His Spirit are seeking to serve Him; there may be those who with downcast souls will go forth to minister unto His body, and they will be privileged to see His blessed face. These receive the premonitions of His favour; whilst at the same time *His enemies and friends* will be in a state of

uncertainty as to His resurrection power and coming ; but He come in power and great glory, because unto Him it is given to be in power in heaven and earth, since He humbled Himself and obedient to God the Father in His mission amongst men, and paid for their salvation.

Gospel according to Mark.

The Gospel according to Matthew, as bearing upon the Kingdom of heaven or of grace, reveals or manifests the Kingdom of heaven as related to Abraham and David. In Abraham there is manifested in its outcome in a prophetic kingdom of heaven ; and conquest over enemies. It may be suggested that Jesus is the spiritual successor of Abraham in His mission amongst men ; He is the spiritual successor of David in that which has to do with His passion, His great conquest over men by becoming the evil that men did unto Him. The success of His kingly mission is not an external thing like the wars of David, but rather spiritual developments, and not until the Christian era burst upon men could they perceive or understand what great victories they had obtained for His subjects.

The mission of Jesus is salvation to men ; and it is as "God with us" the Saviour of men, that He is seen in the Gospel of Matthew. The wise men from the East are guided to His feet ; a corrupt and idolatrous State are troubled at His coming, and seek His destruction ; the infant Church is baptized in blood through persecution. In the East, sin, corruption, brute force, sensuality, pride, and cruelty were rampant on earth when the Saviour was born.

The mission of the Mosaic ceremonial and prophetic dispensation was at the close of the prophets had come to be the forerunner of the Kingdom of heaven by the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan by John, upon Him the Kingdom of heaven was centred in all things visible and invisible. The temptation in the wilderness manifests a perfect Man in His moral character ; the temptation can entice Him to lose faith in God ; to be proud in His actions, or to be ambitious in His aims. The will of God that alone, is His standard of thought, word, and action. The perfect moral Man He comes forth an accredited Messenger of God, and His object is the manifestation of the kingdom of heaven of mercy and grace toward sinful men. His words and works reveal His mission of grace and mercy unto men, and His passion reveals His perfect patience and endurance of every form of persecution that man could think of by putting suffering, contumely, and death upon a human being. If men would know the principles of the Kingdom of heaven, they are to be found very fully embodied in the Gospels.

The Gospel according to Mark there is to be traced a marked originality in the style and method of the work. There is a great deal

of the information the same in the three first gospels, but each has its own mission, and thus it speaks to men in its own way. Usually men identify the writer of the gospel with its contents; and perhaps far too much importance is placed upon the writer of the gospel, and too little upon the special message he has been inspired to write by the Spirit of Truth. It is surely clear enough, whether men can explain the facts or not, that in connection with the Bible, the writers sink into insignificance if they are compared with the messages which they bring to men. It may be said that the men are signs, finger-posts pointing in definite directions, but beyond this they are not important. Even Moses and his relationship to the Pentateuch as the writer of the books may not be essential; but when the servant of God is looked at through the Pentateuch as a sign, then he is seen to be *such a spirit* in his relationship to God and men that no other man can stand beside him in history. Of course it is not Moses that makes the Pentateuch and history, but he is the man and the spirit God is pleased to use for His work of redemption, judgment, and the education of men. Thinking upon the names attached to the gospels in this light, there arises the question as to the meaning of the names of the writers. Matthew means gift, and reward; and is not the first gospel a complete record of the gift of God to men in Jesus, the Saviour, and of the reward that will come to Him and His followers in the kingdom of heaven? The meaning of the word Mark is polite and shining; and thus the idea is conceived that the manner, or the manifestation of the spirit of grace, and the radiation of the light of truth, are to be found in this gospel.

With a startling abruptness the first verse speaks of "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." This embodies the idea that a message of good news had come to men by the Saviour, the Anointed Messiah, who is the Son of God; and without any explanation making known to men that a message of mercy had been received from God, and a way to heaven opened up by this High Priest and Minister of grace to men. This intimation is linked with the past, and reference is made to the prophets who had spoken of the coming of a messenger who would prepare the way of the Lord. This messenger was John the Baptist, who had come baptizing with water unto repentance, but speaking specially of the coming of One who would baptize men with the Holy Ghost. In those days Jesus came from Nazareth, was baptized, and when He came out of the water the heavens were opened, and God's Spirit in the form of a gentle dove descended upon Him, whilst a voice was heard "from heaven, saying, Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The object of the gospel is to make known to men the fact that glad tidings had come from heaven to men by this special Son of God; and He is made known to men by His subjection to the prophets and His reception of their spirit, whilst, at the same time, He is manifested as full of love and gentleness in His manner toward men, and toward heaven and God as the Son, beloved and accepted.

The spirit, position, and condition, of Jesus Christ having been made known, with His relations toward the past and toward God, He was driven into the wilderness by the Spirit, there tempted by Satan, was

panion of wild beasts for a time, and after his temptation ministered unto Him.

far there may be discerned the Son of God as the Messenger of to men ; His consecration for His work by the double baptism n and of the Holy Spirit ; the acceptance of Jesus by the Father, us His formal dedication to the work of God amongst men ; and al in the wilderness, to prove whether He was fit for the work i undertaken.

as after all this preparation, consecration, acceptance, trial, and s, as proved by the angelic ministrations vouchsafed unto Him, the visible prophetic order of the past had disappeared from st men by John being cast into prison, that Jesus came preaching pel, telling men that the time was fulfilled, and that it was their ge to repent and believe the good news He had brought to them. st work was to call Simon and Andrew, and James and John to be of men. In other words, there is the calling of all those who ith acceptance, the giving of power to men to serve God, for w means a strong man ; and the calling of the representatives of ewish and Christian eras. This laying of the foundation of the ned Church hold within its folds the germ of after developments ; e four men there is an open door to the kingdom, power given to e, the symbols which supplant spiritual things, and the kingdom ce in Jesus Christ spiritually manifested.

time being fulfilled, and the kingdom at the hand of every man ould lay hold of it, the next movement was into Capernaum, and upon the Sabbath day, Jesus was seen as the Teacher, possessing hority not derived from men, as having power over the unclean within men, and also over fever and every form of disease. He erved as entering into the secret places of man's being and by er possessed by no other man, He touched the fountain of men's hts and actions, and thus the unclean were made clean, and the r and impure made holy and pure.

ew morning had come upon men, and He who had brought the nd was also shining upon men, fully realised His responsibilities position. He departed from amongst those who had received the hat He might take it unto others. He was going forth to save ut that He might be strong for His work it was necessary that ould be in communication with the Fountain of saving health.

re came a leper to Him, and the Saviour being moved with com- i, touched, and healed the man, giving instructions that he should himself to the priest and conform to the ceremonial appointed in v of Moses. A Priest had come who could cleanse the leper ; and le must be greater than those priests who could only declare er a man was clean or unclean, and perform the ceremonies which en appointed for their guidance. The healing of this man was a nd testimony to the priests by which they might know and stand the meaning of their own ceremonies.

PTERS II., III. Returning to Capernaum again the Saviour was preaching the gospel, and by His mighty power He gave

strength to the palsied man by curing his body, and also his soul by forgiving his sins. But the Lord Jesus was not only with the Holy Ghost, He was such a Teacher as men had never seen, a Healer possessing marvellous power, and He was also a reader of men's thoughts, and could speak unto them in judgment according as they were governed by faith or unbelief.

From the city Jesus passed to the seaside, where the twelve followed Him to hear His words ; and as He passed by the place where Levi sat at the receipt of custom, Jesus called him, and he immediately followed the Lord. This call of the fifth disciple became the occasion of a feast in the newly-called disciple's house, and it was at that time that Jesus made plain to the Pharisees what was the nature of His mission amongst men. It was not a calling of righteous, self-righteous men, but of publicans and sinners unto God by His grace and mercy.

The question about fasting, and the parables of the sewing a piece of cloth on an old garment, and putting new wine in old bottles, speaks of the incompatibility of the work of righteousness or of the reformation of nature of man by obedience to law ; mere reformation is useless if the new spirit of grace and mercy was to be confined by legal forms, it was impossible that it could have freedom for action.

The story as to the Pharisees finding fault because the disciples ate the ears of corn on the Sabbath day speaks to men of the condition of rest and peace which men forfeited by sin ; of the unsabbatic state of the Pharisees, whilst it also emphatically teaches the truth that the condition of rest and peace is that which was man's portion, arranged for him at creation in harmony with his being ; also that the Sabbath was not made for the purpose of ornamenting this state, or subject to it, but because of these things the Son of man, who has come to bring rest and peace, a perfect moral nature, and who has come to do the will of the Father, is Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for man, and man was made for the Sabbath. The sabbatic healing of the man's withered hand, a sabbatic action, brought rest and strength to him, but the means of stirring up hatred against himself through the Pharisees who consulted with the Herodians might destroy Him.

The Pharisees and Herodians took counsel together to kill the Lord ; but to permit their evil passions to cool down, and as He moved on, He withdrew to the seaside, and being surrounded by a great multitude, He healed many, doing such works that even the Pharisees recognised Him to be the Son of God.

He went up into a mountain and there ordained His twelve apostles, that they should be with Him to preach the gospel, and to heal the sick and cast out devils. In the names of the disciples the kingdom of God is found, the representatives of the kingdom of grace and of the kingdom of unity is in the signs or names just as the kingdom is found in the names of his twelve sons. In verses 13—19 there may be discerned the *germs* of the kingdom of heaven ; its place is high upon a mountain, and far above men ; the Founder is the Lord Jesus, the order

whom He was pleased to call, the object of their mission and His own being to preach the truth, heal men's bodies, and cleanse their souls; and the disciples represent the diversity found in the unity of those who follow Jesus.

The kingdom or mission having been established, there was a descent from the mountain into a house, but there were so many people gathered together that they actually hindered the work of mercy; they could not "eat bread." His kinsmen having heard of His design to save mankind by this mission of teaching, healing, and the casting out of devils, sought to lay hold upon Him, for they said, "He is beside Himself." As then, so throughout the ages, and even up to this day, those men who have followed Jesus in His spirit of mercy, seeking to do good, they have been considered as insane. The Spirit of Jesus is not moral insanity; but assuredly other men, because they are so far from being like Him, are insane morally and spiritually, and they require to be set beside Jesus and to conform to His blessed will, so that they may be, in the best sense, made truly sane in the sight of God. If all Christians were animated by the enthusiasm of the spirit of mercy toward their fellow-men, of love and devotion to Jesus, and of obedience to the will of God, then they would have no difficulty in seeing how insane the world has been in the past ages. The Lord's friends said that He had lost His reason in seeking the salvation of men; His enemies said that He was possessed by the devil, and that through the power of the devil He did His mighty works. His reply to all such charges is that men ought to be careful how they think, and what they say, because there is a terrible risk of sinning against light and truth, love and grace, and if any man is guilty of searing his own conscience wilfully, then he commits a sin for which there is no forgiveness, by despising the truth and rejecting the mercy of God.

The Lord has a kingdom and family upon the earth, but it is not one in which flesh and blood, or human carnal relations, find their home; obedience to the will of God in His spirit is the important matter in connection with His mission upon earth; and thus the obedient to God and the merciful in spirit are to Him the nearest of all relations.

CHAPTER IV. The Lord in His mission, speaks often to men of "the mystery of the kingdom of God;" but the familiar words, the kingdom of heaven and what it is like, are not used in this gospel. The parable of the sower is the mystery of God's kingdom amongst men; and under the figure of this earthly story, there are hidden away heavenly truths which only they who seek after wisdom in the fear of God can reach. There is only one Sower, the Lord Jesus, and one good kind of seed, the Word of God; but this seed finds varied soils according to the states of the souls of men, and the results are always according to the condition of the soul when it receives the Word. In other words, the visible external nature, as found in a cornfield, is a true picture of the world; and thus they who see the visible things of the world with their eyes, or hear the Word of God with their ears, let them seek to understand what is God's language in nature, in the soul of man, and in the kingdom of God.

As in the first gospel there was an explanation given to a select company, so here the thought is again introduced that the real value of knowledge is attainable by conversion and the forgiveness of sin, because it is only then that the light of God's truth touches the soul, and there is understanding of the thoughts of God. To Jesus the world of nature in all its diversities were parables of divine wisdom, goodness, and grace; and since He possessed the key of knowledge, all nature spoke to Him the thoughts of God; but if men do not understand this initiative parable of the kingdom of God, how can they be supposed to know all parables and all truth? The parable is a thing for all men; the questioning and explanation is for inquirers; the interpretation for disciples who in meekness are willing to learn the order of nature and of grace, of the visible and invisible worlds.

The other parables differ in kind and in order from those in the first gospel, but it may be supposed there is a special teaching in the parables in this gospel as related to their order, and thus a short study of their meaning may prove useful. It may be assumed that the parable of the sower covers the field of thought from the poor and humble spirit desiring to know the will of God, the penitent spirit which is not ashamed to confess its ignorance in divine things, and the meek spirit which receives instruction and is obedient to all that can be known. This being so, the thought embodied in the candle and the bushel—things hidden and manifested—seems to cover the knowledge of God's laws of truth and righteousness. God's Word or law is light, and surely the use of His Word is not that it should be hidden in a man's soul, but set forth in the life and in its actions. Of what use would the wisdom of Solomon have been if it had all been covered up in his own soul; or the wisdom of a Greater than Solomon if He had not made His wisdom manifest to men? Solomon and the Lord Jesus, possessed light, and their words are as lights in the dark world manifesting that which had been hid from men; and shedding abroad the things which were secret or unknown to them. It follows from this that the wisdom of God as it is received by men should be radiated from them; if this is not done, and the light which men receive is hidden, then the solitary light will soon burn up all the fuel it can find and the end must be the darkness. Absorption is a law of nature, but when there is a surcharge of light and heat received, then there will be light and radiation; these things which are familiar facts of science in the realm of physics are also seen to be very interesting parables in the kingdom of God. "Take heed what ye hear:" because there is as already suggested measurement implied in hearing and receiving; according to the absorption there ought to be radiation, to the knowledge and understanding the giving out of wisdom; to the receiving of goodness and grace the giving out of mercy and forgiveness. If men do not receive, they cannot give out; if the soul is starved it will lose the power to receive and assimilate knowledge; if the Lord Jesus is not loved, His thoughts cherished, and His will made the law of life, how can a man become a means of blessing, a vehicle of mercy for others?

The next parable speaks of the method or order of nature as related to a seed, the ground into which it is cast, the order of nature as a

thing independent of man's care, power, or wisdom, and how that by well-marked stages there is development from the germination in the seed until the harvest, when there is produced the seed containing the germ of life. The facts of the physical order are quite familiar to men; and a description of the order of development is known as the science of this branch of knowledge. As in the physical world, so in the moral and gracious spheres of thought, there is development after its kind. But it may be suggested that as the order of development is to be traced throughout the whole of nature, it follows that whether the study is in the highest sphere of thought, the kingdom of grace, or of any of the other kingdoms, they ought all to be included under the term, "the kingdom of God." It is worthy of notice that in this parable which has specially to do with the power of the reason in man there is nothing whatever stated as to the kinds of seed and the differences of their fruits, it is an exquisite parable of the kingdom of God throughout all nature, and without any limitation. Between the casting of the seed into the earth and the harvest may be days, months, or centuries, but the object is a harvest, whether it be good or bad. The seed of grace and the seed of evil are the two seeds found in their stages of development in the Word of God; and the final issue looked forward to with interest is the harvest of both kinds. This thought is expressed in many forms in the Bible, but in Revelation iv., 14—20, the fulfilment of the order of nature is there fully manifested.

The next parable, that of the mustard-seed, may be said to fit in very appropriately as a symbol of the kingdom of God's peace amongst men, a truth and righteousness. How small the germ in the Infant of Bethlehem, and the risen Christ on the Sabbath morning after the crucifixion all men know; but the spiritual seed has grown, it has become greater than all herbs, that is, than all man's organisations which do not possess divine organic life; it has sent forth great branches into all parts of the earth, and under its shelter all nations will one day rest in peace and joy, in contentment and full of happiness. May God's blessed kingdom of peace come quickly to mankind for His own Name's sake. Amen.

In the meantime men are living in a world of parables; the visible world is in its orders and methods, God's hidden wisdom; the intellectual, moral, and gracious life in the soul of man, is full of parabolic figures and symbols; and thus it is only when the disciples of Jesus Christ have found out their own ignorance and come unto Him alone that He will expound "*all things*" to them. If there are those who think that they know all the secrets of nature and of man, apart from the Shining One they are not invited to listen to His interpretations of God's kingdom, because being self-sufficient they are unable to see, hear, perceive, or understand the inmost thoughts of God's marvellous works; but by coming to Jesus the humble and the ignorant will be led to touch the springs of God's wisdom and love in Jesus Christ, and the radiant light of grace and truth from His face will be blessed and become a blessing to others.

The busy day was near its close when these parables had been uttered

by Jesus, and at the evening hour the Lord gave the command that they should pass to the other side of the sea of Galilee. When they were upon the lake then the storm arose; He lay asleep; the ship was almost filled with water, and in their extremity they cried unto Him, "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" The Lord arose, uttered the words, "Peace be still," and there was a calm on the sea. The Lord rebuked them for their fear and want of faith; but they feared exceedingly the power of One who could command nature to obey His voice. This is a true sign in the kingdom of this world, in the kingdom of man's being, and also in the kingdom of God. There are stages of development in the history of the world, of the soul, and of God's kingdom. In this instance there is seen a new departure in which He is the directing Power, and also a passive Actor; He directs where they are to go, they take Him as He was along with them, and in the conflict of the night they seem to have forgotten their Master's presence. But it is also noticeable that other little ships were with them; in other words, He was not the only Lord of men, but their attention, and their affections were divided in many directions, and thus the passiveness of the Lord under such circumstances. Surely this parable has been manifested in the world often enough; Christians know something of this strange experience; and men can easily discern that this is of necessity the order in the kingdom of God. Men may be obedient to the Lord in what they are doing, but if the spirit of the times is separated from Jesus Christ, there must follow a storm, men will find out their helplessness, their fear, and want of faith; and they will also be brought to fear exceedingly at the majesty of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTERS V.—VII. But if the Lord can speak to the nations and to the powers of the air, the spiritual powers, and command peace, He is equally powerful in the small world of a man's soul when it is similarly conditioned by the power of the devil, and of evil in its legion forms; and His word, "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit," must be obeyed. In the one instance there is obedience and peace, and in the other obedience; and there is seen a man who had been possessed as by a legion of evil powers sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed with humility and grace, with his thoughts turned round about so that they are no longer devilish, but God-like. The Lord has power over nations and over poor outcasts; but there are those who will not be subject to His will. They are the grossly carnal, swinish-like people, who prefer this world and its fleshly lusts to all the precious treasures that the Lord of grace can give them. Such people reject the Lord with His gracious shining face of love, and He is compelled to leave them; but He leaves behind those who were devil-possessed, that they may reflect upon them His spirit of compassion and of mercy.

The story of the healing of the woman who touched the Lord's garment, and of the raising of the daughter of Jairus from the dead, are also parables in the kingdom of God's mercy. In the first instance, showing how very helpless is the condition of men in his fallen, sinful state, when the issues of the life are all perverted from righteousness, and no physician can be found amongst men who can improve the soul's

before God. To touch the Lord by faith is the sovereign power, and it is by this power alone that men can draw virtue from Christ to heal the plague of sin. But if this touch is a touch it may be a sacred thing, the effects are not to be hidden ; though it may be with fear and trembling, the Lord's mercy is manifested so that the healing may be confirmed through an open confession of love and obedience to Him and His cause.

There is a case worse than that of the poor woman referred to, who was hopeless of ever being cured, it is that of the daughter of Jairus, who was dead, and over whose body the mock mourners were making a wailing. Yet even here there is hope, because the Life and the Power can be brought into contact with the dead soul ; and at the cry, "Talitha cumi," there will be the manifestation of a regenerate power which will cause great astonishment to men. They should be studied in this form. Think of children about twelve years of age, and of their state as children of Adam. They are all bright and lovable, full of life toward the world ; intense in their desire for the gratification of all that will give them pleasure or amusement, so that they are dead to God spiritually, and so far as man is concerned they are beyond the means of redemption. But the father does not so regard his child, any more than the heavenly Father gives up His Son ; and thus there is an appeal to the Lord of Life on the child's behalf, which is right and well-pleasing in the sight of God ; yet there are those who so misunderstand the Father and the Son as to make a wailing and weep and wail because of the sad condition of children, and maintain that God's children are dead and beyond all remedy. Jesus openly rebukes this hateful spirit, and such a manifestation of the power of what is good and gracious, and He tells people plainly they ought not to speak thus of the young—rather they ought to be glad that such a condition is not that of death, but of sleep, and that through prayer and contact of the soul with the living Word will come a waking and a life of service. This abominable croaking and wailing seems to gloat over death is not a fit spirit to surround the child, but to bring it with it from the presence of those who love and fear God, and who love and have hope for the young and sympathy with them.

His work come into contact with them, so that when their eyes were opened to look upon His shining face and to receive His assurances of grace, they may see the things that are lovely, and they may hear their souls the Lord's words of peace and joy.

He went into His own country, and His disciples followed Him. On the day upon which He began to teach His fellow-townsmen in His native place was the Sabbath, and they were astonished at the wisdom which He uttered in their hearing. But they could not understand, because He could get more knowledge than themselves, or power to do mighty works, and because they knew so much about Him from their own knowledge, they were offended at His wise spirit and they rejected Him.

This is also a wonderful parable in the kingdom of God, but to understand it the key of the teaching found in the Bible must be used. In this story and parable the Lord is seen as going into His native country ; but this to Him is not merely Nazareth, the separate

or sanctified place, it is also most emphatically that which is embodied in the Jewish kingdom and in the Church of Christ. The disciples are represented as following Him, and this is quite true in the highest sense, because it is only by following the Lord and coming to Him in His own spiritual world that they will find mercy, truth, and righteousness. The rejection of Jesus by His townsmen is the same sin as that of the unbelieving Israelites at Kadesh-barnea, and the names of the places embody the same thought of holiness, separation, or purity. The incident at Nazareth is in the small world of a village, but the same thing happened a little later in the city of Jerusalem, the Jewish capital, and it has also taken place in Christendom. He was not accepted as a prophet in His Own house by His Own kin, or in His Own country, so the same thing may be said of Him as related to the Jewish nation and Christian states. As in Nazareth He could do no mighty works, only a few gracious acts of healing, so also in Jerusalem and in Christendom, because of unbelief, His power to work has been limited, and men have brought death upon themselves because they would not accept the treasures of His wisdom, power, and grace. It is said that "He marvelled because of their unbelief." It is a marvellous thing that men should become so prejudiced as to reject what is so simple and yet so divinely wise and gracious as the Gospel of Jesus Christ to sinful men. But it is the common experience written deep in the lines of history; and when men can see things as Jesus saw the people of Nazareth, it will also be a marvellous thing for them to contemplate. The same thought is evolved in Psalm cxviii., where the builders are seen rejecting the corner stone, and Jesus uses the words of the Psalmist against those who at Jerusalem rejected Himself. The unbelief, selfishness, conceit, and self-satisfaction of men are notorious; but this is the mystery of iniquity. It is from the Lord, and it may well be a marvellous thing that they should see men actually refusing, despising, and rejecting with contempt, Him who is the power, wisdom, and grace of God for their salvation.

At this point the disciples are represented as being sent out by Jesus upon their mission—two and two—having received power to cast out unclean spirits. They are the anointed ones sent forth amongst men, carrying with them the gospel of grace. All who receive them are blessed; but if any reject them, they reject Him that sent them, and for such men there is a condemnation more fearful than that which fell on Sodom. The mission was a successful one. They preached repentance, "cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them." This is a peculiar saying, because it is seen that the servants differ from their Lord. They cast out devils in His Name, and use oil in healing the sick, thus showing that only by the power of Jesus can preaching become effectual in the pulling down of the devil's strongholds in man, and that it is only through the unction or influence of the Holy Spirit that men can be healed in soul and body, so that they may be perfectly restored to the image of God.

Herod, John, and Jesus are the great leaders of men. Herod, as "the glory of the skin," is the lord of this world, of its courts, pleasures, honours, and everything which is external. The prophet, John the

Baptist, represents Mosaism, the fleshly forms, with its inmost spirit crying after righteousness and never attaining to it in this world, or in fleshly, carnal symbols. Jesus Christ is the spiritual power of God and man in the world, who transforms the flesh and the world, and causes them to radiate forth truth and righteousness, mercy and grace. The relation of Herod to John is that of kings to God's servants in all ages, the former being the evil, self-seeking, self-asserting power at enmity with God, whilst the latter is like Moses in Egypt before Pharaoh, saying, "Let my people go;" or like Elijah before Ahab, saying, "Hast thou killed and also taken possession?" or like John to Herod, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." The issue for the prophets of God have been the prison and death; and apparently, Herod, with his pageantry and immorality, cruelty and persecution, selfishness and self-assertion, has survived the race of prophets. But as Jesus received the baptism of law and prophets through John, so also upon Him falls the inheritance of Mosaism and of the spiritual Israel, and thus the apostles of the Mosaic and Elijah spirit are called to bury their master, and then go and tell Jesus all they had done and all that they had been taught. This is the right thing for men to do, no matter what ism they have been following, bury the body out of sight, and then go to the Master and tell Him everything. The past is like a body full of sores, so that at no point can it be touched without causing pain, strife, and ill-feeling amongst brethren. Forget and make the past. Come to Jesus and get forgiveness and be forgiving, and then listen to His voice and obey His will. Men when they are overburdened with cares of the person or the family, the Church or the State, ought not to stay amongst worldly men, those whose glory is on the surface of their skin, but rather, having found out that all fleshly, carnal pleasures and strivings are vain, go to Jesus, apart into a private place, and there get rest for body and soul from Himself.

It is in what is a desert, the wilderness of this world, that Jesus is coming out amongst the people, moved with pity and compassion for His people who are like sheep without a shepherd. The King's mercy is a pitiful, compassionate, peaceful Son of God; and they are blessed indeed who listen to His voice, sit at His feet, receive His teaching, and eat of the True Bread which came down from heaven.

As evening came on; the disciples were sent away in a ship; He sent the people away to their homes; and then He went up into a mountain alone to pray. The night was stormy; the disciples in great fear fled toward the early morning "He cometh unto them walking on the sea; and He would have passed by them." They were all wondering and linking that they had seen a spirit; but His encouraging teaching quieted their fears at rest, and when He entered the ship, and the disciples were amazed because of His presence in their midst, they were amazed; but they were so because they had not considered the work of the previous day, and because of their ignorance and unbelief. The mighty work of God was the giving of the manna to the people of Israel for forty years in the wilderness, and yet they did not receive His providence when the day of their deliverance drew near. *Preparation was being made for entering the promised land*

by the destruction of the Amorites. What a mighty work of God was the giving of Bread out of the Word for the people at the time of the Reformation in Europe, and yet the very men who had eaten so freely of His Word did not consider all that such a sign meant; and because of their unbelief, their trust in man, in princes and kings, they were left to take their own ways, and to suffer the consequences of their sins. Men forget their duties and obligations toward Christ readily enough; but His faithfulness and truth change not, and thus wherever the people are recipient, there He is beneficent; and the more they seek His favour, the more freely does He give to them His blessings.

This is a glorious manifestation of His gracious power of healing; the greatest enthusiasm was manifested on His behalf; there was a great revival, a bringing back to life and health; and so full of grace was the Lord that if men did but touch the border of His garment they were made whole. The vision surpasses description; it is a wide-spread movement in villages, cities, and in the country. May the Blessed One be pleased in His grace to come into His garden as the Prince of peace, the Lord of mercy, and the King of kings, and pour out even such a blessing upon the sons of men.

The scene is suddenly changed, and the Pharisees from Jerusalem are found amongst the followers of the Lord finding fault because there is not shown by Jesus Christ a conformity to the traditions of the elders. The Lord answers them by pointing out that they were condemned by the prophet Esaias, who had written about a people who honoured God by lip service, whilst there was in reality no love to, or fear of, God in their worship. Such a service is a vain thing; and the issue of such actions must be the following of the traditions laid down by men, and distinct disobedience of both the letter and the spirit of God's law. The important thing for all men to study is the soul and its affections, the spirit and its lustings and actions; because the root of all evil lies within, in the very centre of man's being, and not until there is the regeneration of a new spirit within can there be holy thoughts and a pure life with its manifested actions.

The Lord left the Pharisees and went away into the borders of Tyre and Sidon; He would fain have hidden Himself from the people, "but He could not be hid," for there was in that dark region at least one soul hungering for His blessing, and it was not possible that the Saviour and the sinner could be kept separate. The woman found her Lord, and offered unto Him her petition; it seemed to be rejected by His words, "Let the children first be filled." Yet she was just such a child, ready to receive the smallest crumbs that would fall from His beneficent table; and because she was so poor of spirit, sorrowful because of the evils of sin, meek, and wishful to be obedient, she got the rich blessing she desired from the Lord.

The next incident is an interesting one; and it is not found recorded in any of the other gospels. The subject of His healing power in this instance was a deaf man who had an impediment of speech; and as the man could not ask to be healed himself, except by a mute appeal, his friends offered a petition on his behalf that the Lord would be graciously pleased to lay His hand upon him. The Lord in this case

acted secretly by taking the man aside from the multitude ; He also put His fingers into the man's ears, touched the spit or saliva in His mouth, and then touched the man's tongue, "and looking up to heaven. He sighed and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened." The effect was that the deafness was healed, and he was enabled to speak plainly. This merciful work was not to be told to any one ; but His strict injunction of secrecy was not obeyed by the people, for they published the facts abroad, declaring at the same time that He did all things well, because He could make the deaf to hear, and also cause the dumb to speak. It may be discerned that this work of the Lord is a very important one ; it touches the very root of what is often referred to in the gospels as the perverted condition of man's soul in his being unable to hear, and thus unfit to understand spiritually the Word of God. To open the ears is to make an open pathway for the Word of grace into the soul ; and to unloose the tongue is to give power to utter the thoughts treasured up in the soul. The manner of the healing is meant to teach a great truth as related to God's dealings with men in the kingdom of His grace, truth, and righteousness ; it falls into harmony with that cycle of a man's being which is known as the memory or the thought-principle with its association of thoughts ; and this is not simply a mysterious power, it is such a secret in its essence and workings as man cannot discover. It is the inmost secret workings of the soul, or what forns, in a sense, the soul in its capacity of a thought-treasury, that is here touched ; and the Lord is pleased by this strange sign to show that He can open the way into the soul by means of language, and the way out from it by speech. There is secrecy as to the method of changing the perverted thoughts which had sinful relations, and thus unutterable in the presence of God, into holy thoughts and words which could be freely spoken. But this is not science : the method is secret ; it is not meant to be discovered by men. That the Lord was deeply moved when He did this work may be clearly discerned by His every action ; there was, as it were, the burden of a sinful world upon His own soul, and as He looked upward to His Father, and permitted such a sigh to escape from within, it almost seems that the work was too great a one, and too full of sadness for any one to be near Him. This sign is also a parable ; and what may be to a certain extent discerned is this awful thought, that the Lord in very truth went into, and touched by His spiritual power, the man's inmost being. He touched a very hell of sin, and by His touch it was changed into a heaven where the Holy Ghost would dwell. And truly, though the Lord say to men who are thus changed, that they are not to tell others about this marvellous change in their inmost souls, yet they will not be able to restrain themselves from uttering His praises. It may be suggested that the Lord enjoins secrecy, that is, great care in speaking about this marvellous change which takes place in the soul, because men really cannot understand how it is done, and thus they ought to leave this matter unspoken. But whilst the greatest of all secrets ought not to be talked about as if it were something that men could understand, it is also true that He opens the avenue to the soul so that grace, truth, and righteousness may enter,

and He unlooses the tongue, so that it may speak freely and plainly of the mighty works of God.

CHAPTER VIII. Here there is an account of the feeding of the four thousand with seven loaves ; or a manifestation of the mercy of God toward man in all its fulness ; of the spirit of compassion which animates the Lord Jesus Christ ; and also of the blindness of spirit, and the want of faith that have been found in His followers in all ages. From the days of the deliverance from Egypt unto this day the sayings of the disciples have been always the same, "From whence can a man satisfy these with bread here in the wilderness?" The vision of man has been earth-bound, and thus they could not see the Manna, nor yet the true spiritual Bread of Life for the soul ; and because of unbelief, there has been questioning and criticising when there should have been faith and obedience. It is the old story, men would measure God by their own capacities of thought, word, and action, and this is seen to be not simply absurd, but sinful and displeasing in the sight of God. The mighty works of God, especially His great work of mercy, have been carried on in the world, not through man's cordial co-operation, but in the very teeth of his opposition and scepticism. It is of the Lord's mercy, His abundant mercy, that there is a Church of Christ upon the earth, and a work of grace and mercy amongst men ; had it been left to His followers, death and not life would have been the result, and this world would never have been blessed to the extent that it is at this present day.

There is a new departure ; the Lord and His disciples take a ship and go to Dalmanutha, which means exhaustion, or leanness. And truly, the spiritual condition manifested by the Pharisees on this occasion is that of complete exhaustion of divine life. They tempted the Lord, asking from Him a sign from heaven. That their request moved Him deeply may be inferred from the words, "He sighed deeply in His spirit," and refused to give them any sign ; but suddenly left them and went to the other side of the lake. The picture here is that of proud, conceited, selfish, self-asserting men, who were blind to the spiritual things which were going on around them, everything that the Lord said or did being the very sign that they were asking for. What could the Pure One, who is in heaven, say to such carnal, wicked sign-seekers? Positively nothing ; they were opposed to Him in everything, and thus they could not possibly understand Him or His heavenly signs. It was no wonder that the Lord "sighed deeply," for these men were in a far worse state than the man whose ears he had opened and whose tongue he had unloosed. They were in open rebellion against heaven, and in league with the devil, whilst He had been bound by the devil in bondage but desirous of being set free. It is the pure who see God and know His signs ; the impure, the immoral, who have cast off all authority except what pleases their own selfish, self-asserting selves, are not God's servants or even men, but devils full of every kind of evil. May God help men to understand the deep, the all-important truth, embedded in this sign ; for it is the very mystery of iniquity in the moral nature of man ; and it shows very clearly that God is

dishonoured, and His laws trampled upon by such men when they permit the devil of self, or any other devil, to rule within their souls to the complete exclusion of the laws of God. Let men study this sign in all its fulness, and assuredly there will be seen emerging from these tempters the most horrible of all devils, the tempter who, with all the subtlety of the serpent would, if it were possible, dethrone God and dishonour His Name. It is only when men are able to enter into this deep spiritual realisation of things, that they can to any extent sympathise with the Blessed Saviour in such an encounter with such men. The utter repulsiveness in spiritual affinity of these men to the Lord was extreme ; and thus the pain and sorrow, the anguish He endured when He was brought into contact with them must have been intensely strong. Had the Lord Jesus been animated with the spirit of the Baptist, whilst possessing the same clear vision, what a torrent of rebuke and words full of fire as to the righteousness of God's laws would have fallen upon their heads ; but it was not so ; the day for the prophet was past and the hour of patient suffering and uncomplaining grace was come. How the Lord could restrain Himself from speaking to these men as they deserved is truly a mystery ; and how He could constrain Himself to listen to their words and give them a calm answer is truly marvellous ; the words grace and mercy express the why, but there are depths of restraint and constraint in this sphere which men do not comprehend, because they do not understand or see, as He saw, the hateful wiles and temptations of these devil-like men. But the Lord seems to hint in His words that it is time to pass from the Pharisees, and to remember that there is such a thing as the leaven of Pharisaism of which His disciples must beware. Poor, foolish children that we are, we are apt to puzzle ourselves over the Lord's words, putting all kinds of interpretations upon them, whilst He is at all times speaking spiritual things. Men possess only one loaf, His Word, they forget to take Him who is the Bread of their life, and being cast loose from their spiritual union with Him the leaven of unrighteousness works rapidly enough, the end being, that if the devil manifested is not the tempter, it will take some other form, but still a hideous devil in His sight who can see clearly into the inmost souls of men. Lord, evermore give us Thyself that we may perceive and understand Thy thoughts ; so that there may be no callousness or hardness of the soul, but rather great quickness in bearing, seeing, and remembering all Thy words. It is necessary to remember that God's Word is sufficient for the wants of all men, and efficient in His hands as the means of salvation. It is indeed the broken Bread of mercy to a sinful world, and the Bread of Life for the regenerate souls of men ; but though men have often talked thus about it, there has not been a definite understanding of its sufficiency or efficiency, and thus the leanness and want of meat in the place where plenty was to be found.

At verse 22 there is another change of place, and also of the order of thought. The visit is to Bethsaida (house of fishing, or of fruits) and the interest is centred upon a blind man who was brought unto Jesus by his friends and who besought Jesus to touch him. This incident is in some respects like that of the deaf man who was healed ; there

being in this instance also secrecy, a leading of the man away from amongst men, the touch with the spit upon the eyes, and the laying on of His hands before a cure was effected. There is a marvellous peculiarity in this work of Jesus Christ, and it is found to differ from His other works ; because there is seen, not an instantaneous healing of the blindness, but it is by two stages, the first producing a hazy proportioned vision, as expressed by the words, "I see men as trees walking ;" and the second the perfect vision. The story of this healing is a sign or parable in the kingdom of God ; because what is the condition of the impure and unholy, of the proud Pharisee, and the sceptical Sadducee ? It is that of blindness toward God ; and not until the blindness is removed can men see things in their true proportions, and by such a vision come into the vision of peace. The historical aspect of this question may also be interesting because it seems to touch upon the end of the cycle of history that is closing upon men ; whilst also introduces the open vision for which men are being prepared. The significance of the secrecy of the Lord's actions as related to this man and as related to men in their spiritual blindness in these days may be understood when the signs of partial vision and the perfect vision are considered ; because the condition of men for a considerable period has been that of magnifying facts and theories, far beyond their true relative dimensions, and thus the most extravagant conceptions and theories have been given to the world and believed by men. The history of the struggle between science and religion has been peculiarly of this kind. The spiritual visions on both sides have been imperfect and thus the dogmatism of theology in its extravagance, as relating to doctrines, has been met with a dogmatism, as to geology and other sciences, and evolution has been equally strong. All this has been very perplexing and annoying ; but it is as well not to enter further into such questions. Men who are really seeking after light, that is truth, ought to know this, that as the blind cannot heal themselves, no more can sinful men discover the treasures of God's truth without His assistance. There is required a coming of the Truth amongst men for the purpose of separating a Newton and a Faraday, a Butler and a Chalmers, from amongst other men, so that He might touch them, put an unction on their inner visions so that they may see a little of the wonderful works and ways of God ; and it is not to be wondered at if men when they are brought, as it were, into a new world, are unable to define their thoughts, or clearly perceive the relations of all God's truths. There is required another laying on of the Lord's hands upon the spiritual vision of men ; obedience to His command to look up to heaven and to thank God for what He has done, and then there will be a restoration to a clear vision. How the Lord gives, to those whom He calls, this power to see truth is His Own secret ; and it is not for those who are made to see in Him to give to men any theory upon such a subject. As men cannot explain to others how they see with their natural vision, but know as a fact that they do see, so also with the seeing of the hidden, the secret things of God in science in its most extensive meaning, it is enough that the Lord enables them to see. The power and the wisdom are His, but the blessings which follow from

such a vision are His gracious gifts to men. The Lord is pleased to be asked to bestow such gifts upon men ; any one may bring "a blind man unto Him ;" and if the prayer is sincere that spiritual vision may be given and received, then let it not be a matter of wonder if the cure is not instantaneous, but by stages until there is the clear seeing of the grace, truth, and righteousness of God, in the beatific vision of His own peaceful kingdom amongst men.

But the time of His kingdom upon earth was not come when He gave sight to the blind man near Bethsaida ; there was another day of subjection to Cesar, and of hope that the King of kings—the Messiah—would one day come and reign amongst men. The disciples knew through the confession of Peter that Jesus is the expected King of the world ; but here also there is the same peculiar charge not to make this matter known to others. They knew, or rather thought they knew, what was meant by the Messiah ; but it was not so, and thus Jesus would have them be careful in their talking about Him and His claims as the Messiah. They knew enough to be a hope for them in the future, but not quite enough to teach others ; they would act wisely and well to wait until their eyes were opened to see things clearly, and then it would be time to speak about His kingly honour and His kingdom. In the meantime He would tell them something of importance for themselves, and that was about His own sufferings, rejection by the representatives of the Jewish nation, His death and resurrection. This was not Peter's idea of the Messiah as King of Israel, and so he began to rebuke the Lord ; but in turn he was rebuked and named as Satan, because his thoughts savoured of evil and of men, and not of God. This declaration as to His Own suffering and death was not to be a matter for Himself alone ; and thus He preached to all the people the gospel of grace, which is that men are required to follow in the footsteps of their Lord if they would be saved, be the means of grace to others, and seek to be with Jesus Christ when He comes again "in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels."

CHAPTER IX. An account is given here of the transfiguration of Jesus upon the high mountain, where His raiment shone with a whiteness brighter than that of the new-fallen snow ; and where Moses and Elias met with Jesus and His disciples. It is said that Peter spake to the Master about the three tabernacles, and yet "he wist not what to say ; for they were sore afraid," because of what they saw and on account of the cloud of glory and the voice saying, "This is My beloved Son : hear Him." The change from the transfiguration and the departure of Moses and Elias is represented as sudden ; for when they had time to look round, only Jesus and themselves were upon the mountain. There is restraint laid upon the three that they should not speak to others about what they had seen until Jesus had risen from the dead. They were obedient, but they often questioned each other what this rising from the dead might mean. This is a wonderful manifestation of Truth and Righteousness, not, let it be observed, of the Church, but of Him who is the Head and Spirit of the Church ; and it is the Lord Jesus Christ that is manifested as the Son of God, whom all men are to

hear ; and it is with this manifestation of Divine Truth that the power of Moses and Elias vanishes away and Jesus only should be seen by men. The vision and the instructions about not telling any one about it ought to be kept distinct ; the one is prophetic of what shall be, in due time, in the risen Lord from the sepulchre in Jerusalem, and in another resurrection of His Holy Word amongst men ; but in the meantime, as the former only has taken place with power, it is enough for those who love the Lord and His Word to study, and question each other, in submission to His will, as to what may be meant, in its fullest meaning, by the rising from the dead.

In verses 9—13 the disciples are seen asking Jesus why the Scribes, the authorised writers and students of the Word of God, should be found stating that Elias must come before the kingdom of Messiah ; to which the Lord replied that it was quite true that Elias should come and restore all things, and also that it is written of the Son of man that He must suffer and be despised by men ; but all these things had been fulfilled in John, and they would also fall upon Himself. The world in its thoughtless, sinful, self-asserting way, moves on blind as to its own actions ; standards of truth and right are set up which do not agree with God's truth and righteousness, and thus the very men who are loudest in their boasting as to their zeal and faithfulness in the service of God are actually rebels to His cause and persecutors of His servants. The spirit of Elias has been heard in the wilderness of Christendom, and under his spirit many have been turned to repentance and righteousness ; it is equally true that the Spirit of Jesus Christ has been despised and rejected amongst men, and His Word has been set at naught ; but as to the resurrection from the dead, the answer to this question is not found in the gospels. Let those who mourn because of the wickedness that abounds look up, for the day of their redemption draws nigh ; and when He comes in His power, there will be not merely comfort, but also peace and joy in His presence.

In verses 14—29 there are given the details of the man whose son had a dumb spirit. But passing by the external form of this disease, which is a very expressive description of about the worst form of epilepsy—a disease which, in a case of this kind, would be beyond medical skill—it may be worth while to consider for a moment this sign as applicable to the spiritual nature of man. The boy was possessed by a dumb spirit, thus from his lips there could not be rendered any praise or thanks unto God ; the manifestations were sudden, with the marks of passion, pain, and anger ; and the power being exhausted, there was a collapse of strength and an utter inability to move ; and add to these signs the facts of suicidal tendency, which would cause the boy to rush into the greatest extremes as of fire and water. Have men heard of a similar spirit being amongst men, which cannot utter any prayer, seeing it does not know God ? which has been seized with sudden attacks of mania, such as the killing of rulers, the destruction of property and of society, and which after playing its mad tricks suddenly becomes helpless, but anon rages with fury and becomes most hopeful in its destructive powers, and as suddenly is cast down in the opposite extreme as to inability to any good in such a bad

world? Is not this spirit something like the work of the perverted reason in all ages, but seen at its worst in the son of the Christian era. the offspring of the Papacy and despotism, of a wrangling Christendom and infidelity? A poor, miserable creature without any recognised authority in heaven, earth, or hell; with no moral law which it can make a standard for its actions, and when seized by horrible, devilish impulses, altogether unfit to direct its own actions. Is the picture too dark? By no means; it is the only issue for the path in which men have been travelling; and if they are so blind and ignorant as to think that they can question or deny the existence of God, reject His authority or the moral law, make laws to please themselves, and by doing so give themselves up to the devil of self and every other devil in this world, and still think that they can find wisdom, happiness, and contentment in this world, they are expecting that grapes will grow upon thorns, and figs upon thistles; that the devil is as good as God, hell as good as heaven, and that man and the devil will win the day against God, truth, and righteousness. It is not to be expected that the spirit of evil, the conceited intellect, will recognise itself in this picture; but it must be remembered that this spirit is utterly lawless, insane, and immoral; that is immoral in its principles, because it is cut off from the Fountain of moral law, and being so it cannot have a standard except its own rebellious, unholy wishes, and thus it is unfit to be trusted in any place of responsibility. As the father's thoughts were not what His son thought about Himself, so those men who fear God and seek to obey His will ought not to trouble themselves about the opinions or ravings of such lawless spirits, but to see what can be done to get this evil spirit cast out from amongst men. As the father had tried every means within his reach to remedy the disease from which his boy was suffering, so it may be assumed that men who recognise the divine authority have done the same thing, and yet the unclean spirit manifests its hateful actions. What can men do but bring the whole matter to the Master and ask for His help? It is quite true that Jesus will say, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Then let there be a frank confession of the unbelief that fills men, repentance because of such infidelity, and He will not reject the prayer of His people, but will quickly cast out the evil spirit that has prevailed in man and in the world, and will not permit it to enter any more into them. That the struggle will be a terrible one is signified by the state of the child, who was thought to be dead after the exorcism was effected; but the touch of the Lord's hand will be sufficient to bring renewed life, and also power to serve God.

In verses 30—32 there is embodied in figure the kingdom of God's grace and mercy in passing through Galilee, in the hiding of Himself from men, in the deliverance of Jesus into the hands of men, and in His death and resurrection. These words are signs, germ-thoughts in the kingdom of God, and the knowledge of them is what prophets and wise men have desired to know, whilst His Own disciples have not understood them, and they have been afraid to ask Him. In the day of the open vision it will not be so, for then there will be a full revelation of the hidden things of *the kingdom of God's mercy*.

In verses 33—37 Jesus is again found in Capernaum—the city of consolation—and being in the house, He inquired of the disciples as to the subject upon which they had been disputing by the way. The disciples being ashamed of themselves did not speak, for the disputes had been about who would be the greatest. The Lord went down, and then calling the twelve He took up a little child in His arms and with the child close to His bosom, He taught them a lesson in the method of the kingdom of mercy. They had been seeking for pre-eminence over their brethren, but each who manifested such a spirit required for his own good to be placed last, and to become the servant of all; and if they would only, as He had done with this child, receive the children of God to their souls in loving affection, then they would receive Him, and also see the face of the Father of mercy and the Father of all grace. This is also a sign for men to study, it takes cognizance of the past and the spirit of the followers of Christ in all ages.

In verses 38—50 there are recorded the words of John as to what the disciples had said to those who were not of their company, but who in the name of Jesus, had been serving Him by casting out devils. The name of Jesus is very beautiful, and full of the spirit of Christian charity. "Forbid him not; for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My Name that can lightly speak evil of Me. For he that is not against us is on our part. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My Name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." And then, perhaps, turning to the little child that was resting in His bosom and drinking in His words, He speaks of the awful evils that must fall upon any who would offend such a child of God, and a believer in Him. There would also come upon their time of trial and of persecution, a salting or preserving as by the purifying of fire, and of offering sacrifices which would require to be salted with the spirit of mercy and of grace. This spirit is a good thing if it is permitted to permeate the soul in its every action; but if the savour of grace and mercy be lost amongst Christians, how can the body become salted, what is, merciful and gracious again? The spirit of Christ is to be cherished above all things as the spirit of action, and in such a spirit the disciples of Jesus ought to live in the bonds of peace and of Christian love toward each other.

CHAPTER X., 1—12. Here is a new departure; Galilee is left behind and Judah and Jerusalem, persecution and death, lie in the Lord's path way. It was at this time that the Pharisees came tempting Jesus as to the lawfulness of divorce; and He showed them that such a condition of separation was not lawful, although it had been permitted for a time through their sinful condition. The method of God is unity with diversity, and not schism, separation, and divorce; therefore, what is joined by God and made one in spirit, and in body, ought not to be rent asunder by man. The teaching to the disciples is that they should not prove a cause of offence in any such matter, else they set themselves in opposition to the will of God, and bring about a schism in the family of the Church, or in the universe.

In verses 13—16 there are seen the mothers bringing their young

children to Jesus that He might touch them ; the rebuking and unkindness of the disciples ; the great displeasure of Jesus that the children, who form the kingdom of God, should be so rudely treated by His followers, and His remarks as to the manner of reception of the kingdom of God, which can only be done in the simple receptive attitude of children toward their teachers. The disciples persecute and look down with contempt upon the little ones, the Lord is graciously pleased to take them in His arms, lay His hands upon them, and grant them His blessing.

In verses 17—22 there is introduced to notice the young man who seemed by his actions to be fully ready for the kingdom of God ; he saw and kneeled before the Lord as if in a hurry to obey the will of God in all things. He had a want that all his observance of the moral law in its letter could not supply, and thus he would do something more that he might gain eternal life. Obedience to the moral law was good, and because of his goodness and amiability, his strong desire to do right, the Lord loved him, and at the same time laid before him the way of life by self-sacrifice, the one thing which is necessary for eternal life. The buoyancy of the young man's soul was sadly cast down ; he wanted to fill himself more full than he was, and the Lord showed him that he first required to be completely emptied of all self-conceit and self-righteousness, and that by the spirit of self-sacrifice he would gain what he desired, even spiritual treasures in his own soul.

The young man departed sad and grieved to ponder upon the words of this Teacher who made eternal life so difficult of possession ; and the Lord looking round upon His disciples, as if anxious that they would weigh His words, told them how very difficult a thing it is for those who have earthly possessions to enter the kingdom of God. The disciples, whose thoughts were very carnal, could not understand these strange words of the Lord, and so He explains further that the difficulty is not with the wealth, but with the aspect of the spirit toward it, which is that of trust and confidence in visible things, and not in the invisible God. If money is a man's trust and strength it is his god ; and when men are trained up in the worship of wealth, position, or anything that is visible, it is a most difficult thing to dissociate the affections and the trust from such an idol, and to put them upon God alone. Yet it is clear enough that it cannot be until the soul is in complete submission to the will of God, and there is a meek, quiet, instant obedience in everything, even in the sacrifice of self, and all that self possesses, that there is obtained the one thing that is lacking, but which brings in its train the possession or the inheritance of all things. It is a strange paradox, but a true one, that when everything is given up for Jesus, and there is so to speak the greatest poverty, yet at the same moment, the self-renouncing Christian inherits the earth and gains precious treasures in heaven. The loss is a trifle ; the gain beyond valuation ; it is to give up a day to the cross, and the following of Jesus, and to receive eternal life with all its joys. Here Peter would keep the Lord in remembrance of what the disciples had given up to follow Him, and they are assured that no one will be a loser by doing so ; only it is not for them to speak of what they have given up, or to be boasting about their self-sacrifice,

for this spirit is that of the self-seeking, and not of the meek and obedient sons of God.

In verses 32—34 there is recorded the strange amazement and fear that came upon the disciples as they followed Jesus "going up to Jerusalem;" and His words to them about the things that would happen to Him there. This experience is a great conflict of amazement and fear in the kingdom of God's mercy in man and amongst men; it harmonises with the blessing of the spirit of mercy and of grace, and thus it has been to all men who have endured persecution an amazing and fearful experience. In the Lord all was calmness and serenity, for He knew what it meant and He tried to prepare the disciples for the ordeal through which they must pass. As with the disciples, so with the followers of Jesus in past generations, the way to peace and righteousness, and of obedience to grace and truth, has been a dark cloudy path which men could not understand, but they have been following the Master, who has preceded them and who fore-knew all that was going to happen.

As the words of Jesus, and the experience of the faithful, meek followers of God had not made a great impression upon James and John, so the teaching of Jesus and the history of the Jewish and Christian Churches have not taught Jews and Christians the nature of the kingdom of grace and mercy. Even at this day greatness, power, rank, position, and influence are what the followers of Jesus desire, instead of emptying themselves for the good of others, and in the gracious spirit of their Lord seeking the salvation of the lost. They desire, ask, and in some instances obtain, what is a curse and not a blessing. It is not for the disciples of Jesus to drink the cursed wine cup of this world's pleasures, power and fame, else if they do so they cannot truly follow Him. His cup and baptism are brought near to them in the sorrow and sin that abound upon the earth; and in the straitening of the spirit to devise ways and means to serve others for their good. It is not for them to be busying themselves about state matters, or even the wranglings and disputings of men, but to be up and doing in the Lord's service with their loins girt, and their lamps burning, and thus ministering in mercy, grace, and truth, to sinful men.

The scene is changed to the locality of Jericho, the accursed site of infidelity, and the healing of blind Bartimæus the beggar. The word Bartimæus meaning son of the perfect, or the honourable. Unbelief is a thing of the affections and of relation to the will of God; and if any man has turned away from God, by seeking to serve self and become rebellious toward God, this is moral blindness. As the father was perfect and honourable, and the son blind, so humanity can speak of a father created in the image of God, a perfect man, but the son has been blind because he has been sinful. How the blind man came to know about Jesus of Nazareth is not stated; but this example is given, so that all men who are like Bartimæus, and know it, should without any delay cry unto the Son of David, the King of grace, for mercy. There is no time to be lost; Jesus is passing by, therefore let the garments spotted by the fleshly lusts, and by unbelieving thoughts, be thrown down, and the Lord Jesus will give "white raiment that thou

mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see."

CHAPTER XI. An account is given here of the entry into Jerusalem of the King of grace, mercy, and peace. Preparation is made for this event, so that men might be aroused to consider who He is who comes into their midst, with such dignity, and attended by such a joyous people. The colt selected to bear the King was found at a place where two ways met ; and the disciples were challenged when they began to unloose the colt as to their object in doing such a thing. To every man or nation there must be a meeting-place of two ways, and an interrogation as to why there is an unloosing of possessions for the King's service at such a crisis. The meaning may be a little difficult to lay hold of at the first glance, but it really amounts to this, that it is at this point in the history of a man, a nation, or of the world, that there must be the giving up of the selfish way in which the past has been traversed, and the choice to go into Christ's way, and to take Him for King in the spiritual nature. The unloosing of the colt, unbroken, is a fine figure for the unbroken will of man which would not brook control ; but since the Lord is King over the spirit, it must be set loose, and He will direct its course in the future according to His will. It may not be fanciful that there were two songs of praise uttered by the people on that joyful occasion ; those who went before crying, "Hosanna : Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord ;" and they who followed after, "Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord : Hosanna in the highest." The first song is that of the prophets and God-fearing people who went before the Lord in the past ages before the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh ; and the latter the song of the Christian era, and of the days of peace which are yet to come upon the world.

The order of the cursing of the fig-tree and the purification is not quite the same as in the first gospel ; in it the purification is represented as taking place after the entry into Jerusalem, although it is not stated that it was upon the same day. The placing of the purification of the temple in the centre of the story about the fig-tree may have a significance if it can be discerned. Following the second gospel, the Lord is represented as entering Jerusalem in triumph, and also the temple ; and when there He looked around upon all things, as if considering the condition of the nation. The even-tide had come not merely upon the day of grace ; but also upon the gracious day given to the Jews ; and because of this state of matters in Judaism and in Jerusalem, He left this city and went away with the twelve to a new home, even to Bethany or the house of affliction, obedience, and the grace of the Lord.

Following the story, it may be discerned that the Lord has also fallen upon two ways ; the King who was received in triumph yesterday is to be called upon to do that which is not in harmony with His mission ; He must be the Judge to condemn Judaism, and how this could be done in harmony with His special mission of mercy to men was not an easy matter. The day in which He lived was one of signs, and thus, if it

was not for Him to sit upon the throne or the judgment-seat, He con- by the sign of the fig-tree teach men what they ought to know. The Lord is represented as seeing the fig-tree afar off; and how far spiritually the Jews were from God, truth, and righteousness, we cannot know. But as the fig-tree made profession by having leaves thus implying fruit, as the fruit comes before the leaves on the fig-tree the Lord drew near and found on it leaves only. Because there was profession and no fruit the blight fell upon it, and from thenceforth fruit would grow upon its branches. That all this was special applicable to the Jewish people can be seen without any difficulty, that further remarks upon this point seem unnecessary; but the words "for the time of the figs was not yet," seem to run on a parallel with several other peculiar expressions in this gospel, and it may be assumed that they have a meaning if it can be discerned. The spiritual thought embedded in the words seem to be this, that the era of fruit of a spiritual kind had not yet arrived. There was pretension without possession; and the assumption of perfection without the spiritual fruit-bearing seed. To put the idea more plainly, the Jewish kingdom was a thing of forms, having in it a principle which would in due time bring fruition by the coming of Christ; but it was not meant by God to be a spiritual fruit-bearing nation, only a means to that end, and thus when the Jews made their religion the final and perfect order of things, they made the grievous mistake of stopping in forms and not going forward to spiritual realities. It can be discerned that this thought cuts very deep into the self-righteous spirit, and the self-conceit and self-assertion of the Pharisees, or of Judaism; because this was in reality the field of battle at a later time as betwixt Judaizing Pharisees and Christians. The former would have Christians conform to Judaism as the perfect religion, whilst the Christians laying hold of Christian spiritual principles possessed the spiritual fig-tree at the time of the spiritual fruit bearing.

The cleansing of the temple is not altogether a work of judgment, but of judgment and mercy. He came to His Own house, and He found it, in His Own words, a den of thieves, and not a house of prayer for all nations, as it was intended to be, and thus it was necessary that the King and Son should honour His Father by putting down and casting out these abominations. Is there any buying and selling in the Church of Christ at the present time? Any seats for money exchangers, who make their wealth by exchange, or trafficking? Or any who make the gentle affections of the people of God a means of making money? What if the King should be at the door, and His house like a den of thieves? Woe upon the traffickers, for how shall they look up into His face when He enters in and casts His eyes upon them. Then He came in the flesh, and the flashing forth of His holy zeal made men afraid; but when He comes again with spiritual power, how will wicked men look up to His angry face? The Lord in a most remarkable manner assumed the full authority over the temple, because He did not merely cast out the traffickers, the seed of Canaan, but He would not permit the carrying of any vessel through the sacred place. This may be considered as an open challenge to the rulers in

Jerusalem because they had been permitting unlawful things, and He comes with authority, takes the power out of their hands, cleanses the temple, and regulates its internal arrangements. The sign was worthy of consideration, and the Jews were not so ignorant of God's ways of dealing with men, but they must have known perfectly well that God had in time past spoken to their fathers by similar signs. The time for consideration on the part of the Jewish rulers was at an end. They heard of this sign. They did not consider it, but sought the destruction of Jesus, but at that time they were afraid to lay hands upon Him because of the people.

The following morning Peter called attention to the accursed fig-tree, already dry and dead. This thing was a marvel to Peter, but the Lord tried to turn his thoughts in an opposite direction. This is a sign of the end of the Jewish Church, because of its want of faith; therefore, be warned, "Have faith in God," and then through the Christian Church even mountains will be removed, and great blessing will be gained for men; but faith and prayer united with the spirit of mercy or forgiveness is essential for such ends; faith lays hold upon the power of God, prayer draws down His power, and if the merciful spirit directs faith, prayer, and the actions toward men, then men can do anything within the sphere of mercy, and the issue must be mercy for the world, and the possession of the earth for the sons of God.

Whilst walking in the temple Jesus was challenged by the rulers as to His authority for doing the things which He had done. Jesus did not question their authority to put the question to Him, but by questioning them as to the baptism of John, He compelled them to confess their own ignorance, and what was of greater importance, their unfitness and unwillingness to give His righteous claims a fair hearing. They could, or rather would, not decide as to John's position as a prophet, and thus they proved themselves to be incompetent judges to consider His claim to be their King.

CHAPTER XII. The Lord did not directly tell them by what authority He interfered to purge the temple, but by telling in their hearing the parable of the vineyard, He showed them very clearly the dangerous position in which they were placed, and pointed out that they were actually, by their open hostility to Himself, fulfilling their own Scriptures. They were quite familiar with the fact that Israel had been compared to a vine and a vineyard of Jehovah's planting, and that the prophets had been martyred by their fathers; but when He spoke of the Heir being killed, and the judgments that would follow such a crime, they were not moved to think upon His words, but perceiving that the story was told against them, they were the more anxious to seize Him, but dared not do so at that time because of the people. They were full of the spirit of persecution, but for the time they were restrained from evil.

In the temptation of the Pharisees and Herodians about tribute; of the Sadducees about the resurrection; of the Scribe about the first commandment; and the question of Jesus about the Christ being the Son and Lord of David, there does not seem to arise anything new as

compared with the facts in Matthew requiring special consideration. At verse 38 He begins to warn the people against the spirit of the Scribes, which was not that of mercy and of self-sacrifice toward their fellow-men, but of self-glorification by their wearing of long robes by their seeking after public honours and preferences in the streets, the church, and in the homes of the people; and what was still worse because of their unfeeling, selfish behaviour towards unprotected widows, and their vile hypocrisy to gain selfish ends.

At verse 41 Jesus is represented as sitting over against the treasurer observing those who went into the house of God, and the amounts of the alms that they gave. The rich cast in much; but a poor widow threw in a farthing, and the Lord says that she "cast more in than they which have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of the abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even of her living." In other words, they cast into the treasury of God with a worldly, self-asserting, self-glorifying spirit; they saw self doing what was creditable, and what would bring the praise of their neighbours; their motives were selfish and thus impure, without faith, and not acceptable in the sight of God. The widow gave all she had; gave in the light of God's face shining upon her, without a single selfish motive, self-sacrifice to please God was the sole motive of her giving and thus it was a sacrifice well pleasing to God and acceptable in His sight.

CHAPTER XIII. There is a description here of the events which would take place during the Christian era in the world, in the Church and in the spiritual world of men's thoughts. It is to be a time of great trouble amongst the nations of wars and rumours of war, and a persecution of the Church of Christ by the Roman power, but specially it may be presumed, of the Pagan Empire. After the Roman Pagan Empire there would arise the abomination of a perverted Christian Empire which would persecute the children of God in a manner unequalled in history; and during this period false Christs and prophets would appear who would with the subtlety and power of the devil lead all men astray, except the elect, chosen ones of God. After the great tribulation, when the Roman Pagan Empire would be destroyed, and the Roman Papal Empire would have its power broken, then would follow the period of darkness, when, as it were, all authority would be overthrown amongst men; but when the heaven would be so shaken, then would the Son of man come to men in great power and glory for the double purpose of manifesting His gracious purpose to the faithful and of punishing those who reject His Word. The attention of the followers of Jesus Christ were, as it were, to be constantly turned toward His coming as their hope, resting assured that it would come, and that the Christian generation, or era, could not pass away until these things should be done or fulfilled. But if this hope was given to them as a beam of light to illumine the awful trials, persecutions, and uncertainties which should surround them when the visible order of things upon the earth should crumble away, and the invisible order of things in God's Word, and in His Church, should pass away, so that trust in man

and confidence in God would seem to be equally misplaced, they were not to give up their hope and give way to despair. In such times it would be their duty and privilege to cling to God the Father; being careful, watchful, and prayerful, in trusting Him alone. The time of the coming is not a thing essential for men to know; it is not a secret revealed even to the angels in heaven, or in the Church of Christ, nay, it is not even a matter for the Son, as the Minister of grace and mercy to men, as One with men in the work of redemption, to seek to know such things. His duty was faith and obedience to the righteous laws of God in all things; He also had to watch and pray, and be constantly upon His guard against the enemy; and as with Him so with them, faith, obedience, watching, and prayer should be their privilege and duty. The position of every Christian is that of a servant left in charge, possessing authority, and with a duty to perform, but also, with this special instruction for guidance in the long dark night that was coming on, never to forget the Master's return, and to be, not merely on the watch, but also ready to meet Him on His arrival. "Leet coming suddenly, He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."

CHAPTER XIV. There is here detailed (1) the purpose of the rulers of the Jews against Jesus to put Him to death. (2) The anointing of Jesus in Bethany, the consecration of High Priest and Sacrifice. (3) The betrayal by Judas of his Master to the chief priests for money. (4) The preparation for the Passover feast and the communion of the Lord with the disciples at that time. (5) The institution of the Lord's Supper as the sign of mercy, and the warning which Jesus gave the disciples as to their behaviour when He would be arrested. (6) The scene in dark Gethsemane when sin lay on Jesus. (7) The betrayal with a kiss and subjection of the King of grace to the power of wicked men. (8) The persecution before Caiaphas and the condemnation of Jesus by the Sanhedrim. (9) The thrice repeated denial of Peter that he knew not Jesus.

CHAPTERS XV., XVI. There is found recorded here (1) the formal meeting of the council of the Jews where Jesus, the lowly, humble One, was bound and delivered as a criminal to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. (2) The trial of Jesus before the governor, the many accusations of His enemies, and the marvellous silence of Jesus when so accused; in other words, His soul is here made an offering for sin; this may be considered as the laying on of the hands upon the sacrifice, and the transferring of man's guilt to Jesus, who is silent under the imputation. (3) The choice of a king; Barabbas or Jesus Christ. (4) The King of grace and the kingdom, as described under the signs of the crown of thorns, the scourging, the smiting, spiting, and mock worship. (5) Behold the King of grace going forth bearing His cross of shame, assisted by His followers, to the place of crucifixion. (6) The crucified King of grace, the Pure One, under the curse for the accused. (7) The King of grace and of peace "numbered with the transgressors," the *thieves* who were His companions. (8) The

persecution and the reviling which the King of grace had to endure (9) The horror of great darkness which filled His soul, and the work by God's face being turned away from Him at that awful hour.

From verse 37 to the end of the book, there may be traced the following thoughts: (1) The death of Jesus Christ with power, by the giving up of self to God; but through such an action rending the veil betwixt the visible and invisible things of the flesh and the spirit, as the symbolic and the eternal truths of God; this is the kingdom of heaven: (2) The spontaneous testimony of the centurion to the Divinity of Jesus as "the Son of God," which would embody the ideas of the perfection of the sacrifice offered, and the acceptance of the sacrifice by the Father. (3) The faithful followers of Jesus Christ, who in their submission to the will of God, wait upon Him, beg for His body, and place it in the sepulchre. (4) In the 16th chapter, the new Sabbath rest, with the open sepulchre at the time of the rising sun; the two Marys troubled about the heavy stone already rolled away; the angel of light, God's messenger of truth, comforting the faithful followers of Jesus, and announcing that the Lord had risen from the dead. (5) The appearance of the risen Saviour and Lord of Mercy to Mary Magdalene, and to the two disciples as they went into the country; and the unbelieving disciples. (6) The appearance to the eleven as they sat at meat; His reproof because of their unbelief; and thus the fellowship of Christ with His people who see His face as the face of God manifested in the flesh. (7) The mission of the servants of Christ to preach the gospel of peace to every creature; and the great spiritual powers which the disciples received. (8) The glory of Jesus Christ as King of grace, and the fulfilment of the words, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven:" and the blessing of the Lord resting upon His disciples as they preach the gospel amongst men.

In this three-fold cycle there is to be found the preparation of the Saviour for His passion by friends, false friends, and the rebellious servants of His Own house, and the subjective agony in the soul in the garden; the manifestation of complete subjection to wicked men as related to the kingdom of grace; and the power and glory of the risen Saviour on the right hand of God, His servants being sent forth to carry on the work of His kingdom of mercy amongst men in all nations.

The Gospel according to Luke.

I. The gospel written by Matthew has the special object of making known to men the Gift of God in Jesus Christ; principles of the kingdom of heaven as set forth in the life and passion of the Saviour of men. The gospel according to Luke reveals the loving spirit of Jesus as by the shining forth of His life. One in His gracious life of self-sacrificing service. This is the name of Luke—luminous—attached to it seems to bring forth another aspect of the same glad tidings; but in this instance it is the sweet, gentle, patient shining of the servant's life, but not the unflinching of truth, luminous, to enlighten the whole world. The first is God's Gift come to His people, the Jews, asking them to receive it; the second gospel is the Servant of men, self-sacrificing in word, and action for the good of men; whilst this gospel is shining forth upon all men and nations, making known unto them the mission of love, and the passion or self-sacrifice of the Son of God and man. The order ought to be the same in the individual: first the reception of the Gift of God; second the transforming of the grace and mercy of God in Christ upon the soul; and third the manifestation of that light in the life for the benefit of others. The mission of heaven's grace and mercy had been shining upon men; and it reached the soul of Luke, and guided by the Illuminator, he was to declare and make known to Theophilus—friend and lover of God—the things in which he had already been instructed. The first gospel begins with the first blessing uttered by Jesus; it is the gift of the Holy Spirit to the poor spirit; and it promises and gives to men the Kingdom of heaven in all its fulness. The second gospel fits in with the first blessing of the mournful, penitent spirit, the altar and the sacrifice and the joy and comfort which came through the atonement or reconciliation with God by the forgiveness of sin and the life in Christ. The third gospel is in harmony with the third blessing; and in Theophilus, a friend to God's cause and a lover of Christ, there is seen the meek man, or nation, obedient to the Lord, who shall inherit the earth.

It is a retrospective glance into the past, so that the continuity of the preparatory work of God may be understood. The things which are recorded took place in the days of Herod—glory of the Idumean, a son of Edom; when a priest, Zacharias—man, servant of the Lord, of the course of Abia—the Lord my father, and the daughter—beth—the oath of God, a daughter of Aaron—mountain of

light, his wife, were found to be righteous, and walking in God's ways blameless. They had no children, and they were both strict in years, so that the time for bearing children was past. Whilst Zacharias ministered in the temple, an angel appeared to him, informing him that his prayer was heard, that Elizabeth should bear a son, that his name would be called John, that he would be a Nazarite from the womb, and that he would be a prophet to Israel and the forerunner of the King to prepare the people for His coming. In these thoughts there may be discerned the power of the kingdom of man over God's people; the remnant of those who continue faithful to God in Israel; the longing desire of the gracious souls: God's cause of grace and truth; the faithfulness of God to His gracious promises; the utter incapability of the Jewish nation to bring to the conception or birth a prophet of God; one like unto Elias; a the visitation of God in His gracious power for that purpose, so that there might be a suitable preparation for the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ and His kingdom upon the earth.

Such may be conceived as the spiritual intent of this message, not merely to Zacharias, but to the Jews and to all mankind; it speaks of the miserable condition of man unable to conceive the true things of God; to manifest the devoted, consecrated spirit in His service; and to go forth amongst men in the spirit of the prophets of Israel, warning men because of their sins, and calling them to repentance, righteousness, and to the service of God. In the godly Zacharias and Elizabeth the ministers of God, and His Church and faithful Word, there may be discerned the dying embers upon the altar of sacrifice, the flickering lamps almost out in the holy place; and unless there is a special intervention by the gracious God, the ashes on the altar will become cold and dead, and thus self-sacrifice would be extinct, and the truth of God would vanish from the earth to return no more to man. The aspect of the soul of Zacharias toward this divine message was one of doubt; alas! alas! for the Church of the living God when it is so low, so full of doubt and unbelief as to question the Word of God; does it not seem as if the enemy had fully conquered, and that the cause of God's grace was indeed dead amongst men when the creature foolishly says of the Word of God, "Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years." Almost dead to God and to the life of faith is the sad thought that arises out of such words, and the soul trembles with fear lest a devilish storm should arise and extirpate the life of grace from the earth. But no; the Lord of grace is watching carefully when the lowest point will be reached; and then, to teach men their utter helplessness without His aid, He sends forth His messenger of light and strength to give a renewed life of grace to mankind. To the aged priest's doubting question, the angel replied: "I am Gabriel (the strength of God) that stand in the presence of God, and am sent to speak unto thee and to show thee these glad tidings." It is God's power that comes down upon men, a messenger from the presence of the King, and such a messenger cannot tolerate unbelief; they who do not believe God's Word are unable to speak God's thoughts, and thus the judgment of a closed mouth is sent upon those

who should be the ministers of His grace and truth to men. The service of God is for a time taken from them and given to the children as yet in the womb ; and until the prophecy is fulfilled in its season, they must be silent and ponder upon the mighty works of God in His gracious purpose toward men.

The scene is changed from the temple at Jerusalem to another temple not made with hands ; prepared by God for His service in Nazareth. This temple was named Mary, no longer a Miriam, or bitterness, but blessed of God. She was espoused to a man named Joseph, or increase, of the house of David—that is, beloved, or dear. Is there not a spiritual parable of far-reaching significance here ? A passing away beyond the fleshly lineage and outward figures to spiritual truths ? In this temple of God there is to be conceived the Lord Christ, whose favour is toward Joseph, who is the son of the beloved by Rachel, and not by the line of Leah and Judah. By the flesh the Lord Jesus comes through Mary of the tribe of Judah as the chief Ruler and thus under law ; but as Christ, the Son of God, His lineage is that of spiritual blessing and increase to men, within the house of the beloved of God, in grace and truth. The message of the angel to Mary was to the effect that she had been graciously accepted by God, that the Lord was with her, and that she was blessed. This manner of salutation caused her a little trouble, and she was meekly considering what it could mean, when the angel told her not to be afraid, because she had found favour with God ; that she would conceive and bring forth a Son whose name would be Jesus ; that He would be great, be the Son of the Highest, and that to Him the Lord God would give the throne of David ; that he would reign over Jacob for ever, and that His kingdom would be an everlasting one. The reply of Mary is not that of unbelief, but of inquiry ; there is no doubt here as to the power of God ; it is the honest seeking after that knowledge which is necessary to one so highly favoured. Her thoughts turn to the usual method of generation, but the angel turns her conceptions to a coming of the Holy Ghost, and the overshadowing power of the Highest, and by such an incarnation the Child born would be the Son of God. Further, the angel reveals to Mary the condition of Elizabeth, and how that the barren one had conceived and was in her sixth month of pregnancy. "For with God nothing shall be impossible." The words of Mary are very beautiful, showing her meek and gracious nature, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to thy word." The curse of barrenness is seen to be removed from the Church of God upon this earth ; on the one hand, the aged matron, the Jewish Church, receiving power to bring forth its last prophet ; and on the other hand, the virgin, the Christian Church, by the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit becoming pregnant with a new spiritual, holy life. The importance of the sixth month as referring to the Jewish Church may have a significance, as related to the sixth blessing bearing upon the pure in heart ; and it speaks to men, saying that only in this cycle can men see the face of God and live. This story of the incarnation leads the student back in history to the sixth visit of the angel of the covenant, to *the tent of Abraham on the plains of Mamre*, and there

may be heard the divine voice promising a son to the patriarch by Sarah, and uttering the words, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" With reference to the name and position of the Lord amongst men, there seems to be a double line of thought; her son is to be Jesus, the Saviour, and by this Name He will achieve greatness; but there is another Name, "the Son of the Highest," and it is unto this Son, the Christ, that the Lord God would give the throne of David—that is of His beloved, of mercy and of grace. He would reign over Jacob, the supplanting power, the Jews, the visible things; but beyond this there was His invisible kingdom and power of grace, the birthright and the blessing in Joseph which would never end. These are the wonderful things of God's grace and mighty power; it is not for men to doubt God before such wonderful revelations, but rather to pray for increase of faith, meekness to receive His blessed Word into the soul, and trusting Him to wait patiently, being assured that all things will come to pass according to His Word.

The virgin-mother held in her womb the kingdom of God in its germ in the King of Grace, Mercy, Truth, and Righteousness; and was not this a strange fulfilling of the promise to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness with the promise that they shall be filled? These are the hidden things of God; the preparation for the manifestation of God in the flesh. The true Jewish Church, as represented by Elizabeth, dwelt in the hill-country of Judah; and it may be said that in the days of the unrevealed will of God, the Lord often came and brought joy and gladness to the people, and caused the child of promise and of hope to leap in the womb. In these two babes conceived in the wombs of these two mothers, there seems to be inclosed the kingdom of God in its varied relations as bearing upon the visible and invisible orders of things; the mothers represent the visible things; the babes the invisible spirits of the ages. By the coming of Jesus in the germ-life, the spirit of Mosaism was quickened to a new life, and the Jewish Church became prophetic in its utterances, blessing the mother and the Son, the Lord who had come, and through whose power the babe in her womb, the spirit in her form, did leap for joy. The blessing uttered by Elizabeth is that of the Church of God in all ages, but specially as related to Abraham, for it bears upon the fulfilling of the promises of God and of His oath unto Abraham.

The words which flowed from the lips of Mary are a gracious utterance, suitable to come from the mother of Jesus or from the pure Church of Christ; the soul is stirred up to "magnify the Lord," and the spirit is full of joy in the Saviour who is God, because of His most gracious condescension toward one so lowly as to make her a blessing to all generations. It is not Mary or the Church that is mighty, but God the Saviour, who has done marvellous things, specially in His great work of mercy which has been to them that fear Him from generation to generation. His mercy is upon those who fear and serve Him, but to the wicked He shows a strong arm to punish their wickedness, and to scatter the proud in their haughty ways. The mighty who boast are put down from their seats, and the lowly are exalted in the earth. The hungry are filled with that which is good, whilst the rich, who are

self-sufficient, are sent away empty. He has sent help to His Israel, by remembering His work of mercy according to the promises made unto Abraham and his seed.

The time came for the delivery of Elizabeth, and she brought forth a son; at this unexpected event, the friends were full of gratitude unto God for His mercy, and there was joy because of this new life given to the world. But what shall the child's name be? The friends said Zacharias, after the father; but Elizabeth said no; that his name should be John; and the father being appealed to confirmed his wife's words by writing the words, "His name is John." In other words, there is here to be discerned the struggle in the soul, or in the Jewish nation, about this child and what he represents. The friends would have his name to speak of the memory of the Lord's work in the past as to their fathers; but the voice of God to men is that they must stop looking back into the past, and learn to receive this child as a gift of grace and mercy to them at that time, and as looking forward to brighter times of grace and mercy; this child severs the link of the past and the Mosaic spirit, and it speaks of the coming King of mercy unto men. The name was significant, and the people knew this, as shown by their saying, "What manner of child shall this be!"

The curse of dumbness and unbelief having been removed from Zacharias, the Holy spirit came upon him, and he prophesied as to the future. A blessing is sought upon the Lord God of Israel, because of this merciful visitation and redemption of His people. In the house of the beloved, the gracious children of God, a new Horn of salvation had been raised up, according to the words uttered by holy prophets from the beginning; which had held in them the promises of salvation from enemies, as for example the first promise in Eden that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. Also to bring about the performance of the mercy promised to the fathers, the remembrance of His holy covenant, and the oath to Abraham, so that those who are delivered by such a King from their enemies might serve Him in holiness and righteousness all their days. This child was not the King, but he would "be called the prophet of the Highest;" and his mission would be to go before the King to prepare His ways, to give people to understand that salvation and the remission of sins would be found through the tender mercy of God in Him who is the Day-spring and who gives light to all that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide the feet of men in the way of peace.

CHAPTER II. A new field of thought is opened up in this chapter, and there may be discerned not a local movement amongst a part of men, as in Judah under Herod, but an edict, a decree going forth from the great ruler of the world. It seems a strange thought, but it is one with far-reaching interest which links the decree of the greatest of all the Cæsars with the birth of the King of kings in Bethlehem. It is said that Augustus was born in the eighth month of the year, and on this account he was named Octavius; but after becoming conqueror at the battle of Actium, where the regal power of Egypt fell from the hands of Marc Antony and Cleopatra he named himself Augustus—majestic; and

the eighth month of the year was named August after him. Upon this man converged all the glories of the world ; and it was by the downfall of Egypt, the prophetic or foreshadowing power of pride and strength as compared with Israel, the people of God, that the world struck the octave note of dominion, and to Rome and Augustus Cesar the world must pay tribute. The imperial power of the world had reached its zenith ; the temple of Janus was shut, the world was at peace, an apparently, even under the heel of a despot, a time of peace had come to men. But these things were not in the order of eternal truth and righteousness ; they were huge lies built upon the unstable foundation of unrighteousness, and though this work of man was magnificent and majestic, to look upon, it was cursed ; and thus the disintegrating force of the power of God in the world would in due time bring them to nought. The power of the world was at its highest point of glory and majesty ; the cause of God was like a flickering flame, so feeble that its breath would bring its extinction. What a contrast is here for men to study. Is there a King who reigns in the world, whose "kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion from generation to generation?" and who at the same time in a special manner reigns in the kingdom of heaven amongst those who fear His Name? Assuredly it is so ; and it was when the world had assumed its holiday attire, having subdued all its enemies, and emperors were going to dominate the world, that the decree from Rome determined the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem according to the prophetic utterance in the word of God. Augustus Cesar gave a decree from the palace in Rome as to the taxing throughout the world ; in consequence of this order from the master of the world, the King of kings when brought into it had no home, for there was no room for Him even in the common inn ; and thus the Baby King of the universe was wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. Surely the King of grace could not descend further ; He was homeless because of the imperial mandate of the master of the world, and He became a companion of the lower creatures ; the glory of this world and the glory of the King of grace shine forth each in its own setting by this great contrast.

But if the earth knew not its Creator ; and man could not find a home for the King, heaven was fully awake to the great event that had taken place. It was unto the shepherds, the faithful servants of God, who were watching their flocks during the darkness of the night, that there was first given a revelation of what had taken place in Bethlehem, God's house of bread for men. The news to men was not such as to cause fear, but they ought to be as "glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." The Saviour is come in the Infant, and the Christ, the King of the universe, in the Babe lying in a manger. Such a revelation of grace made heaven jubilant with songs of praise ; and in this manifestation of God in the flesh, the highest glory will be brought to God, a true and abiding peace brought to the earth, and the goodwill of God toward men. The shepherds hasten to Bethlehem to give a welcome to their King ; and having seen Him they returned to their flocks, "glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen as it was told unto them."

ime the child Jesus was circumcised, and when the days for His purification were ended they went up to Jerusalem to offer to the Lord and to offer the usual sacrifices according to the Law. In all things there is meekness and obedience to God in those who had to do with the infant Jesus. The Son of Man was made subject to ritual and ceremony ; in His flesh He was subject to the laws of Moses, and thus in all things He was made like unto His brethren.

His presentation in the temple was made deeply interesting by the presence of the aged Simeon who was even then "waiting for the consolation of Israel." A special revelation had been given unto him by the Holy Spirit that before his death he should be privileged to see the Messiah. Guided by the Spirit of God he entered the temple, and when the infant was presented, he knew that the Hope of Israel had been fulfilled. The father in Israel took the Hope of the world "in his arms," for such a fulfilment of His faithful promises ; and the joy, which came out of unfeigned lips, was that his departure should be because he had seen God's salvation. This was the Seed of the woman, the Light of the world, and the Glory of the Father. Here it is necessary to pause and to ask if there is a special meaning in these words of the aged prophet? They do seem to breathe the spirit of those men who in the ages before the coming of Christ in the flesh had kept their ears open toward God and had had been the stars in the firmament in the dark night to lead the people alive as to the coming Seed and King. The men who had lived after righteousness, and had not been filled, had passed away from this generation ; but at last the King had come to His people. This prophet of God was privileged to see the fulfilment of the prophetic hopes of past ages. Upon the head of the venerable prophet rest the hands of all the prophets ; and above all, as if from the goodly fellowship, there breathes the spirit of the fervent prayer, as these glorious visions are at last realised. Looking at Simeon's words from this stand-point they are pregnant with wonderful thoughts ; especially when they are thus touched by the spirit of Jesus, which is the fulfilment of prophecy, that each sentence becomes a living word to the people. The aged prophet came to a symbolic temple, there to find the presence of God in which God dwelt. His fathers, in seeking after the Messiah, had been privileged to receive and disperse a portion of the blessing among men ; he held in his arms the consummation of the Law, and righteousness, all concentrated into one point, thus it was that he blessed God. The prophets had prayed and longed for the coming of the one great event of the world's history ; he had his arms the Hope of the ages, God's salvation, and now the spirit would seek to sleep in peace being no longer required. The Sun had risen upon the world with all its glory of divine power, goodness, and grace ; and this great event having taken place the prophetic stars must vanish away before the blaze of His glory. The fulfilment of these words of Simeon can be seen at a glance ; the age of listening and hearing had closed by the advent of God in the flesh, and from thenceforth Jesus Christ must be seen

as the centre of men's thoughts and the supreme object of affections.

The prophet has a blessing for the blessed; the prophets Jewish Church lay their hands upon the apostles of the Church, and thus convey to them in historical continuity the past. The Infant, God's salvation, rests in the prophet's arms; them; He belongs to both dispensations, even to the whole world. He is bequeathed in the flesh from the Jews to Christians. The Word speaks of Jesus as a sign to be spoken against for the purpose of men's thoughts may be revealed; and that He was set up "for and rising again of many in Israel." He comes as a Revealer, to be by the revealing of men's thoughts to themselves; and that of His mission is to be manifested by a fall first, and then by a rise. It has been so through the Christian era, for the Lord Jesus Christ. The Word has been the Sign amongst men by which they have been saved in their loyalty toward God; and only by falling upon Him broken have they been saved, and been enabled to rise again. The sword has pierced the mother's soul, that is the Christian Church; men know; history manifests very clearly in what way the Word deals with the world, the flesh, and the devil of unbelief, have repeatedly into the very quick of the blessed and the beloved of God. The Word, the Head so with His body, it has been blessed by God and a blessing to men; but it has been despised, rejected, yea, even crucified by enemies. But all this speaks of the mercy of God; His dealings with men in this day of grace, only it is necessary to remember that it will not always remain so; the stone of judgment will fall upon the wicked, the rejecters and despisers, and then woe shall be their portion because they will be broken to pieces beyond any remedy.

The holy Anna—gracious, merciful, daughter of Phanuel—vision of God, of the tribe of Asher—happy or blessed—speaks of the pure in heart who see the face of God. She also gave birth to the coming of the Holy One, and "spake of Him to all that were looking for redemption," and pointed to this Infant One through whom redemption from sin was attainable. The temple of God is still open for men; blessed are they who serve God night and day in humility, penitence, and prayer, they will be purged from their sins, see His blessed face, and be enabled to speak to others of redemption from sin to be found in this Israel of God.

At the age of twelve years the boy Jesus was taken up to Jerusalem to the Feast of the Passover. When the time for staying in the temple was at an end then the parents left with their friends, while the boy tarried behind in Jerusalem. The Boy being missed they returned to Jerusalem to seek for Him amongst their friends, and after three days they found Him sitting in the temple amongst the wise men, listening to their grave discussions and asking them questions. The people were astonished at His wisdom and the answers which He gave; they were amazed at what He had been doing; and "His mother said unto Him, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I sought Thee sorrowing. And He said unto them, how is it that ye sought Me?"

sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? And the, understood not the saying which He spoke unto them." This incident may be interpreted in the light of the words "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." How will the day of peace dawn upon men? By dogmatic theologians wrangling in the spirit of hatred and strife about signs, symbols, and articles of faith; and by philosophers and scientific men maintaining that they possess all wisdom, that the sun of truth shines upon their tabernacles, and that all other men are sitting in the gross darkness of superstition and error? By no means, the fires of strife and hatred cannot quench the flame of jealousy and ill-will, they increase the blaze by adding fuel to the fire, and the end would be not peace and charity, but a hatred irreconcilable and the devilish spirit that will not forgive. History contains a good many specimens of men's ways of peace-making in this manner, and the issues in their manifold diabolical forms; and surely, if the men of the world are not too far gone in wickedness, they may be able to discern in this sweet picture of the boy Jesus, and the doctors in Jerusalem, a better way of solving the manifold difficult questions which surround them on every hand. The method of Jesus is worthy of consideration; it is that of patiently hearing all that can be said upon any subject, and in return to ask questions upon those points which are difficult, or are not clearly explained, so that the truth may be made manifest to all men. In the child Jesus there is no assumption of great wisdom, or of striving after effect. He clearly understood the subjects under consideration and modestly conversed with the learned men as if He was their Scholar, or even their equal. The real truth is that He was their Master; for it may fairly be assumed that the calm, gentle, modest Child influenced every thinker and reasoner in the temple, throwing such a charm into their conversation that they were glad to throw aside for the time their authorised teachers, and to be unconsciously guided into a genuine search after righteousness and truth, that is the will of God, by the suggestive questions of the Boy in their midst. Is not this in very truth the only means by which men can possibly become the wise and peaceful sons of God? They must permit the child Jesus to preside in their meetings, invite the honest, modest spirit of inquiry to come into their midst, and turning away from vain wranglings and foolish philosophies seek to know what is true and what is false, what is good and gracious, and what is evil and vicious. If learned doctors of theology, wise philosophers in all forms of wisdom, and careful, painstaking men of science will permit, nay, invite the Child, who is Truth, to preside at all their meetings, they would soon see that not merely had another spirit come into their midst, but they would be full of joy and thanks to God who had bestowed upon them such a President. The wrangling and strife, pride and vain-glory, intolerance and hatred, which have been the curse of public societies and their meetings, in time past, can all be traced back to this one fact that the child Jesus has not been there to preside in their midst, and to ask questions; and self, that worst of all devils, has shown his own conceit, self-seeking, self-glorifying, self-assertion, and even self-deification; for is not man a god when he is a full-blown wrangler in church courts, a wise

philosopher who has measured the universe and founded a school, or adored scientist who has made the world his debtor by his magnificent services to mankind? Wisdom abhors all such manifestations: the President, by Divine Right, of the Church, the school of wisdom, philosophy, and of the scientific society of the universe, can have no rival. So soon as the devil of self is voted into the chair by men, the gentle Child, who leads men into the truth, leaves the assembly, and it is no longer His church, but the devil's schismatic house where men named Christians strive against and hate each other; no longer a school of divine wisdom, but the devil's school for blinding men by their own vain conceits; and no longer a society for scientific knowledge which will bless mankind and glorify God, but Satan's meeting-place where men seek their own glory, and praise their fellow-men. The way to unity is by the child-like spirit of Jesus Christ, and only by Him can all men be members of the Church, wise in divine wisdom, and full of knowledge in all science. It is His presence that men require in the midst; may they fervently pray that He will be graciously pleased to come into their assemblies, and then there will be growth in grace and strength in the spirit in searching into divine wisdom, and increase of knowledge in the manifold works of God. The parents found Jesus in the temple and were amazed at the position He occupied; but they knew not that the universe is the temple of God, and that the Child in the midst was the Wisdom of God. They had sought Him sorrowfully. Why? Simply because they sought Him where He was not to be found, and there ought to be the emphasis laid on the word *ye* in His question to them, because it manifests their ignorance and their foolishness, when they knew better than others where He ought to have been found. This is truly divine wisdom in His answer, and it seems to run in this direction; the privileged few who knew the thoughts of God, and were the custodians of His gracious purpose, had lost the Truth, and in sorrow had been seeking after Him; when He is found they would reprove Him, but He gently reproves them for seeking Him in any place except the temple of God, when they knew that He was intent upon His Father's business. Of course, they did not understand this marvellous parable, but does it not mean that during the three days of grace given to man in Adam, Abraham, and during the Christian era He has been amongst the wise and good men of all nations, hearing their strange speculations and asking them questions. In the great temple of mankind it has been His business to lead men to think, and if possible to follow the truth as it has been revealed to them. They who have been most highly favoured, and who should have known the great work He came to perform by bringing a kingdom of peace and rest into the souls of men, have gone astray in their search, for they have limited, in an unreasonable manner, the great work of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is not merely the regeneration of a church, or a nation, but of the world in its every mode of thought, word, and action. His Father's business is the restoration of peace and rest to the world. The temple of Jerusalem was a spiritual figure of the world, and the doctors its wise men. He would set their thoughts in harmony with the will of God by His questions, and then, but not till then, the kingdom of peace will come to

the great temple of God upon this earth. These thoughts speak to all men who have ears to hear : it may be that the hour is near when the followers of Jesus Christ, in grace, wisdom, and knowledge, will learn subjection, and in consecration to the will of God, keep His sayings as the real treasures of the soul. If this is done, then as "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man," so His redeemed people in all nations will be like their Divine Head in all things, being conformed to His image in truth and righteousness.

CHAPTER III. Chapter ii. opens with a united Roman Empire under Augustus, Emperor, and the birth of the King of kings in Bethlehem; the former being the symbol of all that has been powerful, strong, majestic amongst men, whilst the latter speaks of weakness, helplessness, and the emptiness of all that men usually consider as a means of greatness; this chapter strikes another key-note, and already the gilt has been smeared upon the imperial crown of the Cesars, and there is a breaking asunder of that mighty power which held the world in awe. The infamous Tiberius was about this time retiring to Caprea; and the kingdom of that Herod the Great, who sought to kill the Infant Saviour, was divided into the hands of Pontius Pilate, Herod, Phillip, and Lysanias. The work of disintegration had begun, not merely in the Roman states but also in the Jewish Kingdom of God, for both Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests in God's house. Under such conditions, which means that the judgments of God had begun to fall upon Rome and upon a corrupt priesthood, the Word of God came to John the Baptist, calling him to his mission of preaching repentance to men, and to prepare the way of the Lord, so that all flesh might see the salvation of God.

The words of the Baptist to the various classes which came to him to be baptized, were full of power; he told them plainly that they were a generation of vipers, and not sons of God; and that they must bring forth suitable fruits as proofs of repentance before they could claim to be the sons of the faithful Abraham. The day of judgment would come suddenly upon them, and if they did not bring forth good fruit very quickly their doom would be the axe and the fire. These words are words of warning to men; of mercy straining its own mission that it might seize and save those who were going on to destruction. Three classes are referred to as questioning the Baptist as to their duties, the common people, the publicans, and soldiers. To the first he recommends a charitable spirit, even that of mercy; to the second justice; and to the third, gentleness in their duties, truthfulness in their words, and contentment with their wages.

To the reasoning of the people whether John were the Christ or not, he replied, that his baptism was only an external thing, like the washing with water; but there was One coming far mightier than himself, and so great and good that he was even unworthy to loose His shoes. His baptism would be of another order, for it would be a spiritual cleansing, as if with fire, and at His coming there would be a separation of the good and the vile, so that each would be adjudged to its own place.

But the Baptist reprov'd not merely the common people, he bold told kings of their sins, and because he told Herod that it was unlawful for him to keep his brother's wife, and to work many other deeds, the king shut him up in prison.

When the people were baptized by John in Jordan, the Lord Jesus also was baptized, and as He prayed the heaven was opened, the Holy Spirit came upon Him in the shape of a dove, and a voice from heaven said, "Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased." The Son of God is known by a direct revelation and manifestation from heaven, and by the baptism of the Holy Spirit; but as a man by the baptism of water. He is the Son of man in visible things as well as the Son of God. In the lineage of man, His ancestors were traced back to Adam, and from Adam to God; but as the Son of God and the second Adam He is by this Spiritual baptism recognised as the beloved of God, His gracious Son in whom God has pleasure. The Lord Jesus is the Inheritor, the Heir of all things, by the line of God's promises in Seth; therefore His portion is the Birthright which God gives to man; but as the beloved Son He comes with the Spiritual Blessing added to the Birthright, and thus through, by, and in Him, must come every blessing to this world.

Upon the Lord Jesus Christ there came by this double baptism, through the laying on of man's hands and of God's hands, the consecration and dedication which fitted Him for His mission amongst men. The Birthright is His, but it must be redeemed from the enemy; and it is by the blessing of grace and mercy received from heaven that He must conquer the empires of the world, the flesh, and the devil. This is the true Chevalier of the Order of Mercy; the only Captain who has gone forth to fight against the enemies of man, pure and without reproach. He is our King, the Lord Jesus Christ, and He stands in history without a rival. Let foolish men boast of their great generals and famous captains; here is One who may well command the adoration of the greatest, the admiration of the purest, the devotion of the most loving, and the rapturous praises of all the redeemed. With what emotions have the souls of men been moved when they have been privileged to read of a Livingstone and his career in the dark continent of Africa; but in Jesus Christ is found Livingstone's Captain, who went forth into a wilderness more terrible than Africa, upon a universal mission of unparalleled magnificence, and to a passion which no man can understand. Hero and Saint, King and Prophet, Sage and Priest, where can His peer be found? The idea is absurd; He has no peer. "Blessed be the King that cometh in the Name of the Lord, peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

CHAPTER IV. Jesus is seen here as led into the wilderness by the Spirit, there to be tempted for forty days "of the devil." During this period He did not eat anything, and at the end of that time He was hungry. The first temptation of the devil is that the hungry Son of God should command a stone to be changed into bread. His reply to

ation is that men will not live upon bread that ministers out by every word of God which is for the upbuilding of the spiritual nature of man. The next temptation of the Lord Jesus should seek to gratify the spirit which is power, by imperial domination over men. This was within the reach of the emperor Nero, who could have seized the magnificent power of Rome from the wicked Tiberius; but the conditions were that the gracious laws of God should be trodden under foot; and the emperor, evil, or self should become selfish and self-asserting. It was a critical choice, the empire of the world, or obedience to God. The Lord Jesus did not hesitate for a moment as to what was cast behind His back and God received His worship. Again the Lord was tempted, and this time it was the temple of God. The temptation seems peculiar, but presumption, by the performance of a mighty wonder to make foolish men start, and superstitious children bend in adoration. To such an abhorrent method of gaining publicity, not become subject; because, for any man to attempt to tempt God, so that good may come out of it, is a devilish thing, as the Son of man, it was His duty to obey God, and not to presume presumptuously or foolishly upon any pretence whatever. The temptation suggested that the great principles which underlie these things may be summed up in the following thoughts: (1) Man is not a lifeless thing, though it could be changed into the stone which would satisfy fleshly lusts; the Bread which will nurture the life of man's being is God's Word. (2) The creature is under law; therefore obedience to the laws of God, the service of God in conformity to His will or laws, is right, and to serve self or worship the devil is wrong, it is evil and doing evil, and thus ruinous to soul and body. (3) God, Creator and Law-giver, has His temple in every soul; therefore beware, therefore, O man, lest the devil try to tempt thee, and thou begin to question, and to discuss His holy will, and to seek of gaining a selfish, presumptuous desire, to do this is to deny God's supremacy; to make thyself a devil; and to fall into the snare of presumption, will not be to be taken charge of by the devil, but to fall like Lucifer into the hands of demons, to be driven from the soul, and the sacred place where He reigned in glory for legions of devils. To change the aspect of the temptation also means this: choose betwixt death and life, evil and good, and Christ, self and God; His Word is the sign of His will, and if it is chosen then the soul is safe. There is the mighty mystery of the small world within, how is a man to be related to God by believing the devil's lies, and by asserting self, but by obeying the moral and gracious laws of God in all things. The soul is not merely the world within, of self, and the world without, the other human beings; but there is the universe, heaven, earth, and hell, and man by his spiritual nature is brought into the Invisible; his relation to God and to the spiritual world is that of meekness of the soul, child-like obedience to

His holy will, and an utter abhorrence of any thing or thought which would even question the supremacy of God in the soul and in universe. The order of the temptations in this gospel differs from order in the first gospel; but without entering into this question may be well to point out that there is a remarkable fitness in the order in both instances; the first gospel is a gift, so to speak, first to Jews, and through them to the world; and thus the order of self, of house, and the world is seen to be the suitable order of development; but in the third gospel, where the stand-point is the sun shining upon the whole world, then the order considered tends to unveil the grand conceptions of the marvellous thoughts of God given to man by Jesus Christ. With regard to this subject, in its fullest scope, it is not for man to say in what way the Lord was tempted or to attempt to determine why the order differs in the first gospel from that in the third. It is a matter of fact the Lord Jesus alone could have given this information to the disciples; and under the guidance of His Holy Spirit the gospels were written. The utmost that ought to be done in this and in other difficult problems is to think that the child Jesus is suggesting questions for consideration which have to do not merely with His Own person but also with the life of His redeemed Church, and with the history of the world. It is not difficult to observe that in the garden of Gethsemane and the order of temptation there, with its results to all men, there is an intimate connection with the temptation in the wilderness and the Lord's obedience. In the first instance, man fell by eating that which was forbidden, so that the eyes might be opened to see the great world without, and that he might be a god in wisdom, to know good and evil, and become independent of God; in this instance the man Jesus would not eat a forbidden thing; He would not have His eyes opened to see the world without; He would not extend His hand to do an injustice to man; and He would not be independent of God, or act without His authority in the things of the world. The history of men is that of Adam and of Eden; there the evil seed was sown, and the tree with its horrible fruits has been fruitfully manifested; the Lord Jesus planted a new tree of life amongst men, which grows in harmony with the will of God, and the fruits which it yields are also manifested.

The temptation came to an end, and the Pure One who passed through the ordeal unscathed, came forth to His mission. By overcoming the tempter and obeying God He proved Himself to be the Son of God as well as the Son of man; and it was as the peacemaking King and the Son of God He returned, in the power of the Spirit, into Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, and glorified by those who heard Him.

He came in this spirit and with power to Nazareth, His home, according to His custom, He entered the synagogue, and stood up to read the Word of God. The portion of the Scripture He read was that which is found in Isaiah which describes His Own mission amongst men, as a prophet, a healer, a deliverer, an illuminator, and a liberator. In other words, in Him there was found the prophet, priest, deliverer, and illuminator by divine wisdom, and Saviour of the world; and His mission and His Word the acceptable year of God had dawned upon men. He stopped reading and closed the book, because the remain-

of the sentence spake of a day of vengeance; and as yet mercy surrounded them, and they would be required to choose for themselves whether they would have mercy or judgment. The eyes of all the people in that meeting were fastened upon Him; and He began to tell them that the Scripture they had heard was being fulfilled in their hearing. His words were gracious and pleasing to the people; but they ministered to their self-glorification, as may be seen, and they began to be proud of their townsman whom they knew as "Joseph's Son." This Spirit was antagonistic to the Spirit in Jesus, and thus He began to speak to them in a different strain. They did not look for a Saviour, a Healer of soul and body in this Man; for themselves individually, they did not require a physician, but it would have gratified their curiosity and their personal interest in Himself, if He would to please them work a great wonder in their midst. It is a common saying and a true one that, "no prophet is accepted in his own country," therefore, the Lord expects that the same word will hold good in His case. They were imagining how happy they were, and that they required no help from God or man; but in this they were like their forefathers in the days of Elijah, because the days of famine for God's Word would soon be upon them, and then the prophets of God would not be sent to Nazareth or Judah, but to Sidon and Sarepta, to the Gentile world. As there were many lepers in Israel in the days of Elisha, and only Naaman a Syrian was cleansed, so it would also come to pass that they who despised the healing Word of God would remain impure, whilst the Gentiles, whom they despised as unclean, would be healed and saved. Such thoughts as these raised the anger of the self-conceited, self-righteous, and self-asserting people of Nazareth, they rejected Jesus, and they would have destroyed Him had they been permitted. "But He passing through the midst of them went His way."

The Lord is seen carrying on His blessed and beneficent work as the Healer at Capernaum. In the synagogue there was a man who was possessed of an unclean spirit; and it testified as to Jesus being "the Holy One of God." At the rebuke of Jesus the devil was cast out, and the people were amazed at His word of authority and power.

Leaving the synagogue He entered Simon's house; his wife's mother being ill with a strong fever, He healed her; and she ministered unto them.

When the sun was setting great multitudes came unto Him to be healed of divers diseases, He laid His hands on them and they were healed. The devils also were cast out of those who were possessed. They knew that He was the Christ, but He rebuked them so that they might not make known to the people that He was Christ. The day being come He went into a desert place; there the people found Him and asked that He should stay with them; but this could not be, as the kingdom of God had to be preached in other places in Galilee.

CHAPTER V. In this chapter the Lord is seen as being unduly pressed upon by the multitude; having entered into Simon's boat He asked him to thrust out a little from the shore, and in that position He

taught the people. When He had finished teaching, then He asked Simon to take the boat out into the deep water and to let down his net. Simon's reply was that they had been toiling all night and taken nothing, but he was willing to obey the Master. In obedience to the Lord's command the net was cast into the sea, and such a draught taken that the fish filled Simon's ship and also the ships belonging to James and John. This wonderful draught of fish brought Simon Peter upon his knees with a confession of sinfulness; but he was encouraged by the Lord saying "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." When they brought their ships to shore then they left all and followed Jesus.

In a certain city He healed a leper, and instructed him to go and show himself to the priest and offer for his cleansing the things required according to the Levitical law, and this was to be done as a testimony unto the priests.

Again He was found teaching on a certain day in a house. A great many of the Pharisees and doctors of the law were there from many places; and the power of God was present to heal. A man sick with palsy was brought unto Him borne by four men, but as they could not get him unto Jesus by the door, they let him down through the roof before Jesus. The Lord perceiving their great faith said unto the man, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." But this statement seemed as if it were a blasphemy to the Scribes, and thus they kept thinking and reasoning upon His words. His reply to them was a rebuke because of their unbelief and the healing of the palsied man, who went away to his house glorifying God.

Going forth he saw Levi the publican, and called him to be a disciple, who immediately rose up and followed Jesus. This call brought the evening feast at Levi's house, the presence of Jesus and His disciples amongst publicans and sinners, the uncharitable remarks of the Pharisees, and the Lord's response as to His Own mission being to sinners, and not to righteous men.

The remarks as to the disciples of John and the Pharisees fasting, whilst the Lord's disciples did not, bring forward this conception, that they thought they were right and Jesus wrong; in other words, the spirit of self-assertion and of persecution in its germ. But the Lord by parables showed that the time for fasting had not come unto His followers; that the day would come in due time, but in the meantime as they enjoyed His presence, fasting was not an essential thing. The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were following the old things which must vanish away: with Himself and His disciples there was to be manifested a new garment and the new wine of the kingdom of God, and thus fasting was out of place for them at that time.

CHAPTER VI. Here is raised by the Pharisees the question of the Sabbath and its lawful observance, owing to their having observed the disciples of Jesus plucking the ears of corn and eating them on that day. The Lord Jesus referred them to what David did when he was hungry; and thus He would have taught them that it was unwise, and uncharitable to find fault as they were doing about a matter which was

supreme importance. The eating of corn in the field on the day, and the eating of shew-bread, were of little importance compared with that humble spirit that seeks to obey the will of God. Things are lawful to such a spirit, because then man is not the slave of law or the slave of the Sabbath; but the Lord's day is to be a means of grace by which he can pass beyond forms and ceremonies and enter into the spiritual possession of that peace and rest which the Sabbath signifies.

On another Sabbath, when He was engaged teaching in the synagogue, there was a man present whose right hand was withered. The disciples were on the watch to see whether He would heal on that Sabbath. He knowing their thoughts, called the man into the midst, and asked them whether it was a lawful thing, on the Sabbath, to do good or evil; to save life, or take it away? They did not reply; He looked at the man; they were filled with madness, and began to consider what they should do to Jesus. What is the gracious will of God toward man? mercy or judgment, salvation or destruction? The answer of Jesus Christ is the reply to such questions; and it is only by His grace that men's souls and bodies and the paralysed wills of men that are bound by sin and sorrow, be comforted and enabled to serve God.

During this period there was for the Lord Jesus a night of watching and prayer upon the mountain top; the preparation season which is necessary before the setting up of His kingdom upon the earth. At the same time was come He called the twelve disciples and gave them the names of apostles; in other words, these are His chosen ones, called by Him to carry out His will amongst men. What the mark is in meekness and obedience to the will of God, that also they are to be, so that they may truly represent Him whose servants they are in the kingdom of God.

From the mountain of the kingdom of heaven down to the plain of the world, with its multitudes of suffering creatures, what a descent is it that leads to the kingdom of grace and mercy in Jesus Christ, and it is for this very purpose that He left heaven on His message of mercy and at this time appointed His apostles that they might carry out His blessed work. The Lord is here represented as surcharged with mercy; if men did but touch Him they were healed, because of His virtue that went out of Him. Come, ye hungry ones, to Jesus, meek and lowly, and to the meek spirit there will be given such a filling of grace and truth in the way of righteousness that the soul will not be able to receive it.

These are the laws of the kingdom of mercy in the spirit of meekness. They are to be found in this chapter from the 20th verse to the end. In these there may be found an epitome of the principles laid down in the Sermon on the Mount. In the first gospel, the sermon represents the spirit of the kingdom of heaven, or of mercy. In this gospel the position is altered, but it comes in under the third cycle, which is that of the kingdom of heaven in the meek spirit, and in the fourth cycle with the fifth blessing in that cycle, which is that of the kingdom of heaven in the spirit. In other words, the kingdom of heaven, in all its

principles, is built upon the poor spirit, and its manifestations in the meek spirit, obedient to the will of God, and in harmony with the merciful Spirit of Jesus Christ. It is not necessary to consider in detail these laws, because this has been done, to a certain extent, in connection with the first gospel, only it will be well if every member, specially of this portion, but also of every part of God's Word, remember, that it is in the poor or humble spirit as related to God, in a meek and obedient spirit as related to God and His kingdom in Christ, and in a merciful spirit toward men, that the Scriptures are studied, God revered and obeyed, and men served.

CHAPTER VII. begins with the incident of the faithful centurion who sent to Jesus the elders of the Jews, requesting that the Lord would go and heal his servant. The Jews had a great respect for him, and they thought that he was worthy of such a favour, because he loved the Jewish nation, and had built them a place for the worship of God. Jesus, without any remark, responds to their call, and proceeds toward the house of the centurion; but before the party had reached the house, messengers from the centurion met them with the request that He should not trouble Himself to come to the house so unworthy, but to speak the word and the servant would be healed. The centurion had heard about Jesus, for faith cometh by hearing; thus through faith there was reasoning, and by a marvellous power, as to visible and invisible power, he had reached the conclusion that the Lord could certainly do what he desired. This great faith of the centurion was made the means of the Lord's words, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." The messengers returned home, and they found that the servant had quite recovered. The setting, so to speak, of this story in the first gospel differs from its position in the third, and the same story is seen, or may be taken upon, as two pictures in their different relations. The story in the first gospel is in the second cycle, and under the second blessing cycle—in other words, a sorrowing master is comforted by the love of his servant, and the suffering man, by being healed, finds comfort. Thus the double mission of healing the soul and body is to the glory of the world, as set forth by the centurion and his servant. In the third gospel it is in the third cycle of meekness of spirit, faith in God, obedience to His will, and in harmony with the sixth blessing, which refers to the pure in heart, that this picture shines with such marvellous beauty; and it can be seen at a glance that a more perfect human thought as bearing upon these relations could not be presented to the spirit of man. The meekness of the centurion, and his obedience to law, are exquisitely portrayed; a pure heart, a faith, the purity of the man's soul, who could thus conceive of Christ, is truly marvellous.

The following day the Lord, His disciples, and much people, were seen entering the city of Nain—beauty, pleasantness. Near the gate they met a funeral party carrying forth a dead man, the only one of a widow woman. The Lord, knowing all the circumstances, showed compassion on the widow, drew near to her, and said, "Weep

Then turning to the coffin and the dead body, He commanded the young man to arise. At that moment the dead man arose and began to speak, and the Lord delivered him unto his mother. This mighty work cast a fear upon all who saw it. They glorified God, believed that a great prophet had come amongst them, and that God had visited His people. The day, or blessing, which follows that of the pure in heart, is that of the peacemaker and the Son of God. If the cycle of meekness, that is, of the kingdom of heaven in obedience to law, and the blessing of the King of peace, are applied as the keys to unfold the meaning in this story, it will become instinct with a new life. The kingdom has come and also the King. He has come to His beautiful and pleasant garden, that He might enjoy the fruits which He could reasonably expect after all the care and culture He has bestowed upon it. The fruits which are seen emerging from the garden gate are death and sorrow, and not life and joy, as might have been expected. Alas! for the garden of the Lord; the serpent has been there. The Church is seen clad in the garb of a widow, and her hope and stay is dead. The compassionate, meek, peaceful King and Son of God, the Resurrection and the Life, spake the word, life is restored, and the Church is comforted. Wonderful parable of the kingdom of heaven. Does it not seem to speak to men even now to lift their dead and go forth to meet the Lord? He comes for fruit, and the Church presents Him with a dead body. Oh! Meek and Peaceful One, be filled with compassion at this time. Come in mercy with a new life to Thy Church, and enter not into judgment with Thy servants. Give the help of Thy Holy Spirit so that men may glorify Thy Name, and know that God has visited His people in peace. The time, the critical time in the kingdom of heaven amongst men, was seen to be come. Such a wonder as raising the dead on the way to the grave was manifestly a visitation of God, and thus the facts were carried by the disciples of the Baptist to his lonely prison. It was after such a report about Jesus that his two messengers came to Him with the question: "Art Thou He that should come? Or look we for another?" In reply to the Baptist, they were to tell him what they had seen and heard, and His message may be interpreted thus: Blind souls who were going on in their own proud, deceitful ways, are now enabled to see their danger, and in humility of spirit they see and are seeking after the true Light. The lame have received new life, and in joy and comfort they are marching heavenward. The leprous souls once unclean and self-asserting are now conformed in their wills to the laws of God. The deaf who would not listen to God's Holy Word have their ears unstopped, and they are hungering after truth and righteousness. Those who were dead in sin and the pleasures of this world, are animated by the spirit of mercy, and they are made alive unto God, and become the means of life to men. And unto those who are utterly empty of truth, grace, and purity, the gospel of grace is being preached, so that they may see God. Such is a conception of the message of Jesus to John, and blessed are all they who are not offended in Jesus and in His work.

This story has another aspect for consideration. The Lord is pleased to send a suitable message to His persecuted servant; but what shall

He say to those who had been privileged to hear the preaching of John, to listen to His own words, and to see His wonderful works? The hour of reckoning has come, and He calls men to consider in what way they have used the privileges they had enjoyed. His remarks about John are meant, by their strong contrasts, to lead men to think of the opposite classes of teachers they had listened to. Was John a man similar to their rulers and teachers, who were mere reeds blown about by the wind, infirm of purpose, pliable, and guided by the spirit of compromise and expediency? No; he was like God's great tree of righteousness, unyielding in the face of man, but speaking and doing the will of God as he was commanded. Was he clothed in soft raiment, like the great dignitaries who wear gorgeous apparel, live in palaces, and enjoy all the delicacies which minister to and gratify the senses? No; he was a prophet of God, who ministered in a wilderness, scantily clad, without a home that he could call his own, and poorly fed. His words were not smooth as butter, lulling men's consciences to rest, and thus permitting them to go onward in the way of destruction pleasantly, but words as of fire, telling men of sin, repentance, duty, judgment, eternity, and of heaven and hell. Which of these are the servants, the messengers of God to men? The selfish, self-seeking, self-asserting men of this world, who love honours and the praise of men, and who pamper to men's fancies, being accommodating, compromising, and following doubtful, expedient ways; or the Baptist who goes forth as an iconoclast to break down the mountains of men's pride and conceit, to raise up the humble, gentle, and meek ones of God's kingdom, and thus to prepare the way of the King and His kingdom of peace amongst men? The people, the publicans, and sinners, believed that John was God's servant; but there were men, even those who wore soft raiment and lived delicately, who followed the traditions of men and not the Spirit of God, and who rejected God's counsel, and thus frustrated the work of God in themselves, and also to those whom they served.

But this question has still another aspect, and it is an important one; there are two parties in the great market-place of the world, and they have constantly been playing at games with each other. They never have been able to agree as to what they ought to do. They are like sulky children who would not take the cue and respond to the signs in the game; there has been plenty of piping to the sweet strains of the gospel, but men would not dance; and there has been mourning because of sin, but men would not weep. The stern, frugal, God-fearing, sin-denouncing Baptist had come to men; and with a supercilious air of criticism, men say, "He hath a devil;" the Son of man, a man amongst men, had come, and the verdict of the thoughtless and the godless is that He is a glutton and a drunkard, and a friend of wicked people. Fools may rashly conclude that this is the end of the game of life and of history; it is not so, but wisdom shall be fully justified by the use of the many means employed for the salvation of men.

Is it necessary to add anything more to these words? Only this thought, that this passage falls under the cycle of meekness, or the kingdom of God amongst men; and thus it means history, the work of

d upon a soul, in a nation, and in the world. It harmonises with the both blessing of the persecuted for righteousness' sake, and of those who possess the kingdom of heaven. The story is not to be limited to John the Baptist, Herod, Jesus Christ, and the people who listened to His voice nineteen centuries ago ; but it is emphatically a word to men of this generation, upon whom the same kind of spiritual darkness has taken place, and to be found recorded in history. The lesson is not a very difficult one to those who wish to see and understand the thoughts of God. If men are not stone-deaf, let them hear and obey the voice of God. It is surely time to give up the playing of games, or to play the parts of sulky indifference or resistance ; for the redly divine wisdom will be fully justified before the men of this generation.

The next picture reveals the King of grace in a very interesting and noble aspect ; He is not come for the final judgment, but, so to speak, to gather up in one brief story the record of His mission and the results upon this earth. The Lord Jesus is seen as invited to go into a Pharisee's house to eat with him. In other words, the proud ruler in the church invites as his guest the Head of the Church and King of the nations. Into the Pharisee's house—as, for example, the grand churches and places of worship, or the whole visible Church—there is seen to enter, when she heard that the Lord was near, a sinful woman, bringing with her an alabaster box of ointment. In coming to Him at His feet weeping, she washed His feet with her tears, and drying them with her hair, she kissed His feet and anointed them. This picture is this of a true penitent, overcome with sorrow because she is full of the most passionate tenderness toward the loving Saviour, anxiously desirous of serving Him in any way. The attention is directed to the self-conceited Pharisee, who was engaged all this time in thinking that the Anointed One could not be a prophet, else He would have known the character of the woman, and would have avoided away from Him the sinful creature at His feet. Up to this point Jesus remains passive ; a visitor to the house of the Pharisee, and the subject of the ministration and anointing of the woman, but though not speaking, yet carefully considering the thoughts and feelings of both the Pharisee and the woman. The Pharisee's name was Simon ; it is a representative name for the teachers of the school of the prophets in the Old Testament era, and for the leaders of Christ in the Christian dispensation ; thus the man is a representative of the visible church, and he represents only too clearly the spiritual leaders who have oftentimes manifested. The Lord Jesus did not take notice at the loving offices of the sinner or the critical thoughts of the Pharisee in his self-complacency and self-righteousness ; but with the wisdom He led the Pharisee, by a parable, to understand the relative positions of the woman and himself toward the Fountain of grace. The woman despised by Simon, and himself, were alike accepted in the sight of God ; and because they could do nothing to help themselves, they were both freely and fully forgiven. But the lesson is in this story not merely the items of debts and forgivenesses, but also the emotions of the affections toward the creditor ; and it is

THE UNITY AND HARMONY IN GOD'S WORD.

that the Lord showed—by the thoughts of Simon and the act of the woman—which of them acted the right part. It is true, as Simon said, that the one forgiven most would love most ; but this implies a knowledge of the amount of the debt owing and of gratitude in proportion to whose debts are forgiven. The Lord does not stay to prove that Simon was a less, equal, or greater sinner than the woman, but accepts her own valuation of himself and his gratitude, and also Simon's valuation of the woman and her service. Simon, who could criticise everybody, had been guilty indeed ; because he had not even provided water to wash the Lord's feet, had not given Him a kiss of welcome to His house, and had not anointed His head with oil—things which a guest might have reasonably expected from one in such a position ; but the despised woman had provided a bath of tears, her hair had been used to dry His feet, and she had kissed His feet and anointed them. The vision expands, and there is seen a respectable, self-complaisant, critical church, a weary, suffering Saviour in His redeemed ones ; and the sorrowful, loving, devoted, forgiven followers of Jesus ministering unto His body in its members. There are also to be discerned the questioning thoughts of Jesus which condemn, out of their own mouths, all Pharisees who have the same spirit ; and the declaration of forgiveness before men for all who, like this woman, have loved and served, with all blessing, through faith, of peace and salvation.

CHAPTER VIII. Here is seen to be a new departure ; Jesus with His twelve go forth for the purpose of making known to men the glad tidings of the kingdom of God ; and accompanying the itinerating party there were those women who ministered unto the Lord and His disciples of their substance. The thought which seems to be embodied in the joining of the woman to the company of the men is, that there is not merely the kingdom of righteousness in this little band, but along with it there are the accompanying graces which minister to the partakers of that kingdom. For example, Mary means blessed and exalted ; Magdalene, tower of strength, majestic ; Joanna, grace and mercy ; and Susanna, joy and a lily : thus those thoughts which are blessed, elevating, gracious, joyful, and beautiful surrounded the company which bring to men the righteous kingdom of God in spirit.

The parable of the sower takes in this place an interesting part ; it is the subjective reception of truth in the soul as relating to the kingdom of righteousness ; and the study of the parable in connection with the conversation betwixt the Lord and His disciples ; the mysteries of the kingdom, and His interpretation, will prove it most and profitable to every student.

The parable of the lighted candle speaks to the Christian servant and subject who has received the seed of grace into his heart and is thus changed or regenerated, that the duty of the Christian is obedience to the law of God in meekness ; and this means making manifest the world God's will, which is light, upon those who are in darkness. To live contrary to this is to fail in the object of His mission and to smother its operations ; for this secret thing give

cannot remain hidden from men. The meek followers of the Jesus King must take good heed to what they hear, and also how, for it depends entirely upon what use they make of their privilege—whether they will receive more or lose what they already seem to possess. The coming of the mother and brethren at this time, going to see Him, reveals this thought, that all who are meek and obedient to the will of God, and seekers after truth and righteousness are His brethren. The humble, penitent, and meek, who seek after truth and righteousness, have all one goal in their old labours; it is the desire to see Jesus Christ in some form or other of His manifestation of Himself.

The next incident—that of the storm on the lake—takes a new form when looked upon from the stand-point of the fourth cycle of the fourth blessing of righteousness in that cycle. There is a going forth upon the stormy waters of this world of the kingdom of righteousness, “but as they sailed, He (the Head) fell asleep:” the storm came down, the boat was almost filled, and they were in great peril. In their tumult they cry to Him that they are perishing, when He arose, rebuked the wind and water, and there was a calm.

Is not this a magnificent conception of the history of the kingdom of righteousness amongst men? it was launched forth into the world at His command; but soon, all too soon, He was forgotten; a stormy wind of every form of evil and of heresy has blown upon the bark to destroy it; men of the world have risen in their rebellion to seize and drag it down to the bottom. The men who have been in charge of the ship of truth and righteousness have been at their wits' end; and at last, in despair, they remember the Master and cry to Him, making known to Him their perishing condition. Calmly and in His majesty He arises and speaks to the power of the air, the vain and foolish thoughts of men, and they are hushed to rest; the masses of men who would destroy society are rebuked, and they fall back in confusion.

His words helpless, awe-struck, unable to lift a hand against the majestic Word. This is the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is so like

“Where is your faith? Say no longer, ‘What manner of man is this?’” but realise that He is in very deed and truth the King of righteousness before whom infidelity in its every form, and sensuality in its manifold conditions, must be banished from this earth, and before the majesty of His presence like chaff before the wind.

The story of the demoniac of Gadara when studied from the stand-point of righteousness in the spirit of mercy presents, if not a new face, at least a more perfect conception of this parable of the kingdom of God.

What is Gadara but a picture of the soul of man; of all the things that are associated and stored away in the memory? It is a place that is wounded; but man cannot describe its boundaries. In this place, in this condition, there are a legion of thoughts, and every one of these, if not kept out of the way of righteousness, is a devil ready to show its face.

This is not by any means an over-drawn picture, or reality, it is the very life, and is seen to be a correct manifestation of the unclean and debased spirit and the debased soul with its legion of wilful, passionate, and unrighteous thoughts. *The Lord Jesus, the King of righteousness and*

of mercy, stands face to face with the unrighteous, completely perverted, irrational and irresponsible creature; God and the devil, good and evil, are here face to face, and in this miserable creature the fight for the supremacy is to take place. A fight—no; the devil cannot lay upon Jesus; the light of God destroys darkness, and the devil heard crying out, and beseeching that he may not be tormented. The foul fiend has no pity upon man; for this poor wretch was reduced to insanity. What then shall the Lord of mercy do to this praying creature that is afraid of his due? He permits the legion to go into swine, and in them to seek their own destruction. What a strange manifestation of righteousness and of mercy; of the mighty power of the Son of God and the miserable condition of sinful man. This, this is the horrible revolting picture of what sin will do when man eats that which is of his own pleasure, seeks to possess the world, and would presumptuously seek to be a god in wisdom. Be afraid and tremble, O soul, for this would have been thy portion but for the matchless mercy and glorious righteousness of Jesus Christ. O Lord! what can men say unto Thee? This world was one horrible Gadara when Thou didst visit it; and even now, how many love their swinish thoughts more than mercy, and sin more than righteousness. Truly the prayers of Thy people must seem like mocking words, when they cry unto Thee to be merciful, when Thou art agonising to save men from their horrible condition. Come, Lord Jesus, visit Thy people in Thy great mercy, teach and guide them Thyself, for assuredly they are helpless without Thy aid and the gracious influences of Thy Holy Spirit. Return, O Lord, return unto Thy people, so that they also may gladly receive Thee, being anxiously waiting for Thy presence.

The scene is changed again, and in the crowd of those who are delighted by the Master's presence, there is seen advancing one of the rulers of the synagogue, named Jairus, who falling down at His feet beseeched the Lord to go into his house and see his daughter who was at the point of death. In the way He was crowded by the people, and the poor woman who had been unwell for twelve years, and could find no physician to heal her, touched His garment and was made whole. She would have departed with the stolen blessing, but the Lord perceived her and caused her to make confession of the blessing she had received. In the meantime, servants from the ruler's house brought intelligence of the child's death, and they thought it would be useless to trouble the Master any further; but He encouraged the ruler, rebuked the mourners, and brought the maiden back to life again. These two incidents are to be read as parables in the kingdom of heaven with the cycle of righteousness around them, and in the light of the blessings of purity and peace. The Righteous and Merciful goes first to Gadara to seek the lost; but those who possess the light of truth and are set in His Church must come forth to seek Him if they would get His blessing. In the kingdom of righteousness, historically, there cannot be any greater One than the Merciful; but He comes forth with mercy to Gadara, and afterward He is called to come unto His people that He may give them renewed life and peace in Himself. It is betwixt these great events, which are great landmarks in history, that

l by so many seeking His blessing. But this one esentative of the great principle of purity. Her life serable because of an issue of blood from the body, re soul, but she touched Him secretly, and she was sness and purity met upon this woman and she was teousness and purity will be touched by the Christian may be made righteous and holy ; but such a gift to church granted in secret, is not given that it may be e private life, there must be a confession of what re for the soul and the church, so that God's Name l. The coming of Jesus to the dead maiden is the hteous King of peace to His church; and by His be a manifestation of the resurrection of truth and ore men, say, for example, of His Holy Word. The ished at this mighty work, but it was not a thing to it was to be for them and for all men, a matter of e this was a sign of a greater event which would k. This death with its resurrection is a figure of a ich would move not merely a house and a synagogue, Church and the world.

This is the beginning of the cycle of the kingdom n by the sending forth of the twelve disciples with rity over all devils and diseases ; their mission being ul one, that of preaching the kingdom of God, and ; sick. The spirit of the missionaries is in harmony ssing ; they go forth empty handed, poor in purse, onal spiritual power ; but they are strong in God, and is will in a humble, patient, and obedient spirit.

l was perplexed by the rumours which he heard about hat he had beheaded John, but a mightier than John nget men, and thus his curiosity was aroused and he e Jesus. For this man there was no mercy, healing t ; the Merciful would not seek his face, but flee from hands were red with the blood of the prophets of stles who had fulfilled their mission, and the people n, there was abundant mercy, healing, and comfort in ar away from the courts of kings and the houses of

ere is only five loaves and two small fishes ; but these, ; and distribution through His servants, will fill the sit at His feet. His Word of mercy, received in ed, and will prove a blessing to men. His Holy Word isfy the longing soul, if the soul is meek, but failing ithin, and the putting of the power gained to a right dissatisfaction, the seeking after the world's dainties, will loathe the bread from heaven. What a blessing would be, if all men were meek of spirit ; thankful gifts and graces ; and animated by the merciful spirit w-creatures. It would not be heaven altogether, but

the saints would possess the inheritance of the earth ; God's law would be observed by men, and the spirit of mercy would be fully manifested.

The confession of Peter's belief in Jesus as contained in the words, "The Christ of God;" and the words of Jesus to His disciples, commanding them not to tell any one this thought, with the explanation as to His sufferings, rejection by the people, death, and resurrection, contain the righteous kingdom of God in its hidden treasures. It is the kingdom of mercy to men ; but hidden within these words there is also the righteousness of the kingdom of God.

The words of Jesus to His disciples as to their duties in denying themselves, taking up the cross and following Him ; as to the saving and losing of life ; the gaining of the world and losing the soul ; and being ashamed of Him amongst men, is to be read in the light of the Merciful sending forth His messengers of mercy with the kingdom of mercy to men. The way is not a pleasant one, because it is the path of self-sacrifice and of crucifixion, but it is following Him, who gave His life that man might live, and who gave up the throne of the universe so that men might not be cast away from the favour of God.

The scene upon the mount of transfiguration reveals the pure moral nature of the Son of God. Truth, bright as the sun flashed forth from His countenance as He prayed ; and His righteousness in His life was glorious and beautiful as the glistening whiteness of the snow. There appeared talking with Him, but in glory, in spotless purity, Moses and Elias, and their conversation was about the work of mercy, the decease at Jerusalem. They who had gone before were privileged to see and understand the great work of mercy ; but the Christian Church was soon as heavy with sleep, and thus unable to comprehend what these things meant. "When they were fully awake they saw His glory, and the two men that stood with Him." When? Not quite yet ; but the day is near when they will understand this scene ; and then they will not speak about making three tabernacles, but be satisfied to listen to the beloved Son of God, and to hear Him only.

The scene at the foot of the mountain is upon the plain of human life, in the cycle of mercy, and the condition of men before peace comes upon this world is depicted in the story of the man whose son was possessed by an unclean spirit. This kind was one of the worst in its form ; and the disciples, in the absence of their Master, were unable to cast it out. The disciples and the people are described as a "faithless and perverse generation" that is without faith in the Word and power of God, and perverted in the ways of unrighteousness. There seems to be impatience and even subdued anger in the Lord's words ; as if His patience was almost exhausted by such a generation, and His long suffering could hardly extend further to those so utterly unworthy of His mercy and kindness. The child was healed and given to his father ; and such a manifestation of the mighty power of God caused great amazement amongst the people. But whilst the people were full of wonder, Jesus took the opportunity of impressing upon the disciples the necessity of thinking intently upon what they had heard ; because, although men would in this manner speak of the

power of God, the kingdom of mercy was not to be forwarded by praises, but by the Son of man becoming subject to men by being delivered into their hands. The disciples did not understand these things; how very few of the followers of Christ have understood them; by power will the kingdom of mercy and of peace be obtained; but Jesus says no, this is your great lesson, and you will not discern that the kingdom of mercy in the world is to be made successful by giving up, and by becoming subject, and not by the power of God or of man. Christ's disciples were singularly reticent, and afraid to speak to Him upon this subject in other words, there has been such a hankering and longing for power by Christians that they have been blind to their own highest interests; and in seeking power they have found pride, and instead of peace and love, strife and hatred.

ought the followers of the Lord Jesus to act in the carrying out of this great mission of mercy amongst mankind? In the incidents which are given in this chapter, from verse 46 to the end, there are given the following instructions upon this point. 1st. It is not in the spirit of pride and ambition, and of men seeking to be the greatest; but in the spirit of a little child, and by receiving all who have such a spirit, as would receive the Lord; it is not the world's estimation that must be sought, but to greatness, because in the Kingdom of God they are the best who are the humblest, gentlest, and kindest. 2nd. It is not in the spirit of self-conceit as to dignity, position of authority in the world, or in the world; but rather by a penitent, self-abnegating spirit, which would magnify the good works of others, though not of the same name, nation, class, or denomination. 3rd. It is not in the spirit of an easily-offended spirit, which would bring down the curse, or the wrath of God upon men, if they do not pay all the due honours, respect, and attention to the servants of God; but in the spirit of meekness and meekness, which remembers that the merciful work of the Lord is the important duty, and which sets the face to meet persecution and to receive it for the Lord's sake, and for the good of men. 4th. It is not to be in a vaunting spirit full of self-satisfaction; but by humbly and patiently choosing to follow Jesus though this may bring utter poverty and disgrace in this world. Truth and righteousness in the work of mercy must be followed, and not self-aggrandisement. 5th. It is necessary to remember that the Lord's vows are upon the soul; that He has said, "Follow Me." The work of mercy is the all-important work of the servant of Mercy, and not the ministration to the poor and to those who cannot, or will not, listen to the voice of God. 6th. It is important that this work should be viewed as a duty and privilege; and not as a plough that God gives His servants to hold till their work is done; therefore go forward, and look not back, else the fitness for the work of mercy will be lost.

CHAPTER X. There is a new movement instituted here, and the Lord is sending out the seventy, two by two, preceding Him in His journey from place to place. The reason why the seventy were sent out is because there was a great harvest to be taken in and the usefulness

labourers were few in number. But the seventy were not to suppose they could do the work themselves, prayer was necessary on the so that a blessing might follow their labours and be the means of bringing forth an increased number of Christian workers. The seventy sent forth as lambs among wolves, empty of purse and of self-interest intent upon their mission and with the rich blessing of peace upon their lips and in their souls. Wherever they went they were to receive things proffered to them by those who showed them kindness; their duties were to preach that the kingdom of God was nigh upon men, and to heal the sick. Should any reject them or their mission the dust which would cleave to their feet would be wiped off, as a testimony against them. The responsibilities of those who reject the Word of God through the servants of Christ are increased; the light of truth being so much more distinct, duty by the more plain and the judgment more awful. If, when God's Word of Truth is proclaimed to men by the faithful followers of it is despised and rejected because men love the darkness rather than the light, and prefer sin to holiness, then what excuse will they find for their pride and folly in the day of judgment? This cycle strikes a high key-note of moral purity and human responsibility. They have their mission, and it is, being humble and holy themselves, to others to whom they speak to accept and obey the same principle. The Holy and Pure Light of God had been shining upon Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, but these cities, though exalted to the very height of their great privileges, had not profited by them as they ought, and the woe and the curse would fall upon them. The disciples may be disappointed if their work should also be like that of their Master; they that hear the Word from their lips, hear the Lord; and if they reject His messenger they will reject the Lord also, and the Father will send Him.

The seventy returned from their mission with joy; they had been very successful in their work in His Name. Their success and joy gave a spirit of buoyancy to the Master's thoughts; and in spirit He cast Satan down from the heaven in the human soul, wherein he had reigned so long. They had been able to cast out devils, now He gave them authority to tread beneath their feet every infidel power of the enemy, and remain unhurt themselves. But they are to be humble and obedient, rejoicing not on account of the power they have received, but because their names were found written in heaven.

When this success of the mission was reported to Jesus the Father, joy in His Spirit, and thanks was rendered by Him unto the Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that the hidden things of the kingdom of God were concealed from the wise, and revealed unto babes. This is the Father's method of dealing with men; they who are full of conceit as to their own knowledge, and will not condescend to ask God to teach the ways, must stumble on in the darkness; whilst the infant in Christ, to the Father, and the helpless state of the babe in Christ is its plea for light and guidance in the divine life. The Lord points very clearly that the supposed strength and wisdom of men are vanity and folly; and that the weakness and simplicity of the child

f God are their real strength and safety; and then, as if thinking upon His relationship towards the redeemed children who rely upon Him, He points out the greatness of the power committed into His hands as the Moral Governor of the universe. This seems to be a thought that will stagger men, and thus He points out that they must not limit their vision and conception of His power and glory by what they see by their physical eyes. There are the unseen things which the Father knows about the Son, and the Son about the Father, but if they were like babes of grace they also would receive a revelation of the Father through the Son. These words were spoken, at least, to all the seventy; but as if they were of special importance as bearing upon the future, He turned privately to the twelve, His witnesses, telling them that they were blessed in seeing such things, for prophets and kings had desired to see and hear them, and had not done so. The thought that seems to arise out of this portion of Scripture is that the Father sees, and foresees, the success of His work in the overthrow of sin and evil lusts in the souls of men; the dominion of evil is seen to be broken; the souls of men will again become pure and holy before God, and His dominion in the souls of men in truth and righteousness would surely come to pass. The vision is a glowing prophecy, viewed from the stand-point of one soul, but developing into the kingdom of God even in its fulness; the seed has taken root and brought forth fruit, and His eye detects the consummation of His Own work in the destruction of the works of the devil and the establishment of the kingdom of God amongst men.

To know the holy and merciful will of God is one thing; but to obey and willingly obey is something of far greater importance. The lawyer who stood up and tempted Jesus was not an ignorant man, he knew the will of God, and yet his question was, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" The Lord, in this instance, had to do with a tempter who was wise, and not a babe in grace, and thus in His reply the Lord referred him to the law which he studied. The lawyer's answer was in harmony with the moral law as it related to God and his neighbour, and thus Jesus approved of the answer, upon this platform of pure morality, and told him to do what he said was the law, and then he would live. The lawyer saw that he was caught in his own trap, because it was plain enough to him, through past experience, that the moral law was too high and holy for him to keep it perfectly; and because of this felt want in his own soul, he had put the first question to Jesus to see what He would say upon such a point. The man was evidently a good deal of the serpent in him, and so he began to tempt and to shirk the question of obedience to the moral law of love by asking the question "Who is my neighbour?" The reply of Jesus in the parable of the good Samaritan, in which the priest and Levite, the representatives of goodness, mercy, and truth in the Jewish nation were seen to neglect their duties in a shameful manner, whilst a despised Samaritan is seen acting the part of a neighbour to a Jew, who despised and hated him and his people. The lawyer when asked to answer his own question was shut up to the reply he had to give; so he said, "He that showed mercy on him." The Lord's reply to this

man was, and is still to all men, "Go, and do thou likewise." The teaching embodied in this incident may be summed up in the following thoughts: Avoid tempting men, for this is unholy, and therefore it is devilish. Knowledge of a perfect moral law is not salvation or eternal life; with this knowledge there must be a meek, obedient will, and by this obedience to that which is known there will be discovered the fact that a perfect moral law is not what man can obey, and live. This throws the door wide open for the gospel of grace and mercy, and then it is clearly seen that mercy and not moral law is what man requires from God; and as this is what he requires for himself, so it is his duty not merely to love God and man in harmony with moral law, but also to deal mercifully even with his enemies, and in this spirit there is found eternal life.

The scene is suddenly changed to a certain village and to a certain house, wherein dwelt Martha and Mary, two sisters. The place is not named, but it is not difficult to discern that this is Bethany—the house of the grace of the Lord—and near to Jerusalem. The two sisters are photographed to the life in the few words which describe their aspirations and their outward conduct. The gentle Mary sits at the Lord's feet and drinks in His words; and her choice was the good part which would never be taken away from her. Martha is to be seen distracted with her manifold duties, fretting and complaining because she is left to work alone, and even grumbling that the Lord should seem to care so little for her, and asking Him to bid Mary assist her in the work. The Lord's reply to Martha is very gentle and kind; it is like that of an aged parent fondly remonstrating with a child for troubling itself about trifles, when the one important thing that should be attended to is to do that which is needful for the moment, and to choose, not those things which worry the soul and give trouble, but the truth, righteousness, and peace which will never be taken away. Mary is the picture of the holy soul, calm, tranquil, full of peace, and ready for every duty; and her choice is truth and righteousness, which she drinks from the lips of undefiled Truth and perfect Righteousness. Poor Martha is full of trouble; without and within there are things which distract her attention; and thus the Holy Pure Spirit of God cannot bring the dove of peace into her soul. Many things distract her attention, and thus weaken her power for learning and for service. "One thing is needful," and it is that the eyes should be steadily fixed on the Master's face, whilst sitting calmly at His feet drinking in His words of truth. In this spiritual attitude there is no necessity for fussing and fretting. To drink in His thoughts and obey His will, become, like inspiration and expiration in breathing, the natural actions of the life, and thus knowledge of truth and holiness in life, meekness of spirit and merciful actions, go on steadily hand in hand without any friction or ill-feeling.

CHAPTER XI. Attention is here turned to the Lord, as He was engaged in prayer, and when He had finished His devotions, the disciples requested that He should teach them to pray even as John had taught his followers. The Lord was pleased to give them a form of prayer, wherein He teaches them that they have a Father they have

en with their bodily eyes; His Name is holy and to be hallowed
 m; He has a kingdom to come for which they are to pray and
 He is the Giver of the daily bread which sustains soul and body,
 is implies gratitude to the Giver; men require to be forgiven
 and sins through His mercy, and as they are forgiven so they seek
 give and be merciful to others; and God the Father would be
 l'to give guidance in every way and duty, so that the soul may
 ivered from the evil within and around. The sphere of this
 is that of the pure in heart seeking the face of God the Father;
 is also that of the child seeking to know its dependence upon
 ather for the kingdom to come in its fulness for sustenance,
 nness, and guidance. Perfect peace is not come, but the storm
 ; the sun shines through the clouds, and there is joy and hope
 i the Father. This is not everything, but it is a great deal; and
 mon to be specially drawn from the prayer and the parable, as
 s what follows about the actions of a parent toward a child, is
 nce in God that He will assuredly give in response to prayer all
 in harmony with His will. If an earthly father gives good and
 il to his offspring, "how much more shall your heavenly Father
 e Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" The sphere of this incident
 l its surroundings is faith in God the Father by the child who
 is face being reconciled through His grace and forgiven by His
 ; and the spirit of the child is that of mercy, the desire to be
 ul even as the Father is full of mercy. Man limits the mercy
 l by his own spirit of forgiveness, or the want of it; God does
 it Himself, but in harmony with the laws of mercy He promises
 dy Spirit, and what this promise means man cannot fully discern.
 Lord was seen casting out a devil; the man was dumb, but so
 s the devil was cast out the man spake. This was a marvellous
 and it drew the attention of the people so that they were full of
 r. But wonders are interpreted according to the condition of
 ul; a good and holy work to a pure soul is a good deed no matter
 yond that he could not say anything as to its moral character;
 to a bad man, who is envious and jealous, impious and devilish
 s may be imputed, even though the deed is beneficent. There
 hose in the company when Jesus healed the dumb man who
 ad this last method, and thus they said that the Lord was casting
 vils through power received from the prince of the devils. At
 me time there were those who asked that He would give them
 from heaven, tempting Him; but He knowing their evil thoughts
 i them plainly that their method of thinking and reasoning was
 us, because it was simply absurd to think that Satan would seek
 rthrow his own work; whilst since it was clear that His works
 ood and merciful, the works of God, then the only issue to the
 ent must be that the kingdom of God was come upon them. To
 d understand the parables that follow in which the Lord paints
 ible words the condition of the soul possessed by the strong
 ully armed; the coming of one stronger who overcomes him;
 that unclean spirit *which seeks rest*, leaves its house which is

swept, garnished, and thus partially reformed, and then returns with seven companions, the last state being worse than the first, there must be a reference to the cycle in which this is placed and to the division in that cycle. It is in the cycle of the pure in heart; and under the head of the same blessing; and thus the Pure and Holy One who casts out dumb, unclean spirits that cannot pray unto God, is brought face to face with devilish men of the very worst kind. By the casting out of the dumb, unclean devil the Lord proved Himself to be the stronger One who overcame the man fully armed; if men are not with Him in this work, then they are against Him; if they do not gather in the unholy, so that they may be purified, then they are scattering, and thus they are His enemies. Apply the last parable to the Pharisees, and truly the picture is awful in its significance; the climax of sin and unrighteousness is attained, because self-asserting men say that evil is good, that the devil is as God, and they show by their thoughts, words, and actions that they serve the devil, and not God. The "pure in heart" who seek God's face and favour are blessed; but the impure and unholy are of their father the devil, and they do his works.

Verses 27, 28, record the incident where the woman, as if inspired by God when she heard the word of Jesus, cried out, "Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the breasts which Thou didst suck. But He said, Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." Wicked men say, "He hath a devil, and is mad: why hear ye Him?" Women and children call Him Blessed, and sing His praises. If no human being had been found to utter a word of praise and blessing on the behalf of the King of holiness, then the very stones, inanimate nature, would have uttered His glory and declared His goodness. Thanks be unto God, that by His grace, impressionable souls have always been found who do not stay to reason upon their utterances, but out of the abundance of their thoughts are ready to speak of Him and bless His Name. The thought of the woman contains a figure of great beauty; the body of flesh in which the Lord was clad came from the virgin's womb; and from the breasts of a virgin-mother He had received nourishment. Remove the drapery of the human figure, and from whence came the Lord? Out of the womb of the Morning, from the fountain of Deity, and His sustenance has been the breasts of the consolation of the grace, truth, and love of God. As in the visible world He has only one parent, the virgin-mother, so in the invisible world He had one Father from whence He proceeds, and whose love, grace, and consolations He has fully received. Would men be blessed? then there is also for them a virgin womb, "the Word of God," and if they hear and keep its laws they will be blessed indeed. But this is an evil generation; men will not believe, they must see signs with their eyes, hear strange things with their ears, and handle peculiar things with their hands; in other words, scepticism, spiritualism, and materialism reign, and not faith and the Word of God. The proud city of Nineveh had forgotten God, and its great wickedness was crying out unto God for vengeance upon men who had corrupted themselves; but God had been merciful, the prophet Jonah was sent unto the people of Nineveh, and they repented. Jonah was a sign to the people of

Nineveh that the brooding, dove-like love of God was anxious to save them from destruction, and they understood the sign and repented. Another, a greater than Jonah, had come with the same dove-like spirit in His message of mercy, but He was being rejected, and there was no sign of repentance in the nation. Solomon, the king of peace and wisdom, was so famous in his day that the queen of the south undertook a long journey to see him; but a greater and wiser, the King of peace, had come to the Jews, and they could not discern His Spirit of peace nor His wisdom. Because they would not know or understand the Sign of God, Himself, the queen of the south, who sought after peace and wisdom, would condemn them, and so also would the people of Nineveh who repented when Jonah preached unto them. The great sin of the people was emphatically this, that a great light, even the Light of the world had risen upon them; but the use they were making of His Word was to put it in a dark place, to cover it up by their own vain conceits and traditional ideas, and they would not permit it to shine into, and out from, their souls. They were not obedient, but wilful and disobedient, and thus they were enshrouded in the darkness, instead of receiving and radiating the light of truth. The soul of man is the lamp of God; but to fulfil the end of its being it must fulfil one function, and one only, that is obey God's law. But if there is transgression of law, or the will of man crossing as at right angles the will of God, then darkness must be the result, and not light, and then the whole soul must be full of darkness. This figure is very beautiful; and only those who have studied the laws of optics in the latest developments of science, can understand the exquisite harmony that is manifested here as to physical light and darkness, and spiritual light or truth, and darkness or error. Beware, search carefully into this very important matter, and see that there is no mistake, for although men may say that light is darkness, and darkness light, that truth is error, and error is truth, they will not alter by their foolish conceptions by one hair breadth the laws of God by which there are light and darkness, truth and error. If self and self-conceit rule the soul supremely, then the devil is king, evil is man's choice, and the darkness is the kingdom in which he seeks to dwell; but if God's laws, His Word in nature and in grace, are heard and obeyed, then the King of peace and truth is King, the good will of God is man's choice, and the body being full of light, with no darkness within, then there will be radiation as when a lamp gives light by its bright shining. If this portion of God's Word is studied in the light of the double thought of purity by which God's face is seen, and of the peaceful spirit of the child of God seeking that peace and truth, holiness and righteousness, should be supreme amongst men, then the exclamation of the woman and Christ's remarks about the sign indicate very clearly the spirit of His Own mission to men. If the Lord came from the womb of holiness, righteousness, wisdom, and peace; and drew as from the breasts of God thoughts of grace and truth, men have the same privilege through the Word of God, and by obedience to His laws. No sign will satisfy a wilful, self-asserting sinner; not even the Ambassador from heaven of grace and truth; because the *light of heaven is so refracted, bent out of its*

path when it touches such a medium, that holy thoughts become impure, righteous words turn into crooked ideas, wisdom becomes folly, and words of peace stir up strife and hatred.

As the Lord was thus speaking to the people about the deep things of the kingdom of God, He was invited by a Pharisee to go to his house to dine with him. The Lord graciously accepted the invitation, went into his house, and sat down to meat. The Pharisee had his own ideas about cleanness, and he was astonished that the Lord Jesus did not wash His hands before He partook of any food. The sphere of thought is a hidden one; it does not seem that the Pharisee expressed by words his thoughts, but the Lord responded to his thoughts by answering him as to the real cleanness and uncleanness which should trouble men. The flesh does not profit, it is the spirit; the state of the hands is not sinful, it is the condition of the soul before God. The Pharisees were notorious for their great attention to external observances, but they did not study the condition of the soul in its desires and emotions, and thus though the skin was clean the soul was full of wickedness. Both are important, because God would have a pure soul as well as clean hands; but seeing that the thoughts of a man determine his actions, the motives should first be carefully examined, and then if they are pure everything will be clean. Because of this grievous mistake made by the Pharisees, and being careful to tithe every trifle, so they made external duties the sum of religion, whilst justice and mercy, the spiritual things, were too often neglected. They loved to get praise from men, and pre-eminence in society, but in seeking their own interests they disparaged and wronged others, and thus they were neither gracious nor just. With all their fair external show they were not spiritually living or clean, but rather they were like hidden graves which men do not see, full of rottenness, loathsome and unclean. The Lord was interrupted by a lawyer, who felt that such plain speaking to the Pharisees, as a class, was also a means of reproaching them as a class of men. The lawyers may not have sinned exactly in the same way as the Pharisees, but they also were far from the kingdom of mercy, because by their study of the Word of God and interpretation of its contents they made the Holy Scriptures a grievous burden, and not a message of mercy to relieve men from their heavy, galling yokes. They added burden to burden, thus making life to the contrite and penitent a grievous, unbearable thing, whilst for themselves, they did not so much as attempt to lighten the burden of others, or think of trying to carry a burden of self-sacrifice themselves. They did not lack zeal or public spirit, for if they were not busy striving about the law, they could speak to any extent about the prophets who had been killed. Talk, mere talk, without any practical religion of mercy was their hobby horse on which they rode continually, and because they were full of talk, and not doers of the Word, their religion was a vain thing. Because they were mere talkers, and not workers of righteousness, their behaviour was a sufficient testimony against them that they were like their fathers in their actions. What their fathers had done, and what they were ready to do was a thing well known to the wisdom of God; because although the spirit of persecution had been manifested

t, it was to reach its climax in their generation, so that in the
 n of the Head of the Church, and through His death, the
 l from the beginning might be required of that generation.
 s curse rested upon these men, because to them had been
 God's Word ; they had, by becoming wise in their own
 'taken away the key of knowledge," they had been standing
 ie treasure house of God's wisdom and grace talking and
 ; about different keys that would disclose to men what they
 possess, but as they could not agree which key would fit the
 ie divine wisdom, they would not allow any one else to enter
 words of the Lord, true words, awful words of condemnation,
 e to the souls of these men ; but they were not listened to
 nce and meekness ; pride and hatred, envy and malice, set
 ; in a blaze, and thus they would not comprehend that they
 ig faithfully instructed by the great Teacher as to their
 words, and actions. The Pure One was provoked in many
 peak things upon which His persecutors could lay hold ; but as
 was not yet come, they were unable to do anything to Him.
 men there can be traced the seven-fold spirit of evil as it
 he soul of man ; and in Him there was manifested the seven-
 s of God's Holy Spirit, which will make a man holy, just,
 l, and gracious.

§ XII. There is seen here a great multitude seeking the Lord
 many, and so excited, that they were actually treading upon
 . To this multitude He did not speak directly, but turning
 ciples He began to warn them against the evil spirit of Phar-
 ich is hypocrisy. He did this because the hateful spirit of the
 is one that is exceedingly dangerous ; it covers up, or hides
 if under a veil, things which are unholy ; whilst the face is
 ere is hatred in the soul ; and whilst the man seems in every-
 reatly flourishing, there is a worm at the root, and also rotten-
 ie character, and it is only a question of time as to when the
 osition will be discovered and the devil's flat venomous head
 l instead of the loving spirit of a son of God. Secrecy is use-
 d's universe, the All-seeing is not cheated, so that men ought
 upon this fact that the day of light will unveil all secrets ;
 ed things will be revealed, and what has been kept secret by
 e proclaimed aloud in the street. In view of this day of re-
 r the light of God's truth, how ought men to live ? Not in
 in who may be able to destroy the body, but in the fear of
 All-powerful. The fear of God is not to be a terror-stricken
 but one of perfect confidence, because God never forgets His
 who put their trust in Him. There must be not merely trust
 ut also an open confession of Jesus, the Saviour, because if
 wardice and a denial of Him before men, then in that day the
 e ashamed of the men who denied Him before men. The Lord
 forgive any word uttered against the Son of man, that is, by
 ignorant of spiritual truths ; for such He is the Sin-offering ;
 y man enlightened by the Holy Spirit and knowing spiritual

principles, blaspheme His Name, it would seem that such a sin brings an awful penalty in its track, and that the searing takes place of the conscience which will not respond to grace, and thus it cannot be healed. However terrible the circumstances may be in which a peaceful son of God is brought, the spirit in such an hour is to be that of humble, implicit trust in God, and the Holy Spirit will, without fail, give the needed wisdom and strength for the emergency.

Whilst Jesus was speaking He was rudely interrupted by a man who wished the Lord to become a judge betwixt himself and his brother about an inheritance. His reply is, that His work is not judgment or to be a divider of properties. This incident led Him to warn them as to covetousness, specially upon this ground, because life does not consist of property, but in peace with God, truth, and righteousness. The parable of the rich man who lived for this world alone, and who was just about to enjoy himself when his soul was called hence, shows the utter folly of such a life, because these things were not treasures to save his soul, but things which would tend to sink his soul into the lowest depths. Therefore food for the body, raiment, and all such things are of secondary importance; and men may well trust their heavenly Father that He will give all that is really necessary. The Gentiles might be excused if they were anxious about such matters, but the children of grace, who are inclosed in the loving arms of the Father, whose eye is upon them continually, ought not to be distrustful when they know that it is the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom of heaven. Treasures must be sought in the heaven of God's grace, truth, and righteousness; and if the soul's treasure is in the Lord's keeping, it is quite safe for time and eternity. The peaceful children of God are not to take up their abode permanently amongst men of the world, but rather there must be readiness, so that in an instant the waiting ones will open the door and meet the Lord when His knock is heard. This watching, waiting, patient spirit is very important, for upon it depends their reception by the King. There ought not to be any questioning as to the day or hour of His coming. Watch, be ready, "for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." Peter, as the representative of the visible Church, asked the question whether this parable was specially meant for the servants of Christ, or for the body of the people? To this the Lord replied that the stewards, who are rulers, have greater responsibilities than the people; but if they are faithful their reward will be in proportion to their faithful service. But if unfaithful and disobedient, then the punishment would be severe in proportion. Blessed are they who, humble and poor in spirit, serve the Lord Jesus in His kingdom of peace on earth; He will surely come again, and there will be gracious rewards to all who have served Him faithfully.

The strain of thought is abruptly changed; there is a turning away from the objective kingdom of peace and its duties, and a sudden subjective contemplation of the effects that would be produced by His Spirit of peace. "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and what will it be if it is already kindled? But how can sin be consumed without fire; and if no fire, altar, or sacrifice on the earth, how shall men be saved?" The peaceful Son of God knew well what the effects of His peaceful mission

would be, nothing less than that the Lamb should be sacrificed by the wolves, given as a prey into their teeth; or that the gentle Dove would be destroyed by the vultures. The fire was indeed already kindled around Him, and He knew that the hour of sacrifice would come; there was an awful baptism near at hand, and until that hour was past there would be a terrible straitening upon the Son of man. But this fire, as of sacrifice and baptism of anguish, was not to be limited to the Son of man; it was to be a mighty power bringing about strife and division wherever the kingdom of peace came amongst men until families and kingdoms were divided, and by this means to be purified and baptized into His Spirit. Men have been singularly apt in discerning the changes in the weather, and thus they can foretell when a shower is coming, or when it is going to be heat; if able to do this with the mutable, external world of nature, then why are they not able to discern the spiritual changes which transpire, and to foretell the events that must come to pass? The reason was not far to seek, men would not honestly consider the things passing on in their midst; and they would not ponder carefully the thoughts that were current amongst men; they were not honest, true, or righteous; therefore they were blind instead of foreseeing, and unable to give a correct judgment as to the signs occurring in their midst. If they could not discern clearly all that was transpiring in their midst, this at least they ought to understand that their case in the court of heaven was an utterly hopeless one; therefore any delay in seeking reconciliation would be madness, because if once the case came before the Judge, the consequence would be the prison, and no deliverance until the debt was paid to the last mite.

CHAPTER XIII. But great care is required upon such a question as righteousness and acceptance with God, because of what may seem like sudden judgments falling upon men. Wicked men may put out their hands and destroy men at the altar of sacrifice; or a tower may fall and suddenly end their lives, but these things prove nothing as to the spiritual condition. Repentance and faith in God are the absolute requirements for all men; failing these, they will fall in their own blood, even at the very side of the Divine Sacrifice; or the Rock, the Tower of Salvation, will fall upon and crush them.

The Lord at this point told to them the parable of the fig-tree which was planted in a vineyard; how that the Master of the vineyard came for three years seeking fruit upon it, but found none; at last, He was resolved to cut it down, because it was worse than useless, seeing it took up the ground where another good tree might be planted; but upon the intercession of the dresser it was spared for another year, and if after everything that could possibly be done for it, there was barrenness, then it should be cut down as the Master desired. Justice waiting upon gracious patience, pleads for punishment upon those who do not fulfil the function of life, but Mercy prays for one more opportunity; and then, if there is no blossom of repentance, or gracious fruits manifested, why it must be so, because nothing more could be done for its well-being. These thoughts seem to bear specially upon the kingdom and work of Jesus

Christ upon earth, in His mission as the Lamb of God, the Peacemaker, through whom peace comes to men. This work is far from being a pleasant one, it is like a fire which will set opposing elements in fierce conflict, the issue being the burning-up of Jesus, the Burnt-offering, as an acceptable sacrifice unto God. Such an experience is a baptism into death; such a crucifixion of the flesh that its power is entirely broken and the spirit is set free from sin and death to live a spiritual life unto God. Since the Lord endured this for His body, the redeemed Church, it also had to be sacrificed and baptized in the same manner. But there are those who do not understand such things, because they will not receive the truth; therefore, unless there is repentance there is no blessing from His Sacrifice; and if they despise the Sent One of God, their end must be destruction; only the Lord is full of compassion and patience, therefore, another opportunity was granted to them at the request of the peaceful Son of God, but if not utilised then, the end would certainly be destruction.

As Jesus was teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath, His attention was directed toward an infirm woman who was so bent down that she could not raise her body erect like a human being. The Lord was moved to help one so infirm, and calling her, in gracious words he said, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity." Putting His hands upon her, she became erect in body, and gave glory to God. The work was one of mercy upon a day of rest and peace, and thus it was in perfect harmony with the will of God. The ruler of the synagogue was indignant that such works should be done on the Sabbath, thus, as he thought, profaning it by doing work, and he would have men come and be healed on other days of the week, but not on the Sabbath-day. The Lord knew that the man made the sanctity of the Sabbath the pretence of stopping His works of mercy, and thus the word hypocrite goes home like a powerful sting into the soul of this wicked, unmerciful man. His argument from loosing an ox or ass and taking them to water, was a matter that everybody could understand, since it would have been cruel to keep creatures tied up, thirsting for water, which the owner of the beast could supply. If, then, men are merciful or kind to their creatures who serve them, how much more ought the Lord of mercy and the Prince of peace to set free on the Sabbath a meek, obedient daughter of the faithful Abraham bound so long by the enemy. To understand this sign in the kingdom of God, it is necessary to remember the place of this incident as in the cycle of peace, and under the head of the blessing of meekness, or the spirit set free to obey law. Look upon Jesus as the peaceful Son of God come to give the Sabbath of rest and peace to those bowed down with infirmity; upon the woman as the meek child of faith waiting for deliverance; and upon the ruler of the synagogue as the unmerciful tyrant who would keep the soul subject to tradition, and not to God's gracious laws, and then the incident shines forth in great beauty. The sphere of thought is raised upon the figure of Moses and Israel in Egypt to the King of peace, setting free the redeemed soul. The bent body is the sign of the fetter, but it is specially the meek and faithful spirit that is delivered by His

d word of power. The freedom in this instance is not gained th into the wilderness, but to bring peace and rest to the meek is the granting of the assurance of the divine favour to the that being forgiven and accepted in Jesus Christ, there is free-ice, and joy in serving the King.

hat is the peaceful and righteous kingdom of God like? In ct it is like a mustard-seed which a man puts in his own garden, ows to become a great tree, and it gives shelter to the fowls of In other words, the gospel of peace seems a very insignificant the eyes of men, but it is a living, organic, divine power; and ceived into the soul it will grow according to law, and become blessing to a man and to mankind. It is also like leaven, hen it is received into the soul quietly, works until it permeates ges the whole mass into harmony with the holy, righteous, and will of God.

ord was journeying on toward Jerusalem, when there came unto nan who was evidently more curious about the question how uld be saved, than anxious about his own safety. To such a Lord will not deign a reply. A look of reproof, which con-ich levity and curiosity, is enough. And then He spake to all each of His voice with intense earnestness, telling them that t matter for speculation, but for striving, agonising to get t gate which is so narrow that many who seek to enter in will ble. A day of mercy is given to man, not to be foolish or e wise in their own conceits, but that they may by any lawful t inside of the house of God's mercy and salvation; for if door be shut and they are found outside, prayers and pretences navailing, and the privileges despised will only add to their and trouble. The curious and conceited will find themselves, he company of Abraham and the prophets, as they imagined e sure to be because of their superior knowledge and privileges, de the gate amongst those whom they called dogs, publicans, ers, whilst the despised Gentiles from all parts of the world d a seat in the kingdom of God.

at time another class of men came to Him advising His de-immediately, as Herod would fain put Him to death. His hat the cunning fox is powerless. He has His work of casting ils and of healing to perform on the day of mercy, and ; the souls of men from sin, but after that there will be a tate, in which the men who have their glory in external things : no peace. In the meantime it was necessary that He should rd, because the order of things in this day of grace is that all are put to death in Jerusalem, in the visible city of God, ey ought to be honoured. The brooding love of God in Jesus is been full of the tenderest care, and of even a maternal . The eagle and the hawk have often been seen hovering be beloved of God; but even as a hen shelters her chickens r wings in the hour of danger, so those known by His Name protected and cared for. But all this was now at an end; the He had brought forth had rejected Him, and thus the hearth

was left desolate. Soon, very soon, the eagles of Rome would be seen hovering around the city; and from that time, when the stone of God's judgments fell upon them, they would not drink of the cup of salvation, or sit under the shelter of His love, until the day they would be awakened from the night of trouble to say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord."

CHAPTER XIV. The Lord Jesus is described here as going into a Pharisee's house on the Sabbath-day for the purpose of eating bread; and before the Lord in the house there was seen a man ill with the dropsy. The Lord Jesus put this question to the Pharisees, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?" They could not give Him an answer, and so He healed the man and sent him away. They were evidently not satisfied with the Lord's way of doing things, and therefore He led them to consider that if they had an ass or an ox which had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath, would they not use the suitable means to pull them out. To this argument they could give no answer, and thus they were silent. If it is right and merciful for men to deliver their cattle out of a pit, then much more is it right, lawful, good, and gracious for the Lord Jesus to heal the body of a man that is full of dropsy, so that the organs of the body may perform their functions, and the organism be not destroyed by its own morbid secretions. If it is lawful to heal the body of a man in such a condition, how much more suitable to cleanse the soul, purge it from the many foul thoughts which hinder a healthy, moral life, and by bringing the soul into harmony with the will of God, to give freedom of action and peace toward God.

The phase of sin which stands in opposition to the state of purity by which a man can see God, is that of self-assertion through which a man can only see himself and his own greatness and pretensions. This self-assertion on the part of the Pharisees and others came under the observation of the Lord Jesus, and to rebuke them for what was so unseemly, He told them the parable of the wedding-feast, advising them not to sit down in the highest or the best places, because there was a risk that more honourable men might be invited to the wedding, whose places they would take, and they would be required to go lower down, and thus, though they were ready to exalt themselves, they were not the best judges, and the issue would be humiliation before all the guests seated at the table.

Again, as men ought not to seek their own glory, or be self-asserting, so men in giving feasts to others should not do so from selfish motives, so that they might be recompensed, or receive as much again; but rather they ought to give to the poor and the sick who cannot repay their kindness, and then there would be a reward at that day when justice and mercy would be raised from the dead.

There was one man at the table who seemed to appreciate the Lord's thoughts in this matter, and he exclaimed, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." But evidently the man was not of the kind who was as anxious to eat of the Bread of God's Holy Word as he was to eat of the feasts provided by his friends, and thus, on his

he Lord told the parable of the great supper as a warning of superficiality in religion, of the necessity of attending to the God, or if it was despised, then the feast would be taken by those who would accept it; the consequence being that those who were self-sufficient and self-asserting would not be permitted to taste the supper so graciously provided. The feast of God is a feast of truth and righteousness, and by His grace men are invited to enter in and receive all that the kingdom of righteousness offers.

But truth and righteousness, purity and peace, are not so easily obtained. There must be decision as to duty, the giving up of what is loved, and the bearing of things that are unpleasant. The development of a holy character is not a thing of a day but for life; thoughtful men will sit down and consider fully the whole of their life that there may not be any breakdown in the work. It is not only a thing for this life, but also for eternity; and thus the wise man will consider whether it is safe to go on in his rebellious ways, that one day the King must be met, and as there is no power to contend with Him, it is surely the right thing to get terms of peace on any delay before the day of destruction comes. If there is a true profession, and the choosing of God's service, it is well; but a true profession is also necessary in one who is a disciple of Jesus Christ. The grace of grace and holiness which purifies the soul is a good thing; but grace is without purity or mercy, then how can it be made gracious? It is an outcast thing, unfit for heaven or earth; let those who have ears to hear such thoughts hear them, lest they be cast, unholy, useless state be theirs. This chapter, it will be seen, is interpreted in the light of the peace-seeking Son of God, who came to bring purity to men, or holiness into the soul. The means of grace and holiness is the Word of God, and the means of grace and holiness is found in plenty in the Scriptures which the Jews possessed. The Word of God as a means of mercy, purity, and peace, is always asking for the means by which the soul may be cleansed from sin; and the means by which the sin-stricken, the selfish, and self-asserting, and the conceited are wise in their own opinions of themselves, is to accept humbly the invitation of God's grace in Jesus Christ, to renounce the self, to be self-sacrificing, to count the cost of the undertaking, and to receive peace with God. Mercy and holiness are essential to the attainment of salvation. In Christ there is all that man requires. Into the man the powers must be received and developed; failing this, man is left weak, unfit for heaven, or to live upon this earth.

CHAPTER XV. In this chapter the Lord is seen as surrounded by the Pharisees and sinners who have come forth to hear Him; whilst the Pharisees and Scribes are heard complaining that the Lord should so far forget His dignity which becomes a teacher as to have fellowship with such men. To the complaints of these men, the Lord by parable shows that He is the object of His mission to this earth as the peace-bringer of God; and the question to Him is not one of dignity or respect, but of searching after something valued which had been lost. If a man had a hundred sheep and he lost one of them, would

he not set forth upon a search expedition, going after the lost creature until it was found, and when found would it not be brought home with rejoicing? and if the neighbours were anxious about the losing and the finding of what was precious to a neighbour, would not this be a suitable time for mutual congratulations and joy? This which is so natural amongst men is also the kind of feeling in heaven over a sinful child that departs from the heavenly fold. There is a lost one out in the mighty universe, gone astray from the path of righteousness; he will never return of his own will, therefore the Owner would go forth to find what He prizes, and by showing His love, pity, and care for the outcast He will bring it back to the fold again. There is great joy in heaven when a sinner repents, because it is the restoration of the loved and the lost; there is no joy of salvation over the righteous or the self-righteous, because the first live in the light and joy of the Father's face continually, whilst the latter are not saved, they are on the way to destruction unrepentant, and thus rejecters of the love and grace which left heaven to save the lost.

There is a new figure introduced, and it is a woman who has lost one piece of silver out of ten. She is engaged with a lighted candle sweeping and cleaning the house until that which was lost is found. When it is found then there is joy amongst friends and neighbours, because that which was lost is again possessed. In like manner, when a sinner turns unto God and finds peace in Jesus Christ the angels or servants of God have joy because of this change. The first picture may be taken as an objective representation of the coming of the peaceful Son of God to save men; the second picture is subjective in its nature, in other words, the spirit of man by the Word of God, searching out the truth, and when the fact is known that the soul has lost the image of God through sin, then there follows repentance, salvation, and joy. The first is objective as to heaven and the world, the latter subjective as to the soul or to the Church of Christ as a whole.

The parable of the prodigal son covers a much larger field of thought; but it may be suggested that the great lesson it is meant to convey will be found by considering the place in the cycle which it holds. The cycle is that of the peacemaker, and the blessing is also that of the peaceful Son of God; but there seems to arise in this part a three-fold cycle. Peace brings the Peaceful One, and it also brings by Him these three thoughts. The first parable reveals the Lord Jesus as the humble and poor of spirit, who gave up all that He might seek the lost; the second parable illustrates the state of the soul in its darkness and the effect of the Word of Truth under the influence of the Holy Spirit; whilst the parable of the prodigal son speaks not only of the meek spirit which is so precious a manifestation of God in Christ, and by man when he is repentant and forgiven, but specially the Father is represented as having two sons, just like the Pharisees and the sinners by whom the Lord was surrounded. The latter had been self-willed and foolish in the extreme, and his behaviour had been not merely what would grieve a parent, but what might with justice have been the means of his being cut off from his father and family for ever.

However, when the day of famine came, he thought upon his home and determined to return thither, repentant, and if his father would be gracious, to propose to serve in the house as a servant. The repentant returning son finds a watching gracious father, and instead of the father degrading his son, he is received with joy and feasting. But there is a discord in the family, the proud elder brother despises the prodigal, and in his folly and anger he becomes unjust toward his father, and utters words which are not simply selfish, but shameful from a son to such a father. The repentant son is meek and willing to obey even as a servant; the father is gracious and meek toward his son who had grieved him so much, and even to this petulant, selfish son he is full of grace and meekness, whilst at the same time he teaches this elder son how wrong he is in cultivating or permitting such a self-seeking spirit to rule his thoughts, words, and actions. The parable seems, but is not really, incomplete in this sense that it does not show whether the elder brother went into the house or not; but it is complete in showing the spirit of the penitent as meekly seeking his father and as becoming subject to his will; the father's meek, patient spirit toward the prodigal; and the petulant, selfish spirit in the brother are surely the important threads running through the story. To all Pharisees, who despise publicans and sinners, the Lord Jesus is still saying that the method of the kingdom of God is patience, pity, forgiveness, and meekness toward sinners, with a joyous welcome to the repentant who were lost and dead to God and goodness; whilst to the self-righteous it is also meekness, the restraint of the laws of grace, gentle remonstrances, and kind promises; but, beware, it also aims to say, lest the Father be changed into the righteous King and Judge, for then if such a proud, selfish, unforgiving spirit is manifested there will be the rejection of what is so vile and sinful, and thus the despised will enjoy the feast, whilst the highly privileged will be cast out into the outer darkness.

CHAPTER XVI. Here the Lord Jesus is discerned as speaking a parable "unto His disciples," whilst the Pharisees standing by heard the words. The story speaks about a rich man who had a steward, the man was accused to him because he was wasting his master's property. There is acknowledged responsibility, for the steward is to account, and because he is unable to clear himself his position is taken from him. When the master has given his decision, the steward is seen considering and resolving as to his method of escape and so soon as his decision was made he put it into execution by dishonestly defrauding his master. The rich man commended the steward for his forethought, skill, subtlety, and cleverness in looking after his own interests; and it will be granted that he showed more shrewdness and worldly wisdom in this service of his unrighteous self than the children of the truth do in the service of their Master and Father. How should the parable read as it is related to the work of God? The rich man may represent God from whom all things proceed; the steward a servant of God intrusted with a living body, this at the very least, and he is responsible unto God.

for that nature which he possesses. The creature has no right to waste the time, bodily strength, or spiritual powers granted to him; so he may calculate upon a day of reckoning when the stewardship will require to be accounted for to God. Men will act righteously or unrighteously; as a matter of fact, whether they know it or not they do choose the master they will serve; and it is also a well-known fact that men who love themselves and seek the world and its pleasures are more skilful and successful even in their own way than those who are the servants of God. Why is this that men who serve a bad cause are so diligent and clever, whilst those who serve a good cause are often so indifferent and careless about the results of their labours? The reason is plain enough, the man of the world actually hungers and thirsts after that which is unrighteous, he is determined to get what he desires, and by the means within his reach he gains his end. Is it so with the disciples of Jesus Christ? Does history prove that they have possessed a peaceable spirit, and that in the spirit of peace they have hungered and thirsted that righteousness and truth should prevail upon the earth? The children of Mammon have been wiser in their generation than the sons of God and of truth, because they have been in earnest; when the children of truth are in earnest then they will also be more wise, and they will find the means to gain the end they desire. It may be suggested that riches receive the name "Mammon of unrighteousness" not because they are unrighteous, but because these things are what selfish men desire to obtain for selfish ends; but whilst disciples of Christ are to set their chief desire upon truth and righteousness, still those things upon which men of the world set their affections are not to be despised, but made a means for gaining higher ends. The visible things are not eternal; but they are useful as the means by which there is education in truth and righteousness; therefore the disciple is called upon to be faithful to the trust confided to him, and righteous in all his actions. If men are not faithful in tangible things, how can they possibly be faithful in truth and righteousness? and if they are not faithful in the things intrusted to them by another, how can they ever possess truth and righteousness, which are God's endowments to all men who are faithful? This parable touches the very kingdom of God within the soul by which peace and righteousness can be realised; but men must choose which master they will serve; they cannot serve God and also self with its manifold desires; they are opposed to each other, and thus God or Mammon is the choice of every man.

The Pharisees heard the story about the unjust steward, and they scoffed at what He said; but He told them that they were of the class who would try to justify themselves whilst doing unrighteous things. This, however, was a useless, foolish thing for men to do, because no matter how highly unrighteousness may be exalted amongst men, it would ever be an abominable thing in God's sight. They would do well to be in another mood toward the thoughts He was presenting to them, because grave responsibilities rested upon them. The law and the prophets were the sole authority until John, since then the gospel of the kingdom of God had been preached in their midst, and those

and left the former had by an intense spiritual struggle received the kingdom of God, and entered into it. Still, although the one died to be vanishing from sight and the other taking its place, this was not in the outward forms only, and not in spiritual principles, because these can never truly change or pass away. The kingdom of God in the world, the prophets, and Christ is one; and it is built upon the mercy of God which is seeking after the unity of peace in this world. God does not punish the putting away of His children and adultery or unholy love, all evil, hatred, and unrighteousness is an abomination in His sight.

These are the worst forms of schism; but if men would be faithful sons of God, and merciful in their actions, then the kingdom of God and righteousness would be amongst men.

What will the issue of the present order of things be? Will this kingdom of mercy, which works for peace, continue? And will there be a variation in the world to come when the day of grace is at an end? Are there any men sufficient information for their salvation in this world? The reply to such questions seems to be given in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. It represents a man who lives in this world enjoying everything that the world can give to gratify his desires; whilst another man, Lazarus—the help of God—a beggar, lies at his gate and with sores, desiring to satisfy his hunger with the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table; the dogs were his only friends, for they licked his sores, and they were his companions. But there is a change of night, of place, and time and the beggar is seen in Abraham's bosom, whilst the rich man is discovered in Hades, in torment. The rich man cries for mercy to the father of the faithful, and asks that by the intercession of Lazarus a drop of comfort might be sent unto him, so that his agonies might be allayed; but the reply is, Son, remember the past, how thou didst act toward Lazarus, and see how unreasonable it is to expect that he should be tormented for thee, when on earth during the day of probation and of grace, there was no mercy or pity shown for him. That day of grace is ended, and a gulf separates heaven and hell, so that there is no bridge now over the chasm that divides holiness and sin. The petitioner finding that there is no mercy shown himself is heard to plead for his five brothers, and that Lazarus should be sent to warn them; but here also his petition is rejected, because they already possess all that is necessary for salvation, and if they will not listen to Moses and the prophets who were the messengers sent, neither would they believe even though a man rose from the dead.

The sphere of thought, it may be suggested, is that of the person of the pure in the cycle and blessing of peace, and it is in the midst of these relations and principles that the parable has such a place: in such a place. The principle of peace in Jesus Christ, the faithful Son of God, is not quite the same as the kingdom of peace in the world and righteousness as viewed in the historical development. It is as a hidden principle in the merciful kingdom, and only in the course of the time for a new evolution does it take the leading place and rule over men. The kingdom of Mercy in Jesus Christ holds in reserve the hidden seeds of holiness and of peace, but these work in their own sphere, as subject to mercy during the day of grace. If

this thought is conceived, it may help to throw light upon this strange parable, which in such a wonderful manner holds within its circumference the states of earth, heaven, and Hades. Removing the parabolic veil the following principles may be observed in the story. The present order in which man lives is two-fold in its nature; there being the moral order, which will include all nature; and the order of grace, or method of mercy, which is meant to operate for man's salvation or recreation. Men who live for selfish, sensual ends, whose god is self, fail to obey the moral law which is their duty; and they despise the mercy of God which is for their salvation, and the means of blessing to others. Lazarus—the help of God—was a standing sign and sermon to the rich man, and every time he saw the beggar and his sores, God was speaking to him as to his duty and privilege. The rich man had no eyes to see or ears to hear the laws of God to be kind and merciful; he lived and died despising and rejecting the authority and will of God. The dog, as a portion of nature, subject to man, was more God-like, because in its nature there was the germ of sympathy and compassion, and as God moved it to act kindly toward the sufferer it did so. The sick man was utterly helpless, for he was laid down by his friends who were merciful at the rich man's gate; but God was his help and trust, and, therefore, though a beggar, he was truly a son of God. The scene changes, and there is a complete reversal of positions in the unseen world; but although there is such an abrupt change, it is more in form than in spiritual fact; it is simply that the changing relations have passed away, and the results of principles, the laws of God are seen in the operations. There is no throne of judgment, or anything of that kind in this picture; it is development according to law, the results being what men could easily have known beforehand. Remove the true man from his riches in which he trusts and in which he finds his sole delight, and then utter beggary, misery must be his portion. He has chosen self and despised God; sought after sensual gratifications and rejected mercy, therefore the hell of self and of the universe is his portion. He would not be subject to moral law, would not accept mercy or be merciful, therefore how could God take him to the heaven of moral law, or compel him to accept mercy? Further, men have no righteous cause of complaint against God because of His methods of moral law and of grace; they have only to listen to the servants of God, to His Word, to His laws in nature, and if they will not do this no other means would persuade them to change their mode of life, to become moral and gracious in their thoughts, words, and actions. The parable seems to put the thoughts in extreme positions of light and shade, but in the spiritual world the same extremes exist, and only He who knows both states of being could disclose by parable what harmonises with spiritual truths. The parable may have a double reading as applied to an individual soul, and to the race of man; to the first, it speaks of the sudden change by death, the end of the day of grace, and the eternal state which is not the same as men live in this world; to the second, it speaks of the end of the day of grace upon the earth, of separation, and thus of judgment, but in

he case of the individual his destiny hangs upon his own choice and his own actions, whilst the kingdom of peace and holiness upon the earth, God will bring about this manifestation in due time.

CHAPTER XVII. Here the Lord is seen addressing Himself to the disciples about what is called offences, in other words, the persecution of the weak by the strong ; this is a grievous thing in the Lord's sight, and full of woe to those who thus offend. The disciples were specially instructed to take heed that the unmerciful, unforgiving spirit should not be cherished by them, because repentance and forgiveness, and not persecution, is the method of the kingdom of grace. The injunctions of the Lord in this direction were more than their faith or practice could comprehend, and thus they prayed for an increase of faith, so that they should be able to do their duties. Faith, the Lord tells them, is like a potent organic thing, it is not conveyed by impulses, but by development, so that the grain of faith of to-day may be able in due time to perform mighty wonders in the kingdom of God. But the servants of God who receive faith are not to become conceited by what they do, they are saved by grace through faith, and they work by faith through God's grace, so that grace and faith are as God's gifts the means of blessing, and men remain as unprofitable servants in all cases, not even doing those duties which were laid to their hands. On the one hand there is no room for persecution, seeing that all require to be forgiven ; and on the other hand man has nothing of which he can boast, so that persecution and boasting are alike excluded from amongst men.

The Lord was on His way to Jerusalem, and near to a village ; ten lepers presented themselves afar off crying for mercy. They were commanded to show themselves to the priests ; as they went they were cleansed, but one only, a Samaritan, returned and thanked the Lord for the cleansing he had received, whilst the other nine with the basest ingratitude went on their way without glorifying God, or thanking the Lord Jesus for the healing of their bodies. Because he returned and showed that he valued what he received, he was blessed by being made whole in soul as well as body ; he was grateful, therefore the gracious One bestowed mercy upon him.

The Pharisees demanded when the kingdom of God should come which the Lord Jesus was preaching about ; but they were informed that the kingdom of which He spake was not one of outward show, but an invisible kingdom in a man and amongst men. The disciples of Christ are warned against such an idea as a visible kingdom at that time and under such conditions ; the kingdom of peace and of the Son of man was not yet ; so that they must not run after those who sought after visible things. Darkness and not light would come first amongst men, and the coming of the Son of man would be like the lightning flash from heaven, and not a thing of earth. Before that day there was the time of suffering and of rejection ; and as it had been in the days of Noah and Lot, so it would be at that day amongst men at the revealing of the Son of man. In the meantime duty and not desire was to rule their lives ; the *gracious will* of God and not self-seeking ;

because there would be a sudden visitation and separation, to be followed by punishment upon evil-doers.

CHAPTER XVIII. Because of this time of persecution and to help His followers to understand the righteousness of God's grace in His patience toward men, He told the parable of the importunate widow and the unjust judge. On the one hand they need not expect justice from wicked men, unless it was wrung out of them, for such men would be found who would not fear God nor care for man. They were not to think thus of God, because although patient toward wicked men in the day of grace, and for a wise purpose, He would be just, and also punish the wicked for their ungodly deeds. God will certainly prove faithful to His promises and upon His Word Christ's followers may rest content; but the time would be so terrible, the persecution so trying, and the darkness of infidelity so great, that it was a question whether any faith would be found in men upon the earth at His coming. This is the mystery of the kingdom of truth and righteousness; how unjust rulers should prosper in their iniquities whilst the saints of God would be worn off the face of the earth; and yet God would be true to His promises, just to His people, and would eventually punish the wicked.

There have been men in all ages who have had a very high opinion of themselves, and who have also despised or set at nought other men. There are two classes amongst men who have got the names of Pharisees and publicans, the former representing all that glorifies self, whilst the latter is unfit to live in the same world or worship in the same temple with one so righteous and good in his own eyes. The Pharisee is not like other men in wicked deeds, he is holy in his own eyes through fasting, and he gives his due unto God. The publican, on the other hand, is of a very different stamp, for he cannot draw near to God, because of his sinful state, and the only utterance in prayer that leaves his lips is the cry to God for mercy to a sinner. Men value themselves, the one exalting himself very high, and the other humbling himself low before God, but God reverses the valuation, and the man who raises himself up is cast down, whilst the penitent sinner is pardoned, accepted, and raised up. The proud man who exalts himself is not saved because he thinks he is so good, and the sinner who humbles himself and will not even dare to think that God can be merciful to one so unworthy is not condemned, because of his unholiness of soul; but salvation comes through the receptive child-like trust in God which honours His Word of truth; and it may be granted that the humble, empty soul of a sinner is moreceptive of faith and grace than the full soul of the Pharisee. The bad man and the self-righteous are equally sinners in God's sight, and thus whilst the Pharisee shuts himself out of heaven through his own pride, the sinner might do the same by his desponding fears; but the latter is nearer the kingdom, seeking after it, and woe upon those who despise or rebuke such little ones who are seeking Jesus and the kingdom of His mercy.

The ruler who came to Jesus asking what he should do to inherit eternal life was very good; he had kept all the commandments from his youth, but yet he could not satisfy himself that he was sure to get

ternal life. The Lord Jesus told him what was lacking in his character, it was to become merciful, to seek treasures in the heaven of God's grace, and to follow Him in the path of self-sacrifice and of self-abnegation. This was too much for the ruler; the cost was in his sight too great, and he went away full of sorrow, much cast down because he could not serve self and at the same time gain eternal life; keep the devil of Mammon in the soul and yet worship God. The difficulty of gaining salvation is increased as men's position or wealth increases, because the strong current of selfishness becomes intensely strong, and self-assertion is the issue if men will not become subject to the will of God in the kingdom of mercy. Man requires life, that is renewed moral nature, but the patching work of reformation by obeying laws is useless; therefore there is no remedy for the soul except grace through the mercy of God, and by it there comes the new inheritance of eternal life. Peter and the other disciples had done this, and their reward was manifold, more good things in this life than the things that they had given up. They had given up a few earthly treasures, but they were getting the golden treasures of heaven into their souls, and they would also obtain the moral, perfect life that would never end. But to make these things possible for men the Head had to go to Jerusalem, there to be despised, rejected, and crucified; and to rise from the dead. Out of death there must come life; but this was a mystery to them at that time; and even at this day men can hardly comprehend the facts, that when men say they are good apart from the face of God, they are self-assertors, and not pure of heart; and when they wish to get eternal life without self-sacrifice and self-abnegation, they are seeking for what is not to be had, because it is only by grace that the moral nature is renewed and brought into conformity with the will of God.

The Lord came near to Jericho, the place where men are blind because of their unbelief; yet even in this place, or state, all men are not as odds, for there is one man sitting at the way-side humble enough to beg, and with this amount of knowledge, that he does not see the face of God. He is a beggar without a home, but he has heard of Jesus, of His Father, and of the eternal home, and he is glad when the opportunity offers to raise his voice and to cry for mercy to the Prince of peace, the Son of God, who is passing that way. Men who think they see may speak as they will, he knows what he wants, and no execution or hinderance on their part will keep him back. His request is to get the clear vision of the Son of God; he had faith, it was the means of his salvation; and after receiving the blessing he requested he followed Jesus and glorified God.

CHAPTERS XIX., XX. Jesus is represented as having passed through Jericho. A man named Zaccheus—pure, or righteous—the chief among the publicans, and a rich man, being anxious to see Jesus, ran on before, climbed up into a tree, and there awaited His coming. The Lord came to the place, called Zaccheus by name and told him that he intended to abide at his house that night. Zaccheus full of gladness because of this gracious visit of Jesus to his house came down and

received Him joyfully. There were those who murmured because this action on the part of Jesus, because he was making Himself guest of a sinner. The thoroughness of Zaccheus' conversion, how was proved by the fact that he became charitable and merciful to others, and by promising restitution wherever he had done wrong. His spirit is commended by the Lord, who said that salvation had come to the house of Zaccheus, because he had become a son of the faithful Abraham. For this was His mission to the earth to seek out and save the lost.

The people were animated by the thought that the kingdom of God would appear when He reached Jerusalem, but to divert their thoughts and teach them that it was not so, He told them the parable of the servants and the ten pounds. In this parable He teaches that there will first be a departure on His part as if into a far country, to see the sovereign and to receive the kingdom, that there are ten servants who are left in charge during the absence of the nobleman who are responsible; and that the citizens, his enemies, hate him and will not have him to be their king. In due time the nobleman returns as king, and then the servants are called to account for their use of the means supplied unto them, and receive their rewards; and punishment is awarded to those who were rebellious against his authority.

After telling this parable He went toward Jerusalem, going by the disciples, and when they were at the Mount of Olives, two of the disciples were sent into a village to bring the colt unto Him which He described; they were asked why they took the colt, and answered as Jesus had commanded them, "The Lord hath need of it." The King of grace, meek and lowly, entered Jerusalem, the multitude of the disciples rejoicing and praising God for the works they had seen and "saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the Name of the Lord; peace in heaven and glory in the highest." The Pharisees and the scribes sought to rebuke the disciples, but His reply was, that if they were silent the stones would speak.

The joy of the people was very great because they had received the King; the sorrow of the Lord was intense because His coming to Jerusalem meant the climax of its responsibility, and as He knew the means of its destruction. He looked down upon the city and wept over it; He spake about its ignorance, of what was for its peace, and of its blindness which could not pierce through the thin veil which separated the happy scene of which He was the centre, and that awful visitation of judgment which would come upon it at a later date. Entering the city He purged the temple and taught therein daily, whilst the priests and others sought His destruction, but were unable to do anything to Him because of the earnest attention the people gave to His words.

In the temple He was challenged by the rulers of the people as to His authority for what He did. He challenged them as to the authority of John, and as they would not give Him an answer, so He declined to inform them as to the Author and source of His authority and mission. In the parable of the vineyard, and the reference to the stone rejected by the builders, the Lord clearly pointed out not merely the last

conceptions in the kingdom of grace, but also the inevitable consequences of the course that the rulers were taking, because they would be guilty of the most terrible of crimes, and the consequences would be most disastrous to the nation.

The unjust and unrighteous proceeding of the rulers of the people at this time in their hypocritical pretensions and subtle schemes to take hold of His sayings, and thus to find a charge against Him so that they might hand Him over to the governor, require no further comments; morality, there was none in their thoughts, words, or actions; they were determined to take His life, and any means, lawful or unlawful, would be used to gain that diabolical end. The scheme of the Herodians about tribute to Cesar failed completely, and the temptations of the Sadducees were made a means of showing the ignorance of this class, of their own Scriptures, and of their misconceptions as to the power of God.

The Lord's question as to Christ being the Son of David, with a special reference to the 110th Psalm, was not answered by them; but through this reference by Him to the Messiah, they were again invited to consider their Scriptures, their own thoughts and intentions, and His words and actions. They could not say that they were not warned, because repeatedly they are referred to the Bible so that they might not commit the sin they contemplated.

Before all the people, the Lord warned all His disciples that they should avoid the sins of the Scribes, which were self-conceit in their personal appearance, the love of the praise of men, ambition to get the best places, covetousness, and hypocrisy. These spiritual manifestations are devilish, and they are condemned by God as unfit to exist in the Church of Christ or amongst men. The disciples of Jesus, as the sons of God, are to be like the widow-woman who cast all she possessed into God's treasury; and if men give themselves a living sacrifice unto God, this is well pleasing in His sight.

CHAPTER XXI. In this chapter is contained the description of the destruction of the temple, and the prophetic utterances of Jesus as bearing upon the times of great tribulation which would come upon the world and the Church. The disciples were anxious to know when these things would take place; and also, what the signs would be which would be linked with such events. They are warned against being led astray by false Christs, and going after any pretenders. They were not to be terrified because of wars and tumults, for these things would come, but the end is not immediate. There would be great troubles amongst the nations, and persecutions before kings for His Name's sake; but this would be to them for a testimony. In all things they were to give themselves up to the influence of the Holy Spirit, and speech and wisdom would be given unto them at such a time. When the visible Jerusalem was seen encompassed about with enemies, the desolation would be at hand; and the Jews would reap the punishment for their transgressions until the fulfilment of the times of the Gentiles. The signs in the spiritual world would be in the failing of moral light, the despising of the truth of God, and the rejection of authority; and through

this there would come perplexity, fear, and trouble amongst men, until all the powers of the heavens would be shaken; and when the heavens and earth are shaken, there will appear the Sign of the Son of man coming in His power and glory. These things seem to speak of the great wars which would bring down the Roman Pagan Empire, and of all the pride and power of man which exist in nations apart from God in the spirit of imperialism and despotism; of the downfall through contentions, strifes, wars, famines, and fearful sights of the fleshly, carnal spirit of Judaism in Palestine, and of the Papacy in Europe; and of the reign of infidelity which has been so prevalent in Europe and in the world for some time. If this is so, and there is not in a reaction against infidelity, and the eclipse is steadily passing away, then men are called upon to consider these signs which have come to pass; to look upon the fig-tree of the Bible, and all the trees of God's vineyard, which are shooting forth new buds and blossoms; and to understand that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. There is great need for forethought and care at such a time, so that the day of the Lord may not come upon men when they are asleep, or off their guard. Watching and praying may be all that men can do at such a time, but if these are done faithfully, there will be some faithful ones ready to meet the Lord at His coming.

CHAPTER XXII. There is given here an account of the preparation for the passion or the resignation of Jesus of Himself into the hands of men, so that He might endure those things which would be for the salvation of men. It will not be necessary to enter into each incident in detail, as this has been done in the former gospels, but simply to glance as briefly as possible at the events in their order. (1) The proud rulers of the people are seen in consultation seeking to find out the means by which they might kill the Lowly One. (2) The traitor is revealed, as Satan-possessed, the enemy of God, going forth to betray the Holy One for money. (3) Peter and John, as the representatives of the visible and spiritual things of the kingdom, are sent by Jesus to prepare the Passover feast, being guided in their actions by the directions and the sign given by their Master. (4) The mystery of the kingdom of good and of evil may be discerned in the Passover, the Lord's Supper, and in the betrayer who has his hand in the same dish and eating of the same food as the Master and the disciples. This is a matter upon which many questions have been asked, and who the betrayer of Christ is may still be a question for men to ponder. There is a Judas with his hand on the table, but the souls of Christ's followers are not so holy, true, and faithful, but they may be represented as asking who of them should do such a thing? (5) The kingdom of grace is found in the abnegation of self; the passive endurance of persecution, scourging, mocking, reviling, and of death at the hands of men; but the disciples were engaged in striving as to who would be the greatest and most powerful, thus like Gentile rulers, instead of how they might be emptied of self and in weakness made strong to endure suffering. The Lord would teach them to reverse the order of their thoughts, and to realise His Own position and work; because He, as the Chief, did serve, and though above all

men. He had become as the younger son in a family and the servant of all. They had been with Him in His temptations, and unto them would be given a kingdom so that they might reign with Him ; and in that kingdom there would be fellowship and communion at the Lord's table of grace and mercy, with the power to judge and govern others as rulers in Israel. But this matter was not so simple as they might be inclined to think ; they who are to be made able to rule must first learn how to obey, and only through obedience can the hearers of God's Word be made obedient or able to rule and to strengthen their brethren. The enemy of mankind, in man and also in the visible world, in the visible church, and in the heaven of men's thoughts, would sift the confident disciples, and the issue would be not faithfulness unto death, but repeated denials of the Name and power of Jesus. The kingdom of mercy had been set up by Jesus in poverty, and they had lacked nothing ; but the time would come when the kingdom would appear as if tottering to the ground, and everything would appear to be lost ; then men would act differently, they would provide for their own wants, and even use the sword in their own defence. But these things would be fulfilled in Him according to the word "He was reckoned among the transgressors ;" in other words, they were fulfilled in His Own body during the crucifixion, but also in His Word and Church, in His mystical body in Christendom. (6) The garden of Gethsemane—the oil-press, is the hallowed spot where holiness and sin, judgment and mercy, met face to face ; not the valley of the shadow of death, but where death in its most terrible form crushed the Meek One to the very dust. The cup could not pass His lips ; God the Father's merciful will must be done ; and even though the Beloved of God is in an agony, and sweating a bloody sweat, there must not be any drawing-back from this work of the kingdom of heaven and of grace. This is the inexorable law of mercy, the immutable law of grace, the unchangeable law of self-sacrifice. If men would seek to understand what is meant by law, that is God's unchangeable method of action, then let them stand in spirit beside Jesus Christ in the garden and upon the cross, and then they will not merely tremble at the majesty and grandeur of God's laws, but will also be led to adore the awful wisdom and grace which could thus by the agony in the moral nature of the man Jesus Christ bring about that salvation by which men are reconciled unto God. (7) The agony in the garden was past, and with the supreme act of self-abnegation, self-renunciation, and giving Himself up to sacrifice, there came a messenger of light with strength from heaven to help Him in the things He must endure. He received a kiss from the betrayer, and thus the sign of the pure affection of the soul was made the means of His capture. The evil effects of the sword that His followers had used, He graciously healed, thus preventing evil through their over-officious service. Resigning Himself into the hands of His persecutors, He told them that this was their hour of success and of the victory of the "power of darkness." In this hour how gracious and peaceful does this King appear ; this is the most marvellous incident in history, and yet the Prince of peace is seen as a subject under law, the law of grace and mercy which He must obey, so that He may reign. (8) The

darkness brings doubts; doubt is unbelief, and thus the night of the world and the night of the soul agree. Peter was caught in the darkness, and ere he was aware he had denied his Lord three times; but he heard the cock crow, speaking of a new morning, then he knew his weakness, sin, and shame; and when he saw the face of Jesus, he went out and wept bitterly because of his sin in denying his Lord and Saviour. The Lord was in the hands of His enemies; hell was let loose, and men groping about in the darkness loved to do evil things. There was persecution and reviling, buffeting and smiting of the Son of man, and these ended in the unjust condemnation of the Christ by the high priest of the Jews, the visible representative of God in the Jewish nation, of grace, truth, and righteousness.

CHAPTER XXIII. Here the Lord Jesus is seen as transferred from the power and authority of the Jews and handed over to the Roman governor upon the charge of perverting the nation, of forbidding tribute to Cesar, and of calling Himself Christ or King. In the Jewish Sanhedrim He was condemned because He acknowledged Himself to be the Messiah, the Son of God, and thus the King of the Jews, or, in other words, of Judaism in its forms and ceremonies of that fleshly, carnal method of worship and service which supplants the true spiritual worship of God. This charge brought against Jesus before Pilate as claiming to be Christ is true in its spiritual intent, and the Lord Jesus did not deny the relationship which He bore to His countrymen and to Judaism; but the governor discerned quickly enough that, in the sense of being a treasonable conspirator against Cesar, there was not the shadow of proof, so he declared that he found no fault in Jesus. The Jews would not be balked of their prey, therefore they became the more fierce in their denunciation of Jesus; charging Him with teaching from Galilee and throughout Jewry. Being a Galilean, Pilate thought he would get rid of the Prisoner by sending Him to Herod, who was at Jerusalem at that time. The wily Herod was glad of this opportunity of seeing Jesus, having heard so much about Him; he hoped to see a miracle done by Him; and he questioned Jesus in many ways, but it was in vain, the Lord would not answer the despotic murderer of the Baptist; his day of grace was past. Again the Jewish rulers accused the Lord before this man; but as Herod could make nothing of Jesus, he showed the pride, envy, and hatred that moved him by setting Jesus at nought, handing Him over to his soldiers, arraying Him in a mock royal robe and sending Him back again to Pilate.

The Lord Jesus was not easily got rid of; there was a feeling of responsibility and of duty about Pilate, and thus weak and vacillating as he was, he held out for a time against the excited Jews. Again Pilate had to declare that no crime could be proved against Jesus, but he would chastise Him and let Him go, and He would be the usual prisoner to be set free on the occasion of the Passover. They rejected Jesus at once, and chose Barabbas, who had been guilty of sedition and murder. Pilate tried a third time to get the release of Jesus, but

was in vain, the cry, "Crucify Him, Crucify Him," drowned his words, and thus he gave way, delivered up Jesus to the cross, and set Barabbas free. He was not merely numbered with the transgressors, but He was made the substitute for the murderer, and it is in this light, with the price of blood, of death resting upon Him, that He was sent forth by the rulers of this world. Blood resting upon Him. Did He then take the place of the Cain-like men who had killed their brothers? It is too true. The world was at that time as if steeped in blood, and the cry of vengeance against the Gentiles had gone up into heaven, and this is the only means by which there shall be expiation; the Just dies for the unjust, the Pure One for the murderer. It is the mystery of sacrifice in its varied forms, and without self-sacrifice unto death, remission of sin would have been impossible. It is not the death of one man amongst millions that is the object of study here; it is the unique Man who has a perfect, moral nature, upon or within which a sacrifice can be offered, and the power of grace, which is above moral law, permits and directs the self-sacrifice of the Holy for the unholy. What Jesus is as a sacrifice and priest for the whole world of men, that He is also for the individual soul. And is it not a great truth that in every soul where the seed of grace is proffered and rejected, the Lord is spiritually crucified afresh, there being within the small world of the soul the same enemies spiritually as were against the Lord Jesus in Jerusalem? Is it the very truth, a matter of fact, that the perverted spirit of man, the fleshly, carnal nature, and the corrupt ambitious desires rule within a man before conversion? The reply must be yes. If then a new authority, the Word of the Grace of God, is brought into the soul, speaking of the supremacy of God, and the appointment of Christ as Priest and King, will these powers abdicate at a moment's notice, and give up the reins of government to the Son of God? Not so. There is oftentimes a struggle, a hating, rejecting, despising, and condemning of this new power. What does this amount to, if not in experience, yet in truth? It is that there is within the soul a sacrifice, a veritable meeting of spirit with spirit, and a struggle for the mastery. Upon Jesus the yoke of sin was laid. His holy, moral nature was the altar upon which it was placed, and there it produced physical death by the actions of men, and moral death, or separation from God, in the awful, spiritual darkness upon the cross from the sixth to the ninth hour. In man's case the order is reversed, the morally good and the gracious comes into man's inmost soul; there is a revelation of holiness and grace, of truth and righteousness, and the Word is made either a savour of life unto life to the redeemed, or of death unto death in those who perish. The savour of grace and truth is the same in each case; but in those who are humble, obedient, and penitent, the life of Christ is a living power which crucifies the lusts and affections of the soul; whilst in those who are proud, rebellious, and impenitent, Christ is crucified afresh and put to shame. Can the truth of the substitutionary and expiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ, as a practical and experimental fact, be placed in a plainer aspect? It is not merely the logic of the intellect that is required here, but also the sanctified reasonings of the moral nature as related to the state of the soul; the impossibility

of man working out his own salvation with the curse of upon his head; the marvellous fact of the Holy One becoming sacrifice for sin, the Gracious One the Priest; and as a new Heavenly spiritual body, giving renewed moral life and gracious power to so that the evil powers in man may be crucified, put to death, so Christ may reign as King over the soul and body. The proud, inverted, intellectual power in man, which is as a god wanting to both good and evil, might desire more knowledge upon many points and because it seeks to know that it may believe, the consequences unusually are that the words of grace and truth do not bring about receptive state of the soul, or sufficient light to understand the meaning the thoughts of God. This is what may be expected in the very natural things; for surely it is enough for the Gracious One to humble himself, to speak the gracious words of truth, to live a righteous life to die a cursed death, without being brow-beaten, questioned, doubted and scoffed at, by the proud unregenerate spirit of man, guided by desire to gain knowledge, preserve power, or gratify his lusts. It is evident that in this direction there is only one issue; an antagonism strong against the Holy and Righteous, so intense against the Gracious that death alone will give satisfaction. The way of life is for man to humbly believe the Prophet of God in the Word of truth; trust the gracious Priest, and accept His sacrifice for sin; be meek and obedient to the King of grace; sit at the feet of the Wisdom of God; go along with the Merciful in seeking the salvation of the lost; help the Proud to purge the soul from sin; be a peaceful son of God in a world of strife; and patiently endure persecution and reviling in this being assured that for the evil endured there will be the good of eternal kingdom, and for the reviling a crown of glory that never fade away.

Passing to the next point, the symbol of the kingdom of grace is the cross, first laid upon Jesus and then upon Simon the Cyrenian, hearing the Word of God and obeying its precepts, so that the death and lusts may be crucified, and by being surrounded, encircled with spirit of self-sacrifice, following after Jesus, this is the kingdom of God and of life to men.

The Lord Jesus had a retinue on this eventful occasion, when the kingdom of heaven, of righteousness in its highest aspect of mercy was being manifested amongst men, and they were the people who had been blessed by Him, and the woman who loved and trusted Him. The way to Calvary was the road of sorrow, of wailing, and of lamentation, and it has been so in all generations. History is one long record of this experience of the spiritual followers of Jesus Christ. The Lord was touched by their sympathy with Himself in such an agony but the suffering in the Microcosm, in the body of Jesus, was as not compared to what would take place in the macrocosm of His mystical body in the saints. His personal sufferings would soon be past in the Christian era, with its prolongation of persecution, was a secondary matter for them to consider. The days were coming when they would say that it was a blessed thing not to bear children, or to give birth, not to see souls brought to the knowledge of the truth.

as the milk of the Word. The days of persecution would be that death would be coveted rather than life, and their become so intolerable, that destruction would seem better erections they would have to endure. If when the tree of was but a sapling such things were done, then what might t when the tree was full grown, and thus exposed on all sides my? This is the kingdom of righteousness by grace and e world. It is a terrible picture, and it has been an awful to many; it is grace and mercy, not grace only. It is , or the portal, through which the redeemed must walk to .

oint the Lord is found with new companions; they are male- l ones, who have been led forth to be put to death; and ary—the skull—they are to be crucified; a thief on each rd in the midst. "He was numbered with the transgressors." the Lord of mercy; for as they are intent crucifying Him, from His soul is rising up to heaven that the Father would m, for they were ignorant of the awful crime they were .

he cross there were many spectators; but in the fore-front, d by the spirit of the devil, there were seen the rulers e Saviour and asking Him, if He were the Christ, to save he soldiers also joined in the sport against the King of the even one of the malefactors railed upon Christ, asking that ave Himself and them. The word salvation was on all their kery, but it was written as in living letters of fire upon the soul of Jesus Christ. They thought that deliverance from lvation; He knew that only through pain can salvation be men, and thus the pain and the shame, the agony and the ere the means of bringing about salvation for the lost and ons of men. The Pure One must for a time lose the vision : of God, so that those who were in the darkness might be o the light of His face.

as one who sympathised with the peaceful Son of God in this a malefactor; and he prayed, openly confessing his sin, the is sentence and punishment, that the Lord would remember kingdom. The Lord's response to this prayer is the promise uld be with Himself in Paradise that day, and thus the eace carried to the Paradise of God one who had forfeited laims upon God or upon society.

e hours of darkness came over the whole land, the sun give its light. There was separation from God and by men in these hours of awful agony. This was the the passion on the cross by enduring, as the agony in was the climax of the struggle in the giving of Himself ands of wicked men. The work of man's salvation was d; the mystery of grace and the mystery of evil were ed, and thus the Lord Jesus could commit to the care of His Spirit which would soon pass away into the invisible

The death of Jesus brought the spiritual life of the Christ; visible forms were at an end, and the spiritual things of God, the Sanctuary, were manifested. The centurion who had been a witness of the crucifixion was moved at the moment of the death of Jesus as if a living coal from the altar of heaven had touched his. Whilst men were mocking, he was thinking; and when they were silent, his lips were unsealed, and "he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man." A new life through death, and a witness testifying to the righteousness of the Man who died for men.

But if there was glory to God in the highest through His death there was also sorrow and trouble to many because of what they had seen that day; they had assisted at the crucifixion of the Righteous and a sense of guilt lay upon their souls; they returned to the city smiting upon their breasts, as if repenting of the things that had been done.

In the meantime Joseph, a good man and a righteous one, who was looking for the kingdom of God, went to Pilate, begged the body of the Lord, took it down, and put it in a new tomb. The women who followed after Joseph, saw all that was done and where His body was laid, and then they returned home to prepare the spices and ointments for the embalming of the body and to rest during the Sabbath-day.

CHAPTER XXIV. The first day of the week brought an open grave with the stone rolled away. The women enter in with the spices, but there is no body to embalm; the spirit has become greater than the body, the new life more potent than the past forms things have changed, and a new world is made manifest to men. This was a matter of perplexity to the women; but messengers of the light of God's truth, glorious in their dazzling brightness, spake unto the women, and asked them why they sought the living amongst the dead? The Lord of life could not be kept under the power of death even upon the third day the body must become subject to the risen Spirit, and a new era of life must begin upon the earth. The resurrection of Christ from the dead was a new thought to the followers of Jesus; it was like idle talk, and thus they did not believe; even Peter was left in a condition of wonder by what he heard and on account of what had come to pass. The possibilities of the kingdom of heaven are not limited to the manifestation of truth by new voices, to the cries of repentant souls because of sin; to the loving services of the men followers of the King, there is a universe of wisdom and illumination for men in the resurrection of Christ, and by the messengers of truth, it is made known unto men that the coming kingdom will be more glorious than things which have passed away. In the past, the kingdom was dimly discerned through forms and ceremonies as in the man Jesus Christ; after the resurrection, spiritual life as power would be manifested, and thus men would be brought much nearer to God.

The two disciples were going to Emmaus—people despised and obscure—and as they journeyed, their talk was about the things which

ly happened. Whilst they were communing and reasoning at they knew, Jesus joined their company and entered into tion with them. He graciously inquired why they were sad such a conversation with each other, and they rehearsed to at had happened, what their hopes had been, and what they d from the women who had been at the sepulchre early in the .

At this point the Lord broke in upon their recital of their l hopes, and told them how foolish and unbelieving they had not seeking to know and understand the things which the had written, because they had clearly foretold the sufferings as the means, or the way, to His glory. And beginning in as written by Moses, and in the prophets, He interpreted to things referring to Himself. In the house at Emmaus, the ealed Himself to the two in the act of breaking bread ; their e opened, they knew Him, but it was only for an instant, and gone out of their sight. The disciples returned to Jerusalem friends, and made known to them the great discovery of Christ eaking of the bread. Even as then, so throughout the era, has it not been the same experience with the Simon- who have heard the Word, and to the Cleopas spirits who n His glory? To be with Him in the breaking of bread is the truth as it is contained in His Holy Word and revealed soul ; and surely in no other way can men see or know the rist, the risen Son of God. Lord, evermore bless and e bread of life in Thy Holy Word, and then Thy followers ow Thee and understand Thy gracious thoughts of mercy nankind.

whilst the two disciples were making known their experience, l Christ stood in their midst with the blessing of peace upon

To them His words brought fear, and not peace, because they that a spirit stood in their midst. They were full of reasonings troubles ; they were unbelievers, sceptics, and not trustful , and thus they could not believe and accept the very thing much desired. That their Lord and Head should be living as l things desirable ; but this was a new experience, and thus it y difficult indeed to bring the soul to close quarters with the l to banish the false or imperfect conceptions they formerly on. The gracious condescension of the Lord is very beautiful, Himself ; the risen Christ in spiritual power becomes for the the man Jesus, and calls upon them to look upon His hands , and also to handle His body, so that they might know that is no deception, but that there was really in their midst a human with flesh and bones even like themselves. The effect of this n, for it was nothing less—a manifestation of the risen Christ owly form—produced a strange conflict in their souls ; it is “they believed not for joy, and wondered.” The sun of the the resurrection had reached their souls, and there was joy of this revelation ; but the clouds that hung around their ere many and dense, and thus there was light, but not sunshine ; but not adoration or *worship*. To dispel their cloudy fears.

and thoughts and to increase their confidence, He asked whether they had anything that He could eat, and they gave Him a piece of fish, which He took and did eat in their presence. In this strange incident there is beautifully illustrated the condescension of the Holy One of Israel and the perfect humanity of the risen Christ. There is no change in spirit or manner, but He is still seen to be most gracious toward His Own followers. The condition and position of the disciples is painful and humiliating; for instead of being ready to give Him a welcome He had come in an hour when they were not looking for Him, neither were they watching and praying that they might escape the unbelief and scepticism that filled their souls. He comes to them in their world of darkness as God's pure Light; and only through communion and fellowship, as being one in spirit and one in form with Him, are they enabled to throw off the gloom that surrounded them, and the despair that had filled their souls. If death and the grave ended all their hopes, then their condition had been bad indeed; but if the risen Christ transcended them by leaving them in another world, so that there could not be fellowship or communion with Him, then what better would they have been by His rising from the dead? They were comforted because the risen Christ is also Jesus, and there is no change in Him. There is a great transformation scene in this interview of the Lord with the disciples; it is the link betwixt Jesus, the Son of man, and Christ, the Son of God and of man. Whilst they saw the face of Jesus, they were near to God and could see His face through Him; when the hour of darkness came, there was a complete eclipse in their moral world, and the Sun of righteousness could not be seen; here once more is the risen Sun of righteousness in their moral sphere, the darkness has vanished away, and the pure in heart are able to see the face of God in Christ.

They were comforted and ready to listen to His gracious words; and He began by bringing to their remembrance the things He had spoken when He was with them. The Scriptures required their fulfilment; and Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms testified concerning Him. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Fulfilment of what was filled into prophecy; the Consummation of the spiritual thoughts, words, aspirations, and emotions in the Old Testament. To understand what He had to say upon this point, there was a special opening up of their understandings so that they might comprehend the great truths of gracious suffering, death, and the rising from the dead; and also their own duties as His witnesses to preach unto men that through repentance there would be granted the remission of sins. The Lord's mission had been to found the Church by teaching and appointing them as His witnesses; and by suffering to the death, and rising from the dead, thus to confirm them in the work to which they had been called; and their mission would be to preach His Name in all nations as the means of reconciliation with God by repentance for the remission of sins.

They were not to go forth at once upon their mission, but to wait until they had received the promised Power of God from heaven and when they were clothed with this Spirit, and filled with it then they would be strong for His service. The Lord led H

les forth until they were near to Bethany—the house of the of God; and in the act of blessing them He was parted from and taken up into heaven. The disciples “returned to Jerusalem great joy: and were continually in the temple praising and ig God.”

The Gospel according to John.

CHAPTER I. In studying the fourth gospel, which has the name of John attached to it, the stand-point or aspect of the study will differ from the preceding gospels. The gospel according to Matthew is the gift of God to men in His Son, in whom the kingdom of heaven consists and subsists; the second gospel makes known the Servant of God, the Shining One, in whose gracious words and merciful actions the grace of God is made known to men; the third gospel differs from the first two in this particular, that they are specially linked with the Jewish people to whom Christ came as God's Gift, and amongst whom He ministered; whilst the third gospel shines forth with a light glorious as the sun at noon-day upon the whole earth. The Light, the soft and gracious ministry of the Light amongst men, and the sunshine of grace, the Light of God upon the world, are specially manifested in the three gospels. In the fourth gospel, according to John—grace, gift, mercy—the sphere of thought is the universe, beginning at what men have called the heart of God, His grace, and from this position, by the highest spiritual conceptions which men can understand, to explain the gift of God to man, and the means by which His laws of mercy restore men to the state of harmony with the will of God, and thus to fellowship with God and all who are God-like.

The name which John gives to Jesus is the Word, the conception being, it may be assumed, that Jesus Christ is related to God as a word is to a hidden thought, its express image and true ideal. As the thought of man is unknown to others until expressed by a word, so God's thoughts could not be discovered until Jesus as the Word of God gave a fitting expression to what God's thoughts of grace are toward the children of men. There is an expression of relationship, but no attempt to explain essential Deity; it is a philosophic conception of the highest order, and in perfect harmony with the sphere of Deity, as well as of the limited powers of man to know the wonderful thoughts of God. The Word expresses the manifestation or expression of God's thought; "the Word was with God," the idea of co-existence; and "the Word was God," unity. Here there is a full stop, and it may be suggested that the passage might read thus: In the beginning was the manifested Truth, all science and knowledge; the Truth co-existed with God as Wisdom with the power to design and evolve; and the Truth and Wisdom was the Holy One; that is, perfect morality in its highest conception. The ideas lead backward from the manifested universe to God, and thus it is scientific in its order and philosophical

in its method of thought. To reverse the conception, men require to sum up in one grand summation all that they can know of the order of physical nature by the intellect; of instinct and intelligence in the lower creatures; of the intellectual powers of man, and of moral law as related to God and man, and then they name the Cause, the Holy One; the link betwixt Cause and effects, Wisdom; and the manifestations, Truth, or God's Word; and by these words something like the deas contained in this very short sentence may be very feebly understood. The vision is truly that of the eagle eye; it looks up through Jesus Christ, the Key of universal thought, right into the very bosom of God: into the Light that is inaccessible and full of glory. The ear begins with science, or knowledge of Truth; he mounts upon the wings of philosophy or divine wisdom, and at last faith touches not the footstool of God, or His head, but His very heart, from whence grace, mercy, goodness, truth, and justice proceed.

The beginning of the wise workings of God began, and then the Word, or wisdom, was with God. Every manifestation in the visible creation, in the order of physical laws, was ordained by Him, and there is nothing in the universe but it is in the divine order of wisdom and truth. Even the order, the method of darkness, is His manifestation, the evil and the good, also the light and the darkness, are His; and in His sight there is wisdom and truth in the order of good and evil, because in a moral world they lie side by side, and the holy, wise, true, and just Creator is the Author of all things.

The figure is changed, and the outward world of forms—the Word—gives place to the concrete world of life within the soul. "In Him was life;" in other words, He is the Fountain of this other world within man, which is subject to moral law; and in conformity to moral law there is life, whilst by the transgression of moral law there is death. The moral law is the light of man. In harmony with moral law man was manifested, and this law was to man the light of his life, or of his spiritual being, whereby he could see the face of God and live.

The figure is again changed. There is darkness manifested, the light of man is gone, the life in man is cut off from the Fountain of Life, and thus God cannot be seen by His sinful creatures. The Light is seen to shine forth in this world; and as light He came into the darkness, but there was a complete failure by men to apprehend what the Light meant. The figure here of light is evidently to be limited to the correlated words grace and truth, because the Word had been disobeyed, and a lie believed and obeyed; the life had been despised, and the goodness of God cast aside. The thought which the eye of faith discerns here is not merely the bosom of God's love as revealed in the sphere of moral goodness, truth, and equity, but the self-sacrificing love of God the Father, the pierced Heart of gracious love, from whence there flows forth a new life, that is the blood in figure, and grace and truth, that is water in the figure, by which there is cleansing and regeneration into the thoughts and image of God the Holy and the Gracious One. The Light of God is God's grace in truth. In other words, God burning, consuming, sacrificing Himself for man, and the effect of the Light is to dispel the darkness. The figure is very

beautiful, and it expresses in such a natural manner the grace of God toward men in bringing them to the truth, that further comment seems unnecessary.

The Light was shining in the darkness unheeded by men. They had been overcome by the darkness, and thus though it was all around them, as if in the atmosphere they breathed, or in the thoughts which constituted their being, they did not apprehend or comprehend the will of God for their salvation. God had given them the Light. They preferred and continued in the darkness, but by the sending forth of John, and his coming to men, there was meant to be an apprehension of men, the seizing of them, so that they might be led to stop in their onward career of folly, and be brought to turn their eyes in the direction toward the Light. John is God's witness for this special purpose, and his mission was to make known unto men that the Light exists, and that a special manifestation was about to take place. Many false lights had been seen amongst men, but John's mission was to inform the people that the true Light was coming, even that same Light which gives light to all moral creatures, but specially during the reign of grace to every man that is born into this world. The world, and the men in it who were manifested through His Word, and by His wisdom and power, did not know their Creator, Designer, and Source of being when He appeared in their midst. Even those to whom He had been specially gracious did not receive Him; but those who did welcome their God and King received the privilege of becoming the children of God by faith. These were not begotten again or regenerated by the fleshly, carnal conceptions of men, but by the gracious and true will of God, the Father of all grace and truth.

The Word, the perfect expression of God's thoughts, in the sphere of grace, was seen dwelling amongst men in a tabernacle of flesh; and the spiritual vision perceived His glory, not in the fleshly form, but in that grace and truth which is the truly begotten Son of the Father.

The testimony of John was, that although the Light was coming after him, yet He had also been manifested to men before Him, for He was before him. Out of the fulness that is in Him, all men had received what they possessed and what they are; and it is from the Light in Him that men have become gracious and true, and thus responsive to Him who is true and gracious. The knowledge of the moral law, the holy, good, and just will of God, came to men through Moses; not for their salvation, but to show men how far away from the good, holy, and just they had gone. It was not a ministration unto life, but rather unto death; because it manifested the dead condition of men and their hopeless state under moral law. The light of grace and truth came through Jesus Christ; and it may be said that, in the highest sense, grace and truth were before moral law, because grace is the giving of self for the good of others. It may be said that God is Light even as Creator; but in the order of responsive development, the moral sphere is the highest that could be manifested in man in harmony with moral law; but when the darkness of disobedience and sin eclipsed the light of men, then the pre-existing Light of grace and truth burst forth upon

men in Jesus Christ. If this is so, as the thoughts seem to indicate, then the conception of God which man is called to consider specially is the God of grace and truth as the ultimate Deity, and not Creator, King, and Law-giver. To put the same thought in other words, God desired children, as well as subjects, and it was only when the creatures became gracious and true lights in a dark world, that they really radiated forth the thoughts of God. The Invisible cannot be seen in physical form or by spiritual likeness; the Word of grace and truth, the Son who is in the bosom of the Father He declares what God is; and they who follow in the footsteps of Jesus, become as words to express His grace and truth, God's gracious children to radiate forth the thoughts of God upon men.

The scene is changed again, and men are seen as if they were apprehended by this witness of God to the light. The men who ought to have known the light, priests and Levites, in whom the grace of God was supposed to flow, were the first to ask, "Who art thou?" The confession of John to these men was that he was not the Christ, Elijah, nor the Prophet, but that he was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said Isaiah the prophet." These men possessed authority, and thus they took upon themselves to inquire of this God-sent messenger why he baptized if he was not the Christ Elijah, or the promised Prophet. His reply is that his baptism is in water, the outward form of things; but there was in their midst, standing amongst them, the One who would come after him; One so great that he was not worthy to unloose His shoes. These things took place in Bethany—the house of the grace of the Lord—or Bethabara the house of passage—away beyond Jordan, or before the spiritual things of God were manifested amongst men.

On the following day the Baptist saw Jesus coming unto him, and his testimony that day was, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;" and explained that the One who was coming after him, preferred before him, and who was before him, was in their midst. John did not know Jesus, but he knew that Jesus was to be manifested to Israel; and it was because of this knowledge and call from God that he came baptizing. John had further to witness, that he beheld the Spirit in the form of a dove descending upon Him; and that the Spirit of God had taught him that upon the Man on whom this sign was fulfilled, the same "baptizeth with the Holy Spirit," he had seen and bore witness that Jesus is the Son of God.

On the following day the Baptist and two of his disciples were standing together, when John, looking upon Jesus as He walked, said, "Behold the Lamb of God." The two disciples left John and followed Jesus. When He perceived that they were following Him, He said unto them "What seek ye?" their reply being that they wished to know where He was living. They were invited to the place where He was residing; and abode with Him that day. These two disciples were Andrew, and it may be assumed, John, the beloved disciple; in other words, the grace of God had come with power upon Andrew—the strong man—and upon the gracious soul; Andrew—the strong man—found his brother Simon—the rock or stone—and it was in

this way that the kingdom of the grace of God was set up among men.

On the following day Jesus would go into Galilee to begin the cycle of His work ; He found Philip—warlike—of Bethsaida—then fishing—and called him to His service, again Philip found Nathanael the gift of God—and told him about the finding of Jesus of Nazareth the Son of Joseph ; but Nathanael was very doubtful that any good could come out of Nazareth. They went to Jesus, and by the revelation Jesus gave to Nathanael of himself, he was convinced that Jesus was the Son of God, the King of Israel. In reply to the ardent faith of Nathanael, the Lord Jesus gave great promises bearing principle the thoughts of Nathanael about the vision of Jacob at Bethel, fulfilled in Himself as the true Ladder manifested as the means of communication with heaven.

CHAPTER II. Here an account is given of the marriage feast at Cana—possession—of Galilee, where Jesus, His mother, and His disciples were guests. During the marriage feast the wine failed ; and Nathanael appealed unto Him by the words, "They have no wine." This was a sign to Jesus as a sign, because it spake to Him of relationship with His mother, of waiting guests, and of an hour which He was expecting. His mother gave instructions that the servants should do what He commanded ; the six water pots were filled to the brim ; the water was changed into wine and served out to the people at the marriage feast. This was the beginning of the manifold signs shown forth by Jesus ; by this one He "manifested His glory ; and His disciples believed in Him." This event took place on the third day (possibly after the time when He would go forth into Galilee), and it may also be the third cycle of thought, the meek spirit, which means the kingdom of God in subjection to law. In Jesus' words to Nathanael there are set forth great hopes as referring to the King and the kingdom ; and on this day it may be said that they began to be fulfilled. Looking upon this sign in this aspect, the parable of the marriage feast at Cana speaks of the coming of Jesus Christ to His kingdom ; the mother represents the spiritual Church ; the disciples His Own faithful followers ; the Jewish power as bankrupt in its civil and religious polity, the failure of God's grace in the Mosaic era having failed them ; the six water pots may represent the six-fold manifestation of principles in nature to and including the moral nature ; whilst the new wine is that Christian spirit of grace which would permeate the Christian kingdom of God. The Lord's time was not at that time come ; in other words, the hour of manifestation in the Man had come, but the hour for pouring out His life, His spirit of self-sacrifice to death had not arrived ; that hour had not come, neither had the day for the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, the true wine of God's kingdom come upon the world. It was inpoured into His Own human form ; and at Cana, they were to have a pre-libation of the wine of His mercy.

After the marriage feast at Cana, He took up His abode for a time at Capernaum—city of comfort—and His mother, brethren, and disciples took up their abode with Him in that place.

The yearly Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. When there He visited the temple and purged it by turning out of it all those who were traffickers to get gain. Whilst engaged in this work His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." This cleansing of the temple must have given offence to many, and thus it was not a thing to be wondered at if those who were interested in keeping matters as they were should have asked a sign from Him, seeing that He did such things. The sign which the Lord gave was a parable; and it was that if they would destroy the temple, or sanctuary where God dwelt, He would raise it up in three years. The Jews stumbled at His parable; to them the sanctuary of old was a stone building, and thus they did not understand His words; the disciples did not understand them at that time, but after He had risen from the dead then they believed His Word. The parable here is a very important one, and it brings into strong relief the mission of Jesus. He came to the city and house of God, He found the devil in possession, and the Canaanite spirit ruling the affairs of God's house. The house of God is His; nay, as He affirms, He is the true Sanctuary, and the temple is only a figure of the great truth; therefore it was necessary for the purpose of saving mankind that the Sanctuary should be cleansed so that He might enter into spiritual possession. The visible temple, the traffickers, the scourge of cords, the proud, angry, disappointed, covetous men, are all signs in the kingdom of God; they represent a human soul, its base passions, the punishment of God upon the disobedient, and the angry spirit with the depraved intellect that would fain rebel if there was any hope of overcoming the strong Man who had taken possession. And as it represents a single soul, so also it represents humanity, that great temple of God which Jesus came to redeem and save from the devil and the spirit of the Canaanite.

At that time many believed on Jesus when they saw the signs He wrought. Jesus knew the people of Jerusalem, and all men, and thus He has never committed Himself to men. The testimony of man to Jesus, even those who have known Him most intimately, is a fallible thing; He does not require any such testimony from them, because He alone knew all that is in man and in Himself.

CHAPTER III. The Lord was seen receiving as a visitor, under the cloud of night, Nicodemus—innocent of blood—a ruler of the Jews. He was a timid, honest inquirer, who was compelled to admit that Jesus is "a teacher come from God." The signs he had seen, and the words he had heard, were sufficient to prove this fact, but it was not an easy thing for a ruler to throw up all the associations which bound him to the past without understanding more fully who this Teacher was, and His mission to men. The ruler knew something and he confessed what he knew; he was receptive, he had come to Jesus to be taught, and thus he waited and listened for what Jesus would say unto him. The words of Jesus were startling; He emphasised this one thought, that a new birth is essential before a man can see the kingdom of God. A new birth to an old man seemed an absurd, even an impossible thing, for it seemed to be *contrary to the order of nature*, and thus

the fleshly ideas of the old man were aroused by such a strange answer to his appreciation of Jesus as a teacher. The Lord Jesus had aroused the man's intellect; He had found a way of raising his curiosity, and so He led him onward to still deeper spiritual thoughts. Again with emphasis He stated that a new birth is necessary, but it is being born of water and of the Spirit of God that is essential for those who would enter the kingdom of God. There must be the reception and conception of grace and truth in the soul before the kingdom can be seen and when grace and truth are living powers in the soul through the influence of God's Spirit, then, but not till then, does the newborn spirit enter into the kingdom of God, and as a spiritual creature live unto God the spiritual life of a son of God. The fleshly form, and the carnal spirit are alike fleshly and carnal, and they generate after their kind; but the Spirit of God, by whom there is a new birth, so that a man becomes a son of God, comes into another order of thought altogether, and ought only to be compared as an analogy with a carnal birth. In this sphere men may discern the changes, but they cannot see the Operator; because, even as it is with the motions of the invisible wind, so it is with the motions of God's Spirit within the soul. These thoughts were beyond the sphere in which Nicodemus had been living; the visible, carnal, ceremonial things of the kingdom of God had occupied his attention, and when suddenly led to enter into the sanctuary of his own soul, by the teaching of Jesus, he could only gasp out the words, "How can these things be?" Jesus had brought this man very low when he had to confess his utter ignorance of the spiritual life within; and as if to teach him his unfitness for his office of a teacher, He asked, "Art thou a teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things?" The poor Rabbi was lost; a new world had been opened to his gaze; and the man who ought to have had all this experience, and which was certainly within his reach in the Psalms and other portions of the Word of God, was compelled to keep silence before Jesus. To the spiritual followers of God the things Jesus had been speaking about were something well known and fully experienced; but fleshly men will not receive the testimony of faithful witnesses upon such a subject. If Jesus in speaking as He had done about earthly experiences had gone so far beyond the depths of Nicodemus that he could not follow him, what state would he be in if the Lord would speak to him about the things of heaven? In other words, if he did not understand the subjective experience which those who are saved know, that is, conversion unto God by consecration and peace with God through faith, how could he possibly understand Him if He began to speak of righteousness, mercy, purity, peace, and patience under persecution? Up to these celestial heights of thought no one had ascended from earth; they are God-given thoughts which descend out of heaven; and they are the animating principles which guide the Son of man who lives in the heaven of God's grace and truth. These were revelations, openings up into the kingdom of God in which Nicodemus could not follow Jesus; and they are still to many men as great a mystery as how a man can be born again when he is old, or what the meaning can be of a man being born of water and of God's Spirit.

Words cannot explain such thoughts ; this education is not in the school of the intellect, but of the heart, or the affections, and thus the spiritual being must first experience and then know the earthly and heavenly things of the kingdom of God.

The mystery of the kingdom of God in its highest development upon the earth rises above the reception of the kingdom in the soul, and the active manifestations of mercy, purity, and peace in the actions of the life; and it is to be considered as found in passive suffering, enduring persecution, reviling, and shame, so that others may be blest by seeing such a God-like, gracious example set before them. In the Mosaic era of the wilderness this phase of the grace of God was not often observed ; but in the lifting up of the serpent on a pole, when the Israelites were bitten by the fiery serpents, there is found in figure, this idea of a sufferer made the means of blessing to others. The figure of the serpent becomes the great reality in Jesus Christ ; because as a Man and for men He was lifted up, so that all men might look unto Him, believe in Him, and thus receive life and light from heaven.

In chapter iii., in verse 16, the Spirit of Christianity is seen to flash forth upon men like the summer sun at mid-day in the tropics when the clouds have been suddenly dispelled. The God of Christianity is represented as full of inexpressible love, so moved by the Spirit of grace that He gives the Son of His love to men, that they may believe Him, receive eternal life, and not perish in their evil ways. He is sent not as Judge, but as Saviour ; and they who believe His Word are not judged, but if any believe not, then they are already judged because of the attitude of their souls toward this Son of God, who expresses His love. The judgment requires no proof ; it is found in the evil man who despises and rejects the love and grace of God which shine upon his pathway, and exist in the atmosphere that he breathes. They who do evil hate the good, and they shrink from the gracious light found in God's Word, knowing that they will be reprov'd and punished. Those who love the truth and are obedient to it, will come to the Word of grace, so that their actions may be manifested as being in harmony with the will of God. In these thoughts there may be discern'd not merely the kingdom of God in its highest manifested spirit, as God giving Himself in Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world, but also the kingdom of evil which the Lord came to destroy, so that men who are poor in spirit might possess the kingdom of heaven.

The scene is changed from the heaven of heavens, the fountain of the Love of God, to Enon—fountains or springs—near Salim : in other words, to the souls of men which also have their springs in themselves. At this time John the Baptist was still free, but his spirit animated his disciples, for they were found debating with the Jews about purifying. The question of greatest importance to all men is that of the purifying of the soul ; the Jews, following Judaism, would say that sacrifices, rites, and ceremonies were useful for this purpose ; the disciples of John could urge that these things cannot cleanse the soul, and that only through repentance and the baptism by water could this change be effected. Whilst they were discussing upon this important theme, some people came unto John, and began to tell him that Jesus was baptizing,

and all men were going to Him. The response of John was, that we could only receive that which was given to them by God from heaven they were all witnesses that he had said he was not the Christ, the Anointed One, but that he had been sent to go before Him. The One who possesses the pure and holy bride, the purified, sanctified soul, as the Church, is the Lord Jesus, who is compared to its Bridegroom; John is glad to be known as a friend of Jesus Christ, standing by, hearing His voice; and because he had heard of the success of the King, his joy was now full. The washings with water and all visible ceremonies must give place to His spiritual kingdom begun upon the earth. Christianity must increase, and every other form of worship must decrease; they are at best only voices in the great wilderness of this world, in some form or other showing that the Christian religion in its purity and simplicity is the power which will purify the souls of men.

The King comes from heaven, the holy state, far above all men; men are of the earth, and thus they have very childish ideas about heaven. But the Lord comes from heaven to teach what He has seen, heard, and known, and men are so foolish that they will not receive His testimony. Every man who accepts the words of Jesus as the very truth of God places his own seal upon the Word of God, and openly avows "that God is true." The Lord Jesus speaks to men the very thoughts of God, giving them audible expression in His Own words; and His thoughts and words are not imperfect, because His Spirit is in perfect harmony with God's Spirit of truth. Men guess at the spiritual by gazing upon the letter and the figure, but the Lord Jesus Christ lives in the spiritual world, and words and figures are used by Him to clothe the divine thoughts. "The Father loveth the Son, and has given all things into His hand." In other words, Jesus Christ is God's Beloved Gracious One; and into His hands, as King of grace and mercy in the spirit of meekness, all things are committed. Men must measure themselves and understand their position by this gracious proclamation. By believing and accepting the Son, God's grace, man obtains eternal life; but if there is disobedience, the rejection of Jesus, then the moral nature remains impure, there is open rebellion against God, and the wrath of God rests upon the despiser of His mercy.

CHAPTER IV. There is here seen a new departure from Judea to Galilee, and it takes place through the envy of the Pharisees, and because the success of the work of Jesus was greater than that of John. The cloud was gathering which meant hatred and persecution, and as Jesus moved away from it, having a special mission to the city of Sychar (probably the Sychem or Shechem of Old Testament history). This place was near to the portion given unto Joseph by Jacob; and it was there that Jacob's well was found. If this incident is studied in the light of the first cycle, and of the fourth blessing, that of hungering after righteousness, a new light may be cast upon this interesting story. In this introduction there seems to be very important links of spiritual truth touched in the thoughts relating to Jacob's well and Joseph's portion; the former pointing to the source from whence the kingdom of Jacob comes, and the laws by which he should be guided; and the

the blessing uttered upon Joseph by the dying Jacob in Shechem is the place of Government, and thus the birthright is possessed by Ephraim; and the well contains the blessing rests upon Joseph. Righteousness expresses these two because only by Him who sat weary by the well, could the full righteousness be disclosed to men, and manifested as a power amongst men. The hidden secret of righteousness by mercy was in Joseph like a well; and in due time, by virtue of the Blessing, the Birthright of Government would be mercy first, and then government by moral law, and moral law as a means of developing to the gracious state. The time, the fulness of the time had come, and He was weary of a long journey that had been made from Enon—the fountains—the Jewish kingdom and mode of thought. Whilst waiting, a Samaritan woman came near a woman to draw water out of Jacob's well. She asked this woman that she should give Him a drink. He asked her because His followers had gone elsewhere to buy bread, and he asked why one who was a Jew should ask a drink of a Samaritan, because these peoples had hated each other for many years. The Lord Jesus was thirsting to bestow His blessing upon a Samaritan who was hated and rejected; His servants of the house of Judah had gone elsewhere to find bread to supply their needs. When He speaks to her, the only reply is one about feuds and how strange it seemed to her that a Jew should ask a Samaritan. The way was so far opened up, and thus He spoke to her about "the gift of God," and about Himself as living water: but she did not understand His strange remarks. The water she knew about was that which was in the well, and she could not understand how He could draw it out of the well by that simple means. His words had an influence upon her, as may be seen because she began to compare Him with Jacob; but He checked the current of her thoughts by comparing the water in the well with that water which He could supply, and which, if possessed, would be in her soul a well-spring bubbling up unto eternal life. She began the conversation by asking for a drink of water, and her words were changed, and the woman becomes a suppliant seeking living water, so that her thirsting might come to an end. He told her to call her husband, the one to whom her faith was directed, and unto whom she ought to have been faithful. In the woman's answer was that she had no husband. At that time the Lord revealed to her the unfaithfulness of which she was guilty, which brought the response from the woman that she was as a prophet; and as if wishing to find an excuse for her error, she began to compare Gerizim and Jerusalem as places of worship. To this the Lord replied that the hour was coming when all such things would be abolished. The Samaritan worship had been the people ignorant; Judaism had salvation in it; but the Father's will was that the people should worship to the Father was to be the order amongst all true worshippers of God would seek after truth and not in the *spirit, and not by forms and ceremonies*. "God

is a Spirit;" thus He is not to be conceived of as subject to forms or ceremonial observances; but rather as the Cause by whom the invisible is rendered visible in forms. Worshipers ought to realize this, else they are idolaters and not spiritual; they are adoring the order and the manifestations, and not the Fountain of power and grace, the Wisdom who designed, or the Spirit who develops and manifests. Higher than this man cannot go; Jesus lands the woman in a sphere of thought that must be accepted by believing, rational men; and they, too, must act the same part as the woman of Samaria, that is, turn away from the Light that is inaccessible, through the impossibility of the human intellect following the Lord into such a world. As with the woman then, so now, men turn away from the heavenly thoughts of what God is in His Being, and they are in spirit repeating the words of the woman, "Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He."

After these suggestions upon this most remarkable conversation, it may be discerned that there are depths and heights here which will require much study before the spirit within the letter can be fully disclosed. This is a wonderful parable of the kingdom of heaven going down to its foundation in forms in Jacob and Joseph, and ascending into the heaven of heavens in spiritual conceptions as related to God and Christ. The current of thought seems to run in this direction: there is a departure from Judaism in its forms and ceremonies, and a returning to the more simple patriarchal spirit of the days of Jacob and Joseph. The massive figure of Mosaism was a dead thing; it had become petrified, and the Lord Jesus was bearing away the vital spark of grace and of life from Judaism, so that it might be manifested again under new conditions. The Lord possessed the spirit of the kingdom of heaven, and also the living water of grace within Himself, in fact, the blessing. The kingdom of heaven was virtually on this day going about begging for a home, and when the Lord condescended to say, "Give me to drink," He was really thirsting to bestow the Blessing of the kingdom upon this woman. He begs so that He may bestow; a Beggar He appears to be, but in reality a King asking men to receive a kingdom. The passage is rich in spiritual treasures; and they come out in the comparisons that arise in the conversation between the woman and Jesus. The great fact is this, that Jacob—the supplanter—was now about to be put aside; and the visible things in Joseph were about to be manifested in Him who is the Blessing of God. The kingdom of heaven was not to be an external, hidden thing, out of which men with labour would draw water, but a spiritual power within the soul; a living power growing according to the laws of God's kingdom of grace. And the portion of Joseph, the birthright and blessing inherited from his father was to pass away from being a form and become a reality in Jesus Christ, the true Joseph, in whom there will be increase of spiritual blessings. The comparisons as to water in the well, and the living water in Jesus, Jacob and Jesus, and Gerizim and Jerusalem touch the old and the new, the past and the future; to drink of what Jacob, Judah, or Joseph could supply was like

drinking of water from a well; the thirst returned and the spirit of man unsatisfied must drink again; but the grace and truth given to men by Jesus Christ when conceived in the soul are perennial, and they will make men independent of their external surroundings. Jacob was a great man, in whom the visible kingdom of heaven was manifested by his children, but as the life which gives form to organism is greater than the organs, so the Lord Jesus Christ, the King over Jacob, and the Spirit in the kingdom transcends the forms manifested in Jacob. The adulterous worship upon Mount Gerizim or in Samaria could not be compared to the worship at Jerusalem; the former was full of self-seeking from the days of Jeroboam onward, becoming even more impure after the captivity of the ten tribes and the mixed worship of the Samaritans; the latter contained in its forms the spirit which would one day come to the birth. Salvation to men comes by direct historical procedure through the Jews; and the Lord Jesus became a Jew in His outward form, so that He might translate the spirit of grace and truth out of the dead form of Judaism, and give it freedom in the Roman world. It is the spirit that gives blessing, not the letter or form; and thus in the form of Jesus there was found the Messiah, who can declare unto men all things. The thoughts referring to the woman and her husbands may be understood in two ways, as they are applied to the individual soul, or to a perverted Church. In the former case it is true that the Creator of the soul is its husband, and unto God alone should the affections of the heart be supremely given: this figure is a common one in the Scriptures, and sin is considered as adultery, because as when the wife proves unfaithful to her husband she is liable to be divorced, so the soul that sins is in danger of being cut off from God. It may be said philosophically, and thus truly, that sinful creatures have five husbands, or rather adulterous paramours; these being the lower principles of their being which ought to be subject to moral law; the last and most powerful of these being the intellect, but with all the others there is adultery, or the doing of what is not in harmony with moral law. With regard to the Church of God, it is the old story of Eden, "thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee;" and of history with the subjection of the Church to the kingdoms of this world.

The woman of Samaria viewed as representing the Church of Christ in its perverted forms may be conceived as having received the revelation of Christ; and it is at this point the disciples return to Him, after seeking in other places that bread which He alone could supply. They marvelled because He was seen speaking with the woman, yet they asked no questions, being awed by His presence and the strange expression resting upon His face. The woman in her eagerness to report what had taken place forgot her waterpot, the means she used to draw water, and going into the city she told the men to "Come, see a man which told me all things ever I did: is not this the Christ?" When Christ comes He will tell men all things: He is the great Revealer of all thoughts, and by His revelations men will be brought to admit that He is the Messiah. This is the Christ for whom men are looking; and surely men ought now to be as open to receive the truth as was that

woman at Jacob's well near Sychar. The spirit of the merciful servant of Christ may be discerned in the woman's words; they are not such as repel but invite inquiry, because if He is so wise as to know all things, then surely He is the Christ, and thus the Hope of the ages.

The disciples prayed their Master that He would eat some of the food they had obtained for Him, but His strange answer was "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." They had been engaged about the meat that perishes, and they brought this to Him, and since He rejected what they had provided they wondered whether some one had supplied His wants, but Jesus explained to them that His meat was not such things as money or oblations, the praise of men or the honours they could bestow, but to do God's will upon the earth and to bring about its accomplishment. They said that it was only seed-time, and not until four months would there be the harvest; but in this they were mistaken, because they could by lifting up their eyes discern that the harvest was come upon the villages of Samaria, and in Samaria, as a sign upon the world. They were to become reapers in the great harvest-field of the world, and they were to be engaged in gathering fruit which should possess eternal life. Sowing and reaping would be found in operation in the future in the same field; and all the servants were called upon to rejoice in their labours. They were to go forth as reapers into fields where they had not sown; others had laboured without seeing fruits, but they would be blessed by reaping the results of their labours. This vision seems to be on the eve of its fulfilment in the world; the sowing and reaping have been abundant in the past, but there has also been much sowing without reaping. The Lord's work of purifying His people must be accomplished, and until this is done there cannot be rest. It is only too true that in the past men have been found serving the Lord who did not understand the meat of which He eats, but the dark days of ignorance and of will-worship will pass away, and then the reaping will begin in earnest; and sowing and reaping will go on side by side, sowers and reapers rejoicing together.

The testimony of the Samaritans as to the King and Saviour is very suggestive; some believed because they heard the woman's word; but many more because of His Own Word; having heard Him for themselves they knew that the Lord Jesus is the King so long promised, and also the Saviour, not merely of Jew or Samaritan, but of the world.

The Lord Jesus remained with the Samaritans for two days, and then departed into Galilee. "For Jesus himself testified that a prophet hath no honour in his own country." This statement does not seem to agree with the open reception of Himself by the Galileans; but if it is remembered that the Lord would most likely pass through Nazareth upon His way to Cana, and that He was rejected by His townsmen at an early period of His ministry, the rejection of Christ at Nazareth and His acceptance at Cana are in perfect harmony. But passing away beyond the Galilean ministry into the wider region of the spiritual vision there may be discerned in these few verses the

rejection of Jesus by the Jews and His acceptance by the Gentiles ; and the rejection of the Word of God in the Nazareth of Christendom and His acceptance by those who are waiting for His coming as the Prince of peace, the King of truth and righteousness.

This cycle of the kingdom of heaven in the poor spirit is pregnant with intensely interesting thoughts ; it opens up new fields of spiritual study which will amply repay the diligent student.

The incident of the healing of the nobleman's son may be considered in the light of the second cycle as related to the mournful soul, and also of the poor in spirit, as the blessing in that cycle. The word Canaan means possession, and it is in this cycle of thought, as the Priest of man and the Sacrifice for humanity, that the Lord Jesus may be said to enter into the possession of His redeemed property. The story speaks of a son at Capernaum sick at the point of death, and the father at Cana asking the Lord to heal his son. The man would have Jesus go down to Capernaum to do the work of healing ; but Jesus would lead this man, and all other men, past visible things, and to understand that distance and observation are not in His case necessary. The faith of this nobleman was not like that of the centurion, and thus Jesus said unto him, " Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe." The man had faith in the power of Jesus. His was also the poor spirit waiting for the blessing, and not desiring to argue about signs and wonders, and thus his petition is that the Lord would go down and heal his child before the child would die. This spirit of trust, with a limited faith and knowledge, was acceptable to the Lord. He told the man that his son was healed ; and as Jesus had said, so it came to pass, the child was healed at that hour in Capernaum.

CHAPTER V. The scene is changed to Jerusalem, and by the sheep-gate, where was the pool of Bethesda—the house of pity or mercy ; there was seen in the porches a multitude of sick creatures waiting for the moving of the waters, so that they might be healed of their diseases. One man had been waiting thirty-eight years in this place, and had found no cure for his complaint. Jesus, knowing this, asked if he would wish to be healed. The man's response was that of utter helplessness. He was unfit to help himself, and he had no friends to aid him at the critical moment, and thus his case was a very sad one. The Lord healed the man, and he took up his bed and walked. Where is Bethesda ? Is it not within the human soul, or in the Church of Christ, as the house of mercy ? This picture is that of a mournful soul full of sorrow, and it can find no healer for the infirmities with which it has been so long troubled. Nay, even the thought of ever being healed was almost gone, because so many during such a long time had been healed, and hope deferred had made the heart sick and helpless. The thoughts of the sheep-gate, the pool with its five porches, the Priest, and the Sacrifice for men, all in such close proximity, are aggressive. May they not speak of the market-place in which men live, and the sheep sold for the slaughter, the soul of man or the Church in their helpless state, and of Jesus Christ as the Priest, Sacrifice, andaviour of the soul and of His people ?

Out of the incident of the healing of the infirm man arose the question of the lawfulness of carrying a bed on the Sabbath, and of healing the souls and bodies of men. This man was not a disciple of Jesus; and he seemed to have been so ungrateful for the gift bestowed upon him that he did not even ask the Giver's name, and when he knew that it was Jesus who had healed him, he went and told the Jews that Jesus had cured him. Because of this healing on the Sabbath-day, and commanding the man to carry his bed, the Jews persecuted Jesus. The picture here is not a pleasant one to ponder upon. It is that of a Jerusalem sinner indeed, and of men who reject the light of grace and mercy that is seeking to enter their souls. It is the story of unthankfulness and ingratitude toward God of men and nations, and of the self-seeking will of man, instead of the meek spirit, thankful and grateful unto God for His manifold mercies.

The Lord Jesus Christ knew the thoughts in their souls and the wilfulness, but these manifestations of evil men did not hinder His carrying out of the work He had undertaken on their behalf. The Father had been working hitherto in the invisible world of men's thoughts. The Son was then working before men in a visible form, and by great signs. Invisible power and grace, and visible signs and wonders, could not win men to believe in and obey God; therefore the kingdom of heaven must be carried on amongst men, even though they would not see, hear, or understand the will of God. This form of announcing the kingdom of God as a power in their midst at work for their salvation in Jesus, the Son of God, was rejected by the Jews; they would have killed Him because He "called God His Own Father, making Himself equal with God."

This increased enmity, hatred, and desire to kill on the part of the Jews led Jesus to speak of His work, and He told them that the Son of Himself could do nothing, the works that the Father did or was doing these also the Son was doing in a like manner. The Father did not hide Himself from the Son of His love, but showed Him the things or the works He carried on, and greater works than the healing of the infirm man would be done, so that men might marvel at the wondrous mercy of God. As the Father quickens and raises dead souls to new life, a work more wonderful than causing the infirm to walk, even so the Son could also quicken to a new moral life whom He pleased. The Father had resigned the judgment over men and given the same to the Son, so that the Father and Son might be equally honoured by men. If men will only hear and obey Jesus and believe on God, they will have a moral life which is eternal, having passed from the state of death and of judgment. Yea, the hour had virtually come when the dead would hear the voice of the Son of God and live. As the Father possesses the perfect, moral life, so the Son had also the same perfect moral life in Himself; and on account of this position of Jesus as the Representative of God as a man, authority had been given to Him that capacity to become the Judge of men, and to execute judgment. These things ought not to be so considered as marvellous; but they surely will be a great and marvellous work when the hour has come of the great judgment day, that He will cause all men to appear, so that

to be judged by Him, those who have done good being raised eternal, whilst they who have done evil will arise to a resurrection. In that great day there will not be any injustice the Son of man, by or for Himself He will do nothing. The Law will be righteous according to God's laws, for His glory and for the good of the universe. In Him there is no self-seeking or self-will ; of God, the laws of righteousness, are His standards, and by men will be judged. These are mighty thoughts, great confirmations of the mission of the merciful Saviour of the world, and the good of mankind. There is perfect harmony in this portion of the Law of God and the tenor of the Scriptures, because mercy and judgment go hand in hand, and they are found in Jesus the Saviour of the world. There was mercy to Noah and his family, but destruction to the wicked people in the world ; mercy to Abraham and Lot, but judgment upon the cities of the plain ; deliverance to Israel, but plagues to Egypt ; and mercy to those who accepted the Saviour, but destruction of Jerusalem and captivity for the Jews. Under what conditions the great judgment will take place man cannot tell ; but this seems that it will terminate the day of mercy and bring in the eternal day. The Lord Jesus seems to admit that this will be a most marvellous thing, the others, as to His Own position as Saviour and Judge, matters which men might easily understand if they would only make a fair consideration. If the method of the last judgment were understood, surely reasonable men will admit that it will be a fitting conclusion for the great drama that has been carried on in the world. Without a final judgment on the conflict betwixt the Kingdom of grace and the mystery of evil there would be a great want which would be as if seeds had been growing and never bearing fruit that they would be useless for the practical purposes of education. Men may rest assured that this royal science of grace and mercy will bear fruit to the glory of God's Name, and that the evil seed will be exposed in all its folly and shame, so that the whole universe will be glad that it is not good for man to seek to have his eyes opened as if he were a god, but that it is right to love, honour, and obey the Father of the universe.

In verse 31 the Lord turns from His mission and its consequences to the responsibility of men toward Himself ; the change is from a sphere of mercy to that of truth or the moral nature of man. Men are to receive Jesus as Saviour, King, and Judge, then the evidence ought to be supplied to them so that they might not turn to their Saviour through ignorance. Jesus admits that if there were any other witnesses in His favour except what He said of Himself, then this would not be sufficient to meet the requirements ; but the Father had borne testimony at His baptism and by His Spirit and His witness-bearing is true. John also had borne witness with ; but the witness which he bore was that of a man to men, in a measure useful for men, but not such as the Lord could bear on His Own account. The Lord Jesus condescends to meet men on their own level, in the fairest way possible, permitting them to hear the truth in His favour, so that they might believe and be saved ; but

the thought seems to emerge here that the credentials He bears of His mission are heavenly, they have authority; they are to be believed, and not debated upon as if the Father or the Son could by any possible means be guilty of lying or forgery. John had been in their midst like a shining light, bearing witness of the coming of the King; and for a season they had been rejoicing in the light of truth which radiated from him; and because of this privilege, they were responsible as to their decision in His favour or against Him at that time.

At verse 36 the Lord passes away from men to consider this matter from the higher position of His Own mission to men as the Prince of peace and the Son of God; the witness of John is laid aside, and the mighty works of grace which the Father had given Him to accomplish were as voices from God, saying that Jesus is His Messenger. These works, and by words, the Father bore witness to the Lord's mission, but there were men listening to Him at that time who had never heard God's voice in their consciences, neither had they been able to form a true conception of the Father of mercy. The Word of God did not abide in them, and thus they did not believe the Messenger of God. They were in the habit of searching the Scriptures because they thought that in them an eternal moral life could be found, and these very Scriptures bore witness to Him and His works; but the secret of their failure lay in this, that through their prejudices and ignorance, they would not go to the Fountain of moral life, and of grace and truth, that they might be saved. They must not misunderstand or be offended in Him because He differed from them; He did not seek after, and would not receive, honour from men; but He knew that the love of God was not in the souls. He had come to them as the authorised Messenger from heaven, yet they rejected Him; but if another man would come, seeking his own selfish ends, such an one they would receive. They could not believe in God and His Messenger, because they did not seek God's glory; they sought the praise and honour which came from men, and not the honour that God only can give. They had rejected Him in His work of mercy, by the healing the infirm man on the Sabbath-day, but they were not to think of Him as their accuser: for Moses, whom they placed their trust, would accuse them before the Father. They did not truly believe and obey the words of Moses, else they would have accepted Him; and as they did not believe the writings of Moses, how could they believe, understand, or obey His words?

CHAPTER VI. There is a new departure; Jesus went to the other side of the lake, named here the Sea of Tiberias; and as this word seems to mean "breaking asunder," it may teach that the subjective operations or thoughts, so fully contemplated in the former cycle, are at an end, and that the third cycle of meekness—that is, love of, and conformity to, the will of God—is entered upon. The subject is the kingdom, and indeed of peace, but of that great cycle which, in figure, is so fully manifested in the life of Jacob and in the history of Israel in the wilderness under Moses. These past things harmonise with this cycle, only it may be fully expected that in the life of Jesus Christ, other important truths will be manifested before men. The multitude

followed Jesus because they had seen His works of healing ; and truly, it is only when the sinful, mournful souls receive comfort from the High Priest of humanity that they are willing to follow the King into the desert place. The scene is a mountain ; and there Jesus and His disciples are seated, waiting to receive the people. The remark about the Feast of the Passover, the Jewish feast, seems to be inserted here without any reason or connection with the story ; but it may be the finger-post indicating in what direction the thoughts ought to travel, so that the Word of God may be understood. In other words, what the deliverance from Egypt was, as signified by the Passover, to the Jews, that in spiritual reality is this passage to the followers of Jesus Christ. As it was at that time that Israel became a nation, so it was at this period that the spiritual kingdom of heaven in mercy was set up upon the mountain-tops of this earth, and the people have been flocking into it. The conversation upon the mountain is interesting in this aspect ; because the Lord is seen communing with His disciples as to the means by which the people are to be fed. It is Philip whom the Lord addresses, the one who has the spirit of the evangelist, saying, " Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat ? " The Lord knew what He was going to do, and from whence the bread would come ; but He wished to prove His followers, especially evangelists, that they might know how to act in the future. The answer of Philip is that of a disciple, and to the best of his ability he answers the Lord's question, but after all it means nothing ; because if neither the money nor the bread were to be found, it would make little difference what quantity would be required for such a purpose. As Philip was not specially thoughtful in this instance, nor when he told his friend Nathanael that in the Son of Joseph, Jesus of Nazareth, they had found the Messiah, so it has very often been with the evangelists, the spiritual brethren of Philip. Zealous they have been, assuredly, and also successful in their labours through the blessing of the Lord upon them ; but they have not been sufficiently careful to define their own thoughts or the questions the Lord gives them to consider. The Lord puts no limit as to the quantity of bread which the people are to eat, but Philip is anxious that every one may get a little. The Lord has been pleased to bless His servants abundantly in their service of seeking to save the lost ; and the imperfect thought, the stammering tongue, with the soul alive to God, seeking to do a little good, has been the means of saving souls when the scholars and the orators have received no blessing from the Lord. This is the method of the kingdom of grace ; the babes are blessed and a blessing ; whilst the wise men live in the wilderness of self and are not blessed by God, neither have they been very useful to men. The Lord spake to Philip, exciting his thoughts and affections ; but one of His disciples, Andrew—the strong man—suggested that there was some bread in the company, and also two small fishes, but so small a supply would be as nothing to so many people.

The conference was over, and it was evident that none of the disciples could meet the want that had arisen ; men, women, and children had come to the King in His kingdom, surrounded by His ministers, to receive the bread of life that would nourish their souls and teach them

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how to live: and one servant could only say how much might be required, so that a little would be given to each; whilst the other suggested that they possessed a little, but it was altogether impossible that so little could minister to the wants of so many. The Lord gave instructions that the people should sit down upon the grass, and that Jesus took the loaves; and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would." The feast being an end, the disciples were instructed to gather up the broken pieces, so that there might not be any waste; and twelve baskets full were taken up from the five loaves, over all that the people had eaten. This was a wonderful sign at which they arrived with the fear of death and judgment? Prophet whom the Jews were expecting. How will the soul of man be nourished, that has been delivered from the fear of death and judgment? The answer is found in this parable, or sign in the kingdom of heaven; there must be the meek spirit sitting at the feet of the King; the reception of the Word of God, as Jesus distributes the same by His servants; and it is when the bread of life has been received in the soul that there will be the knowledge that Jesus is God's Prophet, bringing to men the Word of God; and by the Word, through obedience, the soul will be filled with all the good things of kingdom of heaven.

The people had agreed that Jesus would be their King, but they not the spirit of His kingdom; and it was when they would have force to gain their ends that Jesus withdrew from them and went into the mountain alone. The strong contrast betwixt the people and their method of action, and the King of meekness and His method of operation, comes out very clearly in the 15th verse; they were seeking men; and alone, He rules in heaven and earth unseen; the disciples went away in the evening to cross to the other side during the night, the darkness, the stormy wind, and the waves were around them. Jesus had not come to them before the storm but when the storm was at its height then the Lord came walking on the sea. When they saw Him they were encouraged by saying, "It is I: be not afraid."

Him into the boat and soon they reached the place where they were going. Unto what shall men liken the kingdom of heaven from amongst those men who would set up an unrighteousness, and power? It is like unto the Lord Jesus upon the earth. He leaves men to take their own way strength to struggle against the powers of darkness; and they are in danger and cannot reach the place to which that He comes forth overriding all obstacles and difficulties sought in the past. Their ideal has been men only the son of man. He is a King indeed, but not the King of kings, who was self-willed and self-righteous. Their ideal has been men only the son of man. He is a King indeed, but not the King of kings, who was self-willed and self-righteous. Their ideal has been men only the son of man. He is a King indeed, but not the King of kings, who was self-willed and self-righteous.

disobedience and unrighteousness, and only through the coming of the righteous and meek King of heaven can the storms be hushed to rest in the souls of men and nations.

The following day the multitudes followed Jesus to the Capernaum side of the lake ; and when they found Him they said, " Rabbi, when camest Thou hither ? " The Lord's reply was that they sought Him not because of the great sign that was done in their midst in the preceding day, but simply because they had eaten of the bread and had been filled. They were not given to reflection upon signs and words ; their hunger was not for righteousness and holiness, but for those visible, fleshly, carnal things which fill the belly, cover the body, and adorn their homes. All this gross sensuality was repellant to Jesus, and thus His words to them are that they ought to work for what will not perish, even for that meat which He could give unto them and which would be to them a pure, moral, and eternal life. This was the object of His mission amongst men, and it was for this purpose that the Father had sealed the Son so that men might know, without any doubt, that the Lord Jesus carries the seal of heaven's mercy amongst men, and that all who trust Him as the Missionary from God would receive pardon and eternal life. The people heard Jesus saying that they must work for the meat which abides to eternal life, and that He was the means of communication with heaven ; and they asked what they must do to work God's works ? The response of Jesus was that they must have faith in Himself as the Sent One from heaven. They were not satisfied with this reply, but required a sign so that they might believe in Him. Such a Messenger they thought would do mighty works, even as Moses had done in Egypt ; that is the visible signs by which the power of Egypt was broken, and Israel went forth free. " What dost Thou work ? " Their fathers did eat the manna in the desert that they received out of heaven. Could Jesus break the Roman yoke, for example, and give unto them manna from heaven as did the great law-giver ? Jesus interrupts them by emphatically stating that it was not Moses that gave the bread out of heaven ; but that the Father had given to them the true Bread. The true Bread is not manna which can only nourish the body ; it is that which gives a renewed moral life to the soul and to the world. The prayer of the people is that the Lord would evermore give them that Bread ; but He explains to them that it is Himself that is the Bread of Life ; and that they who come to Him shall cease to hunger ; and that they who believe in Him should never thirst. They had heard His marvellous words ; but they did not know or believe what He said. They were thinking about a visible kingdom and of eating fleshly, carnal things, being lured away by their own vain imaginations. His kingdom would be successful whatever men might say or do, because the Father's counsel must stand ; all that the Father had given to Jesus would come to Him. Also all who will go to the Lord Jesus would be accepted by Him. The Lord Jesus came from heaven upon His message of mercy, not to do His Own will, or to seek His Own glory, but simply to do the will of the Father ; and the will of the Father is that all those given to Jesus shall be saved and raised up at the last day ; and also, that every one who looks upon

THE UNITY AND HARMONY IN GOD'S WORD.

Jesus and believes His Word of salvation shall receive eternal life; and Jesus will raise him up at the last day.

The Jews could not understand the thoughts and words of Jesus and they murmured because He said, "I am the Bread which came down from heaven." Through unbelief they staggered at the divine thoughts; and they said that He was Jesus the Son of Joseph, whose parents they knew, and thus they could not comprehend what He meant by coming out of heaven. Jesus told them not to murmur among themselves because of what He said, because no man could come to Him by faith unless drawn by the Father's grace: but all who would receive life and be raised up at the last day. The prophets had prophesied that all God's people should be taught by Him; and thus they who hear the Father and learn His will come unto Jesus. It is not that men have seen the Father, because only the pure in heart are in a sense, privileged to see God; but He who is from God hath seen Him. This is a great truth, that all men who believe in Jesus possess eternal life. If a man believes in the Word of God he is a new creature. There is a pure moral life in his soul and it is Jesus alone who can nourish that life of purity, as bread nourishes the physical body. Jesus is the new moral life in a sense, loses himself, and Christ lives within, a new creation altogether and a portion of Christ's mystery body. Physical bread, fleshly forms and ceremonies cannot do the things, because all who have partaken of such manna and tried to live by, or upon it, are dead in the desert of their own being. Jesus alone can sustain the life which He bestows, and they who live in men live in Jesus, and are sustained by a pure moral life, that is sustenance for the living soul, then death is impossible for this very life of God, and thus not merely eternal as bearing up but as expressing a union with the Eternal. The bread which gives for the life of the world is His flesh; in other words, so that the most perfect product of organic life in the body, so that manifestation of His moral life is that which was sacrificed for salvation. Here again the great thought of the moral nature as being the sacrifice for sin comes prominently forward struggle in the kingdom of darkness is in the moral nature it is only because the Lord Jesus did offer up, resign this as a sacrifice for sin: and at the same time retained the moral life in Himself that He could atone for sin, expiate be the Author and Sustainer of moral life in those who believe. These are very important thoughts; pregnant with blessing because they show that the creature is utterly helpless not his own, but Christ's, and the sustenance of spirit, Word, and not the dead works that the creature can do. Thy children meekness and deep humility of spirit. Taken to these wonderful words which enter into the life of the creature, for so long as self reigns in an individual being, sustenance are not prized as they ought.

lavour are not seen and realised. They are the blessed in heart : and they shall see God.

could not comprehend the thoughts of Jesus, and so they ang themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His

"The more the Jews seem to stumble at His words, the y He tries to impress upon them the truths they contain, gainst them every other avenue by which they will try to life.

The way of eternal life is found in eating the flesh in drinking His blood, and unless men do this they are e ; but by eating His flesh and drinking His blood there is rrection power, because His flesh is true meat, and His drink ; and it is by this eating and drinking that the soul us, and Jesus in the soul of man.

Thus far the Son of itures are brought near to each other ; but here the Lord l creature-conceptions and enters the heaven of heavens ;

son which He makes is a marvellous one ; and were it not e uniting link which binds the thoughts together men

be lost in the profound depths which open to view. There Father, that is the One possessing essential moral life,

peaceful Son upon a mission, and that Son is living because r ; and as He lives because of the Father, so those who

Jesus are united to Him, and they also live because of

lost blessed Bread of God, what can Thy redeemed ones

unto whom Thou hast given life ? Their prayer is that st evermore give them Thyself to be in them as their life,

also may become by Thee loving peacemakers in this world sons of God through Thee. This mystical union with God

surely the third heaven of thought ; what a marvellous

ixt this glory, which excels in its brightness, which the tellect cannot see, nor the ear of the reason hear, with that

detestable, serpent-like spirit, which would have its eyes t may become as a god to know good and evil. Surely the

roy of God is most wonderful when it lays hold upon such i, changes them from being devils, and actually gives them

divine. The creature must say divine, because it will be s possession ; but Jesus seems to point out that it is

se it is His life, and also the very life of God. "Now sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall

know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ; see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in

himself even as He is pure."

iation of these thoughts by Jesus put His disciples to

some of them considered that these sayings were very ch as men could not hear or comprehend. Jesus under-

difficulties, and He asked them if such things caused ble and to be offended, what would they think if they

the Son of man ascending where He was before ?" This rd saying, a terrible stumbling-block ; but the interpreta-

found in this, that His words are not mere figures and cover spiritual things ; they are the true spiritual living

thoughts of God. When men are not spiritual, but carnal, then they abide by the carnal figures; but when they have received the Spirit—Jesus, and are spiritual, then the figures vanish from sight, and the living thoughts like words of light radiate forth the will of God. Jesus said that there were some there who did not believe; but surely many of His followers have felt chilled by this evil spirit of unbelief who they have been brought so near to the divine manifestation, and have felt as if darkness and not light came from such words. Lord Jesus Thou knowest all things; let not this unbelieving spirit blind the spiritual vision of those who seek Thy face; give fidelity to Thy cause for truly no man would come unto Thee except great grace were given to him by the Father. There have been men who have gone back to the world after professing to be Thy disciples; but those who know their own sinful souls, their hopeless condition, and that without Thy salvation is impossible, they cannot by Thy grace act such a foolish part. Eternal life is in Thee; Thou art the Holy One of God, the Saviour of the world, the King of Truth and Righteousness. Come and cleanse Thy great and mighty temple amongst men; reign as King over us, and eternal honour, praise, dominion, and glory, shall be given to Thy gracious Name.

CHAPTER VII. It is here said that Jesus remained in Galilee, and that He could not at that time go to Judæa, because the Jews sought to kill Him. At that time the Feast of Tabernacles was near; and His brethren were preparing to attend Jerusalem at the great autumn feast of the Ingathering. They were anxious that the Lord Jesus should go up to Jerusalem, so that in the capital His disciples might see His wonderful works. They thought that Jesus was acting a selfish part; seeking to be openly acknowledged as the Messiah, and yet doing things in secret, and thus they would rather that He should openly declare Himself and not continue to cause men to doubt because of His works on the one hand, and His keeping back from His position as the Messiah on the other. There was much unbelief, and a great deal of self-conceit in this advice; these wise brethren evidently thought that they knew better than the Lord Jesus how He ought to act, and this explains their great freedom in criticising His motives and His actions. The Lord Jesus was very patient with them; they did not understand Him or His work, and so He compared His time with theirs, the difference being that His hour for the manifestation of Himself in suffering in His passion had not arrived; whilst the hour for the manifesting of the self-seeking and unbelieving spirit was in full operation. The spirit in which they would act was that of the world, and their actions would be acceptable to men; but His spirit was one which testified against evil, and it was hated and would be persecuted. They could go up to this feast, it would be as a pleasant holiday to them; the feast to which He looked forward had not yet arrived, because His time was not fulfilled. This passage requires to be studied in the light of the fourth cycle, that of hungering after righteousness, and in the spirit of the first blessing, that of the poor in spirit. The brethren of the Lord in their spirit of unbelief, are like the child Passion, in the

Pilgrim's Progress, they will have their good things now; they will enjoy their feast and pleasure, popularity, and applause, whilst the sun shines; and they will not wait God's time for bestowing His good things, and guiding them in all that they do. The Lord Jesus is like Patience, He is willing to wait the will of God, knowing that the true feast is not that of the Tabernacles at Jerusalem, but the great feast of the gathering at the end of the world, when the poor spirit will be activated by men, and the kingdom of righteousness will be thrown open as a mighty feast which all men may enjoy. This feast was linked with the opening of the civil year by the Feast of Trumpets on the 1st day of the 7th month; with the great Day of Atonement on the 10th; and the feast continued from the 15th to the 23rd. It was a memorial or remembrancer of the wilderness life, and of the deliverance from Egypt; it was the harvest thanksgiving period; and in the abbaty year it was the time for the public reading of the Holy Scriptures to all the people. If these thoughts are considered, it may be clearly discerned that the feast of which Jesus was thinking is not yet come, all things are not fulfilled, but the day draws nigh when there will be such a manifestation of truth and righteousness as the world has never witnessed.

The brethren went up unto the feast openly, but Jesus went up, in a sense, secretly; He has been with men in their feast of tabernacles, not in a secret way, not by an open manifestation of His wisdom, power, grace, and glory. As at Jerusalem, so throughout Christendom there has not been in the souls of men, or in the churches, a realisation of His presence; so there has been much murmuring about Jesus and varied opinions expressed about Him. This has been done publicly not in a quiet way men being afraid to express fully or clearly their thoughts; and in the souls of men the same kind of discussion has been going on about the Lord Jesus Christ.

About the middle of the feast the Lord Jesus appeared in the temple, and He taught the people. The Jews who heard Him marvelled at His wisdom, and they could not understand how One who had not been educated in their schools, could possess so much wisdom. The Lord Jesus in reply told them that the thoughts He taught were not His Own, but the Father's; and that, if men were willing to obey God's will, they would know the teaching and whether it was God's will or the thoughts of a man. The men who speak out of themselves, following their own ideas, seek their own glory; but as Jesus sought God's glory in all His thoughts, words, and actions, therefore He is true and righteous. Moses had given them the moral law, and yet they were not obedient to its precepts, seeing that they sought to kill Him. This serious charge against the people, brought from them the rude and thoughtless expression that Jesus was possessed by a devil. To this Jesus seems at first sight to make no reply, but by reverting to the healing of the infirm man on the Sabbath, He tells them that such a work had caused them to marvel; and then by comparing the act of circumcision on the Sabbath, a rite which they observed to that the law of Moses might not be broken, He asked why they were angry with Him for making an infirm man whole on the Sabbath-

day? They had been guilty of ignorance, bigotry, and foolishness; they judged matters not according to the righteous laws of God, but as things appeared unto them. In this part there may be discerned the spirit of meekness, which works for righteousness by willingness to obey the will of God; and also the self-seeking spirit which works for unrighteousness, because the will of God is despised, and the traditions of men are allowed to rule in the soul.

There is, it would seem, a strange want of connection in this narrative, as if conflicting opinions moved men, and as if expression is given to their current thoughts without any logical sequence. In the 20th verse the people denied that they wished to kill Jesus; and at the 25th verse the confession is openly made that such an intention did exist, and thus they were astonished that Jesus was speaking openly, and the rulers were saying nothing against Him. A question is thrown out, "Can it be that the rulers indeed know that this is the Christ?" And then immediately following this question, that they knew whence Jesus came, but when Christ would come, no one would know whence He is. Is not this a fair representation of human thought as bearing upon the kingdom of heaven; there being apparent contradictions, no one seeming to know what they can make of Jesus Christ? The teaching of Jesus is evidently meant to respond to their ideas. The key to these puzzling thoughts seems to be found in the word "know." They are full of knowledge, the knowing ones, who know all about the Christ, about Jesus, and about the mystery of the incarnation. Jesus takes them at their own valuation, and assumes that they know Him (and also from whence He had come); they were too knowing, and thus He could not give them any information upon such points; but passing by Himself, He would like to tell them something worthy of their consideration, and it was that He was not a self-appointed Messenger to men; that God who had sent Him was a God of truth and righteousness, and Him they did not know with all their knowledge.

Jesus knew Him, because He had come from Him and had been sent on a mission by Him. These words were not palatable to the self-conceited, self-satisfied, knowing ones; they would have seized Him, but the hour of the passion and of subjection had not arrived. Many believed because of the signs He wrought, thinking that even the Christ, when He did come, could not possibly do more wonderful works. This conflict of opinion amongst the people led to the despatch of officers by the rulers to take Jesus; but He began to warn them of the limited opportunity they possessed, because it was only a little while that they would have Him in their midst, and that He would soon return to God. They would seek and not find Him, because where He would be there they could not come. The Jews thought of Him going away to their brethren who were dispersed abroad throughout the world, but they concluded by repeating His Own words as being incomprehensible to them. The kingdom of righteousness is to be found in Jesus the Christ, who knows God, and who came from Him on the mission of mercy to men; the kingdom of unrighteousness is found in that foolish spirit of knowing

which thinks that it knows everything, and yet knows nothing. Instead of wisdom coming from such a source, there are only the assertions about things that are known, and the parrot-like repetition of the words of Jesus without any understanding of their meaning. It is only through being willing to seek to know and obey the will of God in humility and meekness, that men can gain wisdom; if they are full of self-conceit, the end must be folly, and not the truth, wisdom, and righteousness of God.

Upon "the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink." This great gospel invitation was one given to all men and all nations; it speaks of the giving of the Holy Spirit to all who believe, and thus of the spiritual kingdom of Jesus after the Ascension of Christ. In this spiritual kingdom of mercy all other developments find their place in due time; but it is only through the mercy manifested by Jesus, and ratified by the coming of the Holy Spirit, that men are made the pure and peaceful sons of God.

This proclamation by Jesus brought comments from the people, some saying that He is the promised Prophet referred to by Moses; others, that He is the Christ; but some could not comprehend how Jesus should come out of Galilee, when the Scripture said that He would come from Bethlehem and be of the seed of David. There was division and strife because of these conflicting opinions, and thus although the officers would have taken Him, they were awed by His presence and His words, and were unable to do as they had been instructed.

The officers returned to their rulers, and there they were met by the question, "Why have ye not brought Him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this Man." The Pharisees asked them if they also were to be led astray, like the common people, when the rulers and the Pharisees did not believe on Him? They thought that those who know not the law were accursed, but the curse was lying heavily upon themselves, because passion and prejudice were driving them to do unrighteousness, whilst these monitions from their servants and others were the words of God, warning them to be most careful in their actions. The gentle Nicodemus could also utter a word, if not in the defence of the personal Jesus, at least in defence of righteousness, for he referred to their law as being contrary in its principles to this secret-like means of condemning a man unheard. The only reply the enemies of Jesus could give was the taunt, "Art thou also of Galilee?" (or follower of the Galilean); search the Scriptures and you will not find that any prophet is to arise out of that place. The counsel was broken up, the rulers went to their homes, and the Righteous One went to the Mount of Olives.

CHAPTER VIII. There is a new day; and Jesus early on that day was found in the temple with the people around Him listening to His teaching. There was an interruption, for the Scribes and Pharisees brought into His presence a woman that had been taken in the act of adultery. They expound to Jesus the law of Moses, that such should be stoned to death; but they ask what He had to say upon such a

point. All this was done to try Him, so that they might bring a charge against Him of subverting the law of Moses, but He, stooping down, continued to write with His finger upon the ground, whilst they continued to press Him for an answer. The answer was one they did not expect, because He made the standard of their own low, sinful state their rule, and not the law of Moses; if there was one amongst them without sin, then let him cast a stone at the woman. Again stooping, He wrote on the ground with the finger, and the men being convicted of sin, left the room one by one until only the adulteress and Himself were left. Then the Lord raising Himself up, asked "Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said, neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more." What a strange sign or parable this is? Can it be in germ the history of mercy in a soul and in the world? Sin is spiritual adultery, the separation of the affections from God; Moses represents the moral law of God which would condemn the guilty to death; the accusers of the woman may represent the perverted nature of man which cries out for justice upon the offender; and Jesus is the spirit of mercy as well as of judgment, of patience and forgiveness toward the sinful. The contrast betwixt the clammering Pharisees and the silent Jesus writing upon the ground, is worthy of study: He would not speak, but He caused His actions to bring thoughts into their souls which would condemn their importunity. The bent figure, the moving finger, as if recording the sins of men, the patience of divine mercy, all speak out in His actions; but they would not see or understand His signs, and not until He taught them by words that every sinner requires mercy, were they ashamed of their devilish actions, and went out convicted by their own consciences. The Lord had not come to condemn, but to save sinners, and thus adulterous, Scribes and Pharisees, and the adulteress are alike warned to sin no more. The spirit of Jesus in this story is truly that of the Merciful One, but there is also a wonderful manifestation of that poor and humble spirit which gives no offence, whilst it seeks by varied means the salvation of all who will hear His words.

The world is a dark place, and so also is the soul of man; sin has brought about this great eclipse, and thus darkness reigned supreme amongst men. Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world," in other words, the Sun of grace, mercy, and truth, in self-sacrifice, giving forth mercy to men, so that they may know the gracious will of God for their salvation. If men follow what is in themselves they walk in darkness; but if they follow after Jesus then they will receive grace, mercy, and truth, and also a holy moral life radiating forth the grace of God. To this statement the Pharisees raised an objection; and all men animated by the same spirit will act the same foolish part. They do not think that their condition is anything like so serious; they have the light of their own conceited imaginations shining around them, and thus they will not believe that Jesus is the only Light in the spiritual world. They said that because He was speaking about Himself therefore His testimony could not be accepted as true, but His reply was that even though He did bear witness of Himself yet His words were true because He knew whence He came and whither He

was going, facts of which they were profoundly ignorant. It is as the Sun of grace in the sphere of mercy that the Lord shines; and His power is radiant, from Himself He knows both the whence and the whither of its existence and manifestation. Men are too much given to judgment in their own fleshly conceited ways; the Lord comes not for judgment, but for mercy. Yet should He judge, His judgment is abiding and true, because mercy does not stand alone, but linked with judgment through the Father of grace and the Law-giver and Judge in the sphere of moral law. The Mosaic law accepted as witness of two men as true, and there were two witnesses who testified to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Light of the world, these being Himself and the Father; in other words, the New Testament is a manifestation of mercy in its full orb'd completeness; and the Old Testament may be compared to the Father in whom the thoughts of mercy were hidden under the figures and symbols of eternal things. In the Old Testament the Father is specially made known to men; in the New Testament it is the Lord Jesus Christ that is fully revealed; and yet these are both witnesses of the mercy of God to mankind. They asked him, "Where is Thy Father?" To this His reply was that they know neither the Father nor the Son; neither mercy in its symbolic form nor in its personal manifestation; and as they did not know Him they could not know the Father. All this took place in the treasury of the temple; in other words, in the soul of man, for these are great subjective truths which are to be understood by the work of mercy in the soul; and it will depend upon the action of the soul in its acceptance or rejection of Jesus, the Light of the soul, whether there will be the darkness where God the Father dwelleth not; or light, joy, and comfort in trusting Him.

Again Jesus warns them as to the fatal position they occupy; this was the moment in their lives when the Sun of righteousness and of mercy had come to their souls pleading for admission; the critical period would very soon pass away, then they would seek and not find; they would die in their rebellious state, and then the day of mercy would be past for ever. These thoughts did not strike the Jews as of any importance for them; they could not understand that they were sinners in danger of the judgment, and thus they began to speculate upon His words, wondering if He was going to commit suicide that He was going where they could not follow Him. This thought is devilish in its conception, and the Lord Jesus tried to lead them to understand that all such thoughts are from beneath and contrary to God's holy will. His message to them is one from the heaven of God's mercy; and it was for this reason that He warned them that unless they would believe in Him they would die in their sins. They said, "Who art Thou?" To this Jesus replied that He is the same as He had said to them from the beginning. He also had many things to say to them and to judge concerning them; they would not hear or obey; but the Father remained true; and it was His work of mercy to speak to men the things which He had heard of God. At that time they could not understand His words, but when He had been lifted up by the cross and by the resurrection and ascension into heaven then,

they would know that He was not self-seeking, but the meek, obedient Son of the Father. God would be with Him, and He was not alone because He always did the things that are well pleasing in His sight. This witness-bearing to His meek obedience to the will of the Father was the means of many believing on Him. The Fountain of mercy was opened in their midst; and there were many who drank of the life-giving stream, and received the light of grace into their souls.

Jesus turned to those who believed in Him, and told them that they would abide in His Word then they would be true disciples; because by obedience they would come to know the truth, and it was the truth alone that could give them freedom. Here again the Lord Jesus runs counter to their vain conceits, and they assert themselves to be the seed of Abraham and as never having been in bondage; this being so, why did He say that they would be made free? His reply with emphasis is that the man who commits sin is its bondservant; and bondservants do not remain in the house for ever, only those who are freeborn sons are so privileged. This being so, if the Son of God gave them freedom, emancipation from the thralldom of sin, then they would be free indeed. He was quite aware that they were the seed of Abraham, but they sought to kill Him, and they did so because His Word of truth was not the supreme power in their souls. The Lord Jesus spake to men of the mercy of God, this being the Father's message to them; they spake the devil's thoughts when they were scheming how to put Him to death. Their reply was that they had Abraham for their father; but Jesus pointed out that if they were His children they would do His works, and they would not seek to kill Him who told them God's truth, for this is not the spirit of Abraham: The works which they did were devilish in their nature, and thus they knew their father. They said that they were not born of fornication, and that God was their father. His reply was that if this were true then they would love Him because He came from God, being sent by Him on a special message of mercy to men. They would not understand His words, because they would not hear what was so unpleasant; and this was surely strong evidence that their father was the devil, and that they followed his lustings. A murderer and liar is the evil one, and also all evil men; and upon hatred and lies the evil perverted nature lives; yea, it becomes so turned from righteousness that it will not believe the truth. The Lord puts forth the challenge here for any one to convict Him of sin; and as they could not do so, His question to them was, "Why do ye not believe Me?" Only those who are of God hear His words; they would not hear because they were not of God. The Jews heard all these things, but His words did not bring them a single point nearer to God; rather they were the further estranged from Jesus, and began to call Him a Samaritan and to say that He was possessed by a devil. Jesus replied that He was not possessed by a devil, but that He honoured His Father, and they were dishonouring Him. He did not seek His Own glory; but if any man would keep His Word he would never see death. This statement confirmed their opinion that Jesus was possessed of a devil, because Abraham and the prophets were all dead, and this being so then who

Did He make Himself out to be? Jesus replied that He did not seek to glorify Himself, His Father did this for Him; but they did not know God; and if He should say that He did not know God then He would become like them. Their father Abraham had rejoiced to see His day, and was gladdened by the things which he saw. They said that He was not fifty years old, how then could He have seen Abraham? The Lord's reply reveals His Divine nature in the words, "Before Abraham was, I am;" and this claim on the part of Jesus raised their passion so much that they took up stones to stone Him; but Jesus left the temple passing through their midst unhurt. In these thoughts men may be able to trace the outlines of the great mysteries of the universe; the mystery of mercy in Jesus Christ, and the mystery of evil in man. In the first mystery there is ascension in the revelation until God manifest in the flesh is discovered to men; in the latter there is the falling away from a nominal discipleship until the most intense hatred is shown and men are found seeking to destroy the Prince of life and the Light of the world. The incident falls under the fourth blessing of the kingdom of righteousness in the soul and in the world; and it must be allowed that the conflict betwixt the Jews and Jesus gives a fair conception of the righteousness of God in seeking the salvation of men by His Son, whilst the unreasonable, unrighteous opposition of the Jews brings out in a vivid light the awful wickedness of men.

CHAPTER IX. The Lord Jesus is here seen as if He had left the temple, accompanied by His disciples, passing along the streets of Jerusalem, and the object which catches His attention is a blind man who had been in this condition from his birth. Blindness in the body is a sign for blindness in the soul; as in the former the power is lost to see the sun and the light in which the world is bathed, so in the latter the power is lost to see the Sun of righteousness, the face of God in Jesus Christ, and the light of truth which He has manifested. The curious question of the disciples as to the cause of the man's blindness, whether it was on his own account or because of his parents, may be more curious than profitable; carrying the thought into the cycle of mercy, it is a question bearing upon the origin of sin, and this as men well know has been an endless theme of discussion amongst intellectual Christians and others. Jesus would lift this question up into another atmosphere; and He seems to say do not be so anxious to know about the origin of things—that is, whether sin is in the flesh, in matter, in pre-existence, or in an inheritance from parents; it is a matter of fact that the man is blind, that men are sinful, and because there is blindness and sin in the world it is necessary that the mercy of God should operate for the recovery of sight and the cleansing of the soul. Such things are not to become the subject for dilettante debates and squabbles, but rather a message of warning, so that the work which is to be done by the followers of Christ, the purpose for which they are sent into the world, even as He was sent into the world, may be done while it is day. This seems to be the reply of Jesus to His disciples upon this question; and it will be granted that, viewing the question all round the horizon of truth, *it is the most fitting reply that men*

could receive under present conditions. It is quite true that sin disobedience of moral law by responsible creatures ; and in a the question may be limited to the will of man and his freedom to or disobey God ; still this touches only the narrow point in a soul—the point of the adjustment of the balances ; but into the consequences which result from sin who can enter ? Surround all these there are also the merciful works of God which are manifested amongst men, and thus the final settlement of the question is not called for at this point in history. Jesus understood His work it was to give sight to the blind, and to reveal the face of God to souls ; and as the grace of God shining in the darkness He and the man's eyes, told him to go to that pool which was an equivalent Himself the Sent One ; the man was obedient ; he washed, and returned seeing. So it must be with all who cannot see God's face because the film of sin which covers their spiritual vision ; there is required anointing by the Holy One, obedience to Jesus, and then the soul cleansed, the heart is purified, and the face of God is seen. This change ought to be not merely a personal experience, but also a matter for personal observation by neighbours ; the sinful and the blind are like beggars ; they receive all that they can get and give nothing they are absorbent and not radiant, but so soon as the character changed by mercy they become moral, holy, just, and merciful. There is no question about the change that has taken place ; the question is whether the blind man, the sinner, is the same as the seeing man changed into a saint. Such a change ought to cause inquiry, and who are thus cleansed and privileged to see the face of God in Jesus Christ ought to be ready and willing to explain in what way the change took place.

The man that was blind was brought to the Pharisees. The occasion upon which this event took place was the Sabbath, and thus it became the means of contention and strife amongst these men. As to the neighbours, so to the Pharisees, the man made an open confession of the work of Jesus, and the means by which he was cured. This was so very remarkable, such an extraordinary sign of the grace, and power of God that there was a division amongst the Pharisees about Jesus ; to some He seemed to be an impostor, because He did such things on the Sabbath ; to others this seemed unreasonable because a sinner could not do such a work. In their perplexity, indecision, their veritable blindness, they turned unto the man that was blind, and they asked him what he thought of Jesus ? His reply was, without any hesitation, that Jesus is a prophet. And this is true because it is the Word of God that gives light ; and it is the prophetic Word that is made the power of God in cleansing the soul. The unbelief and blindness of the Jews was remarkable ; every man tried by them to cast doubt upon the work of Jesus, and it was when they were compelled through the evidence of the man's power to admit the fact that they set themselves in direct opposition to Jesus. A second time the blind man was questioned and told to give the credit of his recovery to God ; because, as the Pharisees said, they knew Jesus was a sinner. But the man was more than a match for them.

assumptions, but in the plain facts that he had been blind and now could see, and that he was not called upon to express an opinion as to the position of Jesus. As they continued to question him about what they already knew, he cut their queries short by showing their unreasonableness in asking to hear what they would not hear or try to understand; and thus he asked them if they would become His disciples and become willing to sit at the feet of Jesus. This was a grievous insult to these proud men, and so, losing their temper, they began to revile the man by saying that he was a disciple of Jesus, whilst they were the disciples of Moses. They knew that Moses was the servant of God, but this Jesus was a nobody, unworthy of their attention. It was at this point the man received divine illumination—a wisdom far transcending that of the Pharisees, and so he frankly told them that it was indeed a very great marvel that they did not know from whence Jesus came when He had opened his eyes. They had said that they saw Jesus was a sinner; he could say, "We know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth." The fact was one for their careful consideration—had they ever heard of a man born blind who had received sight? If a man had been able to work such a wonder, not even Moses, then the conclusion must be that Jesus is greater than all men, for if Jesus were not a messenger from God he could not do such a work. The man is most reasonable in his argument; but the Jews had agreed that if any one would confess Jesus to be Christ, he should be turned out of the synagogue. They were wilfully blind; they would not see, and the issue was on their part self-assertion as to their own holiness and goodness, and contempt for this man as unworthy of their attention. They could tolerate such behaviour no longer, when ignorant men began to teach them what they ought to know and do. The Light of the world through this man had been shining in their midst, and they had been called upon in a special manner to listen to the thoughts of God; but they would not; they cast him out of the synagogue, and by doing so they also cast out the light of the truth which had been with this man as a witness throughout this scene; they brought the doom of judgment and darkness upon themselves. Jesus found the man who had been cast out, and put this question to him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" The man was a true disciple, he had received the light, and with the power of vision received he could see and was willing to see more; and when Jesus revealed Himself as the Object of the man's spiritual vision and desire, the man believed and worshipped Him as the Son of God and the Light of the world. To the blind man the light of truth had come, and he had accepted it gratefully and humbly, but to the proud rulers the day of mercy was at an end; mercy had been rejected and despised by them, cast out by men as vile; and thus there remained only judgment upon the self-asserting evil-doers. Mercy has come, so that they who see not might see God and be saved; judgment comes to that the self-conceited who think they know that they see God and possess His favour may be cursed by their blindness. These thoughts were heard by some of the Pharisees, and they asked Him, "Are we blind also?" The Lord's reply to such a question seems to be that if

there were no moral vision, no knowledge of moral law, and, th no responsibility, there would not be any sin ; but as all men see, have a moral vision, know the moral law, and seek to obey cepts, therefore their sin remains. But the remedy for moral bl when man cannot see the face of God, is not self-introspection, a this is good in its place after the light of the truth is received must be the looking unto the Son of God, believing in Him, s with Him by His Word, and the worship and service of God ac to His will. It is the grace of God that brings salvation, the God manifests the truth, and only through the mercy of God ca men see the face of God and live.

CHAPTER X. Here is found the parable of the Good Sheph which the Lord Jesus expresses His Own relationship toward deemed. The conception being that the saved are to be comp sheep who live in a sheepfold. All who enter into the saved sta do so by Him, because He alone is the Door by which there entrance. Should men attempt to enter the fold by any other then they are not His humble followers, but they are like lawless and thieves, who seek their own interest and not the common we humble followers of Jesus, if they have the spirit of the Saviour listen to the words of such men, because they know that self- and not self-seeking, is the method of salvation. The Lord Jesu Leader as well as the Door, and when He appears it is with as as the Chief Shepherd. To the Lord's voice there is instant re His call is a familiar and loving one to each member of the floo trusting Him they follow wherever He leads. They will not f stranger, but flee away when they hear the strange voice. This is a parable, and it is not easily understood ; but those who have he Shepherd's voice will listen unto Him as He further explains w means by it. He is very emphatic upon the thought that He is the Door, the Way of Salvation ; and if any one else should pre be a mediator betwixt God and men, then they are impostors. (Him is there entrance to grace, salvation, and nourishment in th life. He comes with a pure moral life in abundance for men, as to men who come to take away what His followers possess, whic destroy their moral life and gracious relationship with God. Good Shepherd He is seen laying down His Own life so that th may be kept safe ; whilst false shepherds are known by their self and by their leaving the sheep unprotected ; they are mere hi who love the hire but care not for the flock, or for the duties lai them by the Chief Shepherd. He knows His flock, and they know there is communion betwixt the Father and the Good Shepherd u matters, but specially in the salvation of the redeemed. The Christ is not a small Jewish fold, or a Christian Church, but the world ; and all the redeemed shall hear Him, be united in one fo the Lord as the One Shepherd over them. It is because of th sacrifice of Jesus, the giving up of His Own moral nature to sin so that He might die for them and rise again, that He is the bel the Father. His death is not compulsory, but free ; He has the to give up life for man's salvation, and also the power to take

same life again when the work has been done ; and all this is done in perfect harmony with the divine will. This parable, and the remarks upon it, give a representation of what Christ is toward His saved sheep that once were lost. He is seen as in possession of the fold, and having authority in it ; and if the parable is studied in the light of the cycle of the pure in heart, and in the spirit of the first blessing, it may be more clearly understood. The spirit is that of the tender Shepherd caring for his flock ; His Own state is the perfect moral life of holiness which He comes to bestow upon His followers in abundant measure, and to manifest the grace of God by giving up His Own life, and when the work of salvation was ended to take it up again. He is the Leader going before the flock ; in other words, His life and example are what His followers should imitate, and by doing so they would show that they do are poor in spirit, self-sacrificing for the good of others, and holy and unblamable in their lives.

These words caused a division amongst the Jews ; some believed, others believed not. Many said, He was mad and had a devil ; whilst others who were more thoughtful, asked the question, " Can a devil open the eyes of the blind ? " Before the Lord could cleanse the unholy soul, and change the wolf into a lamb, He had to give the renewed moral nature and new desires ; and surely such a new creation must be altogether beyond the power of the devil, or of any man.

The season was that of the feast of the dedication, and Jesus was seen walking in Solomon's porch. In other words, transforming the idea ; it was the time of consecration of holiness and purity as to the cycle, and of the kingdom of visible things, which harmonises with the spirit of meekness. The Jews came around Jesus, asking Him why He kept them in suspense, and if He were the Christ to tell them so plainly. The reply of Jesus is that He had already told them, and they would not believe ; but the works which He wrought were sufficient witnesses in His favour. Because they were not His redeemed sheep, they did not understand His words, and thus they would not follow Him. Though they continued rebellious, He had a fold, and also sheep, unto whom He gave eternal life, and they would never perish, because no power in the universe could take them out of His Own and His Father's hands. They had asked whether He was the Christ. His reply is, " I and my Father are one." There existed no division or want of unity betwixt the Father and the Son ; in thought, word, and action they were agreed, and the Holy One was also the meek King of grace, obedient in all things to the will of God.

The Jews, when they received such a reply to their question, took up stones to stone Jesus. He asked them for which of His works they were going to do this ? their reply being that it was not because of His works, but because He, being a man, made Himself God. The reply of Jesus is not a denial of the fact of His divine nature, but a reference to their own Scriptures, in which men are referred to as gods. If, then, those who received the Word of God were called gods, could they say of Him whom the Father had consecrated, and sent into the world on a special message, that He was a blasphemer, when He avowed Himself to be the Son of God ? This was not a reasonable manner of treating such a

question ; they were acting not upon evidence, but upon their prejudices and in their ignorance. In fact the question was one they were unable to discuss, because it touched the very essence of being, a subject which transcends the reason of man. What they could do, and also what they ought to have done under the circumstances, was to consider not merely His words, but also His works, and if they were good, wise, gradually beneficent, and merciful, then they were the words and works of the Father. They could not understand how the Father and the Son are one, or how He is the Son of God ; but His works would certainly prove that the power of the Father was in Him ; and if they believed ~~and~~ honestly and sincerely, then they would become suitable disciples ; ~~and~~ as learners in the kingdom of heaven, men thirsting after truth and righteousness, they would come to know and to understand the unity betwixt Himself and the Father. They were not disciples, but ~~the~~ enemies, who would have taken Him and killed Him, but He ~~escaped~~ out of their hands, going away beyond Jordan, where many were ~~to~~ Him. The testimony of those who believed in Jesus was that John ~~had~~ not done any wonderful works, but his witness to Jesus had been ~~proved~~ to be true, and thus they were justified in putting their trust in Him.

CHAPTER XI. In this chapter the scene is changed, Jesus and His disciples are found beyond Jordan ; whilst in the house of the friends in Bethany, Lazarus, the help of God, sickens and dies during Christ's absence. The associations in connection with this house at Bethany are very pleasant ; all the inmates were beloved by the Lord, and it was in this happy home that He was anointed and received so much kindness. The hour of sickness came, and the sisters sent a message to Jesus that the one He loved was sick. His reply was that the sickness was not unto death, that it would be for the glory of God, and also the means by which the Son of God would be glorified. The Lord remained for two days in the same place after He had received the message, and then intimated His intention of going into Judaea again. The disciples sought to dissuade Him from doing so, owing to the treatment He had formerly received from the Jews, but His reply was that a man must not seek his own safety, but do his duty during the limited time in which he is permitted to labour. Man has his day of grace in which the light of grace shines ; if he will to walk heavenward during this period, there is no cause for any stumbling ; but if men despise the day of grace and do not set out on their journey until the sun of life is setting, then indeed there will be an awful fall, seeing that there is no light of grace within. Having uttered these thoughts as to duty, Jesus told the disciples that Lazarus had fallen asleep, and that it was His intention to go and awaken him. The disciples did not understand Jesus, and thus He told them plainly that their friend was dead : He also said that for their sakes He was glad He had not been there, for this purpose, that they might believe in Him. This incident is to be interpreted in the light of the cycle of purity, and in the blessing of mercy. At the first glance it may seem difficult to apprehend the meaning, under these two signs ; but a little consideration will show that the home at Bethany is the house of afflic-

tion, and of the grace of the Lord, and that sickness and death which bring so much sorrow to men are not unto death, that is separation from God, but used as the means of purification, resurrection, and of teaching the most precious lessons that man can learn upon this earth. The Lord in His utterances about the sickness, and about the sleep, completely transcends the senses: He is seen watching the effects of the purifying element, and looking away beyond the trial and the purification He perceives life, and God glorified in the trial through which His beloved friends had to pass. It is a peculiar thought, worthy of study, that in the sphere of the purification of the soul of man the end is gained not by the quick intervention of mercy, but by patient waiting, by sickness, sorrow, hope deferred, and by death and the grave. Mercy will not wait in bringing the new life into the soul; but when purification and perfection in the moral nature is required, then Mercy waits for the death and burial of all that belongs to the old nature, so that the purified soul might live and see the face of God. It is not that Mercy does not sympathise with the suffering and the sorrowful, but it is for man's highest good, for the glory of God, and for the glorifying of the Son of God, that it should be so; and also, as the Lord said unto His disciples, there is a deep intention, the mystery of grace and mercy, in all this in connection with the faith of men and their full belief in Jesus Christ. The fitness of the remarks of the doubting Thomas and his faithfulness in this special matter is a striking allegory in the kingdom of heaven.

When the Lord and His disciples reached Bethany, Lazarus had already been lying in the tomb four days. Because of the death of Lazarus the sisters had many friends from Jerusalem who came to comfort them. When Martha heard that the Lord was coming, she went out to meet Him, leaving Mary in the house. Her words to Jesus are full of confidence in Him, that had He been with them, then her brother had not died; and even now whatever He would ask of God it would be granted to Him by God. The words of Jesus contain a promise—"Thy brother shall rise again." But Martha failed to lay hold of the intensive thought in her own words, or the extensive promise given to her by Jesus, and thus going back upon a stereotyped belief about the resurrection and the last day, she acquiesced in His promise, but did not seize its meaning as a present help in her time of trouble. The remark of Martha about the resurrection as a vague prospective hope, drew from Jesus the remarkable saying, "I am the resurrection and the life;" and also the statement that though the believer in Him should die, yet he would live; and whosoever would be a living believer would never die. The Lord Jesus is a marvellous Teacher; here He touches an ocean of thought upon which man is not able to enter. That He is the resurrection power by which moral life is set in operation, and also the moral life, may be firmly believed; but how the life that is received by the Christian from Christ survives death, and the living believer cannot die, are matters which the redeemed will experience, but never comprehend. As with Martha at Bethany so with every Christian there is the confession of belief in these marvellous thoughts based upon His position as Christ and by His power as

the Son of God, but the great realities are like a sea without a shore, an undiscovered realm in which men have not as yet set their feet. Martha left the Lord Jesus, and going into the house, she said to Mary, "The Master is come and calleth for thee." Mary arose quickly and went to her Lord, being followed by the Jews who thought that she had gone to the grave to weep there. When Mary reached the Lord she uttered the same words as her sister; but there was this remarkable difference betwixt the sisters. Martha stood discussing with the Lord upon important subjects she did not understand, whilst Mary fell down at His feet, weeping. Mary cannot at such a time reason upon questions of high doctrine; her soul is troubled, and at His feet she confesses and weeps, knowing that it is by far the best thing to trust Him. The Lord could bear the words of Martha, but the wailing, heartless cry of Mary and her weeping, with the weeping of those around her, was not endurable. His Spirit groaned within Him, and full of trouble in Himself, He said, "Where have ye laid him? They say unto Him, Lord, come and see." Such child-like confidence in Himself blended with such intense sorrow, broke up the very fountains in the Lord's soul. He wept, His soul receiving relief from this expression of grief and of sympathy with those by whom He was surrounded. This expression of sympathy by Jesus; His oneness with them in their sorrow, caused the Jews to utter the words, "Behold how He loved him!" But there were others there not so full of sympathy, more thoughtful, perhaps more critical, who would have passed by this scene as something unworthy of the Master. To weep and shed tears is the work of women, and Jesus may have seemed to them as no stronger than a weak woman. Surely the Man who could open the eyes of a man blind from his birth could as easily have prevented the death of Lazarus. Oh! these vain reasonings and comparisons which men will follow; surely it must be admitted that the strongest trait in the character of the great majority of Christians is this endless questioning about God's ways, and what Jesus could or could not do. This vileness of the intellectual Christian has been an awful drawback upon the sweet peace and joy in the Christian family; it dries up the fountains of sympathy, gentleness, kindness, pity, and love; and instead of trusting the Lord there is the endless perplexity of the why and the how of all the providences of God which are for the good of men, the glory of God, and for the glorifying of the Son of God. Such remarks by the avowed followers of Jesus at such a time must be very painful indeed to Him; they speak of want of confidence in Him when His sufferings are most intense, His love and sympathy being drawn out until He weeps in company with those who are full of sorrow. His nature is full of love, tenderness, pity, sympathy, the heart or the affections, and not the head or the intellect, is moved; and those who fret and complain cause Him and those who love Him, and His, to suppress their affections and to groan within themselves because of such reasonings and sceptical questionings. The Lord Jesus has come to glorify God, and to show that He is not unfeeling but full of compassion; and yet on every side there arise questions which impeach this glory of His gracious and merciful nature. His

ple with sin and death in the very grave, to take away its poison, and to conquer this victor over humanity ; Him on every side there arises the vexing question, Merciful One have prevented sin and death in the is in His power to give a new moral life to man so see God's face in peace ? Men are beginning to see things which God will not—cannot do. It is not His grade man—made in the image of God, in holiness, and knowledge—into an irrational, irresponsible animal. What man should be free to choose his own destiny of good or death. What the Lord Jesus can do, has done, and endure the contradiction of sinners, the persecution of us, the painful criticisms—these being false, unfair, and on the part of His friends, and the sorrow, trouble, and grief of His trustful friends. The Lord Jesus could not prevent sin, and death ; but He could bear the reasonings of men, in their ignorance and misconception ; the serpent's bite received into His body, causing all the pain and trouble His friends endured ; and He could wrestle with death and as its victor on man's behalf. Think of the possibility of His being in the soul of Jesus Christ at the hour when He lay in the grave of Lazarus ; and then in that grave and those who were around it, there may be discerned the small world, the micro-organisms and actors in the great work of redemption in which the mystery of sin lay in the tomb and death, the centre was centred in Jesus Christ ; and around these two all the thoughts and reasonings of men were in active operation. They were around Him, and Jesus commanded that the stone should be rolled away, even in this He was interfered with, for Martha remonstrated with Him as to the condition of the dead body. Unbelief was in the air, and in a very gentle manner the Lord brought forth His remembrance, that it is by believing that the glory of God is seen. The stone was removed, and then Jesus, with eyes open, gave thanks unto the Father because He had been seen. He knew that the Father heard Him at all times ; but because that were around Him, troubled with many conflicting thoughts, He looked up with a trustful look into His Father's face and spoke to Him. When there was faith in God manifested by Him, giving spirit in, Him, on behalf of those around Him, then, there came the descending power of God which quickened the dead to a new life. The means which hindered free vision were removed, and then Jesus, with us, as we were, with us with a new life manifested the glory of God. This is the manifestation of the power and grace of God ; the sphere of His activity centred upon the moral nature of man ; and it is evident that the principles which lie at the root of the whole story do teach us that the nature of man is corrupt ; that all the troubles and sorrows of man are the result of sin and death ; that Jesus is the resurrection power ; that He is the perfect moral life ; and that it is through Him, by His death, as man as Priest, Sacrifice, and as the Purifier, that man

receives a new life and is enabled to live a life of faith in, and obedience to, God. These thoughts concentrate upon the individual soul in its experiences; but they also extend and cover the whole of redeemed humanity. The scene is an epitome of salvation; and in the dead body of Lazarus may be discerned the impure nature of man, the inheritance from the first Adam; whilst in Jesus Christ there is seen the second Adam, the quickening spirit, and the moral nature or life He bestows upon the redeemed. When such an event takes place in the history of an individual, it causes many to wonder and to believe in the power of God's grace; but the enemies of God will not understand such a mighty work of grace. The day is coming, however, when this will take place on a more magnificent scale amongst all the nations; and then will come to pass that which is written about mortality being swallowed up of life, and of death being swallowed up by a great victory; for then sin and death will not merely lose their power, but be cast into the pit, into that darkness and prison-house which is out of the reach of the light of God's grace.

The scene is changed from Bethany to Jerusalem, and there assembled in council those who have set their faces against God and His Anointed. They are baffled; they find that they can do nothing; whilst Jesus is doing many things which are sufficient to prove that He is a special Messenger from God to man. The hour of crisis had come upon the rulers of the Jews, and it was at this council that they would decide whether as a nation they would accept Jesus as their Messiah, or treat Him as an impostor. If they were to leave Him alone for any length of time, the consequences would certainly be that the people would believe in Him and give to Him their allegiance; then the Roman power would attack the nation and bring about its downfall. The high priest, moved by God, uttered the remarkable prophecy that it was expedient one man should die so that the nation might not perish, and that through Him there might be the gathering of all the peaceful children of God scattered throughout the earth into one fold. The choice is made, and that which is expedient is chosen before that which is right; the devil's lie is believed, that good may arise out of evil; the Prince of peace, the Dove of heaven, is rejected for fear of the Roman eagles, and thus deliberately in the council of the nation it was agreed that the devil should be their god, and that the Heir of all things should be put to death.

This decision being known to Jesus, and as His time was not yet come, He went away into the wilderness with His disciples. The Passover feast being near, the people were going up to Jerusalem to purify themselves. They sought for Jesus, and wondered whether He would come up to the feast. This expectation on the part of the people was met by a movement on the part of the rulers, and it was by proclaiming Jesus as an outlaw, so that they who knew where He was would give information so that He might be taken and put to death.

CHAPTER XII. The scene is again changed to Bethany, the time being six days before the Feast of the Passover. In the house of Lazarus there was a supper made for Jesus; and Martha, Lazarus, and

ve each notice taken of them in connection with this gathering. was busy serving, Lazarus sat at the table with the Lord, ry anointed His feet with precious ointment. This family of show Jesus too much honour; and grateful thanks are ad in the service of Martha, the anointing by Mary, and the of Lazarus. The central thought, however, is not the work of or the position of Lazarus, but the anointing of the Prince of he Son of God, by Mary for His great work which was then very hand. Here it is the feet that are anointed with the precious t, His feet wiped with the hair of her head, and the house ith the odour of the ointment. It is not the head that is now i by the gentle, spiritual, trustful, obedient followers of Jesus; se organs of the body which are more lowly; nevertheless, is done unto the lowly ones, it is done to Him, and the odour deeds is the fragrance that fills the Church of Christ. All s service is very good and acceptable, if there is not too much h it; and the calm and thoughtful help from God, through , is also useful, although there is little said about it; living power, the aroma of grace, which though invisible with so much power, is the gentle and loving ministration Marys who are caring for the lowly members of the body of As then, so now there may be those who place little value ch work; and even whilst the perfume of the merciful works g pleasure to all who love Jesus, they are found marring the y of the feast of peace by grumbling about such waste, pre- that it could be utilised better in some other way, whilst all the elf-seeking motive is in operation causing the discontent and ug. The Lord puts an end to all such hypocritical arguments words, "Let her alone." The man that touches one hair of ead, touches as it were the very tenderest point in the heart st; to meddle with such followers of Jesus in their gracious is to offend one of His little ones, and therefore woe is upon ho act such a part. The selfish dare to find fault with the ificing, and put their ideas about money and the poor in the nt; they have plenty of reasons for everything they wish to ne, but no heart—that is, affection, sympathy, pity, or love—for owful, bruised souls nigh unto death. The reason or intellect g the affections is not Christianity; but the grace of God in d with the renewed affections or moral nature ought to e reason, and then the ointment would be poured out abun- the Church would be blessed and a blessing amongst men. r are always plentiful, and they ought not to be despised or d; but to minister to the lowly members of Christ in this s an honour indeed, and it is only a passing opportunity f not seized, will soon pass away. The peaceful Son of God th on His mission to death, and the spirit by which He is l for His work is that of Mary of Bethany; the spirit that has he bitterness of death, received the blessing of life, is filled e spirit of grace, and gives up the most precious things for the of Christ in His members. There are many Marthas willing to

serve, many like Lazarus, who will sit at the feast and give co but where are the many Marys so urgently required to fill the C and the world with the sweet perfume of the Spirit of the b Jesus, whose spirit of grace, mercy, and peace is so necessary am men ?

It is around Jesus that the love and hatred of men have moved common people have been drawn to Him by His gentleness gracious thoughts and words, and because of what He has dor those whom they have known. But the rulers and the great am men have envied Jesus, been jealous of His position in the affe of the people, and they have been constantly plotting for the tion of His Cause upon the earth. The penitent draw near to Jesu in Him they find comfort. The proud in their self-conceit despise reject Him, but they do not find happiness or peace in this world, that which is to come.

On the following day a great number of the people who had ce to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was going into the city branches of the palm-tree, and went forth to meet Him. They ' Hosanna : blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the Name Lord." The disciples did not understand this sign at the first ; but Jesus was raised from the dead, then they remembered that such t were written in their Scriptures about the coming of the meek of peace. The common people were full of fervour on His b because of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. This was the of Israel in very deed, who could wrestle with sin and death in own domain, and win the victory. The Pharisees were full of b feelings ; they were losing their hold upon the people, becau merely were the Jews following Him, but the visitors from all pa the world had left their former teachers, and had gone after Jes Nazareth.

It was upon the eventful day of the entry into Jerusalem that o Greeks who had come up to the feast asked Philip to introduce th Jesus. Philip consulted his friend Andrew, and they tell Jesus o request of the strangers. Whether Jesus addressed them direct not is not told ; but the fact that strangers from far-off lands seeking Him was a sign that the hour had at last come for the gl ing of the Son of man. This glorifying could only come by the pr of death and resurrection. And as the natural seed must die befor germ of life within can grow and bring forth fruit, so the Lord of in whom the germ of a pure, moral nature exists, must die to all f things, so that His quickened, spiritual life of holiness and of might be made efficient for the spiritual well-being of His follo His spiritual body. If any man will love selfishly his own soul a interests, then he loves that which is lost, and he will lose all ; self is eschewed, God loved and Christ followed, then there will eternal life gained. If the servant will strive to follow in the foot of the Master here, then hereafter where the Master is there sh servant be, and upon such an one, no longer a servant, but a t God, the Father will bestow honour. These thoughts of death an loving God and losing self, hating selfishness, and giving servic

honour to God, seem to have opened up the kingdom of heaven to Jesus. It was like an awful dark cloud filling up the firmament around His soul, so that trouble and trembling came upon Him. The calm of the peace of heaven was gone; His soul was in an awful commotion, and He knew not what to say. The Child was in a terrible danger, and the instinctive prayer upon the lips was, "Father, save Me from this hour." Instinct soon gave place to rational thought, and then Jesus may be seen communing with His Own soul by the words, "But for this cause came I unto this hour." Quick as the flash of lightning the cry of the Child had ascended to the Father, and in an instant the power of God descended; there was a sudden calm, and His soul was found trusting in the Father's love. The tide had turned; the sun bore forth; and out from the soul of Jesus there went forth the prayer, "Father, glorify Thy Name;" and in response to this prayer the dumb heaven became vocal, and there was heard the words, "I have not glorified it, and will glorify it again." Jesus said that the voice heard came from heaven not for His sake, but on man's account. In these words, men may here discern the voice of God speaking of the glory that has been ascribed to His Name because of the work of creation, and again He is to be glorified by the great work of re-creation, redemption in Jesus Christ. The voice is the voice of revelation, understood by Jesus, but not by men at that time, because the hour had not come for the manifestation of the glory that is to be found in the work of redemption. The hour of judgment had come on the world, and that power of evil which had reigned in man and the world was about to be cast out. The strong man who had kept his house was to be overcome by One stronger than himself, and he was to be found, judged, and cast out of the heavenly places in the soul of man. This struggle having passed, then there would come a lifting not merely upon the cross, but from out of the earth by the resurrection and ascension of the Lord, and as the Sun in the heavenly man's spiritual world, by the mighty attraction of His love, grace, and mercy, all men would be drawn toward Himself. These words are not to signify the manner of Christ's death; but it is well to remember that the garden of Gethsemane, the cross on Golgotha, and the sepulchre in the garden, are all signs bearing upon the judgment and the casting out of evil. It is the resurrection and the ascension which manifest the saving power, because whilst the former signs were going on was the forsaking of Jesus by His followers; but after the lifting up of the earth and the Risen Life, then there came the drawing out to build up His spiritual body. These thoughts were incomprehensible to those who listened to Jesus, and thus the strange contents in their question. They had "heard out of the Law" that abideth for ever, but they could not see how this could agree with the lifting up of the Son of man, neither could they comprehend how the Son of man could be; the matter of fact being that it was the lifting up of the Son of man by resurrection and ascension that Christ could come and abide; the order being first the Son of man to offer, and then the coming of the Christ to reign for ever. In Jesus seems to check their seeking after knowledge, or the

mere seeking to know without any practical outcome from the knowledge possessed. The hour was not come for them to comprehend what was embodied in the Christ abiding for ever, or in the lifting up: the Son of man; but the time had come for them to receive the light of God's grace that was shining around them, and not to speculate upon its shining for ever. Their duty was plain, it was obedience to the light of grace and truth they possessed, else if they neglected this opportunity the hour of darkness might suddenly overtake them, and to wait in that darkness would be to bring destruction upon themselves. They were at that time in possession of grace and truth. It was their estimable privilege to be invited to believe in Him in whom God's grace and truth were manifested, and by obedience they would become gracious and true, the sons of God and of grace.

From the thoughts evolved in the study of this portion, verses 20-34 and interpreted in the light of the cycle of peace and the blessing of righteousness, it is evident that this is a very important portion of the gospel. The spirit which animates it is that of the peaceful, peace-seeking Son of God, and the kingdom revealed in it is that of righteousness by grace. There seems to be a complete cycle of thought in this passage, and it will be enough to indicate these so that they may be more fully studied. (1) The coming of the Greeks asking for Jesus is the sign of the poor spirit amongst men who have been disappointed with their own proud, vain, conceited philosophies. (2) The expression of Jesus that the hour for the glorifying of the Son of man had come speaks of that conflict which would first bring sorrow and mourning, but afterwards glory, to God and comfort to man. (3) The method of the kingdom in the King is compared to the grain of wheat which must die, so that it may live and bring forth fruit. (4) The order of the kingdom in man is by self-sacrifice, and service to be followed by honour from the Father. (5) But such thoughts are full of trouble to Jesus and to men, yet they are the means by which there is the revelation of mercy to men. (6) After the revelation of mercy then judgment upon evil, and the casting out of the evil one from the souls of men. (7) Because Christ lives and reigns there is light, and men are responsible to Him for the use they make of their privileges.

This great revelation was followed by the departure of Jesus and the hiding of Himself from men. The visible Man was gone from their midst, but His words were not dead. This departure, therefore, was a trial of their faith in Himself and His words, and to prove them whether they would be obedient or not. The issue was that although He had done so much for men, yet they did not believe, trust, obey, or love Him, and in thus acting they fulfilled the words uttered by Isaiah who had pointed out that men would not believe the report given to them of the mercy of God, nor see God's arm revealed for the salvation of men by the coming of Jesus. If men will not believe the words of God uttered in their hearing, nor see and understand the power of God's grace operating in their midst, then it must follow that there will be spiritual blindness and a searing of the conscience; and because of these there will be lost the power to see or perceive the truth, and thus the healing of the souls of those who despise and reject Jesus will

is impossible. Such were the thoughts uttered by Isaiah when he saw the glory of Jesus as the suffering Saviour.

In this period of the hiding, the despising, and rejecting, there were many rulers who believed on Him; but they were miserable specimens of Christians. They did not confess their Lord for fear of men, and for fear of losing their social position; "they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Comment upon these words is altogether unnecessary. Enough to add that as it was with the few in Judæa, so with the many in Christendom, even in the Church of Christ, the fear of man and the love of the praise of man have been very powerful motives, far more powerful than the words of Jesus as the authority over the soul, or the love of God, because of His grace and mercy to the soul. This is very like trying to serve two masters, and permitting the devil's threats, or his cajoling and praises, to direct the actions of the life, instead of the Word of God and the love of God in the soul. Men might say that such men ought to be condemned as cowards; but mercy is very patient and gracious, and surely Christian men ought to try, by peaceful and gracious means, to bring about a better state of things amongst men.

Again Jesus stands before men with a message from the Father; it is an important one, for He is represented as crying aloud so that all men and all nations may hear His voice. The intention of it is that believers in Him believe not merely in Him as the Saviour of the world, but also on God who had sent Him to manifest to men the thoughts of God. The time of hiding and of darkness is past; and lo! they who behold Jesus see God. This is a revealing of the Father in very deed; it is a voice that the world may, nay, must hear, and all other teachers, with their varied religions, must fall down before Him. He comes again to men, and it is as the Light of grace and truth; but the radiance of the light is boundless, it extends to the world and to whosoever will believe so that they may get out of the darkness and get the darkness cast out of them. He comes, the King of men, the Prince of peace, the Light of the world, so that all men may hear His words. They are brought to men so that they may believe and obey Him. They must choose to receive or reject His words, because there is no middle way open. The light shines, therefore men must admit that it is so as a fact, or question this fact and reject it by their perverted reasonings. The Word is not come to judge men; His mission in the reign of peace is salvation; but if He does not sit as judge amongst men His Word will do so, and men destroying themselves will be self-condemned upon the clearest testimony. The words of Jesus "are the spirit of prophecy," in other words "the true sayings of God." The Jesus manifestation, so to speak, is not the revealing of the person Jesus, but of the Father who sent Jesus, giving Him a commandment as to His every word and utterance. The conception here is a noble one; and if read in the light of the cycle of peace, and the blessing of peace, it speaks to men not of the beggarly elements in which they have been living, or of the fleshly conceits upon which they have been fed by men, but of the Jesus or gracious forms of things, the laws of grace vanishing from their sight, and God alone being glorified by what men are beginning to

know as the method of God's will or the laws in the universe. Christians have not lost their Jesus; He remains to them as the perfect manifestation of the will of God in the moral and gracious sphere of their being; but He has become so much more than Jesus of Nazareth, that this form is seen vanishing away, and the Christ, the anointed of God, the universal Teacher and Law-giver, in every sphere of being has appeared before the spiritual vision. It is a marvellous thought, and yet this surely has been the undefined Hope of man in all ages; only the reality so transcends in glory man's conceptions that there seems a breaking up of past associations to permit this glorious vision from heaven to enter the soul. The vision here seems to fit with the visit of Mary Magdalene to the sepulchre on the morning of the resurrection; she came early, while it was dark, to the tomb, and found that the stone was taken away, and running to Peter and John, she told them that the body of the Lord had been taken away and she did not know where they had laid Him. Men have been thinking about a dead Jesus as if lying in a grave; and the first effect of the change of thought is that of disappointment; the body of Jesus is gone men know not whither, their old Hope seems to be lost even in its outward form and there is a feeling as if everything was lost. But in reality it is not so, the Christ embodies all that was in the Jesus; and God is more than the Christ. Men have been lifted up, their spiritual eyes opened, and thus the fleshly forms will lose their power; the spiritual Christ will be seen in His glory and beyond, around, in all things God the Father speaks, and the Christ is the exponent of the Father's thoughts. If the three disciples were afraid when they entered the cloud on the mount of transfiguration, is it any wonder if Christians should be found anxious and trembling when a similar experience is falling upon them? The relationship will be changed toward Jesus of Nazareth because the day of carnal forms and of subjection to men and to law is passing away; but they must look up, and there will be seen One like unto the Son of man saying, "I know that His commandment is life eternal: the things, therefore, which I speak even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak." There is no cause for fear; He shall reign; and under His blessed rule of peace and righteousness men will be brought to believe, obey and also, in due time, know the will of God in all its manifestations.

CHAPTER XIII. The expected hour of departure is contemplated Jesus; and it is before the Passover feast which speaks to man deliverance from the power of this world, where the children of God are persecuted by their cruel enemies. But He has loved and kept His Own followers in the world, and will still keep and love them to the end. During the supper, this special period of His watchful tenderness and mercy toward men the devil was not idle, but in the busy hour when Judas Iscariot there was the diabolical purpose formed of betraying the Lord. Jesus knowing that the time was come for the true Passover feast, the manifestation of His own love, even to the death for His followers; the iniquity of Judas in His betrayal; that all things in the universe were given into His hands as King over the kings of the earth; that He had come from, and was returning, to God;

ose from the supper, the feast of His love, and laying aside His
 uments of glory and of beauty, He girded Himself with a towel,
 ok upon himself the position of a lowly servant, and having poured
 ater into a basin, He the Servant began to wash His servants' feet,
 id to wipe them with the towel that was girded around Him. When
 e Lord came to Peter, he remonstrated with the Master because He
 as doing that which was not in harmony with His dignity; but the
 rd gave him to understand that the meaning of this action was not
 derstood by him then, though it would be so hereafter. Peter in his
 isplaced zeal for his Master's honour declared, "Thou shalt never
 sh my feet;" but when he was told that without this washing he
 uld have no part with Him, then Peter went to the other extreme,
 d would have subjected himself to the washing of the head and
 nds as well as his feet. The Lord tried to moderate the rash con-
 ceptions of Peter by explaining that those who are bathed require
 y the washing of the feet so that they might be perfectly clean;
 t they were not all clean, because the betrayer was in their midst.
 e Lord Jesus may be here contemplated as the Son of God persecuted
 e righteousness' sake, to whom belongs the kingdom of heaven.
 are is no want of knowledge on His part as to the past, present, or
 are; everything is clear and distinct before His vision, and by this
 n He would teach His followers what He did for them. How
 uld the Lord of glory restore fallen humanity to God? Only by
 tting aside His royalty, coming down amongst His creatures as
 ir servant for their good, and by His lowly service to cleanse their
 ions by His own life's mission and passion. If men are too proud, in-
 lity, or by misconceptions, to reject this service of Jesus, then they
 outcasts from the commonwealth of Israel; they are masters, not
 vants, gods, and not fallen creatures, and they have no portion in the
 cious kingdom of heaven. This is a great sign, it covers the whole
 d of history, showing the grand principle that the spirit of Jesus
 hat of the servant for man's salvation; and that the spirit of the
 eemed ought to be that of lowly submission to their Master and the
 lowing of Him in trying to serve others.

The washing of the feet being at an end, the garments put on, and
 as being seated at the table, He asked them the question, "Know ye
 at I have done to you?" They were in the custom of calling Him
 ir Master and Lord, and in doing so, they did quite right. But if
 Lord and the Master condescended to wash the feet of His servants,
 servants ought also to wash one another's feet. This action was a
 p, and also an example, that they should act as He had done. It is
 portant for the servant to remember that he is not so great as his
 rd; and that the apostle sent forth to preach the kingdom of heaven
 not be so great as the Master from whence his commission has been
 eived. If men know these things, and are obedient, they will be
 eed in their deeds. This message is addressed to every soul, but
 ery man will not receive it; there will be traitors in the fold moved
 'the spirit of the serpent, full of ingratitude and of covetous thoughts.
 ch things ought not to make Christian men astonished; it is history,
 d this evil spirit in the *midst* of men subtle, ungrateful, covetous.

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proud, full of the spirit of persecution, has caused much sorrow and the faithful followers of Jesus Christ. They who receive the Lord's servants will receive Him; and they who receive Jesus Christ will receive God's Spirit also, and He is the Comforter for all His people. Having made known to His disciples their duties, specially, that of being subject to each other in love, and not as being lords over one another, the faithful helping of each other by the sign of the lifting up of the heel, and their union with Jesus by the Holy Spirit, then the Lord became troubled in the Spirit, and told them plainly that one of them should betray Him. This was a strange thought to the faithful followers of Jesus, and there was doubt in the company as to the man who could be so base as do this deed. The Lord had testified to the fact, but He had not named the person. The beloved disciple who was reclining on the bosom of Jesus, by Peter's request, asked who it was that should do this, and by the sign of giving the sop, He made known the fact that Judas Iscariot was the man. From that moment the restraint of grace was removed from Judas, and he was given up to do evil. Nay, not merely was restraint removed, but the evil purposed was to be done quickly. The disciples were ignorant of the meaning of the signs and words; the worlds of darkness and of light were sitting at the same table, and those who were there did not know the words were in conflict and issue of the struggle. They thought that the words were common-place, as bearing upon food for the body, or gifts for the poor, but, in reality, they were the cause of the trouble in the spirit of Jesus, and the issue was the departure of one of the twelve, devil-possessed, going forth into the night of utter darkness. It is not difficult to discern in this incident the opposing kingdoms of light and darkness. In Jesus the kingdom of heaven is in tribulation, whilst His followers are ignorant of their danger, and unsuspecting as to their companion. The meekness of the Lord throughout the scene, and the gentle method in which He acted, is clearly shown; and there is a fitness in the awful silence of the traitor, as the Lord exposes and brings to the light the horrible thoughts he had been cherishing, and the mastery they had attained over him. He is the true King who can in meekness, and the greatest provocation, rule His Own soul; and that man is the meanest slave, the most pitiful object in the universe, who on account of lusts is driven to do what he knows to be wrong, and sins against the Lord Jesus the whole scene is discerned, because He reveals not merely what was passing in His Own soul, but also what was going on in the soul of Judas. Without the Light in this scene all would be dark the darkness within Judas, the ruler of the darkness, driving him to an awful crime, and the dark night into which Judas went, were an escape observation.

The traitor was gone, and the Lord Jesus felt as if the in-
darkness had also passed away. His spirit was relieved, and
darkness rebound, He is in the light, and the glory of God shined
upon Himself; and the rapid execution of

glory, flash through His soul, and for the moment He is in heaven. A strange transition; yet it was necessary that He should have thus felt, before He began to speak to the eleven, of what would be of so much importance to them, and also to all those who have believed in Him through them. The exulting utterance, and the soul full of heaven, must have drawn the attention of the disciples to their Lord; and it was when they were waiting expectant, that, as a father, He addressed them as "little children." The compassion of the Saviour towards the disciples is very tender; and before their separation He must warn them to the future, so that they may not be taken unawares. Only a little while longer would He be with them; when He was gone, they could seek for Him, as He had said to the Jews, but where He was going, there they could not follow Him. The one commandment which He would leave with them in that solemn hour was, that they should love one another; not according to any standard which they could set, but even as He had loved them by dying for and saving them when they were His enemies. The sign of Christian discipleship is not a name, or baptism, or even the Lord's Supper, but love; and it is by this mark that all men may know who are, and who are not, the disciples of Jesus Christ. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

The ardent Peter was anxious to know where his Master was going; the Lord's reply was that he could not follow Him now, but that at a future time he would do so. Peter was not satisfied with such an answer, and thus he was bold enough to ask the reason why; asserting he was ready at any time his willingness to give up his life for His sake. This demand from Peter was not accepted by the Lord; the spirit of the Lord and the questioning were all wrong: the future was full of darkness, and Jesus was not willing in His last words to cast a gloom over them; but they who boast of what they are able to do, require to be reminded that their strength is in God and His grace, and not in themselves; and that it is when they are so self-confident and full of boasting, that they are in the greatest danger: because so strong they are left to themselves, and then in the hour of darkness there comes the sudden unlooked-for temptation, and there are repeated falls of dishonour to God's Name. Reading this portion in the light of the promise of persecution and the blessing of mercy, and applying it to the history of men and the history of the Church of Christ, the repeated trials of Christ may easily be found, and it is worth while for the student to study the subject in this wider aspect.

CHAPTER XIV. Here it may be assumed that the Lord is in spirit blessing the persecuted for righteousness' sake who are pure in heart. They are in trouble; let it not overwhelm them; they have faith in God, let them trust Him also in the future. There is a kingdom in heaven for the persecuted as He had already told them; but now He speaks of mansions in His Father's house, where they will abide in peace and safety. He is going to leave them, but it is not for any selfish purpose, it is to prepare their home, and having prepared it or shed His work, then He would come again, so that He might receive

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them, and that they may be with Him. Where He was going, and the way He was going, they already knew. Here Thomas interrupted Lord by saying that as they did not know where He was going, how could they know the way? The reply upon the pure in heart it has viewed in the light of the blessing amount to this, I am the Way of holiness; I am the truth and grace by which holiness is obtained; I am the moral life of perfect purity by whom men see God. In words, men are seeking the holy home which they lost by their becomes to them the Way to moral purity; the Truth and Grace which it is known, and by living in Him they possess that holiness without which no man can see God. There is no other way to God the Father, and to a holy, happy life, except through Him who is the Grace of God amongst all nations. They who know the holy Jesus, God's gracious Son, know God the Father, but they transcend the conception they do not merely know God the Father, but they have also seen Him. Philip was staggered at these thoughts, they transcend the conceptions of the evangelist's spirit, and thus he would see the Father with the organs of sense, so that He might be satisfied. The Lord Jesus gently rebukes the slowness of perception of this beloved disciple; and puts it to him as a strange thing that one so zealous and full of faith should be so ignorant as not to know the Master he had been serving. The man who perceives and conceives Jesus aright has actually perceived and conceived the Father; this being so, why should he seek after another revelation or manifestation of the Father, and that the Father that the Jesus, the Grace of God, is in the Father, and the Son and Grace, is in Jesus, then the union of the Father and Son need not be discussed; the words of Jesus are not His Own thoughts, as from the Father; but the thoughts of God which are in Jesus power by which His mighty works of grace are done. If all too metaphysical, far transcending the sensuous life, then do not to understand them, but believe what Jesus says without question and trust, the Lord emphatically teaches men that they are into communion of spirit with Him; and when there is this fellowship in grace and holiness then the works which He done by His followers; yea, even greater works, because His purity, whatsoever men would ask in His Name this would that glory through the Son might accrue to the Father; but if the disciples ask anything in His Name, He will do it; but if He possible is so marvellous as to dazzle men; the limitation directs the channels of the petitions, and it is seen that the power of the kingdom of heaven. The possibility but it is only through the spirit of love, humility, and grace, and wish to work upon these lines, for the power of the kingdom of heaven. The possibility of grace in the spirit of mercy that this position can be maintained. Jesus filled up His petition in harmony upon the fulness of the kingdom

the issue was for Himself persecution, Gethsemane, and the grave; but beyond these there lay the joy He set Himself, and it is to this work that He invites His disciples. Conditions of love and obedience the Lord Jesus is the Father, the High Priest of Israel, and He will pray for them to be given to His disciples to abide with them for ever. The Comforter is to be known as the Spirit of truth; a witness to men of the world, because they are not spiritual, and thus they cannot see or know the spiritual things of God. It is not so with the disciples of Jesus who love and obey Him; they will know the Holy One, and the Pure One will abide in them as long as He is going away, but they would not be left without comforters as orphans without a parent. He would come back again, and while He would be seen by the men of the world, and then more to be seen by them; but His followers will see Him; because He has a pure moral life in Himself that they will have life and to see Him. At the day of hiding from the Father's revelation to the saints, then the mystery of the oneness of the Father, His saints, and Jesus with the Father, would be known. Those who obey the words of Jesus and obey them, they only are the Father's; they who love Jesus; they who love are beloved by the Father, and Jesus will manifest Himself unto them. This question of manifestation where the saints could see Jesus, and the world could not, was a mystery to Judas or Judah, the betrayer of the ceremonies, and thus he interrupted the Lord by asking, "How can the Father be manifest by such a saying." The Lord's reply was that love purify the vision; and obedience to His Word will keep the heart pure and holy. Those who are holy and gracious will be seen by the Father; and Father and Son, Thought and Word, will abide in those who are the holy ones of God. But those who do not love, and are not obedient to the words of Jesus, cut themselves from the Fountain of Life and Light, holiness and grace, and they are blind and deaf; they do not see the Father's face, and His words through His Son. These precious words were spoken when the Lord was present with His disciples; but the Father's Word sent by the Father in the Name of Jesus, would be manifest, and bring the thoughts and words of Jesus to their hearts.

At the supper and the washing of the feet, Jesus was troubled in His heart at the departure of Judas Iscariot there came an elasticity of joy and joyous in its expression, followed by words of comfort; and at this point the soul that was about to be taken in a tempest reveals the thought that in Himself there is life. The climax is wonderful, divine; but what may be said is even more marvellous is the fact that this secret, unknown to the world, is to be given by Him to His persecuted followers, who are the peaceful sons of God. It would seem, if the Father's Word conceived, that the germ of heaven was found as if in the depths of hell; wave upon wave, storm upon storm, is seen rising and about to overwhelm the seed of grace and holiness. Yet it lives,

peaceful, and supported by the invisible hand of God. As with the Master so with the servants, they would also possess the peace of heaven within their own souls; His precious gift to them, and having the kingdom of heaven within them, the world could give nothing like it, and it could not take away a possession so precious. There would be trouble all around amongst men, but their portion would be peace, trusting in the Lord; there would be fear, because of the evil that threatened them, but in peace they could hope and patiently wait for His coming. Such conditions and surroundings might cause the weak of faith to tremble, but to those who love Jesus and are full of faith, even such things are matters for rejoicing, and not for sorrow. Whence should succour come in the awful hour of trial? from the visible Jesus or the invisible Christ; from the fleshly forms of things, the Jerusalem in bondage, or from the spiritual world, the city of God? Not from Jesus, but through the Priest-king, the Christ, who is in the Holiest place, in Heaven, and in the heaven of man's soul, by the Holy Spirit in the Father's grace, mercy, and peace received by the sons of God. The Jesus is a passing figure, the Subject for a great purpose, and that more than the Father; and even the Christ regnant, though far transcending the Jesus, is not all comprehensive of the Father. There is no lack of harmony in such thoughts; these are manifestations of God, making known to men the will of God, but beyond the manifestations there is essential Deity which the creature cannot possibly understand. These words of Jesus to His disciples were prophetic; they spoke not merely of His Own passion, which was at hand, but also of what they, and those who believed in Him through their word, would have to endure, and at such a time they would fall back upon His faithful words as the means of their trust in God. This hour had come upon Himself; the time for speaking was nearly ended, because the powers of the world in all their intense fury were coming upon Him; but the temptation of the devil, the fury of man, and the darkness of hell could not touch His spiritual Being; there was no affinity with such powers in Him. To show His love and obedience to the Father He was going forth to this persecution unto death; they also must arise and go forth upon the same mission, and acting thus they would prove their love of, and obedience to, the will of God.

CHAPTER XV. The Lord Jesus here instructs His disciples by the parable of the vine. But to understand this parable it is necessary to think of the associations which surround the vine, what it is in itself, and also the position of the parable in this cycle of God's Word. The associations are, upon their natural aspect, as in harmony with God's will, good; the vine is a figure for the nation of Israel redeemed from Egypt, planted in Palestine, taking deep root, and filling the land; and when the nation languishes, then the prayer is that God would visit and refresh the vineyard which His hand had planted. The 80th Psalm is a wonderful prayer as viewed in this aspect, because the Psalmist begins by calling upon the "Shepherd of Israel," who watches over the children of Rachel, the beloved, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, and thus uniting the idea of the vine in Ephraim and

Manasseh, the children of the blessing ; and with Benjamin, the son of the right hand, to whom belonged Jerusalem, and not with Judah, in whom was the visible ruler. Judah is said to bind his foal to the vine ; this may mean the linking of Judah with Benjamin by Jerusalem being made the capital of the nation ; in other words, Judah ruled over the city of the King, but it was not his portion. Judaism in its very nature is like the lion's whelp, and not like the tender, gracious vine ; it is Christianity in its most blessed conditions, that harmonises with the symbolic vine as a nation. The perverted use of the vine is found in Noah, who instead of using the authority conferred upon him in the spirit of grace, got intoxicated, and thus his shame has been manifested amongst all his descendants in all nations. The vine of Israel became changed into the vine of Sodom ; also Israel became an empty vine, bringing forth fruit to himself instead of to God. The vine in itself, as an organism, is not to be compared in strength or beauty to the cedar of Lebanon or the oak of Bashan ; these are regal in their visible glory ; but the lowly vine is more valuable for man than the cedar or the oak, because it yields the luscious grape, which will make the thirsty glad and the hungry to rejoice. The vine is not selfish, ever receiving nutriment and turning it into strength for its own existence, but the very reverse ; it is lowly, clinging with its tendrils to the supports placed within its reach, and it yields abundantly for the good of those who tend and watch over it. The breasts of the beloved are compared to clusters of the vine ; in other words, the consolations of the gospel vine are full of sweet comfort, peace, and delight to every child of God who in the spirit of the gospel receive Jesus Christ, and who love and obey Him in all things. Jesus is the Vine ; in other words, He yields that wine of grace, mercy, and peace which is the joy and rejoicing of men ; but the self-sacrificing Vine cannot, whilst yielding fruit, drink of the wine, He must wait till the Father's kingdom is come, the time of the restoration, when there will not be any sinful, hungry, thirsty, weary, sorrowful ones, and then He will join his brethren in drinking of the new wine of the kingdom of God. The position of the parable is that of persecution and reviling, and which holds forth in its promise the hope of a reward ; thus it is the very idea expressed by Jesus when He said that He would not drink with the disciples at the supper ; and as expressed in the thought of enduring the cross and shame on account of the joy that was set before Him as the goal of His hopes. The position of the cycle is that of the "poor in spirit," and surely the lowly vine clinging to supports and requiring attention from the vine-dresser fits beautifully into this thought.

There have been many vines which have professed to supply mankind with what will satisfy the soul ; but Jesus alone, as "the true Vine," meets man's requirements. He is not His Own, but the object prized by the husbandman, who is the Father of grace and mercy ; thus the Father and the Son are united in their gracious giving to men. But if the Husbandman and the Vine abide alone, separate from that humanity which requires the fruit of the Vine, then there is no means of blessing ; whilst if the Vine becomes a new power amongst men, and incorporates men into Himself, then *they will become like branches, and through*

reaches the haven of peace and joy in Jesus, so the whole redeemed, the holy nation by faith, will pass through the awful trial and at last reach that fulness of joy which is at God's right

hand Jesus, in the 12th verse, turns from the parable and into the duties of those who are His followers, and His commandment is, that they should love in the same gracious manner and to the same self-sacrificing extent as He had done. The test of love is given in giving; and as a man cannot give more than his life for another man cannot know a greater love. This is what Jesus had in mind for His followers; and when they are obedient to Him in this manner, then He changes His method of addressing them. They are no longer disciples sitting at the Master's feet, but His sons, or servants doing things they do not understand, because the Master has commanded them, but they are His friends who know the Father's will, and who understand and agree that it is done as being good, just, true, and gracious. This is the true Christian life, and it is truly wonderful to think that a sinful, sitting in the darkness, should be privileged to come into the friendship with the Wisdom of God. Men did not choose the light, but He has chosen that His grace should reach men through the world; and He alone appoints them to their work that they may bear fruit that will abide; and it is through this choosing, ordaining, and bearing fruit that men are brought to understand the Name of God in Jesus Christ, and all that it means for the human race. The spirit of humanity is in travail for the salvation of the world in the Name—that is, in the spirit of grace—then the prayer will be by the Father in heaven, because this whatsoever "cannot be answered by any other sphere of thought." The disciples are going into the world in the spirit of the Master in that love which gives up life, and works for the good of others; but in going forth they were not sent out as to what they would receive from the world, because they were a spirit, so antagonistic to the principles of self-seeking, it would bestow hatred. This was the portion of the Master, and they could not expect the same; the world loves and praises what it can understand; but what is God-like, chosen from out of the world, the people of the world will hate, and if possible destroy. It ought constantly to be remembered, that the servant is not to be like the Master; and since they have persecuted Jesus they should not complain if he is treated in the like manner. Such things as persecution and reviling will come to the disciples for Jesus, for His sake, because men do not know Him, neither do they know the Father whose will He makes known to men. Ignorance, however, is no excuse in their case, because they have the means of knowledge and they reject God's Word. The light has been shining, but they prefer the darkness; and thus they cannot excuse themselves for their unbelief. To hate, despise, or reject Jesus is to hate God, and the judgment is just when they stand self-condemned. The works of Jesus reveal God the Father, and it is by the doing of such works and words that men destroy themselves,

and their sin is fully manifested by the light that shines around on every hand. The climax of sin is reached when men see and what is good, true, and gracious, and yet reject and hate what they ought to love. In them this thought is fulfilled, they hate with any cause for their hatred; they are become devils, completely perv and thus they hate God and all that is good. But the black cloud a silver lining, the Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, will come He will bear witness of Jesus; and His followers will also bear witness and even in the midst of the darkness the light will shine like smoking furnace and the burning lamp as it passed between the sacrifice in the vision of Abraham.

CHAPTER XVI. The Lord turns from considering the principal motives of action of His followers and His enemies to instruct the disciples in what they will find to be the order of the spiritual kingdom into which they were soon to be taken, and in which they would have a very important part. They were not to expect that things would be easy with themselves any more than with their Master; and such a complete change of their ideas of the Messianic kingdom ought not to be a cause of stumbling to them after being duly warned. They were not to possess that which they had so much desired—that is, earthly power; but their enemies would do so, and through the power which they possessed the followers of Jesus would be turned out of the synagogues and men would kill them, whilst thinking that they were zealous in the service of God. This persecution of the saints by self-seeking, asserting men will be in opposition to the revealed will of God, but will do it through ignorance and because they do not know the grand will of the Father and the merciful spirit of the Son of man. The Lord Jesus speaks thus to them at this time, so that when the power of darkness come upon them then they may remember His words. He did not utter such thoughts to them at the beginning of His ministry, because He was at that time their companion; but He was departing from them it was necessary they should be strengthened and prepared for the conflict they must endure. He was going away to the Father who had sent Him on His mission, but they were so overwhelmed by what He had said that they did not even ask the question—"Whither goest Thou?" The plain truth was not pleasant, but it is better than a varnished lie, and if His kingdom was one of suffering, and they were shrinking from their duties, the greater the need for Him to go away, so that the Comforter might come unto them. They clung to Him and the visible order of things, but they knew that His departure and the coming of the invisible Holy Spirit would be better for them. With the coming of the Holy Spirit a new era would begin, because He would convict men of sin, show them their righteousness, and teach them the true judgment of God. The sin which all other sins are found is unbelief in Jesus, the grace of the Father; the righteousness of God is in the accepted, beloved, and it is to be realised by faith, not by sight; and the judgment is already past to the believer, because by the resurrection of Christ from the dead He has judged the evil one. The Lord Jesus had many

things to say unto His disciples, but at that time they could not hear or endure them ; but when the Spirit of Truth is comethen He would be their Guide into all truth, not speaking of Himself, but speaking of things to come, glorifying Jesus, and declaring His thoughts.

In this way the true spiritual Christian kingdom and its method, under the guidance and the teaching of the Holy Spirit, was revealed by Jesus to His disciples, and then at verse 16 He touched another keynote by speaking of their not seeing Him any more in a little time, and of their seeing Him again in a little while, because He was going to the Father. The disciples were perplexed by this strange method of speech and could not make anything of His words, but He perceiving their desire to ask Him what He meant, explained to them in figurative language what was about to take place. He impressed this thought upon them, that the hour was at hand when they would weep and lament whilst the world would rejoice ; they would have a time of sorrow, but it would quickly be turned into joy. The hour of travail had come upon the Church, and this is always an hour of anguish, pain, and sorrow ; but when the Child of Hope is safely born, then there will be joy, and no man will be able to take their joy from them. Then they would no more ask questions about His absence or presence, because they would know the secret of His indwelling spiritual power ; and verily, when they were so filled with His Spirit and asked petitions of the Father, they would be granted in His Name, in harmony with the method of grace. Up to that time they had not asked anything in His Spirit in harmony with the laws of grace ; now they were invited to do so that they might be filled with joy. What a kingdom of heaven is this which is here brought to the birth amongst men ; and what a righteousness will men possess when they are filled with this joy which comes from being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ ? It is not all joy, however, because before the birth in a man, in a nation, or in the world there comes the hour of travail, pain, and sorrow, and it is only when the Christ is come that there is joy in the household of faith. The hour of travail has come upon the nations once more, and there is pain and anguish amongst men because of the gracious Fruit in the womb of time : He shall be seen in a little time by men, and then their joy will be great indeed. The hour of travail is painful, but when it is past then the sorrow and anguish will not be remembered because of the fulness of the joy that will be manifested.

The hour of the birth had not come, because the Seed of the woman had not bruised the serpent's head ; and for this reason Jesus up to this time had spoken in parables, and not plainly to His disciples. The body of Judaism was in travail at that hour to bring forth the Christ, but until the spiritual era was come the spiritual things had to be covered by fleshly forms. When that day came then His Name of Grace would be the passport word in the universe ; and it would not be necessary for Him as a visible Intercessor to plead their cause, because the Father loves those who love, trust, and obey His Son. At this point the figures of speech vanish away, and Jesus tells His disciples in plain words that He had come from, and was returning to, the Father ; and they understood what He said. *The forms of Mossaism are gone, the open*

vision has come, spirit reigns, and grace and truth are manifested. Doubts are dispelled, and they know of a surety that Jesus came forth from God upon the great work of mercy for a lost world. This, however, is a pre-liberation of knowledge before the time for true manifestation had come; the veil had been lifted for a moment, and they had passed beyond the hour in which they lived. Again the veil was about to fall upon them, the darkness was rapidly approaching, then there would come the scattering of the disciples, whilst the Merciful One would be left alone; and yet not of mercy would be with Him. These thoughts are chiefly spoken for those who have the merciful spirit, men who are sent forth to seek and to save the lost. In Him there is peace; but in the world there is tribulation; be of good cheer, therefore, for He has overcome the world, the flesh, yea, and the devil of unbelief also in those last days.

CHAPTER XVII. The blessed Saviour of men is seen in the position of the Intercessor in the Father's presence; the Holy One in communion with the Father about the great work of redemption. "The hour is come;" it is an awful hour to Him; yet it is the hour for the Father to glorify the Son, so that the Son may be enabled to glorify the Father. As the Son of man, the perfect moral man, He had received authority over all men, and power had been given to Him for this purpose that He should be able to give a holy, moral, eternal life to those whom the Father had given to Him. The perfect moral life which cannot end consists in this, the knowledge of the only merciful, true, and righteous God; and of the Sent One from God known by the Name of Jesus Christ. The Intercessor has passed within the veil; the work of redemption is past, and God the Father is glorified in its accomplishment. The work of Jesus Christ being past His prayer is for restitution to that primal glory which He enjoyed with God before the world of sin was manifested in the universe. He has manifested to the chosen amongst men His Father's Name of Grace; all the redeemed were the Father's, He gave them to the Son, and they have been obedient to His Word of grace. The disciples of Jesus have at last become knowing ones in all the things given to the Son by the Father. The thoughts of God the Father are the words of Jesus Christ, and these are possessed in their spiritual meaning and power by believers in Him. This transcendent change, transfiguration, having taken place; the disciples being recipients of God's Word, know of a truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; and they do believe that the Father of grace and mercy did send Him into this world accursed, to be the Saviour of men. The prayer of Jesus as the Intercessor, the great High Priest of Israel within the Veil, is for the redeemed; there is no prayer offered up in this sphere of thought for the wicked; it is only for those given to Jesus by the Father, and because they are His. All that the Son possesses is the Father's, and all that the Father owns belongs to Jesus; and He is glorified in their redemption and restoration to the Father. Jesus will not be any longer in this world as visible to men, but His followers will; thus to His Holy Father He commits them for safe keeping in that Name of Grace given to Jesus, so that in this keeping there may

is a unity in grace, mercy, and peace, even as the Father and Son are united together. Whilst Jesus was in the world He was true to the great trust confided to Him by keeping those who had been committed to His care in the spirit of grace. The divine love had guarded them on every side, and none had been lost except "the son of perdition," and the loss of the betrayer is the spiritual fulfilment of great principles, not merely to Judas, but to all who have manifested the same spirit. Judas Iscariot is not an isolated being, the only betrayer of the Lord, he is a sign, and in his spiritual descendants there is the fulfilling of the mystery of evil. To the Judas spirit there remains the outer darkness, remorse, and a suicidal destruction; but to the followers of Jesus the light of heaven, fulness of joy, and eternal life, and thus in them is fulfilled the mystery of grace. In the meantime the followers of Jesus possess His Word, and it is to them their strength and succour in every hour of temptation and of persecution. They are hated by the world, even as Jesus was hated, because they do not belong to it or follow its sinful ways; but this time of trial, of purifying, is not an evil thing to them, and thus Jesus will not pray for the removal of His followers out of the world, but that they may be kept separate from the evil. They exist in the midst of sin, but they are not sin, because they are united with Him who is the Righteous. His prayer on their behalf is complete consecration to the will of God, through a knowledge of the truth as gained through His Holy Word. As the Consecrated had been sent by the Father, so the consecrated, sanctified followers of Jesus, are sent by Him into the world upon the same mission of mercy, so that men may become merciful and holy. It is on account of the redeemed that the Lord Jesus Christ has been consecrated for His mission of mercy, and anointed as the Holy One; and His prayer on their behalf is that they may be truly consecrated through the truth and made the holy ones of God.

At verse 24 the aspect of the prayer is changed and the King may be observed as turning the eyes outward from the inner circle of representative Christianity and taking under His protection all the nations and peoples who shall believe on Him through the preaching of the Word by His consecrated ones. His prayer is a marvellous one, it is for the unity of a disintegrated world; but it is such a union as exists between the Father and Son, not in forms, but in spirit and by spiritual union in grace, truth, and holiness. When this union of thought and action upon divine principles is realised then a gainsaying, sceptical, sinful world will perceive the fact, and be compelled to believe that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of men and the King of righteousness. His consummation is to be obtained by one glorious means, and it is the grace of God the Father given to men by the Son of man; and by no other means could this union with God be accomplished. It is Jesus, the Grace of God in men, and the Grace of the Father in Jesus, by which there is perfect union and communion in grace. He is the medium of communication for such a glorious result, and when the mystery of grace is openly manifested, then the men of this world will know that Jesus Christ is Saviour and King, and that God the Father loves the redeemed even as *He loves His beloved Son.*

The work of redemption is conceived of as in a sense completed; and the Son addresses the Father at verse 24, as bearing upon the restoration of the redeemed, so that they may be with Him and behold His glory given to Him as the Son of man, and of God, by the Father. It is as the Loved of God that this prayer is expressed; but it is a marvellous conception, because it links eternity with eternity, time being the link which unites these together by the manifestation of the grace of God amongst men. It is as if the Lord Jesus Christ holds, in one thought, the history of man from glory to glory, and betwixt there is an awful gulf spanned by the rainbow form, upon which He sits and is looking down into the abyss beneath. Above, there is the righteous Father; below, the darkness and misery in that world that knows not God. He is not alone, because He has known by an awful experience, in the horrible pit, what the grace and love of God mean; and around Him those whom He has saved by grace from that pit know that Jesus Christ is in very deed the Son of God, the Saviour of men, and the Anointed of the Father. The Lord Jesus has fully declared to men that God's Name is Grace, and the work He has given to His followers is to continue to make it known in the world, so that the gracious love of God the Father, wherewith He loves the Son, may also be in the redeemed, and Jesus Christ in them also as the inception by which they shall reach eternal glory.

CHAPTER XVIII. The Lord is seen going forth, accompanied by His disciples, over the Cedron—black—into the garden of Gethsemane. This is all that the fourth gospel states as bearing upon the agony which is fully related by the other evangelists. It is true that the word Cedron will cover the idea of the awful darkness and sorrow that came upon the soul of Jesus in the garden; and the thought suggested by the action of the betrayer, and his knowledge of the resorts of Jesus is that Gethsemane was not an uncommon experience, but rather the place which Jesus and His followers have frequented. Cedron—the place of sadness, and Gethsemane—the oil press—have been the resorts of Christians in the days of persecution, in the sad killing times, when the blood of the martyrs has been the seed for new life in the Church. Judas-like spirits have continued to act their diabolical part of betraying the peaceful sons of God into the enemies' hands by playing the spy and informer for vile ends. The Lord Jesus was not taken unawares; He knew all that was coming upon Him, and He went forth challenging His enemies by saying, "Whom seek ye?" The reply was, "Jesus of Nazareth." To this name Jesus responds with the greater Name, "I Am." They come to lay hold of the Son of man; He is prepared to resign into their hands, to be subject to their will, the Son of God. But this Name contains within it such a power that when it is uttered by the Jesus lips His enemies go backward and fall to the ground. Again they are challenged with the same words, and the responses are the same, but this time He asks that the disciples be permitted to go their way, so that there might be a fulfilling of the Scriptures, that of those whom God the Father had given Him none should be lost. In other words, He takes their place and doom; but

He is their Substitute, and the Lord has laid on Him their iniquity, of importance that they should be set free, and not lost, since they are redeemed. Simon Peter was in possession of a sword ; it is, and with it he cut off the right ear of Malchus—king or king- Thus far Jesus permitted the action of Peter, followed by the and that the sword should be returned to its sheath. The servants visible church know not the spirit of the Master, they have edly, in history, acted this foolish part, when it was for them to re words of Jesus, "the cup which the Father hath given Me, I not drink it?" The Master's will has ever been in harmony he gracious will of the Father ; but the servants when they have the bitter cup have rejected it, and taking up the sword they rought disgrace upon the Lord of grace. What a blessing it is le could drink the cup for men in all its bitterness ; men have in their duties, and thus to Him alone must all the praise of on be given.

may be suggested that in this first division there may be traced cle which embodies the thoughts or principles which underlie the of Jesus Christ, or His willing subjection of Himself into His se hands. (1) The going forth from the upper room in Jerusalem Cedron and Gethsemane touches the spirit in which the passion ndergone, and it was there where the great emptying took place, placed the Creator for a time below the creature. (2) The g of the betrayer and his accomplices in their evil work, reveals pravity of men when they are left, without the light of grace, to eir own evil ways. (3) Jesus was in all this the true King, the t knowing One, obedient to the highest, gracious will of the . (4) The "I Am" uttered by Jesus reveals the invisible king- f righteousness in power. (5) His request that the disciples be allowed to depart reveals the mercy of God in the Substitute. re use of the sword by Peter shows the perverted, sinful actions followers of Jesus Christ in the visible church. (7) The King ice and the Prince of peace making peace by instructing His ers to sheath the sword. (8) The persecuted One drinking the eented to Him by the Father.

Lord Jesus is seen as seized and bound by the officers of the nation and led away to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, as the high priest that year. It was this same Caiaphas who had dled that Jesus should be put to death for the people. The figure a peculiar one, but it embodies this idea ; the Lord Jesus was y seized and bound by His own servants ; He was led away into e where the grace of God was once known to men, but times- hanged, there was another spirit manifested in the nation and of God, and thus the wicked servants were about to put to death eir of the vineyard, and the King of the nation. This con- may be transferred to the sphere of the individual soul, or of ndom, and the same principles will hold good.

attention is here turned to the disciples who followed Jesus, these- Simon Peter and another disciple—John, it may be presumed, gh this is not plainly stated. This disciple was known to the

high priest, and thus gained an entrance into the palace, whilst Peter was left standing outside the door. By the request of this disciple, Peter was admitted into the palace, and being left alone near the door, he was questioned by the maid whether he was one of the disciples of Jesus, but his reply was, "I am not." The servants and officers made a fire for themselves, and were warming themselves, and Peter stood with them warming himself. How shall the followers of the King act in visible things when the hour of darkness comes upon them? The answer is, by the denial of their Lord and Saviour, and by conformity to the fleshly, carnal conceits of men. When the King is betrayed in His own house, by His wicked servants, and is put upon His trial as if He were a malefactor, then men who hold by the visible order of things cannot stand, they will conform to the world spirit, and by doing so they deny their Lord and Master. History confirms this concept very fully, therefore it is not necessary to add anything further on such a point.

The judge and the Prisoner; what a comparison. The Son of man, in whom the kingdom of heaven exists, and a miserable creature ~~would~~ to touch His feet or look into His gracious face. The Son of God, in whom all possibilities for grace, goodness, truth, and righteousness exist and consist, and a son of the devil, an unbelieving Sadducee, daring to act as His judge. This is a reversal of heaven's order truly; and yet behold in the Prisoner the majesty and the mystery of grace and truth, whilst in the infamous judge there is to be seen the mystery of evil in its most hateful form. The man sits in God's judgment-seat; and yet knowingly, without evidence, by the subtle device of making the innocent speak words for His own condemnation, he acts the part of a judge in this case. When Jesus was questioned concerning His teaching and about His disciples, His reply was that His teaching had been public, in temple and synagogue, and that in secret He had taught nothing contrary to the law; and He inquired why such questions were put to Him, when there were so many present who had heard His words. This most reasonable question was replied to by a blow from an over-officious officer, who revered the false and knew not the true High Priest, and who asked why He answered the high priest so. To him the Lord Jesus deigns a reply suitable for the place and time, and it is that such brutal treatment is altogether out of place where evidence, be it for good or for evil, is the all-important matter. Annas sent Jesus away to Caiaphas, the high priest, and thus ended the first trial. In this scene may be discerned the righteous kingdom of heaven in the words of Jesus in His reply to the high priest; and also the Judge of quick and dead, when before a judge as a human being He was not protected, but treated unmercifully by the officers of that court, where, in the high priest, the justice and the mercy of God were symbolised.

The attention is again turned to Simon Peter standing at the fire warming himself. Again he is challenged as to his discipleship, and again he denies that he holds such a position. But a relative of Malchus who had seen him in the garden with Jesus and knew him, said, "Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?" Again Peter denied his Lord, and at this time the cock crew. Conformity to the

claim of Jesus to be King of the Jews is put aside by Jesus by asking the reasons why he asked such a question, whether it was of his own, or if some one else had given him this information. Pilate finds himself checked in the order of his procedure, because he is not receiving evidence to condemn the Prisoner, but trying to get a confession from Him of His Own offence in the eyes of the Jews. Pilate, with a touch of pride and with a confession of his ignorance, takes the gentle rebuke from the Prisoner; he is not a Jew. The Jews of the Jewish people had given Him up to be sentenced to death, but had Jesus done to bring about such a determination in His Own power to put Him to death? The reply of Jesus is that He is a King, but that He has a kingdom, but it is not governed by the principles which govern the rulers of this world. If His kingdom had been like that of Rome, then His followers would have used the sword for His protection and for His dominion; but it was not so, and His kingdom did not come in that direction. Did Pilate understand the King? But what means. The words of Jesus were an enigma to him, because such a kingdom as Jesus had been speaking about, without visible authority and power to execute what was willed, was too lofty a conception for the Roman governor. When he said, "Art Thou a King, then?" he was not with any serious wish to know about His kingdom, but he was puzzled what to say or do. It was plain that Jesus was no rival of Rome, and thus not guilty of any crime, and yet these turbulent Jews would not permit him to set Jesus at liberty. The question, however, was brought a declaration from the lips of Jesus, which was a word of advice and of warning to Pilate first, and also to all who have heard of them. The Lord Jesus is a King as Pilate had said; it was for the end that He had been born and had come into the world, so that He might bear witness unto the truth. The truth embodies all correct and true thinking, the principles upon which a man's character is built, and it is in this realm that Jesus Christ reigns the Supreme as King, above all Cesars, kings, or presidents. Despots or rulers may be jealous of Him, and in their foolishness they may try to destroy Him; but this only shows their stupidity, their love of lies, and their unrighteous conduct. "Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." This thought is magnificent in its universal application. The Lord Jesus Christ is not merely the Sun of truth in the solar system as of man, He is the Sun and Centre of truth and righteousness in the universe, and all created intelligences, who love truth and righteousness, hear and obey this glorious King. Poor Pilate! though the Herods, Cesars, and all the despots this world has seen, and all together, are like a farthing rushlight, a mere spark from the sun, compared with Jesus Christ, the King of truth. Strange conduct! Here is a Prisoner before a judge, One who fills the universe with thought, uttering a universal thought which transcends man's knowledge, and upon the judgment-seat sits a man who does not even comprehend in whose presence he breathes. The external world is a reality, and himself the governor, and yet his tortuous policy of expediency is a thing of darkness and uncertainty, and he cannot determine his own actions. The words of Jesus fall upon his

the melody of heaven, the sweet sounds of a mother's song, but he could not touch his spirit or soul. The man is over-burdened with his spirit is overwhelmed by this convergent tide of evil influences all around him; and hearing Jesus he hears not, except that He is speaking about truth, and almost mechanically the governor re-echoes the words in the question, "What is truth?"

He then uttered the question, but not being desirous of an answer, he went forth to announce to the Jews what had really occupied his thoughts; it was that no crime could be found in Jesus. Thus far Pilate confirms the award of the judge, and the innocence of Jesus is fully acknowledged by men. But at this point the just judge, and the unprincipled, vacillating governor of men appears upon the scene, trying by foolish adaptations to customs, and what is thought expedient for peace, to bring men to do what is right. The policy is unrighteous. It was his duty to set Jesus free at all hazards; but to do this was to bring the enmity of the Jews upon his own head. By offering them the choice betwixt Jesus and Barabbas the guilt of Jesus is at least implied, and he placed himself in a false position; and when they chose the robber and rejected Jesus, he could not with safety go back from the false position in which he had placed himself. A powerful commentary is this upon the duplicity and the vacillating policy which men have followed in relation to Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. The history of nations and their rulers may fairly be summed up in the words of Pilate as to their motives of action, and the choice which mankind has been the mighty robbers and murderers which stain the pages of history. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

CHAPTER XIX. Here is presented to all men the King of grace. His stripes of scourging we are healed; and by that crown of thorns, the shame of man, the fruits of his sinful deeds, the fit emblem of grief and sorrow, men have restored to them the crown of purity and holiness; and because He was arrayed in a mock purple robe, in other words, clothed in a garment as if it had been steeped in the blood of the redeemed, receive a robe of white and spotless righteousness. The men who surrounded the King of grace on that day said, "Hail to thee, King of the Jews! and they smote Him with their hands:" now men are enabled to realise what this Hail meant, and why He received so meekly the blows coming from the hands of men. The King of meekness and of peace is the King of the Jews; but the real meaning of this term is not of the Jewish people merely, who delivered Him into the hands of the Romans, and sought His crucifixion, but the King of the meek, who seeks to do the will of God in all nations and amongst all men on the face of the earth. It is the visible kingdom of God amongst men, in the hearts of men, of moral law; and Jacob, Judah, and the Jews represent this kingdom in the Abrahamic family; whilst the governments of this world are ruled by the same thought amongst the nations. To understand this it is necessary to think of the meek King of grace, the self-sacrificing Jesus, who rules, by the perfect moral law of nations, on the throne of the world; and upon self-seeking, self-asserting men and their rulers

upon the other; and this thought is evolved, that the King is here in His representative capacity, and thus equivalent to all mankind. He is the perfect Sin-offering, not for the Jew only, but for all Israel of God in all nations. To fall back upon the Mosaic forms of things, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the High Priest of the nation of priests, had been despised and rejected by them. He came unto the holy place, and He found that the priests were offering God impure sacrifices, unhallowed fire and incense, stones instead of bread, and the light of truth was banished from their temple. The Heir was despised and rejected, cast out of the temple and condemned as an impostor: before Pilate, with the Jews thirsting for His blood, He is in the outer court of the Gentiles, of all nations, where the burnt-offering was offered, and it is here that, as the King of the visible order of things, He is acknowledged to be innocent, and yet condemned as guilty. By thinking of Jesus as the meek King of grace, the Substitute for the whole world as His nation, the great importance of the crowning with thorns becomes of great importance.

The portion of man, through his sin, is the scourge of God in its manifold forms, as war, pestilence, famine, and disease in every way that the flesh is punished and pain is known; his crown is the thorny crown of shame, sorrow, anguish, and remorse; and his robe is that of the purple stains, which speak of a brother's blood shed by the red hand of the murderer. These are symbols, yet how truly they speak of the awful reality and of the helpless and hopeless condition of the sons of men. Pilate brought Jesus out to the people thus arrayed, and again he asserts before all those who were anxious for His death that he knew of no crime that could be laid to His charge. "Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man." History can say not merely, "Behold the man," but behold the only righteous Man, the meek King of grace, in whom dwelt the fulness of the divine kingdom of truth and righteousness.

What has been the response of men to this Wonder of the universe which men have been privileged to behold? It has been the devilish, hellish yell of hatred, "Crucify Him, Crucify Him." Again Pilate would shrink from the crime they would desire him to commit, and for the third time he declares the innocence of Jesus; but the Jews declare that according to their law He ought to die, because He said that He was the Son of God. Pilate is afraid of the people who are seeking the death of their victim, and equally afraid of Jesus, and returning to the judgment-hall, he put to Jesus the question, "Whence art Thou?" To this question the Lord gives no reply, the reason being, it may be presumed, that no reply could be given to one like Pilate, that could be understood by him for his good. The silence of Jesus seemed to rouse the anger of Pilate, and he began in an imperious manner to speak to Jesus about his power to crucify or release Him; but to this Jesus calmly replied that his power was not so great as he thought, because all power is from God; he had no power, except what was deputed to him; and thus his responsibilities would lie in the righteous or unrighteous use of the power resting upon him. The guilt

late was great, it was the perversion of justice, by putting to death an innocent man ; but had Jesus answered the question, " Whence art thou ? " his guilt would have been greatly increased by the knowledge he would have obtained : the guilt of the chief priests, rulers of the Jews, especially of the high priest, was intensified by the fact that they possessed the Scriptures, and because they were wilfully doing what they knew to be contrary to the will of God. The vacillating Pilate knew not what to do ; he was anxious to release Jesus, but this was set by the cry from the Jews, that if he did this, he was not the friend of Cesar, because every one calling himself a king opposes himself to the will of Cesar. These words were sufficient, the weak Pilate made his choice ; the imperial Cesar and the raging people were more terrible in his sight than the fear of God, and with reluctance he set down on the judgment-seat where sentence was to be given against Jesus.

These words, " It was the preparation of the Passover and about the sixth hour," seem to suggest that the critical hour had come for the Passover, and that this sacrifice is linked with the sixth cycle, or the sixth in history ; in other words, the true Passover is the Holy One, the Son of heart, who is privileged to see the face of God. It is also in the very very noon-tide of the day of grace. Pilate appealed once more to the Jews in the words, " Behold your King ! They, therefore, say, Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King ? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cesar." The sphere of thought is in the moral nature of man ; before men there stands forth the perfect moral Man, and his obedience to law, the King who is over men by divine appointment. In the Man there exists the kingdom of heaven, and also the kingdom as a hidden mystery ; in the King, the Holy One three times crucified to be innocent by the power of this world, there exists the kingdom of right. The relation of Jesus to the Jews may be conceived of as more intimate than with the Gentiles, because they had received the moral law from God ; and they had been under an age-long dispensation of moral training ; whilst the Gentiles did not possess the special revelation given to men through Moses, and thus they were not so very culpable as the Jews. Not that they were ignorant of the moral law of God by any means, but they had been permitted to bring together fragments of the original moral law which they could find in their customs, and they sought by these to try to obey the will of God. The Jews had failed in this work of the reconstruction of the moral law, and the moral nature in man, as proved by the various philosophies and systems of worship found upon the face of the earth ; but the Jews, although they had been placed upon a higher platform, ended the same as heathenism, as proved by their foolish choice in the words, " We have no king but Cesar." The thought of representation requires to be remembered here, so that the attitude of the various parties might be understood. Rome is the heathen power, the sword, tolerant to all men as they are subject to imperial Rome, the mistress of the world. In Jesus of Nazareth there was apparently no intention of opposing Rome, and so Pilate sought to set Jesus free. It was the

chief priests who said that **Cesar was their king**, and by this choice, as the representatives of the nation, they absolutely rejected God, and despised His Christ; and thus Judaism as a religion, and the Jews as a nation, did, as a matter of fact, renounce allegiance to Jehovah, and promise fealty to **Cesar and imperialism** at this critical hour of their history. Heathenism would have been tolerant toward Jesus; but Judaism was persecuting to the death; the Jews were become in reality the **fleshly Ishmaelites**, and the carnal Edomites—and not the children of faith, or sons of Israel. The voice of Jesus was silent in this scene, despised by heathen and rejected by Jews; He was delivered up to be crucified—a **Sacrifice, and Sin-offering** acceptable to God for both **Gentile and Jew**.

The King of grace, the peaceful King, went forth carrying with Him the means of His Own execution; and as He did upon that day, so have many of His followers done in past times. To go forth as a peace-making Son of God into a world of strife has often meant Golgotha; and this has been the invariable experience of those who have been the faithful followers of Jesus Christ. At Golgotha, the place of a skull, they crucified Him with two others, Jesus being in the midst, and it is not too much to say that of all the offences committed against a perverted Church, or a despotic power in the State, none have been more cruelly treated or considered as more dangerous to the common weal than faithfulness to the will of God in opposition to the will of man. History has its long record of criminals; on either hand murderers and thieves, but throughout the strange web of events Jesus Christ is constantly seen in the midst in His suffering members. The title written by Pilate and put upon the cross was not blotted out; the superscription is known in all languages, and it may be translated thus: **Jesus, the Saviour of men, the Sanctified and Peaceful Son of God, the King who reigns in truth and righteousness over all men**. Those who are apostates, as were the chief priests of the Jewish nation, may object to such a title, but it expresses His mission to this earth as the Saviour, and also His purpose of grace which has yet to be fully accomplished amongst men.

The crucifixion fits in with the cycle of persecution, and it is not wrong to state that as they who crucified Jesus divided His garments among them, so those who have persecuted men for righteousness' sake, have received the worldly or visible portion of the persecuted as their share in the spoil. The goods and chattels, or even the gracious thoughts of the followers of Jesus may have been thus divided, but the seamless robe, the true Church in its spirit, has not been so easily disposed of; it has been what all men would desire even though they did not prize it fully, or know its true value. There has been a crucifixion of Christ in history, a dividing of the spoil owned by His followers, and the gambling about His coat without seam; but there has also been standing around the cross the true followers of Jesus, the beloved disciple and the spiritual Church of Christ; and it has not been to the hirelings that fleece the flock, or to the wolves that destroy, that Jesus Christ has committed the true Church, but to the beloved disciples, the gracious sons of God who have identified themselves with

he cause of Christ upon the earth. They may not have had much of his world's goods ; but as they have been persecuted by men for righteousness' sake, so they have had their portion, and it has been the possession in their own souls of the kingdom of heaven. In this gospel the reviling of the people around the cross is not referred to ; the beloved apostle, it may be, could not write upon such points, although it is evident that he was an eye-witness of His sufferings. The end had nearly come ; the race was almost run, and the goal was in view ; Jesus knew that all the things bearing upon His humiliation and passion were finished ; and to accomplish the Scriptures He uttered the words, " I thirst." This thirst was for the great reward in heaven ; or that joy which He had set before Himself, and for which He endured life with its pain, shame, and cross. As with Jesus, so with His spiritual followers, there has been the accomplishing of the Scriptures and the finishing of the work of God the Father amongst men. The thirsting cry of Christ and Christians has been answered by the penitent souls sympathising with and responding to the cry : and although the moisture for the thirsting soul has not been the rich, luscious, new wine of the kingdom, but the sour vinegar-like wine of repentance, yet it has done good, and it has been blessed to those who have received and those who have given the beverage.

The hour had come ; and the great work of redemption was finished ; the Father's will had been fully obeyed in all things, and by obedience unto the point of death, and by suffering the cross of shame and all its agony to the utmost, He had as Priest and Sacrifice, King and Subject, fulfilled the Scriptures. He bowed His head and gave up His Spirit to the Father ; the vanquished, and yet the Victor, the Moral Sacrifice, and yet the King of grace. There was death, and yet He died not ; there was a separation of Spirit from body, and a cessation of physical life ; but the Spirit went forth to freedom from its cribbed, confined Home, and the Moral Life that could not die continued in vital union with the Source of Life. Is this a mystery ? So is life and motion, spirit and moral life, and the utmost that any one can say about such things is that God is the Source of physical power and life ; that He is the Fountain of Spirit ; and that He is the Author of Moral Life. The Christ did not die ; in obedience to the Father's will He returned to the Father's presence, and thus His Life was not ended ; the Christ began to be, as the Spiritual King, when the Jesus method of life came to its termination.

These thoughts land men in conceptions which reach far beyond the third heavens ; they are not considered as if they were within the sphere of intellectual knowledge, but they may be conceived of as unquestionable facts which the loving, faithful servants of God may truly believe. The attitude of the soul here is a marvel to itself, because it stands gazing up into heaven knowing that there is a glorious light and life there which men cannot express in words ; it embodies the glorious hope of the future, whilst at the same time it is felt to be necessary to remain upon the earth to see what men will do with the crucified body of the Son of man. Although the Jews had crucified their Messiah, and rejected their King and their God, yet

they were very religious. The pure spirit of religion had left the earth; but men who loved forms and ceremonies, external rites and ordinances, knew not that their religion had become a mockery, their preparations for the feast an abomination to God, and themselves literally lying under the curse of heaven. The Jews could not bear to see men hanging on the cross on their high feast-day, because they thought that this was an offence to God; but their own vile, unclean natures they did not discern, and so they prepared their Passover feast as if they were the favoured people of God. Pilate gave permission that the legs of the crucified men might be broken, so as to hasten their death, and in this there was also given the power to break the legs of Jesus, but when the soldiers had broken the legs of the thieves they found that Jesus was already dead, and so they did not break His bones. Still, to make sure of His death, one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and out of it there flowed blood and water. These facts of great importance as may be noticed from the great carefulness of the evangelist to testify to the truth of His own witness-bearing, as an eye-witness to the incidents he relates, and they are so because upon them hangs the fulfilment of the Scriptures in two definite directions. The first thought is that His body will not be mangled, or His bones broken, so that these would be the cause of His death; and the second idea is that through the piercing of His side they will discover the real cause of death. It almost seems paradoxical to say that men crucified Jesus, and yet that they did not put Him to death; but this idea seems to evolve out of a study of the crucifixion, that in reality the giving up of life was a voluntary act on the part of Jesus Christ; and that what produced the cessation of physical life was the breaking of His physical heart. The 69th Psalm, in which the sufferings of Jesus are prophesied, contains the following remarkable passage, "Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." How can men enter into the experience of Jesus Christ upon the cross? It is simply impossible. They who die in His service have His Holy Spirit within them, and He gives even joy and comfort to them on the cross or at the stake. The bad man is overwhelmed with pain, and it may be with remorse; but the exquisite tenderness, loving kindness, perfect love to His Father's will, and intense love toward the sinful, which is the nature of Jesus, are not known to such a creature. This death is that of an animal in the endurance of physical pain, and it may be regret and remorse for the past, but with Jesus the pain of the body is drowned in the anguish of the soul when all is darkness within. The pure One becomes one with the impure, for He cannot see the face of God; and around Him on every side there is manifested persecution, reviling, reproach, and hatred; and even those who love Him are dispersed, and the few who cling to Him in love, only add to His anguish by their helpless, hopeless state. A broken heart terminated the physical life of Jesus; and a complete rupture of all that the heart symbolises is the great reality, and it brings out this terrible thought, that upon the accursed tree the

Lord Jesus was cut off from the Fountain of divine sympathy and love; he Father's affectionate love ceased to operate upon His soul; His friends forsook Him and were estranged from Him; those who loved Him more than life were overwhelmed in the awful catastrophe that had overtaken them, and so the Sufferer had to minister unto them whilst they were unable to help Him. And then these cruel soldiers, the ailing thieves, the mocking mob, the scoffing priests and rulersazing into His face and pouring contumely into His ears, was it any wonder that the physical heart gave way under the intense strain upon the body, or that the prophetic thought should be so true as referring to His moral nature, "Reproach hath broken my heart"? Oh! what a sacrifice is here for men to contemplate; it is not the breaking of His bones, the physical pain of which He complains, for the crucifixion is as nothing; but it is the piercing of the heart, of His affections, of His moral nature, which is here verily sacrificed; burned as with fire on every side; the heaven above pierces Him with awful darts when the sunshine of the Holy One cannot reach His soul; the awful cloud over His head is full of the lightning of the wrath of God, and the forked flashes enter His soul until He cries in His agony, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" His followers have pierced Him to the very heart by their unbelief, cowardice, and flight; and the world and hell pierce Him on every side with reviling and hating. Oh! Lord Jesus, what is man that Thou shouldst have borne all this for creatures so utterly unworthy of Thy love? Thou art the Heaven of gracious love, and men are filled with the hell of hatred, the venom of the serpent; and Thou knowest though man could not understand such a mystery of grace, that only by such a sacrifice of Thyself could men be changed from being hating and hateful to become loving and full of love in Thee. Oh! blessed Lord Jesus, that men might see Thee on that cross, and hear Thy voice saying "I thirst." Lord, Thy people have been to Thee as if they were offering Thee a little vinegar upon a sponge, little knowing what was passing in Thy gracious heart toward them and the awful piercing Thou hast been enduring. What can Thy followers say to Thee? They do require a sad, reproachful look from Thee that their hard, stony hearts may be broken and that they may understand their sinfulness, ingratitude, and shameful coldness of heart toward Thee. Has the time come O Lord, when there will be a fulfilment of this prophetic promise: "I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born"?

The crucifixion was past, and there was left in the hands of men a sacred body without life: the form remained, but the spirit had fled, and who would care for what to many might seem as worthless? Careth God for bodies and forms, letters and sounds in which are embodied a living power? Certainly God careth for every manifestation that is made in the heaven of the spiritual life, or in the earth of outward forms, and they are all meant to minister to the well-being of

man. But the time comes when the form, body, letter, or sound are found to be dead things, irresponsive to the external world, and that they require to be cared for; not that there is any mistake or loss, but simply that there may be a new manifestation in a higher sphere. The intention is not destruction, but increase of light and life; and during the time of change the form is consigned to the care of those who love truths in their forms, and by them they are carefully kept and even embalmed as very precious, preserved with faithfulness until the time of the manifestation of the new life. Conservatism has its place in nature, man, society, the Church and State; it loves the forms that exist and is careful to preserve what is loved and cherished. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus may be compared to the Conservatives in the infant Church or Society of Jesus Christ; and at the fitting time they had their work to do, a work which could not be done by the liberal Peter, the radical Paul, or the wise, far-seeing John. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a seed, or even to human society in its varied organisations and modes of thought and action; but it is not like men in their selfish, self-asserting methods of action; because nature works by harmony and according to law, whilst men work through their ignorance, prejudices, and selfish desires. Thus they are too often found transgressing moral law, and also the higher laws of grace or love toward those who oppose them.

CHAPTER XX. Here is contemplated the tomb in which the Lord of glory lay. The time for waiting was past, the true Passover had taken place at last, and those who had been under the curses and in bondage were in a position to consider their position as it was related to the empty tomb of the past from whence the form of Jesus had disappeared. Whilst the conservative Joseph and Nicodemus rest satisfied with what they have done and as they think safe, because they possess the form, those who have been forgiven much and who love much, are very early upon the way to the tomb where all that is most precious to them is thought to rest. The darkness was gradually dispelling by the opening dawn of the morning, and to the amazement of the visitor there was seen to be a change in the grave, for the stone was taken away from the tomb wherein the Lord lay. This change was enough to startle Mary Magdalene, and she returned to Peter and John, informing them that the Lord had been taken out of the tomb, and they knew not where they had laid Him. The strange fact of the removal of the body of Jesus caused Peter and John to run to the tomb. John reached the sepulchre first, and looking into it saw the linen clothes lying, but he did not go in; whilst Peter entered into the tomb, saw the linen clothes in one place, and the napkin that was round His head in a place by itself, rolled up. At last John entered the sepulchre, and there his eyes were opened, and he believed the Scriptures that Jesus would rise again from the dead. The grave was found empty, the Lord had risen from the dead, and they went to their own home. This incident is to be interpreted in the light of the open kingdom of righteousness; and it will be seen that the experience of each visitor to the tomb has a distinct meaning. If instead of limiting

the vision to Mary, Peter, and John, and the first day of the resurrection, it is extended to the Christian era, and to all they represent, the meaning will come out more fully. Mary, the penitent soul, comes to the Church as an organism, and to the Word of God, seeking the Saviour, and in the darkness of the dawn of knowledge the fact is perceived that Jesus is not to be found in the tomb of forms and ceremonies; this great stone is rolled away, there is new life, and they who would seek the Lord the Saviour will do so through His servants Peter and John, the spirits in the visible and spiritual Church. But the servants of the living Christ run to the tomb also, and it is to find that the past of Mosaism, for example, has vanished from sight, it is no longer a concrete form to be seen lying in a tomb, all that can be seen is the grave-clothes which covered the form. John is the first to see the empty grave and the linen, but Peter is the first to take possession of the empty grave. But though Peter possessed, he did not understand; and it was only when John came into possession that his eyes were opened to comprehend what had been hidden from their spiritual vision. The figure is a peculiar one, but it expresses the attitude of the sinner toward the Saviour, of the visible Church towards its Head, and of the spiritual in Jesus Christ, who have been taught by the Spirit of God the great mystery of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and of the kingdom of righteousness in Jesus Christ.

The incident which follows is very interesting as interpreted in the light of the words, "Blessed are the merciful." Mary cannot return to her home, but she is seen standing beside the empty tomb, weeping; as she weeps and stoops to look into the sepulchre, her eyes are opened, and she perceives two angels clothed in white, sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet of the place where Jesus had been lying. These speak unto her, asking, "Why weepest thou?" and her complaint is still the same, her Lord has been taken away, and she does not know where they have laid Him. Mary has been looking in the wrong direction; He is not to be found in the grave, neither is He to be found in His ministering servants of light, as, for example, the Old and New Testaments; there must be the backward turn, that is away from self and its complainings, from the empty grave, the Bible, and the questions they suggest, and then behold, though the soul know Him not, Jesus is by the side of the penitent, asking why there is weeping, and who the soul is seeking after. Mary's eyes were holden, so that she did not discern the Lord; she was too busy supposing who He might be to know the Lord, and thus her address is one full of loving anxiety about her Lord, and what she desired to do for Him. It is at this point that the revelation comes; she would be penitent, and the Lord of Mercy utters her name; she is one of His sheep, she knows His voice, and turning to Him her utterance is, *Rabboni, my Teacher* in the way of mercy. This is a great revelation to Mary, but it is followed by a strange prohibition; the spirit that animated her is the right one; it is the mournful spirit seeking to find peace in Jesus. But this is not enough, the penitent are not the holy, and until there is ascension to the Father, the rising up to the new moral life

of holiness in the fear of God, there is no power to lay hold upon or to touch the Risen Saviour. Without holiness no man shall see God; the merciful are instructed to go to their brethren, and to point out to them this great truth, that there is an ascension from the plain of salvation by grace, that through the spirit of mercy they are the Lord's brethren, but there must be ascension to the higher moral life, and only thus can there be union betwixt the Father, the Son, and those redeemed. Mary Magdalene told the disciples the things that the Lord had said unto her; and thus the repentant sinner seeking the Saviour, and seeking to serve Him in mercy, was the first to whom the Lord appeared after He had risen from the dead.

On the evening of the resurrection day, this being the first day of the week, the disciples being met together and the doors shut for fear of the Jews, Jesus Christ appeared in their midst, and uttered the benediction of peace upon them. The Lord Jesus showed them His hands with the imprint of the nails, and His side into which the spear had entered; these were the proofs that Jesus had risen from the dead, and that it was their Master who had come unto them. Again He uttered the blessing of peace upon them, and told them that as the Father had sent Him into the world upon a mission of mercy, even so He was going to send them. Then He breathed on them, giving unto them the Holy Spirit, with the power to forgive or to retain sin. This visit of the Risen Lord to the disciples has, it will be seen, a special object in view. He appears to His followers that they may know He is alive; to give them satisfactory proofs of the fact; to confirm them in the mission of mercy to men, to bestow upon them the Holy Spirit, and to grant them the heavenly power of forgiving or retaining sin. The special objects in view are to confirm their mission, and by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit in meek souls, by which they would know the thoughts of God and see His face, they would possess the power of a holy, moral life to live and act as His followers and representatives. The benediction of peace uttered upon them twice over speaks of the termination of their struggles and their doubts, and from thenceforth they would no more give place to the fear of man, but walking in the footsteps of their Lord they would be kings amongst men, because they were men pure of heart, who could see the King's face, and they were to be guided by His Holy Spirit.

But Thomas was not with them upon this occasion; and it would seem that he would not believe in this mystery of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It did not matter what his friends said, no proof would satisfy him except the tangible evidence of placing his own finger in the place where the nails had pierced the Lord's hands, and his hand into His side. Thomas thought that the raising of Jesus from the dead was an impossible thing; he did so through ignorance, not knowing the power of God, or the essential life in Jesus; his world was limited by his unbelieving soul, and thus although faithful and willing to die for the truths he possessed, he was incapable of receiving the truth of the resurrection unless he knew the reasons why he should do so. But the names Thomas and Didymus mean twin, and thus it is

not to limit the consideration of his character to the unbeliever who will not believe his brethren, but try to carry the thoughts to the more favourable side of his nature which was manifested in the appearance of the Lord eight days after the resurrection. On the third day after the Lord Jesus Christ, when He appeared in their midst, He gave the same benediction of peace upon them all, and then specially to Thomas. Thomas requested that he should put His hand and side where He had been pierced. This manifestation was granted to him so that he might no longer remain an unbeliever and faithless on this question of the resurrection of Jesus. It was not on Thomas of such a marvellous display of divine grace that his gross ideas were dispelled, and without any reasoning Jesus was accepted by him without reasoning, and it may be said even without a touch, as his Lord and also as God. This conversion of Thomas is good for him, and for all who are like him, and it is the kind of conversion of which the Lord Jesus approves. It is not *spelled* to believe when the evidence becomes to reasoning as if it were something tangible or visible, and there is no real means of questioning the facts, is a proof of unbelief in the Word and in the testimony of His servants; and it must be said that a disciple of Jesus Christ, if he is to be one at all, could not try much further off from Christ and remain a disciple. There is no ground of commendation for sceptical, unbelieving Christians, who do not love the truth and would be found even ready to die for it, but they know, are at the same time so wilfully blind as to question the Word of God, and the witness from personal experience of the fact of the risen and living power of Jesus, by the witness within the soul. They are the cursed of God who do not see by their physical eyes, nor yet by the eyes of the reason and understanding, but who believe the Word of God as both righteous and true, and who are the testimony of God's people. The application of the Word to the individual and to history is not difficult; they are not those who are unbelieving and full of doubts, but those who love, and obey the Lord Jesus Christ, realising His presence by faith, and who are invisible to sense and not to be comprehended by the power of the intellect. This age of materialism and agnosticism has manifested the Thomas spirit of unbelief in the world and in the church to an extent as was shown by Didymus; and it is a strange thing that the forms of Christianity should have been grasped so tenaciously in their historical aspect whilst the utter unbelief in the risen living power of men as the resurrection power to a new life has been boldly denied by them. The spirits who have thought that they have been deceived have made a grave mistake. They began by rejecting the real religion in Him in whom the universe of thought and existence exists; backward they could not go into the superstitions of Greece and Rome, or the forms and ceremonies of the Papacy; they would fain have progressed, but the darkness surrounded them, and through their unbelieving ideas and being, doubts, they have been clinging to the past. This spirit of the

twin, that is, being double-minded, rejecting living, vital truths and still clinging to the past, and hopeful or doubtful as to the future, is not what can be approved of; the right attitude of the soul is perfect trust in the Lord Jesus as the peaceful King of truth and righteousness, and in Him as God in whom men live and move and have their being.

Jesus did many other signs before His disciples which are not written; the things which are written, however, are enough to teach men "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." To know Him as the anointed Priest and King, Teacher and Saviour, Sanctifier and peaceful Ruler over men, is to possess eternal life in His Name; by loving, believing, and obeying Him there is life, peace, and joy, and they are the blessed who have not seen and yet do believe.

CHAPTER XXI. The scene is changed into Galilee, and the disciples are seen following their avocation of fishermen. There were seven of them agreed upon what they should do, and thus they pass the night in their boat upon the sea, and they catch nothing. At the daybreak the disciples perceived a stranger on the beach, and they heard His voice asking whether they had anything to eat. The answer of the disciples was No. The Lord Jesus gave instructions about the casting of the net, and in obedience to His command the net was cast on the right side of the ship, and then they caught a multitude of fishes. The Person, the instructions, and the draught of fishes, led John to discern in whose presence they were, and John's thoughts being conveyed to Peter, he left the boat and went ashore to his Master. The disciples had been out all night and had caught nothing; but in their Lord's presence they found plenty, not only in the sea, but also a fire, fish, and bread, a feast ready for them on the shore, and Jesus there to invite them to break their long fast with the food He had provided for them. This is remarkable as the third manifestation to the disciples after He was risen from the dead. The first time was to the believing and faithful disciples, those who were poor in spirit waiting for the kingdom of heaven; the second time was to the unbelieving Thomas, the doubting soul, the church torn into two great factions; the third time is to the seven, a perfect Church, united in love and good deeds, busy in the Lord's work, or it may be in a sense their own, but unsuccessful in their efforts. At His coming there is the daybreak, the glowing fire of zeal, the broken bread of God's Word, and the treasures of His grace upon the glowing, fervent spirit, and the hidden treasures from the depths of His love.

The Lord Jesus graciously permitted nourishment to be taken before there was any conversation. They sat in silence, but the food provided was bread from heaven, and they were brought nearer to the Lord by feeding upon His Word, being guided by His Spirit. The fast having been broken, the Lord Jesus Christ singled out Simon Peter and addressed him, asking the question, "Lovest thou Me more than these?" in other words, the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ in the sphere of the affections. The response of Peter was, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love Thee." The command of Jesus was, "Feed my lambs. Three times the question was repeated, and answered in like terms

ist instance appealing to the Lord's knowledge in all truth of his words. Unto Peter was given the feeding of the flock, the tending or pastoral care over the people, of men and women in truth and righteousness. It is observed that Peter was re-installed into his office, so that he should over the little children, be a faithful pastor, and a wise shepherd. But as the under shepherd, the visible pastor and shepherd, he is not to expect an easy life, plenty, and the power of riches over his brethren, but rather, hardships, the contradiction of the world, and persecution of the world. Life would be a constant trial of faithfulness and patience, and death would be that which would come through persecution. The words of Jesus Christ to all the disciples of the flock have been, "Follow Me;" but like Peter they were curious about what would happen to others than anxious to follow the Master faithfully by following in His footsteps. What would be their own duties and rewards as the consequence of duty? What would be the trial which would be led has had too little attraction for the shepherds of the flock. What should happen to the beloved of Jesus, and what He would do for them, has been a continual matter of speculation and inquiry. The Holy Spirit of Jesus is the spirit which enters into the invisible world, and dwells in every place; it discerns the things which transcend the senses of the human mind, and it does so because it follows Jesus, it leans upon Him, and it is at the Supper, that is to say, enters into His sympathy, loving thoughts, and receives them, and is privileged to ask questions and receive replies to questions which other disciples could not ask.

The shepherds of the flock have been too apt to forget their merciful duties in the following of Jesus, and to ask questions which they could not understand. The Lord Jesus rebukes them with the words, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is it to thee? Follow thou Me." The Lord has His will in this matter. It is not the tarrying and the coming, but the continued existence of Jesus amongst men, and the fact that at His coming it would be the same; but the days of the spirit of Simon Peter are those of practical, merciful service, and not of the beatific vision; the great importance of looking to himself and of being faithful to the Chief Shepherd had given him. The evangelist writes of Peter that he had gone abroad, that he would not die before the coming of Christ in His glory, and he points out that Jesus Christ had said to John that John would not die, but He spake of His Own secret life, and that the spirit of that disciple; and that the servants of the Lord should not trouble themselves at that time about the hidden

who wrote this book was the beloved John: the spirit which was written is that of love, grace, and of the soaring, open vision, and the Holy Spirit of God is the Author. The beloved John writes that it is true; the spirit of every man who loves the Lord; is gracious, and is seeking the open vision of God, will be true; and the day is coming when by the Holy Spirit, the living God, sitting in the open vision, full of love, grace, and truth, will declare that this gospel is God's truth in righteousness.

This gospel contains many marvellous thoughts about the Father the Son, and what Jesus has done. But there is required the spivision in wisdom and understanding, and then men would see th visible universe is the book of Jesus in the visible signs of th that books are copies, transcriptions of His thoughts, and that the and bodies of men are living books, which actually contain the t which He has written. The laws of God are written by His Own in the method of nature; these are transcribed into letters by guidance of His Holy Spirit, and they are found in the Bible, in the f and symbols which harmonise with the written letters as understo the intellectual being; but when these laws are written upon the or treasured up in the memory, then the three witnesses agree in and they ascribe "unto the King eternal, immortal, and invisible only wise God, honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Kingdom of God in the Bible.

ing the Pentateuch and the four Gospels in the light of the laws, or the laws of the kingdom of heaven, it seems evident that no antagonism whatever existing betwixt these two great lights—the Word of God. The former shines as with a reflected light when the veil is removed from the face of Moses, then there is the glory of the Sun of righteousness; and in the latter the light of the Divine Glory bursts forth from the transfigured Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Since the laws of the kingdom of God are found useful in opening up these two great fields of thought, it is profitable, in as brief a manner as possible, to apply the same principle to the whole Bible, with the view of ascertaining whether it is or is not constructed upon this principle, which has been in a measure illustrated at times referred to in studying the gospels. To do this fully would be the blessed work of a life-long study of God's Word; but it may be a possible thing to open the door of the kingdom of God by the key which the Lord Jesus Christ has supplied; and if the Holy Spirit is pleased to open the blinded vision, the entranced soul may indeed get a ravishing view of the hidden things of God, and the soul may be pleased at this time to bestow upon men. To sit in the first heaven of the Pentateuch is to be in the first heaven of the thoughts; to walk with Jesus Christ amongst men in the kingdom of God; His mission and passion, is to be in the second heaven; but to rise with Him from the dead, and to see heaven open, and Christ sitting in glory at the right hand of God, this is surely the third heaven of glory into which only the few in the past have been privileged to enter. It almost seems, returning to the symbolic figure in Judaism, that if men were to be permitted to enter into the Holy of holies, there to look upon the Ark of the Covenant, to look upon the Tables of the Law, the Rod of Aaron, the Pot of Manna, to gaze upon that awful glory overshadowing it, and to command Him who, as the King of grace, has reigned over His gracious people from this place. Is the figure too bold, or is it an awful reality? If men are to be privileged to draw near to God, the Saviour with such freedom, no longer afraid of the awful prohibitions of Judaism, or hindered from seeing the King's face by the unbelief of unbelief which has hidden the High Priest of men from the timid and unfaithful will be inclined to say with Manoah, "All surely die, because we have seen God;" but the loving and full will be inclined to reason as did Manoah's wife, "If the

Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would He have us all these things, nor would, as at this time, have told us such as these."

That there is one Holy Spirit animating the Pentateuch and Gospels is a fact that will not be questioned by those who are tent judges within such a sphere of thought; the evidence is complete that any opposing theories fall down to the ground, even as fell before the Ark of the Lord. There is great diversity of thought and the lock, so to speak, seems sometimes to be very intricate when the key that Jesus Christ supplies is applied, then there is a marvellous harmony of relations, and there is a spiritual truth thought discerned beyond the visible forms which at first occupy prominent a position in the study of the Bible.

The grand idea which underlies the Pentateuch and the Gospel the re-creation of man to the image of God; and in the kingdom of grace and mercy there is to be observed a development which is known to be in harmony with the order of nature and of grace; it is also true that the diversities of operations which are being on, in the constant inter-actions betwixt good and evil, present a conception of what the results will be. The temple of God in the world is being rebuilt according to the divine plan; but the workers, and those engaged in the work, are not able to understand the perfect design upon which the work proceeds, or the final completion of this the greatest work of God. Let them be patient, submit and obedient to the Architect, and what is at present mysterious in due time, be manifested and explained.

The visible order or method of the kingdom, as it is seen in the Pentateuch, is a portion of this great work; but even as men of science cannot expect to know the laws of the kingdom of matter, or when they are analysing what is tangible to find out differences between the spiritual laws of the kingdom of grace are not to be found in the Mosaic institutions, because they are hidden away from view in the Holy of holies and in the Sanctuary. When men pass beyond the veil and reach Jesus Christ, then the order is changed, the visible things are passed away, and motion, with its relations, that is the thoughts and emotions of the soul, are found to be concentrated into a few central thoughts, and by these the kingdom of grace is known in its many manifestations. To carry this analogy or conception a little further, Jesus, the Saviour, represents these laws of the kingdom of grace; by Him they are all interpreted; but as these laws pass through the pure Spirit, as the refracted coloured rays of the spectrum through the prism and are changed into light, so the laws of the kingdom lead men to Christ, the Light, the Essential Truth of God.

In the Holy Scriptures there is to be found the complete and full manifestation of this kingdom of grace; in other words, the scientific method or order of re-creation or the regeneration of man, the laws by which the facts can be understood; and God, in Jesus Christ, is the Light, Wisdom, and Knowledge of God in all true righteousness.

Because the contents of the Bible are found to be facts, that is to say, spiritual, scientific truths; and also matters of belief in harmony with the reason, but not subject to it; therefore in harmony with all science and divine wisdom, it is necessary in the study of the kingdom of grace and mercy to stand beside the King of mercy and truth, and in conformity with His will to use His laws of mercy as a means of understanding His great work, which has for its object the salvation of men from evil, and their re-creation to God's image.

It is well to remember that when the soul stands beside Jesus Christ it is in the Palace of the King; in other words, the soul is not looking upon the external scaffoldings or the forms of the palace, but it is within the sacred inclosure, standing face to face with the Holy Spirit of Truth, and it is preparing to be taught about the organic unity, laws and manifestations of the kingdom of grace and mercy. Clearness of the intellect is desirable; but above all things purity of heart, that is love to God, righteousness and truth, is necessary for a student so highly privileged.

Further, men ought not to expect that by any occult means the science and wisdom of the kingdom of mercy and of peace can be imparted to them; as with every other science, so with this one, great patience, attention, and obedience to the methods laid down are required, and these will bring not merely knowledge, in a limited sense, but the knowledge of good and evil, with the power to trample evil under foot. In this direction lie righteousness and truth; and this means the restoration of the birthright lost by Adam in the garden of Eden.

Again, students, earnest men, seekers after righteousness and truth, will do well to keep in view this thought, that it is possible to gain a little knowledge, and when the difficulties seem to be insurmountable there is sometimes a drawing back, but with such men God is not well pleased. As with Joshua, when going to take possession of the land of promise, there were great encouragements given to perseverance, so now men must go forward, and they will overthrow every enemy, and the promised blessing will at last be obtained by them.

The question might arise as to the best point from whence to begin this study: it is here assumed that it will be well for the student to begin with the Gospels, using the Revised New Testament, and by doing so, much help will be obtained by the paragraph divisions. As the Gospels have already been studied in the light of the Blessings and their cycles, the thoughts upon this portion will be very brief; but a comparison of the Gospels with what has been written, and of the following portion which is meant to show the cycles of thought in their development, will help the student to understand more clearly the principles upon which the study is carried on; and this exercise will be useful before entering upon the Old Testament and the latter portion of the New Testament, with its revelations of the spiritual kingdom of grace and mercy. The numbers represent the Blessings or Beatitudes uttered by Jesus Christ in their order; and it is for the student to try to comprehend the spiritual thoughts which are expressed in each portion, to see whether they harmonise with the spirit of the blessing, and

by walking in the light of the laws of grace and mercy to find out the spiritual thoughts of God in His Word. It is necessary to remember that the honest spirit of inquiry, the spirit that is humble and reverent in seeking after righteousness and truth, will gain that which it desires; but if the critical intellect, with its own perverse conceptions, will set up a standard other than the Holy Spirit of Truth in the Word, then it can easily be conceived that the Light of truth, righteousness, and mercy will not reach the soul. It will be very difficult for many men to close their eyes and ears against the ideas, opinions, theories, and conceptions of men; but it is essential in this study to turn away from all human instruments, if possible from every external means, and have meditation upon the Word, in its spiritual significance, guided by the Spirit of Truth, to follow Jesus Christ as He is revealed in the Word and in the soul.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW.

CHAPTERS I.—IV. may contain a cycle of thought which is preparatory in its nature, in other words, it is before Jesus Christ and the full manifestation of the kingdom of mercy in Him. (1) There is limitation in the genealogy of Jesus by David to Abraham; but this encircles the spiritual promises to a separate people and the kingly authority of Christ over the redeemed and sanctified people of God. (2) The conception of the Virgin's womb embodies not merely the idea of Christ's incarnation, but also the new spiritual life by Him in the soul, and in the world. (3) His Own people received Him not as their King; and the seed of Adam, Edom, would have destroyed this Manifestation of God; but He was received as King by the wise men from the East, who worshipped Him and who acknowledged His Kingship. Within this visible order there is seen persecution, sorrow, death, flight, God's protection, favour, and safety from the powers of this world. (4) John the Baptist and Jesus Christ represent the kingdom of truth and righteousness; whilst the baptism by water and by fire express the outward and inward methods of the operation of God's Spirit in the kingdom of mercy. (5) The wilderness and the temptation of Christ reveal the perfect Man prepared for His work of mercy. (6) He comes to the souls of men and to nations as the great Light bringing to men truth, righteousness, mercy, and peace. (7) During the short period of His life, which is linked with the pre-Christian era of Mosaism, He was preparing for the spiritual kingdom by organising His Church and doing those things which were for the good of men. He is the peaceful King of mercy setting up His kingdom in His organisation amongst men.

CHAPTERS V.—VII. may contain the first cycle. (1) In the Blessings there is contained the Spirit of the King and the laws of the kingdom of mercy; and they who possess such a spirit and obey these laws have

the kingdom of God within themselves. (2) The salt of grace and mercy permeates the soul, making it gracious and merciful; and when the soul is changed then it becomes like light, radiant as a means of blessing to others. (3) The law, the prophets, and Jesus Christ, in their methods of operation lead men away from sin in its every form to a gracious life and to perfection of character, even to the image of God in mercy and righteousness. (4) Alms-giving, that is the gracious spirit, prayer, or communion with God, and fasting, or the penitent spirit, express what the kingdom of God should be in the soul. (5) To possess *the* Treasure in the heaven of mercy, that is Christ, is to possess all things; and if this treasure is possessed then it will not be hoarded up but utilised upon the lines of mercy as a means to do good to others. (6) There are two masters in the soul and the universe, God and Mammon. God claims universal supremacy; if this is granted to Him then all is well; but should there be a division in the soul, or if the Mammon of unrighteousness be chosen, then all must be wrong. (7) The spirit of the peaceful Son of God, and His mission amongst men is described in Chapter vii., and a cycle within a cycle may be discerned here: (1) He is not a Judge to condemn men; (2) things which are sacred are not to be cast before the swinish soul or the depraved multitude without consideration; (3) faith in God and in prayer must be cherished; (4) those outside the kingdom are to be invited into the true and right path; (5) false teachers must be slurred and their doctrines abhorred; (6) purity of soul should be cherished as the means to a holy life; (7) as men live here and now, so shall their eternity be hereafter: if the peaceful sons of God, then the inheritance will be theirs; if sinful, they will be shut out of the kingdom; and (8) there will come the time of judgment when those who build upon Christ will be safe, whilst those who build upon themselves, lies, and unrighteousness, will be lost beyond remedy.

CHAPTERS VIII., IX. may contain the second cycle. (1) The healing of the leper touches the impure spirit of sinful man; and the new life is imparted for the re-creation of the being. (2) This new power of grace in the soul, which is by faith, receives the truth in Jesus with simplicity, and it is blessed by the healing of body, soul, and spirit. (3) The kingdom of mercy comes into the soul for the overthrow of evil, but when it is in possession then there must be a decision to follow Jesus Christ. (4) The aspect of the soul as related to this world is revealed in two pictures—it is like the sea in a tempest, and like the maniac of Gadara; and of course these figures speak also of the world in which the Christian lives, and of the condition of men as viewed from the Godward standpoint. (5) The soul is palsied, utterly unable to help itself; the Lord heals the soul even whilst blasphemous thoughts are conceived about Him; He is pleased to call the soul to His service, and He grants the new wine of the kingdom of mercy to those who follow Him. (6) The Lord enters into the hidden secrets of the soul, touching the spot from whence all evil proceeds; and He not merely heals this open sore, but also gives a risen life to the soul dead in sin. (7) In His mighty power He opens the spiritual vision of the

soul, and He causes the dumb, unclean devil which will not be thankful to God to go out of man; where evil reigned there He will cause grace to reign as the conqueror over sin and death; and the spiritual nature, once a desert, shall bring forth fruit abundantly.

CHAPTERS X.—XII. may contain the third cycle. (1) The kingdom of mercy is built upon Jesus Christ, the only Foundation; the twelve apostles are the chosen instruments for the manifestation of His kingdom amongst men as His servants and witnesses; and His instruction and rules of guidance to the twelve are applicable to all those who become subject to Jesus Christ in His kingdom of mercy. (2) How shall a soul know whether it is safe in trusting Jesus Christ? Simply by listening to Jesus' reply to John the Baptist, and by interpreting His message in its spiritual intention. All that Jesus is to the blind, lame, leprous, deaf, and dead, Christ is to the soul in all its infirmities; and they are blessed who find no cause of stumbling in Him. (3) The visible order or laws of Moses, Elijah, John, and Jesus, must pass away; they are suitable means to an end. Men have been ready enough to find fault with God's order of procedure, but the day is at hand when they will be compelled to admit that Wisdom is justified by the children sent to men, and by their works. Men may accept or reject the Word of God through these varied channels; but there is responsibility under every administration ordained by God. (4) The spirit that loves righteousness is seen in the unreserved acceptance of the sovereignty of God; the acceptance of the mission of Jesus; and union with Him under His yoke, or humble obedience to the laws of mercy and grace. (5) The day of mercy is the day for preparing for the renewed Sabbath; in other words, the Sabbath of moral rest was lost; but the Lord Jesus who possessed this Sabbath in Himself has been working, and men have been eating, so that they may get the moral Sabbath rest restored. It is by eating the bread of mercy and by obedience in giving it to others that this end shall be gained. (6) In the meantime there are seen paralysed hands that cannot work; critical, foolish men who would prevent others from working; and the Word of God pulling poor souls out of the pit into which they have fallen. There has been a marvellous struggle between God and Satan; the issue being that the Word shall gain the victory; but there is also found in history, and in man, such an experience as reformation with a fall back into a sin so great that it is represented under the figure of a seven-fold possession of the devil. (7) Above all these experiences there shines forth the spiritual union of the saints with their Saviour as one family in obedience to the will of the Father in heaven.

CHAPTER XIII. may contain the fourth cycle. (1) The Wisdom of the kingdom of God, but specially the kingdom of grace and mercy, is to be found in the parable of the Sower, and in its interpretation. (2) The kingdoms of grace and of evil are to be found in the parable of the wheat and tares, which explains the state of the soul, and also of the world during the day of grace. (3) The parable of the mustard-seed represents the method of the kingdom in its development and useful-

ness. (4) The parable of the leaven expresses the permeating power of the kingdom in the soul and in the world by changing that which was evil and making it good; and the explanation of the parable of the wheat and tares at this point is meant to show that the hidden things of God are not to be understood by every one, but only by those whose spirits are in harmony with the Spirit of God. (5) The treasure hid in the field is the gospel of salvation; when it is found, and its value known, then it is worth more than all that man possesses. (6) The pearl of pearls is righteousness and truth in the fear of God; but this is not gained by the selfish desire to know what is true, but by selling all that a man possesses, by renouncing self, so that there may be rightness with God first as the means of gaining truth. (7) The parable of the net teaches that there is a judgment to come, as the consequence of knowledge, duty, and responsibility. Therefore men will be wise if they try to understand the wisdom of God, and communicate what they know to others. (8) Wisdom was fully manifested in "the Carpenter's Son," but men have despised and rejected Him; this has been a fatal choice for them; the result has been that they have chosen to walk in the darkness of their own foolish conceits in their unbelief, rather than in the light of God's truth.

CHAPTERS XIV.—XV. may contain the fifth cycle. (1) The story of Herod and John the Baptist sums up in a few words the relations of the kingdom of mercy in its servants with the kingdom of this world. They are the representative men of history, and the sad story conveys a faithful picture of the facts that have occurred in this world. (2) Where can the followers of John go when the merciless tyrants would crush them under foot? To the wilderness and to Jesus, so that He might supply their wants; for Jesus alone can supply the Bread of God for the soul and for the world. (3) What might the visible kingdom of mercy be compared to in its experiences in this world? Even to a little ship on the sea, in the darkness of the night, and the men in the ship toiling to reach their desired haven, but making no headway; to a coming Saviour of whom His followers are afraid; to presumptuous disciples who would walk upon the sea of humanity outside the Church; and to the Christ in the ship, known as the Son of God, who brings to men a calm and peace. (4) The wisdom and the beneficent manifestations of the kingdom of mercy are found in the effects as made known upon men—that is, in the healing of all kinds of sickness, and in the giving out of the divine grace so plentifully that if a soul do but touch Christ by faith it is made whole. (5) The kingdom of mercy goes further into the nature of things than rites, ceremonies, and washings with water; it touches the spiritual order or laws of man's duties, and points out with infallible certainty the root cause of all spiritual disorders and all evil actions. (6) The King and His kingdom of mercy have come not only to the favoured people of God, but to those who have in the past been rebels and outcasts from His kingdom; but specially He has come to those who are in affliction, hunted by sin and assailed by temptation, to cast out the devil that has so grievously vexed the poor down-trodden children of Ham. They

crave the crumbs which fall from the table of mercy ; the Lord grants liberty, deliverance, a pure heart, and His Own gracious favour, so that they might sit down at the feast He has prepared for all men. (7) The Lord Jesus Christ will yet be glorified amongst men as the God of Israel, because of His spiritual kingdom of mercy ; and at that day when the dumb tongues of men will sing the praise of God, the maimed use for His service the powers they had lost, the lame walk in joyful obedience to His will, and the blind see the glory of God, then there shall be given to them the seven loaves of God's provision—that is, all His gifts and graces in the universe of the knowledge of truth—all will eat and be satisfied, and yet they will leave, not the unbroken loaves, but seven baskets—say, seven complete sciences, of which men will eat and live in the sunshine of the favour of God.

CHAPTERS XVI., XVII. may contain the sixth cycle. (1) It is here that temptation specially finds its place, as seen in its operations upon the moral nature and in the moral sphere of duty. Men seek for signs which will satisfy their intellect, or their curiosity ; they will be self-appointed judges, and they will sit to consider whether the Bible, the Lord Jesus Christ, is credible or not. This is the spirit of the devil, and of the greatest folly. This is the fatal error of humanity, for men have been constantly saying, let us see what we desire to see, and know what we think is knowable, and then we will judge whether the way of mercy is a fit thing for the end proposed ; we will not be subject to faith, or wait for illumination, but we will see, know, and judge, and then we will accept or reject as we think fit. It is not difficult to discern the incompatibility of the method of mercy with this hateful spirit of assumption, because it is based upon faith, obedience, righteousness, and the issue is knowledge. The rebels would deal with the King as their equals, and for this reason there is a warning from the King, and the cessation of the interview with those who will not prepare themselves to listen to the terms of their submission. (2) Let all Christ's disciples beware of the leaven of pride, contempt of God's Word, and infidelity. It is very seductive, and many have been led astray because they have not kept the true Bread of God's Word in their souls. (3) Who shall reign over the soul ? Cesar, or the Christ ? For men must choose which master they will serve. If Cesar, Mammon, or self, then this is idolatry ; if Christ, then there is divine illumination, and the soul builds upon the Eternal Rock of righteousness and truth. Unto such men there shall be given the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and all things in their order and in due time will be made known to the soul. But in this cycle the spiritual inheritance is hidden away in visible things, and those who are illuminated ought not to reveal the Christ, that is Mercy regnant in peace, to those who are unable to comprehend such a revelation. (4) The mystery of the kingdom of mercy and righteousness is found in the suffering Jesus, a disciple so changed as to be like a Satan opposed in spirit to the gracious will of God ; the cross-bearing of the disciples as followers of Jesus ; and the coming of the Son of man in glory and to judgment. (5) Mercy is the light of God's truth in Jesus Christ in a world of darkness ; He is seen as

ed ; the spiritual reigns over the carnal forms, and truth and
 less flash forth upon men. History witnesses this scene in
 entatives of men, Moses, Elijah, and the three disciples ; and
 a prophetic promise, the hope of a regenerate humanity, which
 nfigured into His glorious image. The vision was not meant
 rstood when Jesus Christ was on the earth ; but now it may
 ood as referring to Christ, to a soul, and to mankind. The
 of all things will see men made spiritual through the mar-
 ace and mercy of God. (6) The epileptic, demon-possessed
 ie soul and amongst the nations, incurable by man, will be
 the Lord Jesus Christ at His coming. To faith all things are
 but unbelief makes a man helpless to help himself or others.
 l of the day of the Lord's life terminated with Gethsemane,
 he grave, and resurrection, so with His Word and spiritual
 there is persecution and death, so that there might be resurrec-
 z, and the kingdom. These things in Jesus Christ's immediate
 he soul, and in the Church, are the means of sorrow ; but
 e sorrow, pain, and death, there is eternal life, joy, and peace.
 e experience in the soul brings as its results the manifestation
 is of God and freedom ; but for a time it would be necessary
 eaceful sons of God, living amongst enemies, to pay the
 a subject. The sons of God are all free, but men who are
 subjects cannot understand the freedom they possess ; there-
 e time, it is necessary in the interest of the cause of mercy
 ciful and gracious to those who are not in harmony with the
 od.

RS XVIII.—XX., 1—16, may contain the seventh cycle. (1)
 ie greatest in God's kingdom of grace and mercy? Even the
 and peace-loving child who knows nothing of ambition, and
 een to be animated by the spirit of Christ in seeking the
 n of those who have gone astray and are in danger of perish-
 If such a child, a son of God, is sinned against by a brother,
 t be ready to take offence, but he will seek to gain his brother
 ruth and righteousness, first privately, and then before the
 but if the offender will not conform to the moral law and
 of grace, then he virtually cuts himself off from the common-
 Israel. (3) There is no limitation to the forgiveness that
 anted by a son of God ; as he has been forgiven by God, so
 to forgive even until seventy times seven. If he is unfor-
 en he ceases to be a son of God by grace in Jesus Christ,
 orgiveness is the great principle in the kingdom of mercy.
 bject of the life of the Son of God is healing, that is, restoration
 d goodness, and all who follow Him should keep the same
 view. (5) Divorce, schism, and strife are not lawful within the
 of God, and the work of the Son of God has for its aim the
 way of such conditions by uniting what has been torn asunder
 , thus making a new man in Himself by abolishing divorce and
 n end to hatred and strife. The spirit of mercy and of Christ
 ismistic or repulsive, but gentle, affectionate, winning, and ever

conveying blessings to the little ones. (6) The spirit which thinks to obtain pardon, peace, and salvation by conformity to moral law is mistaken one; the order of the kingdom of mercy and the privilege of a Son of God is to be self-denying and self-sacrificing for the good of others; but this is a hard duty for those who think they are rich in themselves and in their good works. (7) Who then can be saved, the good and the wealthy find it so difficult? Even sinners; those who are not good nor wealthy, who are willing to be saved by grace, because in the kingdom of mercy all men are alike, sinners condemned before God with all their possessions forfeited through rebellion, and so no man can possibly have a claim upon God on account of his own goodness or wealth in money or talents of whatever form they may take. Salvation is by grace that it may be by faith, therefore even the sons of God cannot earn a right to be restored to God's favour; but they who count themselves the least in the kingdom are raised up by God, whilst those who exalt themselves, and ask for what they do not deserve, are cast down. In the kingdom of mercy God is the Sovereign, and the humble sons of God will do well to accept freely and fully His gracious supremacy in this kingdom.

CHAPTERS XX., 17—34, XXI., may contain the eighth cycle. (1) In the Son of man there can be discerned the Persecuted by Jew and Gentile, crucified to death, and yet raised up to a life that is spiritual and eternal. (2) The ambitious spirit which seeks greatness is out of harmony with the spirit of Christ, the former would drink of the cup of power and pleasure, whilst the cup that the Son of mercy must drink is derived from this perverted spirit in its manifestations. So long as this ambitious spirit reigns in the soul it is out of harmony with God's gracious will; but when the spirit is a minister of mercy and a servant of grace, then this brings peace with God, joy in the Holy Spirit, and fellowship with Jesus Christ. There are two classes found amongst men of this world, those who think that they see, and those who know that they are spiritually blind. The former are selfish and self-conceited, and they love to conform to the social rules of society, being bound and blinded by the power of this world; whilst those who know that they are blind cry out for help when they know whence it can be received, and they become obedient to Him who is able to bring the light of truth into their souls. The soul of man is like Jericho, even an accursed place; but, by the grace and mercy of God, truth and righteousness are revealed to it. (3) When the light of truth shines, then there is knowledge of law; the King can be seen who has brought redemption entering into His kingdom, coming to men "in the Name of the Lord." (4) The King comes to reign in the whole being, and for this end all that is opposed to the will of God must be cast down. The holy place which had become like a desecrated market-place must be purged, so that the sanctuary of the soul might be made a place fit for communion with God. He comes with power to heal the blind spirit and the lame will which were unfit for service, and the manifestation of this power with authority causes opposition in the carnal affections, whilst the mouths of the babes in grace are opened to praise

God of grace, mercy, and righteousness. (5) Fruit, not mere profession, is the test in the kingdom of mercy; therefore whether it be to an individual or to a nation, the voice of God is that men should take heed that their faith be cherished, so that the doom of judgment may be averted, and blessings received in answer to believing prayer. (6) As the Son of God did not pass unchallenged as to the authority upon which He acted, so His followers have found, and will still find, men ready to challenge any action done in God's Name which is not in conformity with the traditions of men. It is not necessary that they should give up their spiritual authority to men who are prejudiced and dishonest; reference should be to the Scriptures, and if these are not accepted as the supreme standard of authority, then such men are unable to be of any use in any cause where the authority and work of God are in question. They presumed upon the authority they possessed; but they were hypocrites and disobedient, even worse than harlots, who had professed righteousness and obedience to God, but who had at last turned out their error and changed their method of life. (7) The faithful Son of God, the Heir, has come by His servants and in the flesh, and the wicked husbandmen have put Him to death; but in doing so they have over-reached themselves, and brought about their own destruction. Man's greatest iniquity touches God's greatest mercy, and His grace is poured out upon a sinful world, whilst the judgments of God fall upon the unrepentant who will not bow down before the King who will serve Him.

CHAPTERS XXII.—XXV. may contain the ninth cycle. (1) The kingdom of heaven, in what God has graciously done for sinful men, is compared to a great feast made by a king in his son's honour, to which a general invitation was given to the people; but the grace of the king, which was being appreciated, his invitation was treated with disrespect, and he was despised by those who were specially invited. This attitude of those who were so highly honoured by the king, brought about their destruction, whilst it was made the means of the extension of the king's gracious invitation to those who were despised and considered as unfit for his society. The great masses of humanity are so intent upon their worldly occupations and pleasures, that they have no time, so they say, to listen to God's Word, or to obey His will. But there is another class equally culpable, who through self-conceit become self-righteous, and would appear in the King's presence, not as sinners saved by grace, but as righteous by obedience to law. This is a fatal error; it will not stand the searching scrutiny of the light of righteousness and truth, and such a spirit is cast out from the presence of the King. There are the sensualists, the self-righteous amongst men, and there are also the hypocrites, the deceitful casuists, who in the spirit of the devil praise God even when they are seeking their destruction. To put this matter plainly, there can only be the One God, the Source of all authority; to bow down to Cesar, Baal, Mammon, or any other man, form, or image is idolatry. How can such double-dyed, deceitful men be saved? It is not a question in this place of dealing with honest sinners, but of answering men according to their own desires, and

thus the answer of the Lord speaks more to the aspect of their spiritual desires and their decision than to absolute truth. Their object was to ensnare Him; He saw their wickedness, and said, "Show Me the true money." To the Herodians this coin was a true representation of their own thoughts; they wished to serve Cesar, and they had accepted him as king; the response of the Oracle may be interpreted as meaning your choice is made already, give to your idol what he claims, and you desire to pay; but do not forget that all things are God's. These conceited men were walking in the darkness of their own imagination; they did not desire the light of truth, therefore the reply was meant to give them divine illumination, but to permit them to follow their own way, should they choose to do so. The Lord Jesus revealed their inconsistency upon the basis of their own actions, but they were too blind to understand His words, and so they may have concluded that He approved of their subservience to Cesar. (2) The question of the Sadducees, and the reply of Jesus, seem to be a great parable of the kingdom of God. It is not merely a question of the resurrection generally, but specially of the individual soul, and of the whole of the science of the kingdom of mercy. In other words, faith receives the testimony of God that by the science of mercy, the fallen, desecrated temple of man shall be rebuilt; and that there will be regeneration and restoration to the favour of God; whilst unbelief rejects this revelation as unreasonable and impossible. If the grace and mercy of God in Christ are set on the one side, as compared to the woman; and the sevenfold manifestations of God in man on the other, as brethren who have been united to grace and mercy; and the incapacity of these to bring forth seed, is realised, then the force of the question, "Whose wife shall she be?" is a very important one indeed. The sterility of man, of the nature (that is in the order of law), even in its highest manifestation of mercy is seen, and apart from the Head, resurrection is impossible. But the Scriptures are clear enough on this point, that restoration to God and holiness is not attainable by the power of man; and they teach that the future shall not be as the past. In other words, God has been pleased to give to men the kingdom of mercy in Jesus Christ, that the seven brethren may be saved; but the resurrection power is not in the Lord, not in man; and in that state where there is no sin, the kingdom of mercy will not find a place, or men will not be subject to the laws of mercy, but live in spiritual harmony with the will of God. It is not possible that man, that is the spirit, soul, and body, the sevenfold manifestation of God in man, can be raised from the dead state in which it has fallen? The answer of faith in all ages has been, Yes; because the faithful have understood the science and the power of resurrection, but because God has promised that it shall be done, He possesses the power to accomplish the end. Now it can be seen that the seed and the woman, Christ and His Church, have been the means to this end; but the power is not in the woman, or the method of mercy, but in Christ, the Power of God. This parable goes into the inner spiritual workings in man's being, and it extends to regeneration, resurrection, restoration, and glory; it is not wonderful that the infidel *could not* comprehend such a divine parable. (3) The lawyer tem

about the law; and the Lord referred him to the Bible, to the law of the law-giver. In doing this, the Lord passes by, in spirit, the law of the law-giver, and He holds up before men the divine order of the law, in its consummation, as seen in the pure emotions of a human being. This is the perfect law of liberty, not of prohibition, and those who love and obey perfectly these laws of God are perfect moral beings. (4) The Lord Jesus Christ reveals in these three incidents the mercy and authority of God; the regeneration and restoration of man to God's favour; and the perfect moral law of righteousness; and also turns attention to the Christ and His relationship to David, King of Israel. Christ is the Lord over David, because He is David's Son; and the Ordainer of His life-work in the visible kingdom of God; but in the spiritual development of the kingdom of mercy He is the Son and Heir. (5) The Pharisees and Scribes, with their pretensions of righteousness and truth, are the great opponents of the kingdom of mercy; whilst the followers of Christ, in His spirit, are the instruments of the regeneration of the world. The end of the wickedness of the world is, that by this persecution they bring judgments upon themselves, and the hearth is made desolate, and there is no hope until and unless Christ is made welcome at His coming. (6) The Jewish temple has served its purpose, and its doom had come; the spiritual power which it had then in operation, and so the visible order must pass away. The temple and all that it signified, Judaism and all that was emblematic of it, and Christianity with its spiritual power to cast down the empire of Imperialism, and infidelity, and to build up a Christ-like kingdom upon the earth, these form the history of the past nineteen centuries. The disciples were occupied with the temple of Judaism, and they sought to know the future; the Lord perceived and described the final history which would bring about the abolition of the visible kingdom, and the inauguration of His Own spiritual kingdom amongst men. (7) The fig-tree is its parable, and they are the blind who cannot perceive its relation to the present condition of the world. Faithfulness to duty, and faithfulness for His coming are incumbent upon those who follow Him. "The door may be shut too soon for those who are unprepared. Therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour." Men have their opportunities, duties, and responsibilities; what shall they do? They must be to the Master when He takes the account? This is the law of reckoning, and men must realise their position, not as they are by men, but in the sight of God.

CHAPTER XXVI. may contain the first cycle of the passion. (1) There is preparation for the true Passover in the company of Jesus Christ; His enemies were preparing for His death by taking counsel how it might be done. (2) In the house of Simon, once a leper, Jesus was anointed for His passion, death, and burial; only those who are freed from sin, and who love the Lord, can enter into this symbolic Passover of the Lord at such a time. (3) The betrayer and the betrayal of the treatment which the Lord has oftentimes received from His nominal friends. (4) The upper chamber and the Lord's Supper, the love and mercy of God for a sinful world, and the method of

redemption. (5) The shepherd smitten and the flock scattered show the substitutionary work of Christ; and a boasting under-shepherd presents the spirit and tendency of the visible Church. (6) Gethsemane, dark Gethsemane, with the bitter cup, the obedience of Christ, and the sleeping disciples; this is the concrete picture of the experience of the passion in the kingdom of mercy. (7) In the betrayal in the garden, that is in the Church, and by the servants of Christ, there is manifested the helplessness of man, as well as his great sinfulness. If an enemy had done it, then it might have been borne calmly; but for a friend, a disciple, to betray his Lord and Master, and all His companions, to leave Him in the hands of His enemies, this was a very grievous experience. He must tread the wine-press alone, and at that hour He had no help from man. (8) The trial is the persecution by the false friend and servant. (9) Peter denying His Master, with cursing and swearing that he did not know Christ, must have been a great triumph to the enemy; but to Jesus Christ it must have been very painful. This picture must not be limited by the microcosm scene in Jerusalem; but the light that radiates from it should be cast upon the Christian Church, and then the canvas of history reveals the great macrocosm of what Christ's followers have done in His Church and for His cause.

CHAPTER XXVII., 1—56, may contain the second cycle of the passion.

(1) The Lord of mercy and the King of grace is seen as delivered up by His Own people into the hands of the power of Rome. (2) There can be seen a judgment and condemnation in the small court of the conscience, as found in the traitor Judas and in his awful end. (3) Here can be seen a silent King, who will not bring a charge against His Own people; a corrupt ruler and judge; and a people so perverted as to choose the robber Barabbas in preference to Jesus Christ. (4) The King of grace and mercy is seen with the scarlet robe, the crown of thorns, the reed for a sceptre, the mocking courtiers, and the cross, and these express the method of His Kingdom. (5) Calvary, the crucifixion, the gall, the accusation, the companions in shame and pain; the mocking, reviling, and reproaching of men, all these reveal what the Christ and Christians have been called to suffer in His Kingdom. (6) The three hours of darkness and the cry of the forsaken One is the climax of death; this is the incomprehensible secret and mystery of God's grace, which men should never desire to know or experience. Men will find their Gethsemane which they ought to endure, and choose to be obedient; but they are not invited into the three hours' darkness, and the awful experience of Christ at that time. (7) With the passing of the darkness there came the sponge and the vinegar; the cry with the loud voice; the rending flesh, veil, and rocks; and the testimony of the centurion, "Truly this was the Son of God." This is the climax of faith in the invisible and the spiritual; beyond these changing forms there lives the Son of God; and though there may seem to be a great defeat on the part of the power that is spiritual, it is in reality a volitional sacrifice, the joyful accomplishment of the great work of mercy. The seed of the serpent has bruised the heel

f humanity ; but at the same moment the Spirit is set free to crush the serpent's head.

CHAPTERS XXVII., 57—66, XXVIII., may contain the third cycle, or it of the resurrection from the dead with power. (1) Men look upon a tomb in a garden, a dead body laid in it, a heavy stone on the mouth of the grave, and faithful women waiting and watching where the loved rests. (2) Wicked men plot and scheme to prevent the resurrection, using every means within their reach to prevent so serious a consummation. (3) But the works of men avail nothing against the power of God (is manifested, then stones are rolled away which men could not move, and men tremble with fear because of such revelation from God. These visible signs are a matter of astonishment to all men ! but the meek followers of Christ are taught to discern the will in them, and they are comforted. (4) The mystery of the power which underlies such manifestation is the gracious and merciful resurrection power of God ; and the Christian apprehends its full meaning in the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the Head of this redeemed body, which will also in due time, and in its order, be raised up to a vital life. (5) Is Christ risen from the dead ? Some say yes, some no, and there has been a division of opinion upon this matter even until this day in Christendom. (6) To the disciples who have met their Lord in the mountain of His gracious Word, and who have been taught the things of the kingdom by His Spirit, Christ is alive, and He has become the Object of their worship ; but some have been doubtful in such vital thoughts. (7) Jesus Christ has been speaking to His followers and sending them forth, as sons of God, to teach men to be obedient to the will of God in His kingdom of mercy.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK.

CHAPTER I., 1—34, may contain the first cycle in this gospel. (1) The beginning of the gospel points away backward to the prophet Isaiah—the salvation of the Lord—and to the promises of God. The mission of John the Baptist precedes, but it rests upon Him who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. (2) Jesus and John met in the Jordan, the place of judgment and death, the servant and the beloved Son were seen standing face to face ; upon the Holy One there rested the gentle dove and a meek spirit ; and unto them the heavens were thrown open so that there was a new means of communion with God. (3) The Spirit of Christ impelled Him to go forth into the desert, and there for a season there was temptation, the companionship of beasts, and the ministrations of angels. A strange spiritual experience for the Holy One to pass through. (4) He was required to prove His moral manhood, His sinless perfection, before He could go forth on His mission of mercy ; and this was done in the desert and through the temptation. (5) From the desert He came to men with the gospel of mercy ; the time of waiting

was fulfilled, the hour for the new development had arrived. Repentance and faith were preached as the means of entering the kingdom of mercy. With the preaching came the call to the disciples and they were led to choose to follow Jesus in His kingdom of mercy. (6) In His Own city He manifested His power and the glory of His kingdom by casting out an unclean spirit. The soul of man is His home before He can dwell there, by His Spirit, the evil spirit of self must be cast out. His is a new kind of teaching, joined with power and authority. (7) He comes to men as the Son of God, with power not merely to cast out the unclean, but also to allay feverish excitement and to destroy the works of the devil by healing the sick in body and spirit.

CHAPTERS I., 35—45, III., 1—12, may contain the second cycle. The Servant of God is seen to be engaged upon His mission, seeking first communion with the Father and then the good of men, their repentance and regeneration. (2) The leprous body at length required healing and cleansing, and He possesses power to do marvellous work upon the body and soul of a man. (3) But all the while there is cleansing and healing, so that the soul might be made perfect, the spiritual paralysis is so great that there is no ability to walk in the meek spirit in the way of God's commandments. This is the fiercest struggle in the visible and spiritual worlds, but as Christ came with power to obey His will, so He can also forgive sin, no matter what the belief may say as being contrary to this fact. (4) Who are the disciples of God and Christ, called by His grace? They are even the publicans and sinners; men who have been serving false gods, perhaps to serve Cesar and Christ, Mammon and God, at the same time. This marvellous thing in the gospel, that Jesus Christ came to save men and to endow them with His Spirit, so that they might be His followers in the kingdom of grace and mercy. (5) The Mosaic dispensation with its rites and ceremonies, was like a stereotyped form, thus it was necessary for a spiritual manifestation; a new kingdom, with new forms and the new spirit, was necessary for this kingdom of mercy among men. (6) The Sabbath had become, not a day of rest and of joyful fellowship in communion with God, but a time of want, when men were glad to pluck the ears of corn as they grew, so that the soul might be reposed and nourished. Carnal men prize the forms more than the spiritual truths contained in them, and so the soul is made subject to ritual instead of ritual being made the servant of the soul. The Spirit of mercy is given for the redemption of man, it is a marvellous and glorious end, thus the Sabbath is the day of mercy, the manifestation of grace and truth for the restoration of the world to God. (7) So as men receive, eat, and are nourished by the Bread of God's life, men are found complaining and criticising their thoughts and actions, but when the power is given to stretch forth the withered hand to work for God, as His son, then there is raised strong opposition. A council is taken how such an aggressive power against the kingdom of evil may be destroyed. It is here that the sons of God find great contradictions of men and their enmity against the gospel; i

erate, as the sons of God, are compelled to realise in their experience how very different is the Spirit of God from the spirit world. (8) The Son of God is here seen as regnant in His of mercy; and as dispensing His blessings of healing upon ies, souls, and spirits; but under these visible forms of the aistration He could not be fully revealed to, or known by, men.

as III., 13—35, IV., 1—34, may contain the third cycle. (1) he setting up of the kingdom of mercy upon the mountain of ice for the purpose of destroying the works of the devil. is found in a house, surrounded by the people, and amidst itement. In other words, the kingdom of grace is come into with power, and because it is a new kind of manifestation, so at is found in the world, the suggestion is thrown out that cting upon such principles must be insane. This is true sanity; the power of God casting out the demon within, so that the be kept for Christ and God. Let men beware of false concep- this point, lest the ministry of mercy become, through the spirit within, the means of eternal sin. (3) Who is the Lord's and brethren? Even every one who is meek and lowly in spirit, ient to the merciful will of God the Father. (4) The mystery wisdom of God in His kingdom of mercy may be likened to le of the sower and the seed; that is to say, it is a thing pro- i carried on by God in Christ for the redemption of men; and re wise they will study all His manifestations of truth and ness, and seek to know all His sciences. This mystery of God's of righteousness, truth, and mercy, has not been known by erally; only the favoured disciples have so listened to the acher as to be able to understand His thoughts, and to apply righteous purposes. (5) The man who receives this kingdom soul must not hide it there, as a man might hide a light under but it should be allowed to permeate the whole being, and to rth in the life the light of God's mercy and truth. Men are warned as to their actions here, because it is according to usuring out of the spirit of mercy unto others that they shall red by God. (6) This kingdom in its science is one of ent; men do not comprehend its method during the time of ng, growing, and ripening; but when the seed has performed lete cycle by returning to the mature seed, then is the time to d judge of the whole method, the science of the kingdom in its ations. (7) The germ of grace and mercy may seem very d contemptible, but the results are God-like, because it changes ls set against the Holy Will of God, and makes them the sons a Jesus Christ. These parables of the kingdom of God require that they may be understood; but they learn best who seek the ivate tuition through the Holy Spirit of Christ in all their studies.

ERS IV., 35—41, VI., may contain the fourth cycle. (1) ito shall men liken the manifestation of the kingdom of mercy world? Even to a great storm upon the sea of humanity; the

Master apparently asleep; the Church like to be destroyed by tempest in the dark night; the awakening of the Master; the pe amongst men, a rebuke to faithless disciples, and men praising Him w possesses all power in heaven and earth. As on the sea of Galilee i in the world, so in the experience of the human soul, this is trul great conception of the kingdom of mercy in its manifestation. (2) H shall men think upon and know the condition of a human soul un the dominion of the devil, the bond-slave of sin, and in league w death and the grave? Look upon the demoniac of Gadara, and th demonism, sensualism, and the mercy of God stand fully revealed their operations. (3) How will men be taught the good and rightec ways of God? By going to Jesus, studying His Word which gives lig to the soul, falling down in submission before Him, and praying th He will grant His mercy so that the dead soul might live. (4) Suc movement creates a tumult in the soul and amongst men, but the rig step has been taken, the plague of sin in the inmost soul will be heal by the touch of faith, and in due time the dead spirit will live by H power and for His service. (5) Jesus came unto His Own people, b they despised, rejected, and crucified Him; this was the step by whic mercy was set free as a spiritual power throughout the Roman Empire (6) At this point Christ deposes authority to His followers; the Church of Christ is sent forth for the purpose of destroying the works of the devil, and to restore men to the favour of God. It is here that the great conflict betwixt the powers of the world and the servants of Jesus Christ takes place, the issue being the persecution even to death of the servants of God. The world becomes as a desert place; but in the desert the Son of God gives to His followers the Bread of Life, the Holy Spirit with His gifts and graces, and by the divine assistance they live and prosper in the face of the enemy. (7) There is a night of darkness and storm, but in the early morning He comes and brings peace and good cheer to His dispirited followers. (8) At His coming there shall be a great manifestation of the kingdom of mercy, the efflux of grace being so great that if men do but touch His garments, the Word of truth and means of grace, they shall be saved.

CHAPTERS VII., VIII., 1—26, may contain the fifth cycle. (1) Unto what state of the soul of man does the kingdom of mercy come? It is described in the perversions of the Pharisees, their traditions and ceremonies, and their unmerciful dealings toward those who require assistance from their children. This kingdom of mercy is radical in its method of action, it passes by the things which are upon the surface and it penetrates into the inmost soul, making manifest that this is the root of all spiritual perversions, and that if men are to be made righteous it must be by purifying the fountain of the thoughts. (2) Humanity may be conceived of as afflicted with an unclean spirit, and the Lord is seen as leaving Judæa and Galilee that He might be the Minister of mercy to the Gentiles. He gave grace, there was faith manifested, and the devil was cast out. (3) Who are the deaf and dumb but those who will not hear or speak the truth as it is revealed in Jesus Christ? This is the vile spirit of unbelief, which has taken possession of the soul

ricades this avenue so that the Word may not be heard, and tongue so that it might not cry out for help. There is the idea the soul as bound by an infernal master, a tyrant so powerful, a bond-slave is helpless. The Lord Jesus enters into sympathy a bondman, and by various signs, as privacy, touching the ears, sighing, and saying, "Be opened," He gives the power to voice and to speak His praise. This is a sign which harmonises the redemption of Israel out of Egypt; it overcomes the proud but it does not amount to salvation from sin in the spirit of through the Lord Jesus Christ. (4) "How many loaves have they said seven." Lord, be pleased to break unto us this bread that we may know the manifold wisdom and knowledge of all truth and righteousness. We know that such a breaking of will not impoverish Thee; it will enrich us in a marvellous, and men will rejoice in the seven baskets full that will be left they have been fed by Thee through Thy Word. (5) Lord, we do not tempt Thee by seeking a sign, or for a moment doubt Thy passion, or kingdom. We know that Thou art the Sign unto God that Thy Word of mercy and truth shall be fulfilled. Depart from us, but graciously unveil Thyself, and reveal to us at this time we ought to know. (6) Remove far from us the leaven of error and of idolatry, so that our eyes may be opened to perceive and understand Thy Word and Works. We do not yet fully understand by thoughts, but we would be teachable children, with our eyes to Thy blessed face, so that we might drink in Thy Spirit in love and knowledge. (7) Lo! O Lord, even according to Thy love acknowledge our blindness, and beseech Thee to touch us, by Thy hand far away from the things we have been following; theunction of Thy Holy Spirit so that we may see, if not perfectly but things as out of their due proportion and spiritual relations; we will be welcome, because it will be the beginning of better. We will not discuss with Thee this strange method of healing our blindness; but we wait the full manifestation of Thy will, according to Thy command let us be obedient, and not return again into that dark past which is so awful to contemplate.

ACTS VIII., 27—38, IX., may contain the sixth cycle. (1) In the world man there is doubt whether Cesar, self, Mammon, or God have the supremacy and dominion; but this may be settled by the Christ and the method of the kingdom of mercy with its gift of grace for men in their regeneration and restoration to God, obedience to His will. (2) After six periods there will be transfiguration as related to the world; and after the six-fold experience in the kingdom of heaven there is a transfiguration in man, because the heart see God, and then the sons of God radiate forth His truth and righteousness. These are prophetic thoughts bearing on history; the issue being the manifestation of the beloved Lord Jesus only with men as the means for this end. (3) After transfiguration then knowledge; in the meantime duty, obedience, reformation, and restoration to the Father must be kept in view by

following in the same path that the Saviour of men trod to His Father. (4) It is not an easy struggle betwixt the soul and in the world, and the servants of Christ, and the conflict would certainly be a total discomfiture to the servant without the divine interposition. Jesus Christ alone can send and cast out the spirit of enmity and of infidelity which is and desperate; even the remedy may seem to cause death and power and grace men will be brought into harmony with God. (5) If within the soul, and amongst men the struggle to cast out the devil, then by what means shall the temple desecrated and fallen be restored? By the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, because this is the secret of His mission, death and resurrection. (6) The followers of Jesus Christ, house and city, have been excessively fond of reasoning, and their thoughts have been turned in the wrong direction. Qualities of true greatness are to be humble, meek, merciful, and gentle have been seen in ambitious preferences, and in seeking and lords over their brethren. This is all wrong and no science of the kingdom of mercy; for those who man's spirit serve the devil, and not Christ. (7) The spirit of pride or even of self-deification may be seen in men who come to join their communion, or abstain from making known to God's mercy to men. The Spirit of Christ is not shut up and confined to one class of men, but every merciful and charitable spirit throughout the whole earth is in communion with Christ in His kingdom, and they shall not lose their unity unto those who offend God's gracious and merciful children, what their nation or colour may be; they commit a sin against the King of mercy, and to Him they will have account. Grace and mercy are good; but if the gracious and merciful, how can they be made gracious again? Mercy and peace be within the children of God, so that they may be by their actions the Master's Spirit.

CHAPTER X. may contain the seventh cycle. (1) Judgment of schism and strife that there is a state of divorce in God. Whilst men are in their nonage this imperfect kingdom winked at, because of the wilful, sinful ways of men of God in the universe is against such conditions, and a mercy and peace in Jesus Christ is specially meant that has taken place. (2) The means of restoration in rebuking the children of the kingdom whose affection is out toward Christ, but in bringing them to the Spirit may bless them, and by His hands being laid upon them may receive His Spirit. (3) How shall men inherit the kingdom by the works of the moral law, but by self-denial that is, by following Jesus Christ in His meekness and mercy. (4) The mystery of the kingdom of God is that men who have every earthly advantage find it hard to enter the kingdom, or to permit the kin-

souls ; whilst those who renounce all things for Christ receive reward in this world a hundred-fold, with persecutions, and in the end to come eternal life. (5) The way of mercy is like going to Jerusalem, where the servants of God have been persecuted ; goes before His followers ; they follow in His footsteps, amazed and in awe. Jesus explains by His Word that this experience is not something unknown to Him, because He can see past the passion and death to the resurrection and a new life. (6) The spirit of the most eminent disciples has been an ambitious one ; they have had in view power and dominion like unto what worldly men possess, and they asked the Lord for pre-eminence in His kingdom. To them it meant distinction and honour amongst men ; to Jesus it means likeness to Himself in drinking the cup of sin and of suffering on behalf of others.

Who shall be found worthy to sit on His right and left hand in the kingdom of mercy ? This is not known, and it may be fairly said that few, very few, could personally desire such a position. Only those who could only be His ministers of mercy amongst men they might be called to leave the question of supremacy over their brethren alone. Ignorance, unbelief, and spiritual blindness go hand in hand ; but not those who seek for the Lord of Truth, the Son of God, and who will satisfy them until He calls for them and gives them true life into His Own mysteries. The way, however, by which sight is given is not through the intellect, but by faith ; and it is in faith that the Lord gives grace and mercy, so that humble men may follow Him in the way of life.

CHAPTERS XI., XII., 1—12, may contain the eighth cycle. (1) There is preparation for the kingdom and the King ; the kingdom is coming, and to God must the glory, honour, and praise be given for its establishment. (2) He came to His temple ; the sacred place where the King would reign ; He looked round upon the busy scene ; and He was disappointed by those who were His servants. The day of privilege had passed, eventide had come, and the doom was hanging over Judæa and the temple ; the King and His kingdom retire to Bethany—the place of the grace of the Lord—to wait for the coming day. (3) The following day saw the fig-tree of Judaism tried and condemned, because of its pretensions and barrenness of merciful and gracious fruit. (4) The visible things must pass away ; the Lord interposed His authority in the service of the temple ; and what was a place for the King, with the spirit of the Canaanite, was made a temple of God for His worship. (5) Why did the fig-tree of Judaism pass away, and become a dead thing amongst men ? Because it had perverted from truth and righteousness, it was filled with the spirit of unbelief, and it was ungracious and unmerciful. Such manifestations must cut off the streams of grace and mercy from God, and the result must be death. (6) By whose authority can the Christ die ? Who asks ? and in what spirit are such questions put to Him ? Let men beware in this matter lest they be found self-righteous, because they will not dare to act according to the dictates of conscience, righteousness, and truth. His authority is clear and

definite; and only those who are so far astray from God as to have the doom of heaven's anger resting upon their heads will have the audacity to ask for His authority. He gives no answer to such men; but in His parable of the vineyard and the killing of the Heir, He sums up the history of men's opposition to His authority, their awful guilt in putting the Son of God to death, and the doom that will fall upon those who have been so wicked.

CHAPTERS XII., 13—44, XIII., may contain the ninth cycle. (1) In brief, this runs upon the same line of thought as in the gospel according to Matthew, God is supreme, and it is wrong to compare any created being or power with Him. (2) The gospel of salvation is the glad tidings of resurrection from the dead, and unbelievers in these great truths know neither the Holy Scriptures as the means to that end, nor the power of God in Jesus Christ, by whom it will be fulfilled. (3) It is not by the moral law that men are saved; although those who love the truth and holiness are said to be near to the kingdom; yet it is only when they see that righteousness by moral obedience is impossible to sinful men, and they flee to Christ for mercy, peace, and a new life that they are saved by grace through faith, not by their own works, but by the merciful and gracious work of Jesus Christ on their behalf. (4) The Christ is the Lord of David as Creator; and Jesus is His Son by generation. In this there is included the mystery of the incarnation and all the other mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. (5) Beware of self-conceit, self-assertion, self-deceit, and selfishness in its every form; and cherish the spirit of self-sacrifice manifested so fully in the poor widow who gave up all that she possessed for the kingdom of God. (6) The temple of Judaism and all visible rites and ceremonies must pass away; when these are vanishing away then there shall appear a new sign amongst men, even the Son of man so long despised coming in power and great glory. (7) Let men watch and pray lest that hour come upon them when they are not prepared for it. The heaven and earth are even now seen to be vanishing away in a marvellous manner; therefore watch and pray so that at His coming there may be joy in His house and kingdom, and not consternation and condemnation. "And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

CHAPTER XIV. may contain the first cycle of the passion. (1) It is that of preparation for the true Passover; and amongst the enemies of Christ that they might put Him to death. (2) For His death the Lord Jesus was anointed by a woman saved by grace. Upon His body there was poured out the sacred ointment, the gift of love. (3) The traitor seeks the means of betraying his Lord and Master. (4) The Passover and the Lord's Supper are the symbols of redeeming love. (5) The smitten shepherd, the scattered sheep, and the boasting disciple. (6) Getlusemane. (7) The betrayal, trial, and denial.

CHAPTER XV., 1—41, may contain the second cycle of the passion. (1) The Jews deliver Jesus to Pilate. (2) Barabbas or Christ. (3) The

King. (4) Golgotha. (5) The cross and its surroundings. (6) The three hours' darkness. (7) The rent veil, the earthquake, and the broken heart. Victory by the death of the Son of God.

CHAPTERS XV., 42—47—XVI., may contain the cycle of the resurrection. (1) Joseph, and the tomb where the body of Jesus was laid. (2) The Lord's day and the resurrection. (3) The followers of Jesus seeking the living Lord Christ amongst the dead. (4) The revelation by Christ of Himself to Mary Magdalene, her faith, and the unbelief of her companions. (5) The manifestation to the two disciples walking into the country, their belief, and the unbelief of the disciples. (6) Manifestation to the eleven, and His upbraiding because of their unbelief. (7) The commission to the disciples in the kingdom of heaven. (8) The ascension, glory, and power of Christ, and the Lord working with His servants in His Church for the regeneration and restoration of men to God.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE.

CHAPTER I. may contain the first preparatory cycle covering the period before the birth of Jesus Christ. (1) There is seen the poor and humble spirit of Zacharias, and of His wife, and their faithfulness to God's cause of grace and truth. (2) The condition of doubt in which Zacharias was cast by the vision; the shadow of unbelief which crossed his path; thus causing sorrow because of sin. (3) The meek, gentle, obedient, and trustful spirit of Mary, and the committal of herself to the will of the Lord. (4) The hidden kingdom of God's grace, truth, and righteousness, in the wombs of Elizabeth and Mary. (5) The song of Mary in which the mercy of God is magnified. (6) The strife about the name of Elizabeth's child; revealing the different aspects of thought in the souls of men, by which they look into the past and build upon tradition; or into the future and the grace of God as seeing Him who is invisible. (7) The prophecy of Zacharias, which is a grand utterance bearing upon the King of peace and the kingdom of heaven, and of the work of the John or Elias spirit in preparing the way for the coming King who will banish darkness and death from the face of the earth.

CHAPTER II. may contain the second preparatory cycle which would more particularly have to do with the life of Jesus Christ in the flesh. (1) When the King of kings became an infant, then the power of the world was in its greatest glory. The devil at that time ruled the world; and it was then that the King of grace and glory emptied Himself for the purpose of overthrowing the enemy of God. (2) The manifestation of the Divine Saviour of men, and the Lord of glory, was revealed only to a few shepherds who were engaged in their pastoral duties, watching their flocks by night. (3) The child Jesus

was made obedient to rite and ceremony, so that in flesh and spirit, by law and grace, He might redeem men. (4) He was presented in His Father's house, the first-born Son of grace, dedicated to the service of God. (5) He is the fulfilment of prophecy and promise; the Light for this world, and the glory of the Israel of God. Through Him, the sign in the kingdom of mercy, the mother who gave Him birth, and His seed, have been pierced through as by a sword. (6) By Him there is redemption, salvation, and restoration to God; and in Him men find wisdom and grace. (7) He is the Son of God, in His Father's house doing His Father's will; and yet in all things subject to the laws of Mosaism and the kingdom of grace.

CHAPTERS III., IV., 1—30, may contain the first cycle of the mission of Jesus Christ. (1) On the one side there are seen great rulers who had dominion over the world; on the other the humble son of Zacharias called to go forth to preach unto men that they might repent of their sins and be ready to receive the Messiah promised to the fathers. (2) The preaching of John, in which He calls men to repentance, charity, justice, kindness, truth, and contentment, so that through sorrow of soul they might be filled with joy at the coming of the King. (3) The order of the mission of John was baptism with water, that is, ritual and ceremony, or Mosaism; but he was watching with a meek and submissive soul for the coming of the King whose baptism would be spiritual. (4) The kingdom of mercy, truth, and righteousness, of good and evil, may be discerned in John as the servant of Christ; and in the persecution and imprisonment of this prophet by Herod. (5) In the baptism of Jesus Christ by water and by the Holy Spirit there is revealed God's Messenger of mercy to this world in the beloved Son of God. (6) The temptation in the wilderness and the victory over the devil reveal the perfect moral Man, the Holy One, fitted and prepared for His mission of mercy. (7) He comes forth amongst men, the gracious Son of God, yet the end of His mission was that He was despised and rejected at Nazareth, Jerusalem, and by Christendom. Men sought to destroy the Son of God, but in this they failed; the serpent could only bruise the heel; he has not been permitted to hurt the head or the heart of the Son of God.

CHAPTERS IV., 31—44, V., may contain the second cycle. (1) The visit to Capernaum and the casting out of the unclean spirit imply the giving of the poor spirit, else the work of mercy would be without value. (2) The healing of Simon's wife's mother of the fever speaks of the calming of the soul because of sin; and the ministration of the healed one, the work of those who are comforted by the Holy Spirit. (3) The manifold works of healing and the preaching of the kingdom of God show that the kingdom of heaven was manifested upon the earth in the meek ones who received the blessing Jesus bestowed. (4) The teaching of the people, fishing, and calling of the disciples, speak of the hunger of men after truth and righteousness, and of being filled with the kingdom of heaven. (5) The cleansing of the leper speaks of the special mission of Jesus in mercy to cleanse the leprous souls of men. (6) The

aling of the palsied man and the reasoning of the Scribes speak of conflict in man's moral nature; the palsied man could see the face of God in Christ, because he had faith, but the Scribes and Pharisees were blind, because of their unbelief. (7) The call of Levi as a minister of mercy, and the feast with publicans and sinners is a parable of the kingdom of heaven; the King of peace and mercy graced the feast by His presence. (8) The moral and gracious standard of the Pharisees and others was not truth and righteousness, but rites, ceremonies, traditions, and the forms of the past; they would have persecuted the Lord and His disciples who were busy preparing the peaceful kingdom of heaven which would not be confined by the forms of Judaism.

CHAPTERS VI., VII., may contain the third cycle. (1) When the disciples plucked the ears of corn on the Sabbath-day they were using suitable means for the nourishment of their bodies; the traditions of the men would make the Sabbath an idol and not the means of grace or glorifying God. The Lord Jesus shows that the poor spirit will not be intolerant toward others, and that in meekness there will be conformity to the will of the Lord of the Sabbath, and that this means the attainment of rest and peace which is the great reality signified by the Sabbath. (2) The struggle in the synagogue upon the Sabbath, about a man with the withered hand, reveals wherein the un-Sabbatic condition exists; it is in those men who, full of self-conceit, would prevent the work of God which alone can bring peace on earth and life and strength to men. The man restored to strength was made able to help others; whilst the Pharisees, being filled with madness, hatred, and the spirit of murder, had lost the spirit of the Sabbath. (3) In the eleven apostles and their dedication for service in the spirit of prayer and meekness upon the mountain, there is seen the visible laying of the foundation of the kingdom of heaven amongst men. (4) In the healing power of Jesus upon the plain, when if He were only touched by the sick for healing or for righteousness, men were made whole, we can be discerned the hidden kingdom of grace in all its diversities of power. (5) In the epitome of the Sermon upon the Mount there may be discerned the spirit of the kingdom of mercy and its blessed laws and the guidance of men in their duties. (6) In the centurion and his servant there can be discerned the spirit of the meek, faithful, and obedient, to whom the kingdom of mercy was passing from the self-asserting Jews; and the faith of this man, as proved by word and deed, manifested his fitness for receiving the kingdom of God. (7) The visit to Nain reveals the coming of the King in peace, and the work of the resurrection in the Church at His manifestation. (8) The message from John the Baptist and the words of Christ reveal the issue of the Christian era in its persecutions against the servants of God, the rejection of God's Word by wicked men, and the frivolous addition of many whose responsibilities are so very grave. (9) The feast at the Pharisee's house where the Lord's feet were anointed seems to speak of the condition of the Church, its rulers, the followers of Christ, and of His poor ones.

CHAPTER VIII. may contain the fourth cycle. (1) In this fourth cycle, or the kingdom of righteousness, the thoughts are seen to be reaching in their deep significance. The kingdom of mercy is found in righteousness, and it is one of service and of gracious ministrations. (2) In the soul, or in the world, it is compared to the order of nature as in sowing; but the parables of God are only understood by human disciples. (3) The knowledge of God's will is the knowledge of His laws, and this should bring the radiation of the light of truth from saved men, and spiritual fellowship in truth and righteousness. (4) History has been like one great storm upon the sea of humanity. (5) The world has been like a Gadara of insanity, suffering, and sensuality. (6) The secret cause of sin and death is known, and Christ can heal it. (7) By His coming there will be light and life to this dark, dead world, which is at present so full of mourning and of sorrow.

CHAPTER IX. may contain the fifth cycle. (1) The manifestation of the kingdom of mercy is seen in the going forth of the twelve. (2) The kingdom of this world is represented in Herod. (3) The work of breaking the bread of God's gifts and graces is found in the desert of humanity. (4) The mystery of righteousness in mystery is in "the Christ of God." (5) Through the manifestation of mercy in Jesus Christ there is transfiguration—that is, a change from the body of sin and death to the eternal life of truth and righteousness. (6) The state of the soul of man and of the world has been in the past like that of the insane epileptic child. (7) It is in the spirit of Jesus Christ that there are found true greatness, goodness, and guidance for duty.

CHAPTERS X., XII. may contain the sixth cycle. (1) The world is seen as lying in sin; the seventy are sent out to bring the kingdom of mercy and truth near to men; and with the words of mercy there come also thoughts of responsibility and of judgment. (2) There is power in His Name to destroy the works of the devil; and there is joy in the Holy Spirit when this work is accomplished in a man or amongst nations. (3) The laws of the kingdom of mercy are to be found in the story of the Good Samaritan; and the spirit of meekness is seen in the gentle Mary. (4) Prayer and faith in the creature toward God have the promised reward of the Holy Spirit. (5) The casting out of the dumb devil; the enmity of men and their devilish thoughts about the Lord Jesus Christ; His Own exposition of the powers of good and evil; the exclamation of the woman; the seeking after a sign by the people, and Jonah and Solomon being referred to by Jesus; and the right use of the light; all these things teach the wisdom and the history of the kingdom of mercy amongst wicked men. (6) The spirits of the Pharisees and of the Scribes reveal the mystery of iniquity in its manifold perversions; the children of God are called to beware that no such leaven of evil work in their souls. (7) The spirit of the peace-making sons of God is not found in covetousness, but in trustfulness in God, and in obedience and patient watchfulness for His coming. (8) They are God's responsible stewards; and they pass through a

ire. All men are responsible to God, therefore they ought wful judgment that will bring condemnation.

III.—XVI. may contain the seventh cycle. (1) Men rash in uttering premature judgments upon what they e order of providence and of grace. The supreme an is repentance for sin and reconciliation to God as the ighteousness, and then fruit-bearing in mercy and peace. y of the dominion of sin may be found in the infirm o look up in the Father's face ; the fact of salvation power is fully revealed in Jesus Christ, and in the t and peace which He brings to the soul. (3) The king- and of peace is like an organism in its development ; and aeven in the spirit, so that it permeates all those who are have it in themselves. It is not a matter for specula- ithful actions, because the interests at stake are so great. ddom within which persecution must be endured ; but the the blessed of God, whilst their enemies are accursed. f mercy is the Sabbath of grace, and it is given to men se of healing and of gaining spiritual freedom. The teousness of God are like a feast to which all men are ey require to study the spirit of the King, His example, and the consequences which must follow the wise or of men. (5) Sinful man is like a lost sheep, helpless, ced, the image of God being lost from the soul, and like

Christ is the Shepherd, the Holy Spirit, the Illuminator r to God's image, and the Father is waiting and watching r to Himself. (6) Men have proved themselves to be : steward, subtle in selfishness and cunning to do evil, o serve God, truth, and righteousness, so that they may to the eternal tabernacles. In other words, men have gues, and servants of evil, but in being so they have ves by losing the favour of God. No folly is so great as receive himself, to choose the wrong, still thinking that s will turn out right, and to find at last that the Master he Judge, and that the soul has destroyed itself by for- highest interests. (7) It is very hard indeed to convince al issue of this infatuation of trying to serve self in its s and passions and God at the same time. This is the chism and adultery, and so strong is the enemy within n that only through grace by faith, and with the violence rible earnest, can the chains be broken and perfect free-

(8) In the patient, suffering, friendless Lazarus, see a the rich man a man of the world. Their portions in this lfferent, yet Lazarus is found faithful in patiently en- he contempt of men, and every form of evil, whilst the egypt fails to do his duties. The end is that this per- d, tormented son of God changes his condition and is sed, whilst the rich man passes away into the judgment uences of *his own selfish life*. The day of mercy is seen

to be past, and men are held responsible not for what they know merely, but for what they possessed and did not utilize for God's glory, and the good of poor, suffering mankind. It is knowledge of the living Spirit in the Promises, the Law and Prophets, Christ and the Apostles, and obedience, that bring blessing, not the conceptions of dead men, or even a knowledge of the resurrection through spirits raised from the dead.

CHAPTERS XVII., XVIII., may contain the eighth cycle. (1) It may be suggested that in this cycle of persecution in its principles there may be discerned the seven-fold manifestation of the evil, persecuting spirit which animates man. Persecution is made possible because men are self-sufficient and unforgiving, and do not clearly understand that they are unprofitable servants. (2) It is because self-conceit abounds in the world that there is so much ingratitude toward God for His manifold mercies. (3) It is because men have not been meek, but proud, and continually seeking after a visible kingdom in which they might be the rulers, that there has been so much selfishness and self-seeking. (4) There is mystery in the providence of God and in the actions of men; but they who are self-satisfied and think that they are the knowing ones act unjustly, because they do not fear God nor regard man. (5) Those who have the spirit of the Pharisee glorify themselves and not God; they are proud of their own goodness as compared with other people's wickedness, and thus ready to condemn and punish those who differ from them. (6) Seeking after moral perfection by obedience to the moral law without grace will not make a man holy, but it will tend to make him self-asserting and self-righteous. Man is required to choose betwixt God's method of grace and his own ideal of goodness; but the right choice is to follow Jesus in the kingdom of His patience, even though the reasons for suffering are unknown. (7) Blindness or infidelity toward God, if it hinder men from seeking the truth and obeying Jesus, will end in making self a god. It does not follow that in these incidents the fruits of these perversions are fully manifested; but the seeds exist in the principles, and with the opportunities, the suitable conditions being given, the fruits would be manifested in due time.

CHAPTERS XIX., XXI., may contain the ninth cycle. (1) The proud who revile the sinful, and would persecute those who are not of the same name or sect, are not those with whom the Lord Jesus is pleased to dwell, but rather with those who are poor in spirit, merciful, and just. (2) There are responsibilities laid upon all men, because all have received life and power from God; if there is diligence, obedience, and a watchful, prayerful interest in God's work in the soul and amongst men there will be reward; but if neglect, then punishment, and if open rebellion, very severe punishment. All men are under the moral law for obedience to the will of God as the Creator and King; out of this position no man can escape. His servants are under moral law, but also under grace, a gift given to them for their own good and the welfare of others, thus they are called to account for the use they have made of

his special gift. To the diligent there is comfort and joy in the King's approval of their works and suitable rewards; but to the negligent who have not used the means intrusted to their care, bankruptcy and loss of privilege. (3) The King of grace, meek and lowly, enters Jerusalem; at the hour of His triumph brings with it the revilings and hatred of the Pharisees, and the prevision of sorrow. Men rejoice, but the King weeps, for His mission of obedience to law brings death to Himself and life to men, His rejection as the King by the privileged people, and terrible punishment upon the rejecters and their nation. (4) The King came to the city and the temple, but it was to find the people given up to the love of pleasure, the rulers to the love of power, and all to the love of money. The nation was not subject to God, but to the devil, and thus it was necessary that He should cleanse the soul, the Church, and the nation at His coming. These exist not for themselves, but for Him; not to manifest the kingdom of evil in its seven-fold perversions, but the kingdom of grace, truth, and righteousness. (5) The King of mercy will not overthrow the perverted rulers in the soul, Church, or State, without the question being asked of Him by the rebel powers as to His authority. If men are honest they will consider His question as John's baptism, and answer it faithfully; by doing so they will be taught their duties; but if they are moved by the fear of man, or by the subtle spirit of the devil, then darkness and unbelief, hatred and execution, must be the result. (6) Deceit and hypocrisy, feigning and tempting, are the devil's tools for destroying his own fellows; the unholy cannot stand by the side of the Holy One, or the father of lies by the Author of truth. Such a spirit is immoral, therefore to be shunned. It is darkness, and not light; it is turning the back upon God and fleeing from His face. It is impossible that any good can come out of hypocrisy and lying; they are the devil's handiwork, and an abomination in the sight of God. (7) The King of peace, truth, and righteousness will reign over men. He sits on God's right hand dispensing mercy to men, and the hour will come when His enemies will be placed under His feet. (8) The motives of the soul must be watched. If selfish, they will bring the destruction of the soul by its being cut off from God, but if pure, merciful, and self-sacrificing, then there will be acceptance in God's sight, and His blessing. (9) Persecution, troubles, afflictions, darkness will come; but watching in faith, staying in hope, and observing and obeying God's Word, will bring a reward in the soul now, and in the heaven of glory and of bliss hereafter. It is better to trust God than to place confidence in man. The Lord is gracious, merciful, and faithful to His promises. Men are blind, foolish, selfish, and even at their best imperfect; therefore men ought to pray that they may be prepared to stand before the Son of man at His coming.

CHAPTER XXII. may contain the first cycle of the passion. (1) There is a preparation by the Lord for the Passover, and counsel amongst the Jewish rulers how they could put Jesus to death. (2) Satan reigns in the betrayer, and he went forth seeking how to betray his Master. (3) Peter and John are instructed as to the preparation

for the true Passover; the former representing the visible elements or symbols of divine truth; the latter, the spiritual concepts. (4) The institution of the Lord's Supper. (5) The contention among the disciples shows the spirit of the Christian Church, and the spirit of Peter in his response to the Lord, the false spirit that has dominated the servants of God. (6) Gethsemane. (7) The betrayal of the Son of God subject to men. (8) The trial, persecution, and reviling.

CHAPTER XXIII., 1—49, may contain the second cycle of the passion. (1) Jesus Christ as delivered to Pilate by His countrymen, represents His subjection to the proud empire of Rome. (2) Herod and Jesus Christ, Esau or Edom, and Israel, stand face to face. This scene is pregnant with meaning as applied to a soul, or to history. How men touch not the Cain and Nimrod spirit, but the serpent of Eden, Adam, and the carnal Esau. Herod in his glory perceived nothing of the spiritual world that was around him; but Jesus Christ saw in him the personal representation of evil, in its historical aspect, still as found in the soul of man. The strongest antipathy was in Christ against Herod, and all that he represented, and so He answered the rebel not a word to all his questions. (3) The innocent Jesus Christ rejected as King, and Barabbas set free. (4) In its cycle of truth, righteousness, and mercy: i. the cross; ii. the sorrow of the women; iii. the malefactors as His companions; iv. Golgotha; v. "Father, forgive them;" vi. the naked Jesus; vii. the King and His throne of grace and mercy. (5) The penitent thief forgiven. (6) The three hours' darkness. (7) The Son of God with power.

CHAPTERS XXIII., 50—56, XXIV., may contain the cycle of the resurrection. (1) Joseph and the tomb. (2) The Lord's Day and the resurrection. (3) The vision of angels, who would teach men that they err when they seek the living among the dead. (4) The state of the Church of Christ may be represented by the woman; the report of Christ's resurrection received as idle talk; the unbelief that was manifested by the disciples; the visit of Peter to the tomb, and his amazement at all that had taken place. (5) The journey of the two disciples to Emmaus—despised, obscure—and their unknown Companion, who knew more than the disciples, and who was able to open unto them the Holy Scriptures; this seems to be an allegorical representation of the Christian era; just such disciples have the followers of Christ been throughout these nineteen centuries, and it is equally true that He has revealed, and will reveal Himself to His followers by the breaking of the Bread of Life in His Own Word. (6) The Lord is risen indeed: and He has appeared to His disciples with the benediction of peace upon His lips. He is not a shadowy phantom, but the very Truth of God. (7) The disciples can see that the Scriptures are fulfilled in Jesus Christ and in His Word; and they can also understand why the Christ should suffer persecution and death, so that there might be *in due time*, by His power, resurrection from the dead. They must wait for the promised blessing from heaven, and then they also will

e clothed with power from on high. (8) Ascension means reigning; the worship of the King in His temple; gratitude, praise, and thanksgiving to Jesus Christ for His marvellous work of redemption, regeneration, and restoration of men to the favour of God.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN.

CHAPTER I, 1—34, may contain the first, preparatory, or pre-Christian cycle of this gospel. (1) The mystical Word of God is the Creator, Life-giver, and Light of the world. (2) There came a state of spiritual darkness upon men; when the Light came, He was rejected by the power of evil in men. (3) The meek of soul received Him; and they were born again to a life of grace and mercy in the Redeemer. (4) The Word dwelt among men, full of grace and truth. (5) Moses gave the moral law to men, but Jesus Christ revealed the laws of grace and mercy. (6) The witness of John is that of the law and the prophets; and their testimony is, that they are not the Christ, but that they were sent before Him speaking to men, like voices in the wilderness. Their service was with rites, ceremonies, and baptizing with water; but whilst they laboured in external things, there was one in the midst, even a spiritual Power, whose shoes they were unworthy to loose. (7) The Son of God was manifested in due time; and the witness of the prophets is summed up in this thought, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

CHAPTERS I., 35—51, III., 1—15, may contain the second cycle which would possibly harmonise with the life of Jesus Christ in the flesh. (1) "Behold the Lamb of God" was the utterance of John the Baptist; and this word caused a separation of John and his disciples, there being some ready to leave Mosaism, that they might receive grace and strength, and be introduced to the kingdom of mercy in Jesus Christ. (2) Jesus called Philip to His service, and Philip, in turn, called his friend Nathanael. To Nathanael, who was an honest, intelligent doubter, Jesus revealed His Own thoughts and the kingdom of heaven; and the new disciple being satisfied, accepted Jesus as the King of Israel. He was anxious about the truth in Christ, and when it was revealed to him, his soul was filled with joy. (3) Mosaism is like common wine; but out of a pure moral nature, like pure water, the gospel of mercy in Jesus Christ was manifested, and those who know its value can best afford to praise its goodness. This is a great sign, not in the spiritual kingdom after Pentecost, but in His Own life, before the time was fully come for the manifestation of His kingdom. This is the beginning of the manifestation of His power, grace, and glory. (4) The Lord dwelt in Capernaum—the place of consolation—in other words, the Lord has dwelt with the humble and contrite souls in all generations. (5) The Passover was at hand; and by this Passover there would come not merely the cleansing of the

temple at Jerusalem, but the temple of God, desecrated, cast down by man, would be rebuilt by the Lord Jesus Christ. This refers to His Own body raised after the crucifixion; but also to His mystical body which is being rebuilt into His likeness. (6) The Lord knew all this, and all the good and evil in man; but He could not at that time explain these things to men; they were too ignorant to apprehend His thoughts; and such a revelation would have greatly increased their responsibilities. (7) Mosaism tended to carnal conceptions, and to strange limitations of the spiritual world. Nicodemus represents very fairly the spirit of Judaism; it could not see or understand how anything more perfect could be possessed by men than the revelation which the Jews possessed. Yet at that very hour the womb of time was quick, full of life, ready to be delivered with the spiritual Hope which the Israel of God had longed to see, as contained in the promises to the fathers, and in the words of the prophets. The honest, inquiring, timid ruler is a figure of the past; the Christ in His thoughts speaks of the future; it was to make known to men the spiritual truths as bearing upon regeneration, and also the heavenly things of the kingdom of mercy, by suffering, sorrow, and death, that the Son of man, and of God, had come to men.

CHAPTERS III., 16—36, IV., 1—45, may contain the first cycle of the mission of Jesus Christ. (1) The love of God for sinful creatures is the revelation that is made to men in the Bible; in the manifestation it is known as the grace of God in Jesus Christ, and the mercy of God by Him in the forgiveness of sin. (2) How can the soul be purified from sin? Not by the laws of Moses, nor by repentance and washing with water, but by faith in, and obedience to, Jesus Christ. (3) He comes from above, and the Holy Spirit is in Him without measure; those who are united to Him by faith receive His Spirit and they possess eternal life. (4) The gift of God is Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in Him. In other words, His is the Well of living water, and those who ask of Him receive the portion of Joseph, the Blessing, that is, the Holy Spirit, in all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding in truth and righteousness. (5) The meat which Jesus had to eat was obedience to the gracious will of God, and to finish the great work of mercy. (6) Those who have come in contact with the Saviour testify to others what He has told them; and all who believe in Him agree in this experience that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world. (7) Passing from Samaria the Lord Jesus would pass through Nazareth on His way to Cana, but there the Son of God received no honour, the Prophet was in His Own country, and He was rejected.

CHAPTERS IV., 46—54, V., may contain the second cycle. (1) The story of the healing of the nobleman's son in Capernaum, whilst Jesus was in Cana, is the second sign that He did after He left Judasa. It is an allegory co-extensive with the spiritual experience of a soul saved by an unseen Saviour. The spirit of the first Beatitude rests upon the father, and the spirit of the second upon the son, and these two thoughts reveal the marvellous faith, healing power, and blessing that

ed such a sign. (2) Bethesda is the house of pity or mercy ; where the Lord of mercy comes to heal those who are unable to walk in His ways. As with the infirm man, so with a soul, or a nation, He has only to say, "Arise and walk," and the power of God gives new life and vigour, so that there is obedience. (3) Such a work is done on the day of mercy ; it is a gracious act conferred upon an unrepentant soul who is not even anxious to know its Benefactor. It is a sign specially to the Jews at that time to teach them their position and condition ; but it also speaks to every man who has tasted the grace and mercy of God, warning against sin lest the consequences may be realised. (4) Men would persecute this Worker because He works His deeds of mercy on *their* Sabbath ; but He is one in unity with the Father, and it is His work of mercy that the Lord Christ is engaged in. (5) The Son is the Servant of mercy, in the way of grace and mercy, and in all things He is obedient to the will of the Father, the Fountain of mercy. (6) The effect of the work of mercy will be resurrection from the dead by the voice of the Son of God, and at the last day of judgment ; and then the Son of man will judge of the living and the dead. (7) The Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Servant obedient to His Father's will ; and therefore, Moses, and the prophets, testify that He has fulfilled His mission by bringing grace and mercy to the souls of men, to nations, and to the world.

CHAPTER VI. may contain the third cycle. (1) In verses 1—4 there is to be imbedded, hidden away, important thoughts as bearing upon the next cycle. The scene is changed to the neighbourhood of the lake of Tiberias ; the meek King of mercy is seen surrounded by a great multitude following Him ; and upon the top of the mountain, along with the disciples, the visible kingdom of mercy was instituted. The time of the ritual history is that of the Passover, thus linking Egypt and the Exodus with the day that was near at hand. (2) The feeling of the Jews in the wilderness, and the words of Philip and Andrew are recalled ; but this desert place is like unto the great wilderness in which the children of Israel were fed with Manna ; and it is also like the desert of a human soul dependent upon God for the Bread of Life : the Father who gives the true Bread of Heaven is "the Prophet that shall come into the world." (3) Men misunderstand the divine signs ; they would have made Jesus King by force ; but He withdrew such a spirit into the mountain of thought, where men could not follow Him. (4) In the Old Testament, life and history are compared to the wilderness journey of Israel ; here the conception is the sea, and a boat ; Jesus walking on the sea ; His coming to His disciples in the boat, and their safety and arrival at the place where they were waiting. (5) The analogy betwixt the wilderness and the Manna ; and Jesus Christ as the true Bread is the important thought in this portion ; in other words, the wilderness is the visible sign ; Jesus Christ and the actual experiences of His followers the great reality in this day of mercy. (6) The analogy was one that the Jews did not comprehend ; they stumbled through their unbelief and fell as did their forefathers ;

and yet the spiritual thoughts revealed out of the story of the wilderness illustrate, in a marvellous manner, the analogy of the method of redemption and salvation, and the great difference betwixt belief and unbelief, carnal conceptions and spiritual truths. (7) The teaching of Jesus is hard to understand by those who have false preconceptions; yet babes in grace can apprehend what He means when His Spirit is permitted to reveal His spiritual thoughts. It is the Spirit that quickens the carnal figure, and then there is light, life, ascension, and glory; but when unbelief reigns, then there is a falling away from the truth, and even the betrayal of the Holy One of God.

CHAPTER VII. may contain the fourth cycle. (1) When and how shall Jesus Christ reveal Himself to men as King? His brethren who do not believe in Him or understand the kingdom of mercy as distinct from His kingdom of glory, have always urged that He should manifest Himself now in His power and glory, so that men might believe Jesus Christ knew better; He understood that there is a set time for all the works of God, and that it was His duty to wait and obey the will of the Father. The manifestation was not for that Feast of Tabernacles, but the Feast of Tabernacles referred to in this revelation may now be at hand. There is a very important analogy here, but only those who know the meaning of the feast in its prophetic meaning and its fulfilment, can divine the thoughts of the Lord Jesus in His answer to His brethren. (2) The time from then until now has been one of seeking, questioning, doubting, and secret conferring about Jesus Christ; the important question being whether He will come up to this prophetic Feast of Tabernacles or not. (3) When He came then it was to teach the Jews truths they knew not; and when He comes again, it will be to teach men, not as they have been taught in the schools, but by divine wisdom; as then, so when He comes again He will inform them that the thoughts He expresses are not His Own, but the Father's; and if any man is willing to do His will, he will know the truth of God. This is the meek spirit in which teachers and scholars should study the Word and Works of God; for if they become self-asserting, then they will break the moral law, and seek to kill the Christ. (4) Some have apprehended the situation by realising that Jesus is the Christ; whilst others have been offended because they knew not whence Jesus came, or the how of His coming. (5) Because He asserted His spiritual union with the Father the people would have seized Him; but He had a work to perform, and until that was done they could not touch Him. (6) There has been a great day of feasting during the Christian era; men have been going to Him and drinking of His Holy Spirit; but the day is coming when the streams of grace and mercy will be so abundant that out of believers (as living spiritual members of Christ, the Holy Spirit being immanent in them) there will flow God's spiritual gifts and graces. (7) The day of mercy has been one of contention and division about Jesus Christ; but the final report of those who will listen to His teaching is that never did man speak as He has done; in other words, He is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, and the King of grace, mercy, and peace.

CHAPTERS VIII., IX., may contain the fifth cycle. (1) This is the great cycle of mercy, and at the head of it there stands the Lord Jesus Christ in the temple of God, an adulterous woman and her accusers. These are the visible figures, but beyond these there may be discerned the God of grace and mercy, an adulterous humanity, and Moses or the moral law accusing mankind before the Judge. Mercy bends low in patience, writing upon the ground thoughts of grace, pity, and forgiveness; the issue being that moral law is found incompetent to deal with the case, and justice is postponed so that mercy may reign over judgment. (2) Such is the object of the mission of mercy to humanity; but to the souls of men the Lord Jesus Christ is Light, so that those who receive the light of truth into their darkened souls possess the light of grace and mercy and follow Jesus. This is a marvellous thought; but it is known to be true because the Lord Jesus Christ demonstrates by His knowledge and life that He is fully cognisant of the thoughts, words, and works of God. (3) His testimony as to the wicked ways of men is fully proved by history; it is true that the ways of men have been from beneath, that is, selfish and devilish; but His thoughts, words, and works, are from heaven, and He always did the things that are in harmony with the will of God. (4) God, Jesus Christ, truth and freedom; the devil, self, lying, and bondage, these are the great contrasts in the kingdom of good and evil, truth and error. In the nature of things these cannot agree, there must be contention, and the issue seen is that strange perversion in which the devil is set up as God, self is set against Jesus Christ, a lie is opposed to the truth, and the bondage of sin and fleshly lustings is preferred to the freedom and liberty of the children of God. The Jews make their boast in Abraham; but before Abraham lived God and truth existed, and it is by His all-inclusive knowledge that Jesus Christ knows not only good and evil, but also the means by which evil is to become regnant, and in due time subdued. (5) The Jews were spiritually blind; and men are still born blind; yet this judgment falls upon the individual, and upon nations, not because of their own sins in a pre-existent state, or even on account of the sins of their parents and predecessors; but it is for the great purpose of manifesting God's purpose of grace and mercy. The disciples then, as now, would have preferred a grand exposition on the doctrine of the origin of sin; but Jesus Christ passes by such ideas, taking it for granted that the facts are well known, and He turns their attention to their duties in this day of mercy whilst they possessed the light of truth. Learned sermons or lectures upon the origin of sin, the condition of the heathen, their responsibility, and similar questions, may be useful, in their own place, in the realm of thought, when men are saved, know the truth, and see the face of God; but during the day of grace it does seem absurd for Christ's disciples, when they should be following Him in giving sight to the blind, to begin to talk about what they do not understand, things they are not responsible for, and omit the duties to which they are called. This is the day of mercy, therefore use the means of grace, direct sinners to the Sent One of God, and when they are obedient they will have their eyes opened and be able to testify as to the means of salvation from sin, though they

know neither how they became blind, from whence Christ came, or where He is. A very, very little knowledge, with faith and obedience, will save the soul; but where there is much self-conceit, and the assumption of knowledge, then salvation is almost impossible. The man who believes the simple words of Jesus Christ the Saviour, and obeys Him, knows God's greatest secret; whilst the man who thinks he knows everything and has not learnt the first lesson in God's school of humility and mercy is, in plain words, a great fool. To know Jesus Christ as Saviour, the Giver of light and life to the dark and dead soul is to know, in germ, everything; whilst to know everything and not know this first thought in Christian experience is to be in the darkness with death reigning in the soul, the end being the outer darkness and the woe that is unspeakable. (6) Has the Lord Jesus Christ really worked such marvellous signs amongst men in this day of mercy? Thousands upon thousands can testify to the great change known as conversion, so that the facts are established beyond contradiction. Not even infidels, do not so much question the fact of conversion, but they are divided in opinion as to the cause, and whether it has any connection with Jesus of Nazareth. Those who have been converted know and testify that Jesus is the Prophet of truth who has brought light, life, and love into their souls; and it matters not what evil men may say against Jesus Christ, they always find that their own arguments fail them against even ignorant Christians who stand by the fact of personal experience and the Word of God. As with Jews and the man that was born blind, so with men in succeeding generations, they have failed in their arguments and their weapons have been reviling and persecution. (7) To those who are so tried, and by the grace of God overcome their enemies, Jesus will find them, and reveal Himself unto them as the Son of God. This change is a great revelation leading not merely to faithfulness in the face of the enemy, but to the worship of Jesus as God. The Son of God has come for the double purpose of mercy and judgment, that the sinners who do not see God may be saved, and that the self-righteous who think they see may be confirmed in their blindness. The spiritually blind have no sin, because they see no law and know not the truth; those who possess the law, and say that they walk in the light of truth, whilst their deeds are the deeds of darkness, their sins remain and they are blind.

CHAPTERS X., XI., may contain the sixth cycle. (1) The sphere of thought is that of the moral nature and of responsibility within the kingdom of mercy; therefore, the Saviour is changed into the Shepherd watching over, protecting, and dying for His sheep. He is responsible for them, and He is found faithful to the charge given to Him by the Father. The service rendered is not by constraint, but with a free will; His body is subject to outrage, but His Spirit is free to give itself in its pure moral nature as a sacrifice for sin; whilst there is also possessed the power to live again when the object desired by subjection to sin and death has been attained. The parable is deeply instructive when viewed in this aspect, because it represents so forcibly the mission and work of Jesus in His Church; the false teachers of

ders who would lead men astray ; the spiritual communion betwixt
 rist and His spiritual flock ; the extension of the kingdom of mercy
 all men under His Own divine protection ; the perfect harmony
 the will and work of Christ with the thoughts of God ; and the
 urrection power possessed by Him for the regeneration and restoration
 humanity in Himself. (2) In the soul of man, and amongst men,
 this cycle, the scene is one of division, there being the powers of
 il which deny Christ's right to be Head Shepherd, and say that He is
 non possessed and mad to make such assertions ; whilst the powers
 God are moved by His words and deeds to believe in Him. (3) The
 e is the winter of man's spiritual condition ; the season, that of the
 morial feast of the dedication of God's temple, that is, of the soul
 man regenerate with a meek spirit and given up to the service of
 d ; and the place, Solomon's porch, that is, the vestibule leading
 ard to divine wisdom and knowledge. It is the critical hour of
 pense as when a soul, or a nation, seeks plain teaching that it may be
 ded aright in the path of duty. How will men act at such a time ?
 n according to their spiritual affinities ; if they have the spirit of
 world, the flesh, and the devil, they will follow these ; but if they
 Christ's spiritual flock they will hear His voice and obey Him. (4)
 e mystery of sin is that it is such a perversion of right thinking,
 aking, and acting that it believes lies in preference to truth ; speaks
 phemous words by calling evil good ; and persecutes, yea, puts to
 th the Word of God, in the flesh, believing that such a deed is well-
 ssing to God. The mystery of grace is found in Jesus Christ, the
 th, Life, and Word of God in its manifestation in mercy, patiently
 uring the contradiction of sinners against Himself and being put
 eath, so that men might live in Him. This experience leads all men
 the Jordan, that is, to Moses and Joshua, John and Jesus Christ ; if
 re is rebellion and rejection of Christ, then the doom is the wilder-
 s and death ; but if there is meek obedience to the King then the
 eritance shall be possessed. (5) The story of the sickness and
 th of Lazarus is a marvellous allegory in the kingdom of heaven ;
 e family circle in Bethany seems to represent the regenerate soul,
 d also the Church of Christ in its historical condition during the
 ence of the Lord. There has been a sickness even as unto death in
 ntellectual and visible things, but it has been permitted for the glory
 God, and that the Son of God might be glorified. The scheme of
 emption is centred in this family, beloved by the Lord ; and it may
 aid that the parable is co-extensive with the three days of grace
 der which men have lived. As relating to the soul, it may be said
 at Lazarus represents the intellectual power in man which has
 en sick to death through its violations of moral law ; Martha
 presents the restored moral nature in its active functions which
 ould bring the soul into obedience to law ; and Mary, the gracious
 ure which represents the regenerate, meek, faithful spirit, obedient
 the laws of Christ. As in the soul, so in the Church, the
 e principles or powers have been in active operation for the past
 00 years. The work of mercy is not fully revealed by the Lord ;
 e speaks of sleep and of death, but the object of His visit is to

awaken the sleeper and to raise the dead. The time is one of waiting and anxiety to the soul and to the Church; the intellectual power is helpless to restore itself to life; the moral nature can only fast and fret about obedience to rites, ceremonies, and laws; and the gracious spirit prays and weeps, loves and hopes, and patiently waits for the coming of the Lord. The story seems to culminate spiritually in this thought; that the intellect, the moral nature with the moral law, and the gracious nature living in obedience to the gospel, are all helpless for resurrection to the perfect gracious life. It is only when He comes who is the Life that the work of mercy will be completed by the effectual operations of His Own mighty Spirit. But in the meantime during the day of grace, the Lord and His disciples must walk in the light, so that at the appointed time the great work of redemption and salvation may be accomplished. (6) The scene is changed to Bethany; the dead Lazarus, the mourning sisters and their friends, and Jesus arrived at the village. The communications of Martha and Mary with their Lord are peculiar; there is confidence in Him, mixed with the idea of His power to prevent death; and even the hope that He will restore to life the brother of whom they have been bereft; whilst the sympathising bystanders wondered whether Jesus could not have prevented this death since He was able to open blind eyes, that is, give men the light of truth and the spiritual power to receive it. "Behold how He loved him," may be interpreted as referring to the intellect of man, by which there is knowledge of truth; and it ought to be fully acknowledged that the Lord loves the intellectual power of man as a means for this end. There is not anything wrong in the intellectual power lawfully used; it is when there is want of conformity to moral law, for selfish ends, that the spirit is perverted and the intellect becomes dead to God; but the Lord's work of mercy is to give a new spirit and a new life to the intellect so that it may be serviceable within its own sphere. It was by the intellect that the devil led man astray in the path of evil to death; and it is by this new path, that is, of perfect righteousness by truth, that man must be raised from the dead. It is by believing that men shall see the glory of God; and what can be conceived as more glorious than humanity redeemed by the Good Shepherd, led in the way of mercy by the meek and lowly spirit, tried and purified by patient endurance, instructed in the truth of God, made obedient to the holy moral law of life, and become self-denying and self-sacrificing for the good of others? Men are called to remove the obstructions which lie in the King's pathway; but He alone can give the resurrection word which will convey with it the power of raising a dead humanity. (7) The Son of God with power is the object of fear to wicked men; they can see that He differs from other men; but to follow Him means obedience to God and duty in the face of a world at enmity with Him; and so far as short-sighted expediency can see, this means the destruction of all their future prospects. Wicked men say death to this Man who imperils the welfare of the common-wealth, whether He be guilty or not; and God changes the evil thought and action into good by making the cunning, devilish devices of men to work for His glory and the salvation of men. (8) Persecution

Jesus Christ to accomplish His death was the object of the rulers ; but God meant it to be the great Passover for the world's sin, salvation, and restoration to His favour.

VERS XII. may contain the seventh cycle. (1) The Son of God is being prepared or anointed for His work as the Son of God, the Prince of peace, by the gracious Mary. It is the gracious soul who washes the Lord's feet that He may enter upon the thorny path of mission and passion which bring redemption to men. This love of love expressed upon the blessed Saviour seems to be a selfish displacement of the affections ; but it is so little in return for the love and compassion in Jesus Christ, that men have nothing to which they can boast in this direction. (2) The common people are attracted toward Jesus and His mission of mercy ; but the Pharisees amongst men have been His enemies, anxious to destroy Him and those who love and serve Him. (3) The meek and lowly Jesus of mercy and peace is seen as accepted by His Own people ; but the Jews are gone after Him, and selfish men find that they are unsuccessful in their schemes. (4) The Grecians seek Jesus, and this is to be a sign of the coming glory ; but it must be through death by which He comes from heaven, judgment upon the wicked, resurrection, and entrance into glory. (5) There is revelation to sinners saved by grace and great work of mercy, but also hiding from men who do not receive His Word ; believers are saved through faith, but unbelievers are blind and their consciences so seared that they will not believe the truth. (6) The day of mercy is not one of great fervency and spirituality amongst men ; many believe, but they do not see the truth ; they are not animated by His Spirit, and so the consequence has been that men have loved the glory of this world more than the glory that comes from God through Christ. (7) Jesus, the Light of the world, has been uttering a loud cry to men, telling them that those who believe in Him are also believers in God. He is the Light of the world, and those who receive His Word receive eternal life.

VERS XIII., XIV., may contain the eighth cycle. (1) The Passover is the knowledge and love of Jesus ; the supper, the devil, and the serpent ; and the victory through death, the whence and whither of the kingdom of mercy being known by Jesus, He washed His disciples' feet. Simon Peter, not understanding the sign, objected to the Lord washing his feet, but when told that this was the crucial test of the truth in Himself, then he was willing not merely to have his feet washed but to have his body washed. The washing is a sign of cleansing and purification so much of bringing the soul into conformity to moral law, and patient submission to the will of God. This sign is one of the signs in the kingdom of mercy ; it means persecution by enemies, suffering, by true friends in their ignorance, poverty, disease, death, and other things, such as the Lord Jesus endured so that He might be perfect through suffering. This is a washing that very few can stand or patiently endure ; they have their own foolish ideas of what God and Christ should or should not do, and so they are

apt to rebel against this washing which is fitted to make the soul gracious. (2) This act of washing is a sign, an example for the followers of Christ; because they have seen how He has forgiven the wilfulness and ignorance of His servants, borne with the presence of the traitor, suffered the revilings and blasphemies of men, been patient when persecuted to the death by His enemies, and endured the forsaking of the Father's face and favour. If He did all this for His followers, then surely they ought to manifest the same spirit. They are blessed indeed who can receive in the Spirit of Christ all such manifestations of the divine will; in doing so they receive Him and the Father who sent Him. It is hardly necessary to say that this is a conception which far transcends men's crude ideas of the kingdom, but it is emphatically the Spirit of Christ, and of the persecuted who possess the kingdom of heaven. (3) The realisation of such a spirit of meek submission to the will of God in the presence of what would lead the spirit astray causes trouble and doubt; but the secret of good and evil, blessing and betrayal, joy and sorrow, is to be divined by the spirit that is in closest sympathy with the Lord Jesus Christ. This visible kingdom in which Jesus and Judas, Christ and Satan, are found side by side is not the place for the explanation of signs, but rather it consists of signs which the spiritual in Christ alone can interpret. As no one at the table knew the meaning of the sop and of the Lord's words to Judas, so it may fairly be assumed that the meaning is not discernable by man; it is a mysterious sign of the spiritual world in the borderland betwixt good and evil; and the bestowal of that sop seems to be the point at which grace ends its gracious workings, and mercy ceases to restrain the devilish spirit from its desires. Here the light is suddenly quenched; the soul is left alone; and it goes forth into the dark night where Jesus Christ is not to be found. (4) Separated from Satan and the betrayer, the Lord Jesus breathed another atmosphere; then the dominant thoughts in His soul were the glory of God into which He was about to enter; His separation for a time from His disciples; and the spirit of love which should be the all-prevailing spirit in His disciples. (5) This separation of the Lord Jesus Christ from His disciples has been to men a puzzling question; they have been anxious to know whither He has gone, and why they could not be with Him? The Lord points out that there is a necessity for this separation; that patience will explain it all; and that the three-fold denial of the Lord by Peter, and by His Church, has something to do with it. In other words, there is here revealed the cause of the Lord's absence from men during the day of mercy; it is that good and evil might come into open conflict, terminating in the apparent apostacy of the Church from her Lord. (6) What then, if the conflict be so severe, and the issue so grave, what should the followers of Christ do during the dark night of persecution, hatred, and apostacy that would come upon them? The reply of Christ is that they should not be troubled about such things, but simply continue to believe in God and to trust Himself. He would not be present with them in bodily form, but He would be engaged in the work of preparing their home, and having done this, then He would return and receive them to Himself. Is it

his the work of Jesus Christ during the Christian era, and also of the Holy Spirit in making known to men Jesus Christ as the Way to the Father, the Truth of God, and the Life of men? To know Jesus Christ means to see the Father, and to know the relationship of the Son to Him is to know the works of God as well as His Word. But such knowledge is only attainable by love and obedience to the will of Christ; and through these there is inborn into the soul the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth. These things are inexplicable to men of the world; they do not love and obey Jesus Christ, therefore the Holy Spirit cannot be in them revealing Christ to the soul; and as there is neither love to Christ nor guidance into truth by the Holy Spirit, according to the laws laid down in the kingdom of grace, so they cannot see the Father's face or know the mystical union that exists in a family of God. (7) These thoughts, uttered by the Son of God before His departure, are the visible forms upon which the Holy Spirit would work in the revelation of Truth to the soul. His last gift to His followers is that of peace in Himself and in the Father. These things and thoughts were not all that He could bestow upon the tried sons of God; but they are enough to keep them in the great day of trial that would come upon them, if they continue to love and obey Him. Even as Jesus has been obedient to the Father, so must they be in the time of their separation, so that God might be glorified in Christ, men saved, and the name of God brought to love one another. "Arise, let us go hence;" in other words, be the companions of the Son of God in this mission and passion which bring glory to God, peace in the soul during the time of separation and trial, and good-will or love amongst the children of God, reconciled to God the Father through Jesus Christ.

CHAPTERS XV.—XVII. may contain the ninth cycle. (1) The mystical spiritual union of the Lord Jesus Christ with His followers is illustrated by the parable of the vine. This thought differs very widely from what goes before, because there is no longer a straining after love and obedience, but of living in the Spirit of Christ and of bringing forth fruit. Up to this point it was the Son of God that glorified the Father, but here the Father is glorified by the fruit bearing of the Son of God. Peace was the great gift of Christ to His suffering Church; here added to the peace, there is the joy in the fulfilment of the Father's will. The travail of soul is passed, and the Lord's love is shared by His redeemed, who have been faithful to Him. The vine is the kingdom, therefore grace and mercy are seen predominant, building up the temple of God, and operating as the dominant spirit amongst men. (2) The commandment of Christ at this point, in the experience of a soul, and in history, is love; the measure of the love being His Own love to His redeemed. The disciples are no longer servants in the house of God, obeying laws, moral and gracious; they are the friends of the King who know the Father's will. (3) The spirit of the friend of the King must not be changed by such marvellous grace; the Lord Jesus Christ must still continue to be the only Example for every thought, word, and action. (4) These thoughts, uttered by the Lord Jesus Christ, were necessary for His

temple at Jerusalem, but the temple of God, desecrated, cast down by man, would be rebuilt by the Lord Jesus Christ. This refers to His Own body raised after the crucifixion; but also to His mystical body which is being rebuilt into His likeness. (6) The Lord knew all this, and all the good and evil in man; but He could not at that time explain these things to men; they were too ignorant to apprehend His thoughts; and such a revelation would have greatly increased their responsibilities. (7) Mosaism tended to carnal conceptions, and to strange limitations of the spiritual world. Nicodemus represents very fairly the spirit of Judaism; it could not see or understand how anything more perfect could be possessed by men than the revelation which the Jews possessed. Yet at that very hour the womb of time was quick, full of life, ready to be delivered with the spiritual Hope which the Israel of God had longed to see, as contained in the promises to the fathers, and in the words of the prophets. The honest, inquiring, timid ruler is a figure of the past; the Christ in His thoughts speaks of the future; it was to make known to men the spiritual truths as bearing upon regeneration, and also the heavenly things of the kingdom of mercy, by suffering, sorrow, and death, that the Son of man, and of God, had come to men.

CHAPTERS III., 16—36, IV., 1—45, may contain the first cycle of the mission of Jesus Christ. (1) The love of God for sinful creatures is the revelation that is made to men in the Bible; in the manifestation it is known as the grace of God in Jesus Christ, and the mercy of God by Him in the forgiveness of sin. (2) How can the soul be purified from sin? Not by the laws of Moses, nor by repentance and washing with water, but by faith in, and obedience to, Jesus Christ. (3) He comes from above, and the Holy Spirit is in Him without measure; those who are united to Him by faith receive His Spirit and they possess eternal life. (4) The gift of God is Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in Him. In other words, His is the Well of living water, and those who ask of Him receive the portion of Joseph, the Blessing, that is, the Holy Spirit, in all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding in truth and righteousness. (5) The meat which Jesus had to eat was obedience to the gracious will of God, and to finish the great work of mercy. (6) Those who have come in contact with the Saviour testify to others what He has told them; and all who believe in Him agree in this experience that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world. (7) Passing from Samaria the Lord Jesus would pass through Nazareth on His way to Cana, but there the Son of God received no honour, the Prophet was in His Own country, and He was rejected.

CHAPTERS IV., 46—54, V., may contain the second cycle. (1) The story of the healing of the nobleman's son in Capernaum, whilst Jesus was in Cana, is the second sign that He did after He left Judea. It is an allegory co-extensive with the spiritual experience of a soul saved by an unseen Saviour. The spirit of the first Beatitude rests upon the father, and the spirit of the second upon the son, and these two thoughts reveal the marvellous faith, healing power, and blessing that

followed such a sign. (2) Bethesda is the house of pity or mercy ; that is where the Lord of mercy comes to heal those who are unable to walk in His ways. As with the infirm man, so with a soul, or a nation, He has only to say, "Arise and walk," and the power of God gives new life and vigour, so that there is obedience. (3) Such a work is done on the day of mercy ; it is a gracious act conferred upon an ungracious soul who is not even anxious to know its Benefactor. It was a sign specially to the Jews at that time to teach them their position and condition ; but it also speaks to every man who has tasted the grace and mercy of God, warning against sin lest the consequences of sin may be realised. (4) Men would persecute this Worker because He works His deeds of mercy on *their* Sabbath ; but He is one in Spirit with the Father, and it is His work of mercy that the Lord Jesus Christ is engaged in. (5) The Son is the Servant of mercy, in the day of grace and mercy, and in all things He is obedient to the will of God, the Fountain of mercy. (6) The effect of the work of mercy will be resurrection from the dead by the voice of the Son of God, and at the last day of judgment ; and then the Son of man will be Judge of the living and the dead. (7) The Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Servant obedient to His Father's will ; and the Scriptures, Moses, and the prophets, testify that He has fulfilled His mission by bringing grace and mercy to the souls of men, to nations, and to the world.

CHAPTER VI. may contain the third cycle. (1) In verses 1—4 there seem to be imbedded, hidden away, important thoughts as bearing upon this cycle. The scene is changed to the neighbourhood of the lake of Galilee ; the meek King of mercy is seen surrounded by a great multitude following Him ; and upon the top of the mountain, along with His disciples, the visible kingdom of mercy was instituted. The time in spiritual history is that of the Passover, thus linking Egypt and the Exodus with the day that was near at hand. (2) The feeling of the multitude in the wilderness, and the words of Philip and Andrew are instructive ; but this desert place is like unto the great wilderness in which the children of Israel were fed with Manna ; and it is also like the desert of a human soul dependent upon God for the Bread of Life : The Man who gives the true Bread of Heaven is "the Prophet that cometh into the world." (3) Men misunderstand the divine signs ; thus they would have made Jesus King by force ; but He withdraw from such a spirit into the mountain of thought, where men could not find Him. (4) In the Old Testament, life and history are compared to the wilderness journey of Israel ; here the conception is the sea, and a storm ; Jesus walking on the sea ; His coming to His disciples in the morning, and their safety and arrival at the place where they were going. (5) The analogy betwixt the wilderness and the Manna ; and Jesus Christ as the true Bread is the important thought in this portion ; in other words, the wilderness is the visible sign ; Jesus Christ and the spiritual experiences of His followers the great reality in this day of mercy. (6) The analogy was one that the Jews did not comprehend ; they stumbled through their unbelief and fell as did their forefathers ;

and yet the spiritual thoughts revealed out of the story of the w
ness illustrate, in a marvellous manner, the analogy of the meth
redemption and salvation, and the great difference betwixt belie
unbelief, carnal conceptions and spiritual truths. (7) The teachi
Jesus is hard to understand by those who have false preconcept
yet babes in grace can apprehend what He means when His Spi
permitted to reveal His spiritual thoughts. It is the Spirit that qui
the carnal figure, and then there is light, life, ascension, and glory
when unbelief reigns, then there is a falling away from the truth
even the betrayal of the Holy One of God.

CHAPTER VII. may contain the fourth cycle. (1) When and
shall Jesus Christ reveal Himself to men as King? His brethren
do not believe in Him or understand the kingdom of mercy as dis
from His kingdom of glory, have always urged that He should r
fest Himself now in His power and glory, so that men might beli
Jesus Christ knew better; He understood that there is a set time f
the works of God, and that it was His duty to wait and obey the
of the Father. The manifestation was not for that Feast of Taberna
but the Feast of Tabernacles referred to in this revelation may no
at hand. There is a very important analogy here, but only those
know the meaning of the feast in its prophetic meaning and its f
ment, can divine the thoughts of the Lord Jesus in His answer to
brethren. (2) The time from then until now has been one of seel
questioning, doubting, and secret conferring about Jesus Christ;
important question being whether He will come up to this prop
Feast of Tabernacles or not. (3) When He came then it was to t
the Jews truths they knew not; and when He comes again, it wil
to teach men, not as they have been taught in the schools, but by di
wisdom; as then, so when He comes again He will inform them
the thoughts He expresses are not His Own, but the Father's; as
any man is willing to do His will, he will know the truth of God.
is the meek spirit in which teachers and scholars should study
Word and Works of God; for if they become self-asserting, then
will break the moral law, and seek to kill the Christ. (4) Some
apprehended the situation by realising that Jesus is the Christ; w
others have been offended because they knew not whence Jesus c
or the how of His coming. (5) Because He asserted His spir
union with the Father the people would have seized Him; but He
a work to perform, and until that was done they could not touch
(6) There has been a great day of feasting during the Christian
men have been going to Him and drinking of His Holy Spirit; but
day is coming when the streams of grace and mercy will be so abund
that out of believers (as living spiritual members of Christ, the
Spirit being immanent in them) there will flow God's spiritual
and graces. (7) The day of mercy has been one of contention
division about Jesus Christ; but the final report of those who
listen to His teaching is that never did man speak as He has done
other words, He is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, and
King of grace, mercy, and peace.

CHAPTERS VIII., IX., may contain the fifth cycle. (1) This is the great cycle of mercy, and at the head of it there stands the Lord Jesus Christ in the temple of God, an adulterous woman and her accusers. These are the visible figures, but beyond these there may be discerned the God of grace and mercy, an adulterous humanity, and Moses or the moral law accusing mankind before the Judge. Mercy bends low in patience, writing upon the ground thoughts of grace, pity, and forgiveness; the issue being that moral law is found incompetent to deal with the case, and justice is postponed so that mercy may reign over judgment. (2) Such is the object of the mission of mercy to humanity; not to the souls of men the Lord Jesus Christ is Light, so that those who receive the light of truth into their darkened souls possess the light of grace and mercy and follow Jesus. This is a marvellous thought; but it is known to be true because the Lord Jesus Christ demonstrates by His knowledge and life that He is fully cognisant of the thoughts, words, and works of God. (3) His testimony as to the wicked ways of men is fully proved by history; it is true that the ways of men have been from beneath, that is, selfish and devilish; but His thoughts, words, and works, are from heaven, and He always did the things that are in harmony with the will of God. (4) God, Jesus Christ, truth and freedom; the devil, self, lying, and bondage, these are the great contrasts in the kingdom of good and evil, truth and error. In the nature of things these cannot agree, there must be contention, and the issue seen is that strange perversion in which the devil is set up as God, self is set against Jesus Christ, a lie is opposed to the truth, and the bondage of sin and fleshly lustings is preferred to the freedom and liberty of the children of God. The Jews make their boast in Abraham; but before Abraham lived God and truth existed, and it is by His all-inclusive knowledge that Jesus Christ knows not only good and evil, but also the means by which evil is to become regnant, and in the time subdued. (5) The Jews were spiritually blind; and men are still born blind; yet this judgment falls upon the individual, and upon nations, not because of their own sins in a pre-existent state, or even on account of the sins of their parents and predecessors; but it is for the great purpose of manifesting God's purpose of grace and mercy. The disciples then, as now, would have preferred a grand exposition on the doctrine of the origin of sin; but Jesus Christ passes by such ideas, taking it for granted that the facts are well known, and He turns their attention to their duties in this day of mercy whilst they possessed the light of truth. Learned sermons or lectures upon the origin of sin, the condition of the heathen, their responsibility, and similar questions, may be useful, in their own place, in the realm of thought, when men are saved, know the truth, and see the face of God; but during the day of grace it does seem absurd for Christ's disciples, when they should be following Him in giving sight to the blind, to begin to talk about what they do not understand, things they are not responsible for, and omit the duties to which they are called. This is the day of mercy, therefore use the means of grace, direct sinners to the Sent One of God, and when they are obedient they will have their eyes opened and be able to testify as to the means of salvation from sin, though they

know neither how they became blind, from whence Christ came, or where He is. A very, very little knowledge, with faith and obedience, will save the soul; but where there is much self-conceit, and the assumption of knowledge, then salvation is almost impossible. The man who believes the simple words of Jesus Christ the Saviour, and obeys Him, knows God's greatest secret; whilst the man who thinks he knows everything and has not learnt the first lesson in God's school of humility and mercy is, in plain words, a great fool. To know Jesus Christ as Saviour, the Giver of light and life to the dark and dead soul is to know, in germ, everything; whilst to know everything and not know this first thought in Christian experience is to be in the darkness with death reigning in the soul, the end being the outer darkness and the woe that is unspeakable. (6) Has the Lord Jesus Christ really worked such marvellous signs amongst men in this day of ~~many?~~ Thousands upon thousands can testify to the great change known as conversion, so that the facts are established beyond contradiction. ~~Men,~~ even infidels, do not so much question the fact of conversion, but they are divided in opinion as to the cause, and whether it has any connection with Jesus of Nazareth. Those who have been converted know and testify that Jesus is the Prophet of truth who has brought light, life, and love into their souls; and it matters not what evil men may say against Jesus Christ, they always find that their own arguments fail them against even ignorant Christians who stand by the fact of personal experience and the Word of God. As with Jews and the man that was born blind, so with men in succeeding generations, they have failed in their arguments and their weapons have been reviling and persecution. (7) To those who are so tried, and by the grace of God overcome their enemies, Jesus will find them, and reveal Himself unto them as the Son of God. This change is a great revelation leading not merely to faithfulness in the face of the enemy, but to the worship of Jesus as God. The Son of God has come for the double purpose of mercy and judgment, that the sinners who do not see God may be saved, and that the self-righteous who think they see may be confirmed in their blindness. The spiritually blind have no sin, because they see no law and know not the truth; those who possess the law, and say that they walk in the light of truth, whilst their deeds are the deeds of darkness, their sins remain and they are blind.

CHAPTERS X., XI., may contain the sixth cycle. (1) The sphere of thought is that of the moral nature and of responsibility within the kingdom of mercy; therefore, the Saviour is changed into the Shepherd watching over, protecting, and dying for His sheep. He is responsible for them, and He is found faithful to the charge given to Him by the Father. The service rendered is not by constraint, but with a free will; His body is subject to outrage, but His Spirit is free to give itself in its pure moral nature as a sacrifice for sin; whilst there is also possessed the power to live again when the object desired by subjection to sin and death has been attained. The parable is deeply instructive when viewed in this aspect, because it represents so forcibly the mission and work of Jesus in His Church; the false teachers or

lers who would lead men astray ; the spiritual communion betwixt
 ist and His spiritual flock ; the extension of the kingdom of mercy
 ll men under His Own divine protection ; the perfect harmony
 he will and work of Christ with the thoughts of God ; and the
 irection power possessed by Him for the regeneration and restoration
 humanity in Himself. (2) In the soul of man, and amongst men,
 his cycle, the scene is one of division, there being the powers of
 which deny Christ's right to be Head Shepherd, and say that He is
 on possessed and mad to make such assertions ; whilst the powers
 od are moved by His words and deeds to believe in Him. (3) The
 is the winter of man's spiritual condition ; the season, that of the
 orial feast of the dedication of God's temple, that is, of the soul
 an regenerate with a meek spirit and given up to the service of
 ; and the place, Solomon's porch, that is, the vestibule leading
 rd to divine wisdom and knowledge. It is the critical hour of
 ense as when a soul, or a nation, seeks plain teaching that it may be
 ed aright in the path of duty. How will men act at such a time ?
 s according to their spiritual affinities ; if they have the spirit of
 world, the flesh, and the devil, they will follow these ; but if they
 Christ's spiritual flock they will hear His voice and obey Him. (4)
 mystery of sin is that it is such a perversion of right thinking,
 king, and acting that it believes lies in preference to truth ; speaks
 phemous words by calling evil good ; and persecutes, yea, puts to
 h the Word of God, in the flesh, believing that such a deed is well-
 sing to God. The mystery of grace is found in Jesus Christ, the
 h, Life, and Word of God in its manifestation in mercy, patiently
 ring the contradiction of sinners against Himself and being put
 eath, so that men might live in Him. This experience leads all men
 re Jordan, that is, to Moses and Joshua, John and Jesus Christ ; if
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 0 years. The work of mercy is not fully revealed by the Lord ;
 speaks of sleep and of death, but the object of His visit is to

awaken the sleeper and to raise the dead. The time is one of war and anxiety to the soul and to the Church; the intellectual powerless to restore itself to life; the moral nature can only fuss and about obedience to rites, ceremonies, and laws; and the gracious prays and weeps, loves and hopes, and patiently waits for the call of the Lord. The story seems to culminate spiritually in this that the intellect, the moral nature with the moral law, and the gracious nature living in obedience to the gospel, are all helpless resurrection to the perfect gracious life. It is only when He who is the Life that the work of mercy will be completed by effectual operations of His Own mighty Spirit. But in the meantime during the day of grace, the Lord and His disciples must walk in light, so that at the appointed time the great work of redemption, salvation may be accomplished. (6) The scene is changed to Bethaniam the dead Lazarus, the mourning sisters and their friends, and Jesus arrived at the village. The communications of Martha and Mary to their Lord are peculiar; there is confidence in Him, mixed with the idea of His power to prevent death; and even the hope that He will restore to life the brother of whom they have been bereft; while sympathising bystanders wondered whether Jesus could not have prevented this death since He was able to open blind eyes, that is, to give men the light of truth and the spiritual power to receive it. "Behold how He loved him," may be interpreted as referring to the intellectual man, by which there is knowledge of truth; and it ought to be fully acknowledged that the Lord loves the intellectual man as a means for this end. There is not anything wrong in the intellectual power lawfully used; it is when there is no conformity to moral law, for selfish ends, that the spirit is perished and the intellect becomes dead to God; but the Lord's work of mercy is to give a new spirit and a new life to the intellect so that it may be serviceable within its own sphere. It was by the intellect that man led astray in the path of evil to death; and it is by this new light that is, of perfect righteousness by truth, that man must be raised from the dead. It is by believing that men shall see the glory of God, what can be conceived as more glorious than humanity redeemed by the Good Shepherd, led in the way of mercy by the meek and lowly spirit, tried and purified by patient endurance, instructed in the law of God, made obedient to the holy moral law of life, and by denying and self-sacrificing for the good of others? Men are to remove the obstructions which lie in the King's pathway; but they can give the resurrection word which will convey with it the raising of a dead humanity. (7) The Son of God with power is not to be afraid of wicked men; they can see that He differs from the world but to follow Him means obedience to God and duty in the world at enmity with Him; and so far as short-sighted eyes can see, this means the destruction of all their future prospects. Men say death to this Man who imperils the welfare of the world, whether He be guilty or not; and God changes the death and action into good by making the cunning, devilish death to work for His glory and the salvation of men. (8)

Jesus Christ to accomplish His death was the object of the Jews; but God meant it to be the great Passover for the world's redemption, salvation, and restoration to His favour.

Chapter XII. may contain the seventh cycle. (1) The Son of God being prepared or anointed for His work as the Son of God, the Son of peace, by the gracious Mary. It is the gracious soul that washes the Lord's feet that He may enter upon the thorny path of passion and passion which bring redemption to men. This love expressed upon the blessed Saviour seems to selfishness in the placement of the affections; but it is so little in return for love and compassion in Jesus Christ, that men have nothing they can boast in this direction. (2) The common people were attracted toward Jesus and His mission of mercy; but the next men have been His enemies, anxious to destroy Him those who love and serve Him. (3) The meek and lowly Jesus and peace is seen as accepted by His Own people; the Jews have gone after Him, and selfish men find that they are unsuccessful in their schemes. (4) The Grecians seek Jesus, and this is to gain of the coming glory; but it must be through death by the blood of heaven, judgment upon the wicked, resurrection, and eternal glory. (5) There is revelation to sinners saved by grace through the work of mercy, but also hiding from men who do not believe in His Word; believers are saved through faith, but unbelievers are blind and their consciences so seared that they will not believe the truth. (6) The day of mercy is not one of great fervency or activity amongst men; many believe, but they do not see the truth; they are not animated by His Spirit, and so the consequence has been that men have loved the glory of this world more than the glory that comes from God through Christ. (7) Jesus, the Son of God, has been uttering a loud cry to men, telling them that those who believe in Him is also a believer in God. He is the Light of the world, and those who receive His Word receive eternal life.

Chapters XIII., XIV., may contain the eighth cycle. (1) The Passover, the knowledge and love of Jesus; the supper, the devil, and the victory through death, the whence and whither of freedom of mercy being known by Jesus, He washed His disciples' feet.

Simon Peter, not understanding the sign, objected to the washing of his feet, but when told that this was the crucial test of himself, then he was willing not merely to have his feet washed, but to have all his body washed. The washing is a sign of cleansing and purification, much of bringing the soul into conformity to moral law, and patient submission to the will of God. This sign is one of the signs of the kingdom of mercy; it means persecution by enemies, tribulation, by true friends in their ignorance, poverty, disease, death, and other things, such as the Lord Jesus endured so that He might effect through suffering. This is a washing that very few can stand or patiently endure; they have their own foolish ideas of what God and Christ should or should not do, and so they are

apt to rebel against this washing which is fitted to make the soul gracious. (2) This act of washing is a sign, an example for the followers of Christ; because they have seen how He has forgiven the wilfulness and ignorance of His servants, borne with the presence of the traitor, suffered the revilings and blasphemies of men, been patient when persecuted to the death by His enemies, and endured the forsaking of the Father's face and favour. If He did all this for His followers, then surely they ought to manifest the same spirit. They are blessed indeed who can receive in the Spirit of Christ all such manifestations of the divine will; in doing so they receive Him and the Father who sent Him. It is hardly necessary to say that this is a conception which far transcends men's crude ideas of the kingdom; but it is emphatically the Spirit of Christ, and of the persecuted who possess the kingdom of heaven. (3) The realisation of such a spirit of meek submission to the will of God in the presence of what would lead the spirit astray causes trouble and doubt; but the secret of good and evil, blessing and betrayal, joy and sorrow, is to be divined by the spirit that is in closest sympathy with the Lord Jesus Christ. The visible kingdom in which Jesus and Judas, Christ and Satan, are found side by side is not the place for the explanation of signs, but rather it consists of signs which the spiritual in Christ alone can interpret. As no one at the table knew the meaning of the sop and of the Lord's words to Judas, so it may fairly be assumed that the meaning is not discernable by man; it is a mysterious sign of the spiritual world in the borderland betwixt good and evil; and the bestowal of that sop seems to be the point at which grace ends its gracious workings, and mercy ceases to restrain the devilish spirit from its desires. Here the light is suddenly quenched; the soul is left alone; and it goes forth into the dark night where Jesus Christ is not to be found. (4) Separated from Satan and the betrayer, the Lord Jesus breathed another atmosphere; then the dominant thoughts in His soul were the glory of God into which He was about to enter; His separation for a time from His disciples; and the spirit of love which should be the all-prevailing spirit in His disciples. (5) This separation of the Lord Jesus Christ from His disciples has been to men a puzzling question; they have been anxious to know whither He has gone, and why they could not be with Him? The Lord points out that there is a necessity for this separation; that patience will explain it all; and that the three-fold denial of the Lord by Peter, and by His Church, has something to do with it. In other words, there is here revealed the cause of the Lord's absence from men during the day of mercy; it is that good and evil might come into open conflict, terminating in the apparent apostacy of the Church from her Lord. (6) What then, if the conflict be so severe, and the issue so grave, what should the followers of Christ do during the dark night of persecution, hatred, and apostacy that would come upon them? The reply of Christ is that they should not be troubled about such things, but simply continue to believe in God and to trust Himself. He would not be present with them in bodily form, but He would be engaged in the work of preparing their home, and having done this, then He would return and receive them to Himself. Is not

the work of Jesus Christ during the Christian era, and also of the Holy Spirit in making known to men Jesus Christ as the Way to the Father, the Truth of God, and the Life of men? To know Jesus Christ is to see the Father, and to know the relationship of the Son to the Father is to know the works of God as well as His Word. But such knowledge is only attainable by love and obedience to the will of the Father; and through these there is inborn into the soul the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth. These things are inexplicable to men of the world; they do not love and obey Jesus Christ, therefore the Holy Spirit cannot be in them revealing Christ to the soul; and as there is no love to Christ nor guidance into truth by the Holy Spirit, according to the laws laid down in the kingdom of grace, so they cannot see the Father's face or know the mystical union that exists in the family of God. (7) These thoughts, uttered by the Son of God before His departure, are the visible forms upon which the Holy Spirit would work in the revelation of Truth to the soul. His last gift to His followers is that of peace in Himself and in the Father. These things were not all that He could bestow upon the tried sons of God; but they are enough to keep them in the great day of trial that would come upon them, if they continue to love and obey Him. Even as Jesus has been obedient to the Father, so must they be in the time of their tribulation, so that God might be glorified in Christ, men saved, and the Father of God brought to love one another. "Arise, let us go hence;" these words, be the companions of the Son of God in this mission of passion which bring glory to God, peace in the soul during the time of separation and trial, and good-will or love amongst the children of God, reconciled to God the Father through Jesus Christ.

CHAPTERS XV.—XVII. may contain the ninth cycle. (1) The mystical spiritual union of the Lord Jesus Christ with His followers is illustrated by the parable of the vine. This thought differs very widely from what goes before, because there is no longer a straining after love and obedience, but of living in the Spirit of Christ and of bringing forth fruit. Up to this point it was the Son of God that glorified the Father, but here the Father is glorified by the fruit bearing of the Son of God. Peace was the great gift of Christ to His suffering followers; here added to the peace, there is the joy in the fulfilment of the Father's will. The travail of soul is passed, and the Lord's peace is shared by His redeemed, who have been faithful to Him. The vine is the kingdom, therefore grace and mercy are seen predominant, building up the temple of God, and operating as the dominant spirit amongst men. (2) The commandment of Christ at this point, in the experience of a soul, and in history, is love; the essence of the love being His Own love to His redeemed. The disciples are no longer servants in the house of God, obeying laws, moral precepts; they are the friends of the King who know the Father's will. (3) The spirit of the friend of the King must not be changed by such marvellous grace; the Lord Jesus Christ must still continue to be the only Example for every thought, word, and action. (4) These thoughts, uttered by the Lord Jesus Christ, were necessary for His

disciples, so that they might not stumble in the darkness that surround them. Persecution and reviling is the chronic state between the world and the Church throughout history. The absence of Christ is a serious thing for little children ; but His absence is to be for spiritual growth in grace, so that the Holy Spirit might vict the souls of men of sin, righteousness, and judgment. If things were always to guide the spirit of man, then there never come a spiritual manhood in the knowledge of truth and of obedience to righteousness. (5) The necessity of the separation is clear in it is the means whereby men are to become Christ-like, as the sons of God ; but the separation must be felt as painful ; it is a mourning to the enemy and of lamentation to those who lose the Friend ; but in due time the joy of the world will be changed into mourning, whilst the Church, as if by passing through the tribulations, would reach its joy and consolation. This birth, so precious, will bring the spiritual inheritance so long promised to and at that day all mystery will have passed away, and there will be any necessity to ask for special instructions in the things of God. His Name will fill everything and explain every difficulty in Him men will find their conceptions realised, their hopes fulfilled and their joy fulfilled. (6) These things are parables of the spiritual kind, but the day draws nigh when they will all be explained and then He will speak plainly of the Father. Now men know His Name prevails in heaven ; that He is the Messenger of grace and mercy to sinful men from the Father ; and that He has returned to the Father. In the dark days of adversity men have found peace in but amidst all their troubles they have had good cheer, because He has overcome the world. (7) The intercessory prayer of the Priest for His people closes this precious portion of the Word of God. He is seen praying as if His work were already accomplished ; and His thoughts are set upon the glory which follows the fulfilment of His mission and passion. There is a future, but it is in glory in that communion of spirit which speak of sin and death as things of the past. The righteous Father, so long unknown, has been manifested to men, and the redeemed know through their blessed Saviour, Teacher and High Priest, the love, grace, and mercy of God in Christ.

CHAPTER XVIII., 1—32, may contain the first cycle of the passion (1) The passion of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the preparation for the cross seems to be summed up in the following thoughts : the gardener's Gethsemane, its choice and its agony ; false disciples who betray Him into the hands of His enemy ; the knowledge of the future ; His power and the restraint necessary to be laid upon Himself not to use His power to punish men ; His care over His disciples that they be kept safe ; the foolish, hasty, sinful actions of His disciples appealing to the sword ; and the steady determination at ever to drink the cup given to Him by the Father. It will be seen that these thoughts are not limited to Jesus, but they are equally applicable to His Holy Spirit in His mystical body. (2) The Lamb is ready for the sacrifice ; and His death is seen to be sacrificial accom-

to the prophecy of the high priest: He dies, not for Himself, but for the people. (3) Simon Peter and John followed Jesus; the issue being that at that time, and say, during the order of the visible manifestation of Christianity in the Roman Empire, Peter and the visible Church denied the Lord. (4) As after this denial of Christ, and of the Spirit of Christ in Christendom, there followed the strange spectacle of the Lord Jesus Christ being tried before His Own servants, condemned, and shamefully treated by them, so those who know the history of the Church of Rome and how it has treated the Word of God, by actually making it subject to traditions, by dishonouring it through prohibiting its study, will see where the analogy of history comes in. The Churches of East and West have been equally guilty in this matter; they have poured contempt upon the Word of God; and the good that the Bible speaks to men has been silenced by evil men through their perverted ways. (5) Again, as Peter was found denying his Lord twice, so the Church of Christ has been found guilty in a similar manner; that is, after the Reformation, and in these days when infidelity in its most advanced form has been regnant amongst men. (6) As the Christ passed from the hands of the chosen people of God, His Own servants, into the hands of the civil power and of the Roman Empire, so the Word of God passed from the Church into the hands of kings and emperors to be tried by them. The spirit of the Evangel lived, and nothing would satisfy the enemies of the Word of God but its death; and because the empire and its princes were more potent than the Church of Rome, the matter was referred to great councils and diets, the result being that the empire would have the Church judge according to its own laws, whilst as nothing short of death would please the Church, the matter was committed to the civil power. (7) As in the conversation with Pilate the Lord Jesus Christ revealed that His kingdom is one which differs in its order from that of ambitious empire, and that its great power is truth, so men may be able to discern that the same scene has transpired in Christendom, where men have deliberately chosen empire and dominion, and have been led by the men of their choice, as vile and wicked as Barabbas, the robber and murderer. The question, "What is truth?" has been upon the lips of men, but they have been guilty indeed in not listening to the Word of God, the Truth, and of taking their own self-seeking, foolish ways.

CHAPTER XIX. may contain the second cycle of the passion. (1) As Jesus Christ is seen in the hands of Pilate, scourged, mocked, and shamefully treated as an impostor; the priests and officers of the Jewish temple crying out, "Crucify Him;" Pilate declaring His innocence; the Jews bringing a charge against Him of calling Himself the Son of God; the vacillating ruler irresolute what to do; the reference to Cesar; the declaration of Pilate, "Behold your King;" and the cry of the priests, "Crucify Him," "We have no King but Cesar," so history reveals a similar spiritual movement as related to the Word of God and the followers of Christ, kings and princes, and the Church of Rome. The analogy is not difficult to trace; in fact, the story in

the New Testament is a prophetic sign and utterance of the things which have come to pass in these last days. (2) The story of the Christian era as related to the Spirit of Christ is that of bearing the cross to Golgotha and of crucifixion with malefactors. To the people generally and to rulers Jesus has been the Prophet of Nazareth and the King of the Jews; but to His bitterest enemies His Word has been treated as an impostor as compared with the traditions of His fathers; they have been king, and not the Christ in the Word of God. (3) The visible forms which cover spiritual truths have been diverse amongst men; but the seamless robe of His Own Word, Name, and Spirit has been kept undivided, something desired by all, yet as if to the chance of a lottery. Is it not a strange thing that the Word of God should have been cast amongst men in this way, changed from hand to hand at haphazard, revered by them, and yet kept safe in God's lap, watched over and preserved as God's Witness against men, and the means of blessing to them. (4) It is Jesus and His Spirit that have been crucified amongst men; and during the crucifixion He has not been thinking of Himself, but of His mother, His Church, and of His beloved ones. In fact, it is around the cross that the family of the Father in heaven meet; and the Son of God commends and commends to His beloved ones those who are so dear to Himself. (5) But the things of the kingdom of mercy have their fulfilment according to the Scripture. His thirst has been great for the salvation of His people; and this thirst brought Him to die the cursed death of the cross. In response to His thirst there has been given to Him not the new wine of the kingdom, but a little vinegar, even the perverted, selfish love of the human soul, yet this has been gratefully received; and it has been to Him the means of refreshment for the finishing of His work of mercy. (6) "A bone of Him shall not be broken." "They shall look on Him whom they pierced." As with the Lord Jesus Christ, so with His Word; it cannot be broken, because it contains the unity and the harmony of the divine will; but it has been pierced as with a spear and by many arrows; and what has issued from the pierced Word of God has been His Own witnesses as to the truth not only of the Scriptures, but of all truth in philosophy and science. This is a far-reaching explanation of the analogy between the death of Jesus Christ and the death of the Word of God in Christendom; but as the Spirit in Jesus Christ set free by death produced a Pentecostal harvest in the early Church in the Roman Empire, so the death of the power of God's Word in Christendom is about to bring about a spiritual result of even a more marvellous kind within the kingdom of truth and righteousness. (7) Was the Lord Christ as a dead body in the tomb of Joseph, and has the Word of God been a dead thing? To the sensual organs, yes; but to the world of spiritual thought, certainly not. This is not the climax of defeat, but of the victory of the passion, because in the tomb there is fully manifested the long-suffering patience and grace of God. There is never haste with God; whether it is in the creation of a universe or in the re-creation of man, there is the steady, persistent operation of method or law, and only when all that is wise, just, true, good, and gracious

fully accomplished can He rest from His labours. As it was necessary that the body of Jesus should lie in the tomb from Friday evening to the Lord's Day morning, to satisfy men that the Lord was really and not merely scourged, crucified, and pierced by men, in a figurative sense, but also left amongst men, and treated with shame and contempt. Surely men cannot accuse God of rashness or impatience; because it may be said He has been standing by, and hearing the impious words which have been falling from the lips of men. Truly the Lord not like men, else in the hour of their boasted victory He would have broken in upon their rejoicings with His hand of vengeance. It is not a sign of want of power, because the punishment is not immediate; but it is as the Majesty of the power of the Son of God that He can restrain the sword of Judgment, and even whilst the strongest objections call for justice, to exercise patience, kindness, and mercy towards sinful men.

CHAPTERS XX., XXI., may contain the cycle of the resurrection, power, and glory of God. (1) It is a new day, a new era, and a woman, gracious one, is seen in the darkness seeking the Lord's body, but the one has been removed, and resurrection has already taken place. The two most highly favoured disciples run to the tomb and find it empty; the loving disciple being enabled to discern the truth of the resurrection without a sight of the risen body. This is the hour of doubt to those who do not know the truth of the resurrection; of hope to those who see the change in the visible order of men's thoughts; but of great joy to those who perceive and conceive the marvellous thoughts so long hidden away in the Scriptures, and at last made manifest to men. (2) The penitent ones cannot leave the tomb, the place where the Lord lay; in other words, the Bible remains most precious to gracious souls, and without it life would be devoid of life. It reveals to the soul that which is faithful and true; and these angels of God ask why there should be weeping at such a time. But Jesus is not far separate from His Word and the means of grace; and He reveals Himself by His Own gracious Word to the gracious soul. The Word is risen, but not yet ascended to power and glory; therefore It must not be touched with familiarity, but treated with reverence until the spiritual manifestation is complete. The resurrection is a matter to be communicated to the beloved brethren, so that they also may have joy. (3) The evening of the Lord's day brought the manifestation of Jesus to the disciples with the benediction of peace; they were made glad by His re-appearance in their midst; but at this time He bestowed upon them the new order of the kingdom of mercy by giving them the Holy Spirit with power in the kingdom of heaven. (4) There are disciples who are full of unbelief, and these will not accept the fact of the story of the resurrection from their brethren; but in due time the Lord will appear to the doubters also, and by His gracious manifestations cause them to be ashamed of their doubts. The Lord has done many things in the presence of His followers, and they believe and know that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and that in Him they find eternal life.

(5) There is a great manifestation of the Son of God to those who fishers of men; and though they have been toiling all the night and caught nothing, yet at His coming they will find such a revival that they will not be able to teach men the way of salvation. The Lord will prepare for men, and give unto them the gifts and graces of His Own Holy Spirit, and they will know that the Master is with them without saying, "Who art Thou?" (6) But there is the black and sad past, with three-fold denial of the Master; what can the Church say about that and many other things? The Lord will not mention the past; but His instructions for the future, to His under shepherds, He will bring the past to their remembrance, so that they may be helped for the future. (7) The words of this testimony are true, and "we know that His witness is true." But there are many other matters related to the Word of God which cannot be written, because they constitute the world, yea, the universe, and all that is in and forms man. When men know Jesus Christ, the Word of God, then they will know manifestations of God, and also by His Spirit the laws of the universe. He is Creator, Law-giver, Sustainer, and the Redeemer of men; therefore in Him men live, move, and have their being.

THE BOOK OF GENESIS.

CHAPTER I. This book opens with an account of creation. In verses 1—5 there may be found evolved the following thoughts; these being creation, the negations, formless, void, and darkness, the Spirit of God in operation; the manifestation of light and separation from darkness. In these thoughts men may discern the Archetype of all the manifestations of God, because it gives the Author of creation as distinct from that which is created; the Spirit of God as the Power to evolve the thoughts of God in His works, the Truth or Wisdom of God in the form of Light, by which thoughts are known; the darkness, or the awful possibility of created beings becoming perverted from God, with all the consequences which must follow from such a condition; and the Heaven of God's purity and holiness, which is separated from that which is earthly and sensual. The Creator, the Evolver by design and order, the Truth or Wisdom of God, and the place or condition of Being, may be discerned in these verses, which give the manifestation of the first day.

In verses 6—8 there is division of waters from waters, and earth from heaven, the creation of the second day.

In verses 9—13 the earth is revealed to man in the words, dry land and seas, and these, with all that is without life in the visible creation, constitute what is known as force in its manifested correlations of matter or energy in a static condition and in motion. The life is also manifested in the production of organic plants; and within this kingdom may be classed every form of organism built up by the power of life,

ing to the design or order given to it by the Creator. The
of the third day.

verses 14—19 there is revealed the creation of lights ; here, rising
light above the visible creation of the inorganic and organic
na, there may be discerned the lights of instinct, such as is
nd by the bee, the swallow, or the beaver ; of intelligence, as
nd by the dog, elephant, or horse ; and the intellect of man may
pared to the lesser light, which rules in the field of science or
lge, whilst the greater light may be compared to the moral
f man, by which he knows, loves, and obeys the will of God,
; the supreme law for the human soul. This is the creation of
th day.

verses 20—23 the fish and fowls are created ; in other words, the
creatures which are guided by that light of instinct which is
hem. This is the creation of the fifth day.

verses 24—35 there is the creation of cattle and creeping things,
ng the light of intelligence ; also man is seen as created in the
f God, with dominion over all the lower creatures ; the blessing
rests upon him, and he is endowed with power as the vice-regent
pon this earth.

aintenance for the lower creatures is the green herb, but the food
is the fruit or herb bearing seed ; in other words, they live by
t of instinct and intelligence, but man lives by the Word of
that order of thought which is the true evolution or development
ought. The works of God are "very good ;" and the more man
d to enter into the thoughts of God, the seed-bearing seed, the
ll he admire the works of God, and love and adore the Creator.
he creation of the sixth day.

moral creation was ended, and the development of the great
f God considered as perfected ; here He could rest, enjoying
ve communion with man, a holy creature, fashioned after the
pe of all that is true, wise, and holy ; and in such moral perfec-
mony, and peace is that Sabbath of God in which He delights.

VERS I., II., 1—3, may contain the first cycle of creation. (1)
g the key of Christ's thoughts in the Beatitudes to Creation it
een that although it fits into the new creation by grace, it also
ses with this creation in a wonderful manner. The spirit in the
pe is that which animates the whole ; and it is only when man is
ed, that the kingdom is really developed. The kingdom in man
ses with the kingdom in heaven, and thus the ideal Archetype
all creations or manifestations in time and space, in earth and
yea, and also in what is named the darkness. (2) The division
s from waters conveys the idea of a separate existence, and it
ll inclusive ; within, through, from, and by matter and motion,
s of the earth and heaven is manifested ; and thus the micro-
the earth in man with all manifested in it may be conceived
armonising with the macrocosm of the universe. (3) As
the regenerate spirit there is obedience to law, so the power of
rks by the Spirit of God evolving all external forms of

organism according to their order. (4) As the third blessing infers and includes all law, truth, and righteousness, in the order of the meekness of man, so the lights, sun, moon, and stars, the moral power, intelligence, and instinct in God's creatures harmonise with the first day and fourth Beatitude. (5) As this is the all-inclusive Beatitude of mercy, so the creatures in sea and air respond to its embrace; there is no limitation here in the order of creation, but eventually, the air and land include all orders of intelligence and moral responsibility. (6) As in this day of creation there are found beasts and serpents, so there is no limitation here also, and it may be well to remember that the men do not live upon the Word of God, the seed-bearing seed, place themselves in this catalogue, with this exception, that they were made for a higher purpose, but through sin they fail to live according to the command and law of their being. (7) As the Archetype is the perfectly wise, and holy, so man was made pure in heart, and permitted to be as God. (8) But he is not the Supreme, for the King ordains the food by which he shall live; and it is by living in harmony with the order of nature that he will enjoy the Sabbath of rest and of peace in God.

CHAPTERS II., 4—23, III., may contain the second or prophetic cycle of re-creation. (1) As this portion has received a considerable amount of attention in studying the Bible, it will only be necessary to point out the prophetic aspect of this new creation and its historical relations. As in creation there is the Archetype into which creation will be formed, so in the re-creation of man there is the Lord God to whom man is related, and upon whom he is dependent. Sin has left the world a moral desert, the Lord God reforms man, breathes into him a new life, and he lives. (2) Man's being becomes like a garden and a river; or the ideal humanity may be compared to these things; in man there exists all that will give happiness, but good and evil are in his path, and he must choose which he will serve. (3) As man is seen placed in a garden by God, and instructed by Him as to his duties and limitations, it must follow that God is King, and that it is man's duty to obey the revealed will of God in the spirit of meekness. (4) Man has fallen by sin; the hidden purpose of grace and the wisdom of God are the means of his restoration. With the lower creation there is no difficulty in giving them names which agree with their nature; but with man it is very different, there is required a help-meet for this work, so that man may be brought back to righteousness. (5) The Help-meet is the Merciful Saviour from whom the Church is derived, by the work of redemption accomplished by His death. (6) The temptation in Eden reveals the method of man's falling away from God, and it is also a true figure of the continuance of the temptations which have surrounded men in all ages. Man sinned against God, but he could not restore himself to purity and the vision of God. (7) The King came to judgment, to pronounce a curse upon the serpent which deceives and sins, and also to give to man the hope that in due time the serpent's head would be crushed, whilst the heel of the woman's seed would be bruised. (8) There is sacrifice implied, a measure of reconciliation, the loss of Paradise, and the flaming sword preventing the return of man to

ur of God by his own works. It is by the promised seed that salvation; that darkness will be overcome by the light; and world which bears thorns and thistles will be brought to bloom th a greater glory than the Eden of creation.

ER IV. may contain the third cycle of thought, and it centres Cain, Abel, and Seth, the three children of Adam. To understand this cycle it is necessary to remember that the first cycle gives in the spirit of all creation. The word God embraces all that God his name God, though usually limited to the moral domain and ones, may be applied to the kingdom of grace also, as expressed words, "God is love." The second cycle harmonises with the objective world of thought, as represented by the history of sin and redemption in a human soul and in humanity; and the third cycle the kingdom, or the inheritance which man has received from God. If this cycle is viewed in this light, then the great strife of the pre-eminence, power, and authority, is seen in operation, and the result is discerned as deciding upon whom the birthright and blessing will go. (1) Cain and Abel bring their sacrifices unto God; the former acknowledges the supremacy of God, but not his own guilt, and therefore is forfeiture of favour; the latter, by his offering, confesses his unworthiness of favour, and his offering is accepted, whilst the offering of Cain is rejected. The blessing and birthright, it may be said, are about to be conferred upon Abel by God's grace, in the form of His gracious government; but Cain is encouraged to do right, and is told that by doing well he would rule over his brother. It is the nature of man that is all important before God, and it is only when the spirit is found in man that he can be acceptable to God. (2) The hatred in Cain led to murder, and the sorrowing, persecuted Cain was chased from earth to find comfort in heaven. (3) Man may murder to obtain a kingdom and to prevent others from reigning; they conceive is their portion by right; but there is the King of the world Judge of murderers who intervenes in the affairs of this world and then the would-be ruler is dethroned and banished to Nod—land of wandering; they become vagabonds on the face of the earth, driven away from the face of God. (4) When men are banished from God's presence, and have the brand of the murderer on their foreheads do not reform themselves, but they set up a kingdom of iniquity, of despotism, of despotic power, and tyranny; in this kingdom in their own thoughts there is to be found the mystery of iniquity. (5) The history of the race of Cain has been found in cities and fortified, and war: purity, mercy, righteousness, meekness, sorrow and humility of spirit, have not been valued by them or their descendants. (6) The highest point they have reached has been in the sciences; but even the issue in this direction has been nothing more than the foolish spirit of boasting and of murder; that spirit is so fully exemplified in the licentious, despicable Lamech. (7) The world will be destroyed by the coming of the King of peace, the Messiah, or the appointed One; and in His seed the Christ men will be saved by the name of the Lord, that is, Christians.

CHAPTERS V. may contain the fourth cycle. There is a new beginning; another conception of creation and of history. It is "the beginning of the generations of Adam." The Creator, the creature in the likeness of God, and the blessing received are related as bearing up this creation. (1) By sin there was the forfeiture of the inheritance and of the blessing. It pleased God to give these to Abel; but through his death Seth became the appointed one in his stead, and thus kingdom of heaven, as found in the poor spirit, is the portion of **Seth**. (2) Enos—fallen man, subject to evil—may speak of the mourning **Enos**. (3) Cainan—possession—may speak of the spirit of meekness by which the heavenly inheritance and blessing are obtained. (4) Mahalalel—illumination of God—seems to speak of the Word of God, of truth and righteousness. (5) Jared—that descends and rules—may speak to **Jared** of Him who in His mercy came down from heaven to be the Saviour so that He might be raised to reign over men. (6) Enoch—dedicated or initiated—speaks of the spirit of Elijah, of the Baptist, and of the Puritans who have testified against the wickedness of men. (7) Methuselah—he has sent his death—may speak of Him who died for men, or of those who rejected Jesus, and thus chose death rather than **life**. (8) Lamech means poor, or who is struck; and thus the idea of judgment is introduced. (9) Noah means rest, or consolation; and it is in him and his sons that a new order of events will arise, the world being judged, condemned, and punished during his life. This portion or cycle may be supposed to contain the hidden wisdom of God; and the seed-thoughts may reveal to some extent the purpose of grace which is manifested in and by Jesus Christ.

CHAPTERS VI., VII., may contain the fifth cycle. (1) There is seen the manifestation of great wickedness amongst men; the adulteration of the holy seed; the giants in wicked deeds, mighty men of renown. (2) The wickedness of man so great that his thoughts were evil only and evil continually; but the seed of grace was found in Noah. (3) Noah and his sons form the new kingdom of heaven upon the earth; from them the nations proceed by generation; the earth was full of corruption and violence, and although there was mercy toward the just and faithful, the wicked must be dealt with in justice and by judgments. Judgment and destruction is the method of God's dealings with those who despise His Word and reject His grace. (4) The means of salvation is found in the Ark; and hiding in it, men are safe from the judgments of God. (5) The work of God is seen as finished, and the gracious personal invitation is given, "Come thou and all thy house into the Ark." (6) The creatures which entered the Ark were clean and unclean; but in obedience to God's Word they entered the Ark and they were safe. (7) The flood came upon the world, and it continued for forty days and forty nights, a complete period; and as the waters rose, the creatures were destroyed, so that in due time the corrupt world disappeared from view, and only those who feared and obeyed God were kept alive.

CHAPTER VIII. may contain the sixth cycle. (1) It is made known

in the prevailing waters, by God remembering Noah, and by the passing away of the waters at the end of 150 days. (2) The resting of the Ark on Mount Ararat—holy ground—for example, in the Holy One. (3) The conflict of the spirit of the world and the spirit of Christ amongst men, as typified by the unclean raven and the holy, gentle dove. (4) The dove sent out alone and returning with the olive-leaf, and the being sent forth again after seven days, may speak of the kingdom of peace in Jesus Christ, a sweet hope of better things. (5) The returning no more into the Ark, the manifestation of the kingdom of truth, righteousness, and peace amongst men. (6) The removing of the covering of the Ark and the dry ground may speak of the open manifestation of God's will through His Word as in these days. (7) The going out of the Ark and taking possession of a baptized, purified world may speak of the sons of God entering upon their inheritance of this earth, the power of evil being completely subdued.

CHAPTERS VIII., 20—22, and IX., may contain the seventh cycle.

(1) Rest and peace have come upon what was a corrupt world, and man offers unto God a true sacrifice. This change of circumstances in man is well pleasing to the Lord, and from henceforth blessings are to be shed upon his pathway. (2) The ordinance of life is established in man and amongst men through the blessing of God; the old days of violence and corruption, of spoliation and murder are to be forgotten, and not only is the bodily life to be a sacred thing, but the moral life of the soul may be discerned as the spiritual fact beyond the organic form. (3) There is a covenant of grace with its all-comprehensive symbol, as found in the rainbow, and it speaks to men of the everlasting covenant of God's mercy in the meek and lowly Son of man. (4) The kingdom of mercy, peace, and righteousness is hidden away in the words Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (5) To Noah and his sons were given the Lord's vineyard of mercy, but the father drank of the vine of this world's pride of power; he became drunk, and to his shame he has been uncovered in his tent in the face of the nations. (6) The curse on Canaan, the blessing in Shem, and the enlargement in Japheth embody in germ the history of the nations upon the face of the earth; and it will be when these prophecies are fulfilled that the curse will be removed from the degraded sons of Ham, and there will be seen one brotherhood amongst the nations. (7) This will be the manifestation for a cycle of time—say, until the millennium of rest and peace—the world's Sabbath-day.

CHAPTERS X., XI., may contain the eighth cycle. (1) The sons of Japheth—widely extending—are taken first in order; it may be suggested that they are so, because they embrace all history. It is from Japheth that there is a departure; and not until Japheth possesses the kingdom of this earth, with Ham for a slave or servant, and is found dwelling in the abodes of Shem, will there be peace. This end it may be said, has been attained, because the sons of Ham are the slaves and servants of the sons of both Shem and Japheth, and

historically, geographically, and spiritually, the sons of Japheth are living in the tents or abodes of Shem. (2) The sons of Ham—hot or black—have had their day of empire; and the issue has been altogether contrary to their aspirations. They are no longer mighty hunters and great rebels, but miserable down-trodden creatures, the helpless objects of men's pity and compassion. Nineveh, Babylon, and Egypt are fallen; Nineveh is a waste and desolation, Babylon is broken, and the sceptre is gone from Egypt. (3) Canaan—a trader—seems to receive special attention, this vile son of a wicked father seems to symbolise the method of the men of this world, in their cunning and craft, as well as in the abominations of which they have been guilty. Canaan is specially related to Israel, the former being a figure of the spirit of self-seeking, and of the corruptions which pre-exist in the soul of man before the spirit of grace is received; and from that time the fleshly Canaan and the spiritual Israel are in a state of constant warfare. (4) Shem—the name—speaks of the hidden purposes of God's grace amongst men; he is the father of Eber—one that passes, or wrath—and the brother of Japheth, the elder son—in other words, the Name in Jesus Christ is the one of passage; in reality, in God's sight it is the full purpose of mercy that is kept in view. In Japheth all history is embraced; in Ham the history of sin, its rebellion against God and strife with His people, and the consequences of this folly; and in Shem the Hidden Name of God which constitutes His highest kingdom of righteousness. (5) In the descendants of Noah there are embodied the purposes of God; but the actions of men, as seen in their travels in the land of Shinar—land of two rivers, or watching of him that sleeps—and their proposal to build a city and tower for their glory, speak of the self-glorifying spirit by which men have been animated. (6) The Lord has not permitted the foolish schemes of men to succeed; the great Babel which they would have built is a mass of confusion; language has been confounded by those who are considered as the wise and skilful master-builders of this city and tower, so that, positively, at the present day wisdom, or philosophy, and the government amongst men, is a strife about words, and men cannot build, because they do not understand what wise men write, or crafty statesmen propose. (7) The index-finger of hope leaves the tribes of Japheth and the descendants of Ham, and it points downward in the history of the Shem family until it reaches Terah—to breathe, spirit—and then the thoughts are concentrated upon Abram, the chosen of God, the father of the faithful.

CHAPTERS XII., XIII., may contain the first cycle in the history of Abram. (1) In obedience to the Call that came unto him from God, he left his kindred to go forth to a land that God would show him, believing that, according to the promise, through himself a great nation would be manifested amongst men, and that in his seed all nations would be blessed. (2) Abram means the great father, Sarai—my princess, and Lot—hidden or veiled—in other words, in this exodus from Haran there is not merely a new departure of faith and grace, as represented by Abram and Sarai, but also there may be discerned the

hidden germ of unbelief in Lot and his descendants. They reach Canaan, the land of promise, but it is not in the shining of the noon-day sun, but rather in the pale moonlight; and as Abram is the great reality, God's great type of faith, so Lot is like the shadow thrown across the path, bringing doubt and strife in his track. (3) The arrival at Shechem, and the promise given there, speak of the kingdom given Abram by God; the altar and sacrifice being the means by which the visible things are sanctified to God. (4) The removal to Bethel, and the altar and sacrifice there, speak of the consecration of the soul and spirit unto God. (5) There was a famine of bread, of the word of God's mercy to men in that country, dominated by the Canaanite spirit, and thus Abram travelled southward until he reached the land of Egypt. Into this world faith and grace have come, husband and wife, brother and sister; and faith when weak has been very too ready to deny the closer and more tender relationship, and to acknowledge that which is not so binding in its nature. That this is a grave mistake can easily be seen, it is a departure from trusting the Fountain of grace, and such unbelief must bring trouble. (6) The thing Abram feared came upon him, for Sarai was taken into the house of Pharaoh; but if faith suffers through the departure of the spirit of grace, the Lord still remains gracious; He protects His loved, plagues His enemies, and in due time brings those who have been separated together again. Grace brings no blessing to the proud, worldly spirit: this sweet spirit is to be desired, but without faith it is impossible to please God, and thus grace becomes a plague, and not a blessing. (7) From Egypt back to Bethel, the place of the altar, and to communion with God, is a common experience in the Christian life; and they are truly rich who, leaving the world behind them, seek God's blessing and guidance in all that they do. (8) When the peace-seeking son has found the Father's house, and had communion with God, then there usually follows strife and persecution; the hidden evil spirit raises its head, and the result is separation. (9) The wicked who choose selfish ends go toward Sodom; but the selfish and the God-fearing find themselves in the presence of God, dwelling in the sacred place, and enjoying the divine fellowship.

CHAPTERS XIV., XV., may contain the second cycle. (1) The state of things is that of war; the world without and the world within are in strife, and in this embroilment the veiled spirit of unbelief finds a place. (2) Abram, the spirit of faith, comes to the rescue, and the others are spoiled. (3) At this point appears the King of Salem, who is both priest and king; one greater than Abram, from whom he received both bread and wine, and to whom Abram gave tithes. The King who rules in the faithful soul, even Jesus Christ, gives to men the true bread and wine, and in the soul He must reign supreme. (4) The righteousness of Abram lies in this, that he will not take even so much as a thread of the property which belongs to others; they who are animated by such a spirit, being faithful, are counted as righteous before God. (5) The world may threaten destruction, but it shall see, as in a vision, God, the Shield and Defender of His people,

and also their great Reward ; but this Reward is in the Heir of all things. To believe God in this promise, is righteousness ; to doubt and to question God about the fulfilment of His promises, is to depart into the darkness. (6) Abram believed in the Heir, and he was counted as righteous ; but as to the inheritance possessed by the wicked Canaanite, here unbelief laid hold upon him, and there followed the divided sacrifice, the deep sleep, and the awful horror of soul. Too close introspection of the Canaanitish devils within the soul is not good ; the more they are watched or studied the more active they become, until at last they are like the evil genii which, once set free, cannot be bound again. It is evidently a mistake to think that a man can personally crucify the base affections and the unholy desires of the soul. The true method for man is to leave them to starve in the pit or the slough within, to seek constant shelter under His shield, to live upon the Word, and to be instant in service ; then faith ministering to the spirit of grace will keep the flame burning brightly within, and the hydra-headed serpent will not dare to pass through such a fire. If the Sun go down, then there will be left the smoking furnace and the burning lamp of God's Word, and the eye of faith being fixed on them, there will be peace within. (7) The time may be long and weary, but God has promised the inheritance in all its fulness ; and assuredly it shall be possessed by the faithful and the true who follow Jesus Christ.

CHAPTERS XVI., XVII., may contain the third cycle. (1) Sarai had no children ; the gracious spirit longs to bear and to travail in birth, so that souls may be born to God ; but this desire has too much of the carnal, fleshly spirit in it, and so the soul's desire is not granted. In the spirit of meekness, the path of duty is to wait patiently, to seek for guidance according to God's will, and to be obedient. Here Sarai and Abram fail ; and by means of Hagar—fear, or flight—they attempt to work out the gracious purposes of God by their own foolish conceits. (2) Faith departs from the spirit of grace, and takes to his bosom the Egyptian slave, and there is conception ; and it is when the conceited servant despises the mistress that there is the discovery of the grave mistake that has been made. The spirit of free grace cannot endure the self-conceit of the slave raised above her rightful position, and thus sin brings its punishment. (3) The name and nature of the child born according to the flesh is Ishmael ; his hand is ever ready to strike for carnal things, and his tongue willing to talk about forms and fleshly conceits. He has been in a great measure the kingdom amongst men hitherto, and it is surely time that men should understand that this son of a slave has no right whatever to the inheritance which he has claimed, or to cause so much trouble to his brethren. Not Ishmael, but Jesus Christ is the true King, and all troublers in Israel must be banished from amongst their brethren. (4) The mystery of history, of iniquity, of perverted truth, and righteousness is bound up in this Ishmael spirit, and though men may dislike this son of an Egyptian slave, it is true that Hagar and Ishmael have had a great deal more than their share in the habitation of the faithful. (5) The day of slavish fear, and of the strife of tongues, passes away ; an

new revelation is given to men by the Almighty God. There is a better covenant than that of Sinai; the nation is to enlarge into nations, and in the Seed, the Perfect One, there are to be possessed all the promises of God. At this point Abram becomes Abraham—in other words, as God's Nature Jah is incorporated into the heart of Abram's name, so God in Jesus Christ is to become incarnate and spiritually, after the resurrection, the Living Power in the faithful followers of God. (6) But if God will indeed dwell in man, it must be in the circumcised soul, in the pure heart of those who see God. (7) In due time after the circumcision and the purifying in the Church then Sarai will become Sarah, that is, God living in the Church, and by her there will come the son of love, faith, and grace, who will dispossess the man of strife. (8) There is a day of true circumcision coming for the kingdom of God; and the Lord of peace, the King of kings, will bring it to men in due time.

CHAPTERS XVIII., XIX., 1—26, may contain the fourth cycle. (1) The gracious visitation of the three angels to the plains of Mamre, or Hebron, and the welcome they received from Abraham; this is the spirit of faith. (2) The revelation to Sarah that she should conceive and bear a son, the age and condition of Sarah as past bearing, the natural strength being gone, her joy and laughter at the thought, and the Lord's words, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" are all deeply interesting thoughts. They point to these facts that whether in the individual soul, or in a church, there is no power whatever for the conception of God's gracious thoughts. He gives the blessed seed of the Word, the power to conceive His gracious thoughts, and although these things are impossible with men, they are not too hard for the God of all grace. Hope gives joy that thus it shall be; but at the same time there will be a residue of doubt as to the wisdom, power, and grace of God. (3) God's purposes of grace and of judgment are hidden from men; the method of His dealings are an awful mystery to the unconverted, but the faithful who love His commandments, and are gracious in their actions, the Lord is pleased to cause to understand His holy and blessed will. (4) The great mystery of grace is a man pleading with God for men. Let the vision pass beyond Abraham, and then Jesus Christ is seen as the Intercessor, and He is truly the most wonderful manifestation of grace which man can possibly conceive of or think upon. (5) To the camp at Hebron the angel came and visited Abraham and Sarah, but to Sodom there went two angels. This was a gracious visitation to the wicked citizens of Sodom, and they were guilty in rejecting and despising God's messengers. But at a later period in history, in the day of mercy, there came to Jew and Christian the Lord of angels, and His voice is still heard amongst men, by the Old and New Testaments, His angels, that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom than for those who have heard His blessed words and have rejected His Spirit. Then the Lord looked down upon Sodom, and listened to His servant pleading for the guilty; but what shall be done to the awful Sodom that has trampled the Word of God under its feet, and rejoiced in the thought that the Crucified has been put to

death again? Unless He become our Intercessor the pleading of man is vain; if the thorn marks on His brow, the nail prints in His hands and feet, and the pierced side do not plead for the despisers of God's grace, then they are truly undone. Thanks be to the Name of the Gracious One, as He did not turn away from Abraham before He endured such things on man's behalf, so it may be truly said He will not be less gracious in the day of His merciful visitation. (6) But it is not of the gracious Lord that the faithful are afraid: they dread what must befall the spiritual Sodomites who are so prejudiced, selfish, self-willed, ignorant, and full of hatred toward all that is good, true, and holy. They also may have been guilty of laying their hands upon the Holy One in His Word, judicial blindness may be upon them, and persistent in their wickedness, they may be groping about at this very moment, seeking to destroy the Saviour of men, and the only Intercessor betwixt God and men. (7) When the Son of man cometh shall He find faith on the earth? This is a word for all, because there are those who profess that they love and obey God, and yet they are found in league with Sodom, and united by many bonds to those who despise God's grace. If ever there was a time when the sons of God should be separated from the spirit of Sodom it is at this day, for assuredly the hour of judgment has come, and woe shall be upon those who know not the day of their visitation. (8) But this separation from carnal things, fleshly lusts, and worldly pleasures, is an awful struggle. There is no apparent reason for haste, and yet God's voice may be distinctly heard saying, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou on all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." (9) The end is safety to Lot and his daughters; barely saved, the Lord having mercy upon them, and dragging them out of the sink of iniquity; whilst to those whose heart is with the pleasures, delights, and wealth of Sodom, the curse is petrification, even to remain as the doomed and a monument of God's anger. God is the true and righteous, and all that He does is right. Mercy comes pleading with men seeking their salvation. This is the mystery of grace, but mercy despised and rejected is changed into the Judge, and in the judgments that fall upon the wicked there can be discerned the mystery of iniquity and its awful results.

CHAPTERS XIX., 27—38, XX., may contain the fifth cycle. (1) The key-note is that of mercy triumphing over judgment, the faithful being saved to see the overthrow of the wicked, and the important fact that it is on account of the Faithful One that the worldly followers of God are saved from the destruction that operates around them. (2) Will those who are carnal seek after God, and be grateful unto Him for their great deliverance? The reply is found in the drunk father, the depraved daughters, the incestuous relationship, and the generations which proceed from such an intercourse. This incident is a parable in history, in the human soul, and in the Christian religion; and it is when the veil is removed from the depraved human soul and its own incestuous actions are studied, which produce, through inordinate conceit, a false wisdom and a fierce spirit, that the parable is apprehended. In the

is seed may be found in what is known as Gnosticism, the spirit of those falsely-named Christians, and the false prophet. (3) Faith and Grace visited the Philistine here, as in Egypt, Abraham said of Sarah, "She is my would rule in the soul and protect Grace ; but when the world speaks, Faith shrinks from the contest, there is Grace is left unprotected in the hands of the uncircumcised affections. (4) But if man will not protect what is the God watches over what is so precious in His sight, and such the gracious one in whom is the seed of God's Lord is gracious to the graceless, and He restores to precious possession of His Own grace. (6) The kindly Abimelech is a valuable lesson to the faithful in Jesus could not be thinking all kinds of evil thoughts about dutifully they should do the right, and act toward all in all sincerity and honesty. (7) When there is good-will amongst men, then the Lord will hear the faithful servants, and the civil power or the State will be the possession of the Church, but through the Church intercessor on its behalf. So long as the State and the the house, the Church being the handmaid or prisoner there is no blessing, or fruitfulness ; but rejoined to faith, union with the living Head, then blessings will come to the State. If the faithful servants of God hold so lightly as to say, "She is my sister," instead of realising the truth, will it be any wonder if the despised sister will be not permitted to go free until grace is gladly acknowledged of the soul, even dearer and sweeter a thousand fold ?

may contain the sixth cycle. (1) It opens with the vision of the Lord to Sarah, the conception and birth of Isaac, words, and in truth, all that these things mean in Jesus Christ, the Holy Heir of all things. (2) There is the joy of Sarah, the weaning of Isaac and the feast ; and what the nature is this of the coming of the Holy One into the world, He brings with Him. This conception may be said to be with the individual soul, so with the world, there is joy and laughter since Jesus came into the world, and it is all the world will rejoice in Him. (3) Conflict has been things in the hut at Mamre, in the human soul, and at the carnal spirit must not always live and reign over the gracious Heir resides. (4) It is a hard struggle between the Egyptian spirit of pride, and the carnal affections, the wilful ways ; but it is the right thing to do, for as long as the carnal and the gracious spirit cannot agree in man, and as long as forms and ceremonies could not harmonise with the spirit of Isaac and Ishmael, or self and the spirit of Jesus, are they cannot both reign in the same place. (5) The Lord God bears onward to this end, the termination of the

reign of Moses, the servant, and the coming sovereignty of Jesus Christ, the Son of God ; but beyond the hidden things there is the purpose of grace for the salvation of Hagar and her boy, and this is accomplished by the faithfulness, truth, and mercy of God. This parable, and the facts of history which illustrate this thought, are very beautiful. The picture of the dying boy, the mother full of grief, the prayer-hearing God, the ministering angel, and the well of salvation opened in the faithfulness of God in the desert, gives a grand conception of the grace and mercy of our Father in heaven. (6) The relations betwixt Abimelech and Abraham may represent in what manner there will come the end of strife betwixt Church and State. The latter has been guilty of taking away the well of God's salvation, and too often it has been used to minister unto purposes which are not in harmony with the laws of grace. The covenant, the seven lambs, and the well of Beer-sheba, speak of reconciliation, peace, and faithfulness ; and when each power, in subservience to God, works in its own sphere, then the strife of past centuries will be ended. (7) With peace there is the planting of trees of righteousness in the earth, trust in the faithfulness and truth of God, and communion and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is also the everlasting God.

CHAPTERS XXII., XXIII., may contain the seventh cycle. (1) They open with the command of God that Abraham shall offer his son as a burnt-offering on Mount Moriah. In other words, God comes to man to bring peace, but it seems to come by the drawn sword and the altar of sacrifice. It is the often repeated thought in the gospels, the renunciation of self, and the following of the Saviour of men. It is so with God, with Jesus Christ, and with all who follow Him, for only by sacrifice can peace rest upon men ; and there is no peace possible for the soul without self-sacrifice. (2) The method of the disciple of Jesus Christ is obedience in the spirit of faith ; what is pleasant must be left behind, and life should be one continual burnt-offering unto God. (3) What is the will of God for man's salvation ; the order of the divine method of making peace ? It is explained in the conversation of Abraham and Isaac, God provides the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world. (4) Sacrifice and salvation are a great mystery ; but to man there comes the voice from heaven of the Lamb that God has provided ; the method of His sacrifice and all these things are to be seen in the sacred mount of God, in His precious Word of truth and righteousness. (5) When the hidden mystery of grace and God's method of peace-making are disclosed to men, then there follow blessing, multiplication, and power upon the faithful, and through them blessings to all the nations of the earth. (6) To Abraham, the spirit of faith is given through Sarah, or grace, the means of blessing, to the world ; but unto Nahor—dry, hot—through Milcah—queen—there were born eight sons. There seems to open up at this point an allegory hitherto unnoticed, and it is that Abraham represents faith, and Nahor the intellect, or reasoning power, and Haran the fallen, perverted, moral nature. The spiritual nature of man is the field of thought in Terah and his sons ; regeneration is through grace by faith in the

omised Seed, and this is the line of Abraham ; Nahor is the intellectual power which is united to Milcah—queen, the daughter of Haran, and in due time the reason is sanctified and blessed through the union of Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel—filiation of God—with Isaac. Haran is represented as dying before Terah in Ur—fire or light—of the aldeas ; in other words, throwing the vision backward in time, this death is a figure of the sin in Eden which brought death to mankind, and the descendants of Haran on the male side are Lot, Moab, and Ammon, or the hidden, secret, proud, and fierce moral nature in its corrupt state, which cannot be reconciled to God. These germ-thoughts which seem to arise out of this conception deserve, and will well repay, careful study. (7) The time comes when the order of visible things must pass away ; the handmaid of God and her son, Isaac ; the church of the living God and its forms and ceremonies will vanish, but God's truth and faithfulness remain for ever. (8) The forms which are beloved require to be put out of sight, and the appeal is made to Abraham—dust—the son of Zohar—white, bright—for a place of burial. The forms return to dust ; but forms have their father in pure and holy thoughts ; thus for a time the era of faith—Machpelah—double—the thoughts of mortality and immortality, of man's sin and suffering, and God's faithfulness, lie side by side. (9) This possession belongs to death, for it has been purchased openly, and the First-fruits of the immortal lives no longer subject to the power of dust or death. If the field was made sure for Abraham, how much more certain is the resurrection unto life unto those who believe in Him who has risen from the dead ?

CHAPTERS XXIV., XXV., 1—10, may contain the eighth cycle. (1) Abraham is seen in possession of God's promises and blessed by God in all things ; but there remains the desire of the union of his son, Isaac, with one of his own kindred, and to gain this end Eliezer—the steward of God—is called in. Here parable and figure surpass history ; his consummation has not come, the bride has been preparing, but the time of the espousals of the Lord with His redeemed is not yet. (2) The servant will obey the master, but he cannot command the blessing secured ; if he does his duty faithfully it is well ; but there must not be the return of the promised seed to live with his earthly kindred. (3) The faithful servant is seen by the well of living water, and trusting in God, he prays and sets a sign, so that he may know whether his message will be successful or not. It is the Lord of faith that blesses and guides His servants in the right way in every duty. (4) Whilst the servant prays, the Lord gives an answer, and in Rebekah—quarrel ceased—at the well of Nahor, there may be seen God's virgin daughter who will draw water from the well of salvation and give it to His servants. (5) Laban may not have been animated by the best motives when he gave the servant of Abraham such a cordial welcome, but surely when the message of mercy comes from the Lord his soul there ought to be a ready response to God's gracious messenger, and a joyous welcome to the message. (6) The faithfulness of Eliezer is worthy of all commendation ; he is like the servant of the

faithful Master ; his watchword is duty, and humble obedience to the trust confided in him ; and having fulfilled his mission to return and report proceedings without any unnecessary delay. (7) The mission was a successful one ; and near the well Lahai Roi—him that lives and sees—Isaac and Rebekah met. This was a blessed union, and love and joy, peace and comfort come after the bereavement of the past and its sorrows. In other words, there may be discerned the offspring of faith and reason united in marriage, truth and righteousness kiss each other, and the unhappy separation of centuries is healed up. Faith and sight are one, and men live and know the will of God. (8) The union of Abraham with Keturah—fume of the incense—seems to speak of the kingdom of purity, truth, and righteousness, and the outbreathings of the soul and of the nations to God for the manifold blessings received. (9) The Seed of God possesses all things ; faith gives place to the open vision ; Abraham is no more ; and Isaac and Ishmael join hands as brethren beloved in that light which is brighter like the noon-day sun. The figures pass away, but truth lives ; therefore the day will surely come when the things that are here so shamefully foreshadowed will surely come to pass.

CHAPTER XXV., 11—34, may contain the first cycle, as related to the spirit in Isaac. (1) God blesses Isaac ; and he dwells in the light of Him who ever lives and sees His redeemed. (2) The generations of Ishmael, the carnal seed, the first-born by the flesh, are well known ; they have been, and continue to be, a great power in the soul and in the world ; few will regret when this spirit departs this life from the presence of his brethren. (3) The generations of Isaac lead into a different line of thought ; betwixt Ishmael and Isaac the struggle is spiritual, the former having all the carnal lusts and affections on his side, the latter being supported by the grace of God ; but with the offspring of Isaac the bone of contention is the kingdom to which none of the claimants have a right, and neither of them possess any fitness for reigning in the kingdom which they covet. (4) The conception of twins, and struggle in Rebekah's womb, with the prophecies relating to the children, being yet unborn, require to be studied in the light of these thoughts. The 23rd verse contains in germ the history of the world ; it is a story of two kinds of people, two nations, a stronger and a weaker, and yet, in the time, the weaker and the younger will overcome the stronger and the elder. (5) Men have had two kinds of kings reigning over them ; those of the cunning hunter stamp who have been thoroughly despotic of the Nimrod and Nebuchadnezzar kind, and the deceitful, smooth-tongued, semi-religious man with the divine right idea, like the kings and rulers of the sixteenth century. The carnal spirit of the servants of God have had a hankering fondness after the despotic stamp of kings, because through them the venison has been plentiful ; whilst the Rebekah spirit has had a greater affection for the divine right ideal kind of kings ; but unquestionably both have been bad, and the sooner both classes are extinct the better. (6) The carnal, *fleshy*, Esau stamp of men, wearied with hunting and destroying beasts and men, for both forms of hunting have been their chief pleasure,

of the sport, think that death is near, and careless of all cares, never considering duties or responsibilities, sell their for a mess of meat. (7) The more politic, unscrupulous, Jacobites have grasped at the shadow, and they have awakened that the substance, the real divine right to rule has been run out of their hands. The despiser of God's birthright of men deserves to be classed amongst objects of contempt; the covetous, deceitful, vain men, who lust to possess power and glory, their sceptres ought to be broken upon their own heads that they may know that they are not gods, but very wicked

CH. XXVI. may contain the second cycle. (1) It is a time of the land, and thus in figure, in the soul for the bread of God the sacred spirit finds its way to the land of the Philistines. Conscience and not in God is enough to cause a famine; but when it is in God—dispute, a lodging place—then the famine is great and men try to live upon husks. Man leaves God, and He follows after him with His blessings; but the gracious spirit, who sojourn amongst the uncircumcised, must not return to the land of Egypt. (2) To slide backward and neglect fellowship by His Word and Spirit is foolish in the extreme; it leads to ruin, to saying that the beloved, gracious spouse is a sister, and thus it may bring a just rebuke for deceitfulness; those who have no pretensions to godliness, and yet love truth and holiness. (3) God causes His blessings to descend upon those who are just; and because of their success they are often envied and despised of this world. The uncircumcised are blind to their own ruin through such a spirit, because they neglect the wells which are open to men, they get closed up, and so there is the want of living water even in worldly things; in other words, friendship, love of God, and similar affections minister not merely to greater happiness, but are also the means by which men are socially blessed and blessings to others. (4) The strife about the wells Esek and Rehoboth, and the dwelling at Beer-sheba is in the history of the kingdom of heaven, of righteousness, and of godliness. (5) The altar, the well at Beer-sheba, and the God with its blessing may speak of the mercy of God as in the Christian dispensation with its varied experiences. (6) In the latter part of the period of strife, envy, and hatred, there comes the peace, and there is a covenant and feast. (7) Upon that day as the news that living water is found, even Beer-sheba, the Lord's faithfulness in His Holy Word, the seventh well—or the quiet. (8) The climax of the gracious soul and of the nations is by such an experience; but with the Esau spirit it is very sad here is the drinking from a well which breeds corruption, and death, and these things are a source of grief to those who fear, and serve God.

CH. XXVII. may contain the third cycle. (1) The father is

anxious to bestow the blessing upon his beloved son ; and it is around the blessing that all this cycle centres. The thought arises that all the actors are carnal, and that the time has not come for the manifestation of the meek spirit which alone can inherit the blessing of God. The third blessing in the second cycle cannot reach the altitude of thought necessary for comprehending the gracious will of God ; it is the carnal spirit that reigns in the tent at Beer-sheba, and all the actors are found to be self-willed, self-seeking, and not meek, obedient children of God. Isaac is represented as being old and almost blind ; and is there not a grievous blindness in that want of spiritual discernment which prefers the will of self to the revealed Word of God ? for when Isaac desired to choose and bless Esau he was acting contrary to the revelation given to the mother before the children were born. (2) The reasonings of Rebekah and the remonstrances of Jacob are very like the vain, deceitful schemings of the carnal soul ; the object desired is seen and valued, but a righteous method of getting what is cherished is not understood. The heart of man is deceitful indeed, and in the tortuous schemings of the mother and son may be clearly discerned the spirit of those ambitious men who would reign in the inheritance and possess God's blessing, but who all the time are out of harmony with the will of God. (3) The soft, smooth tongue and the hairy hands, the lie with intent to deceive, the doing of evil so that good may come, may all be found in the interview of this deceitful son with the duped father. This is kingcraft as guided by priestcraft ; a supplanter indeed, no more like *the meek King* than the sly fox or the fierce wolf is like a lamb. (4) Yet he gets a blessing, for is he not man's choice, yet given in place of the King ? they would be like other nations, and God grants their request so that they may come to know what it is to serve under such spirits instead of reigning as real kings in happy obedience to law under the gentle sway of the King of kings. (5) Esau came to receive the blessing, but the hour of retribution had arrived, and judgment, not mercy, crossed his path. He had sown to the flesh when he despised the birthright, and now there is no blessing, no place for repentance, not even when it is sought with tears. This also is history, and the story is not merely about Esau and about kings, but it comes to every son of Adam—Edom—who despises the birthright of grace which God has placed within his reach. Esau and his sons, according to the flesh, may rejoice in the thought that the things which are in carnal signs are not eternal : but what comfort can come to men who despise the Word of God, and reject the lowly meek Saviour of men, the King of grace ? (6) Esau begging a mess of pottage and despising the birthright is the first act in the drama ; Esau seeking a way of repentance, and finding that the blessing has slipped through his hands is the second act ; and Esau with his soul set on fire with hellish hatred, and his hand ready to commit murder appears in the third act ; and these signs or actions sketch the life of men, kings, and nations, as the despisers of God's Word of grace. (7) Deceit and hatred cannot live in the same place, therefore the end is the disintegration of the soul, the family, and the nation. Those who ought to be bound by the blessed bonds of love to each other are rent asunder, and no means can be found to soothe and heal the open

ounds which will not be permitted to heal up. This is a sad, sad story, but how very common the experience has been in this world amongst men and nations men know only too well.

CHAPTERS XXVIII, XXIX, 1—14, may contain the fourth cycle.

1) They begin with Isaac's blessing upon Jacob and the desire that the one who prized the birthright and received the blessing should walk in the ways of righteousness and become the inheritor of that spiritual land of which he was at that time a stranger. In these things there may be traced the mystery of righteousness, grace, and truth, as showing how the unworthy Jacob may become the blessed Israel.

2) In Esau's marriage with Mahalath—infirmity—of the fleshly nature of Ishmael, there may be discerned the mystery of evil, because such things speak of further departures from the ways of God, and they are not good but evil only, and evil continually.

(3) The vision at Bethel reveals the order of the brooding love of God over a dark, lined, hopeless world. This is God's kingdom of grace in the hidden mystery of its glory; it is God manifesting Himself in His Son, and by Him becoming the Minister of grace and mercy to mankind. The great and gracious promises to Jacob are for humanity; and the protection and guidance are for those who are called to love, serve, and obey God.

(4) The mystery of the human heart, and of humanity, is the awaking out of sleep and to find God present. This is a strange experience when a man or a nation awakes and finds that God is cognizant of every action; it is dreadful; and it is by this revelation a mercy that the soul is changed to become the house where God dwells.

5) The place where God dwells must be sanctified; but the mystery of the folly of humanity of God's people has been found in this, that they have anointed stones, bodies, garments, and ceremonies; and with the spirit of an Ishmaelite, Canaanite, or Egyptian, they have bargained for bread and raiment and promised tithes to God. The Jacobite spirit has lived long, it lives still amongst men, and not until there is the resignation of spirit, soul, body, and substance unto God can He in every deed dwell amongst men.

(6) In the soul of man and amongst the nations there is a well; but a great stone has been placed upon the mouth of it: this also is the mystery of grace in the soul of man, and amongst men, and both experience and history will testify to the fact, that it is not until there is a return to primitive conceptions of God with all the spiritual powers joined together, that there will be a removal of the stone which covers the hidden fountain of living water, and of the veil which hides the Holy of holies from the sight of man. There is here, as it were, a resurrection from the dead: Haran, Nahor, and Abram meet once more, and the son of Abram becomes the leader amongst his brethren. They must wait until the well is uncovered and then the sweet waters of salvation will be drawn out and given to the seed of God's pasture.

(7) Rachel draws near with her flock, and then as if endowed with a new power Jacob is seen rolling away the stone, watering Laban's flock, and making himself known to his relative by talking, kissing, and weeping. This also is a parable in the kingdom of righteousness; the great stone will be rolled away which prevents

all nations from drinking at the fountain of God's mercy; what the heavy stone is taken away then will come regret because of the foolish past, joy because of the love of God, reconciliation, peace, and good-will amongst men. Humanity will discern that there are not many races and enemies on the face of this earth; but that all are akin, bone and flesh, soul and spirit. The meeting at the well of Hama carries in its bosom the germ of the history of the millennium.

CHAPTERS XXIX., 15—35, XXX., 1—24, may contain the fifth cycle.

(1) The scene is now changed and mercy is the leading thought; in fact it is the revelation of God very much as it is found in the Bible and in history. Underneath the drapery of the figure of the weaver, Leah—weary, tired, and Rachel—sheep—there is found God's purpose of grace and the means by which man will reach the goal desired. Leah represents the moral and legal aspect of the divine thought, but not Judaism in its spirit of bondage; whilst Rachel represents the spirit of Christianity in all its gracious beauty. Jacob is in love with this free spirit, and his love is so strong and fervent that the time he serves that he may receive her as his bride seems as a few days. (2) The custom, the ordinary way of human experience, is not to gain the spirit of the beloved first, but the legal and self-righteous spirit; and this union is not pleasant, there is deception, the soul deceives itself, and then there is the weary toil of duty instead of the service of love. In due time both spirits are united as the wives of the same spirit, but this divided state of the affections is not favourable to love and peace. (3) The order of conception in the soul is toward morality and legalism, and thus the first-born is the one who defiles his father's bed; the second becomes a hearer of the word, the third a member of the priestly order, the fourth the king by divine right. All these are mere externals: forms, ceremonies, and pageantries, and the affections are not touched in their birth or life. (4) The mystery of the hidden kingdom of truth and righteousness is the hungry soul; and it is seen in Rachel who in her agony says, "Give me children, or else I die." This hunger is a good sign, but the impatience and the passion are carnal, therefore the time has not come to give to the beloved the seed of grace. (5) As with Sarah, so with Rachel, there is a departure from the path of faith and trust in the promises, and means, carnal means, are used to fulfil the purposes of God's grace. The fruit of the womb by the handmaid, is a judge to lead to a just consideration of such actions, and to the wrestling spirit in prayer. This spirit is not gracious, but in bonds, and thus there is no peace. Leah follows the example of Rachel, and by her maid there is received Gad, that is a troop of God's prophets and promises, and at last, clothed in flesh, born of a woman made under the law, the son of the bond, and not of the free, there comes to mankind and to the soul the Blessed One. Mercy has come at last, but not as the soul expected or as mankind would suppose; this is a wonderful parable, but it is found true in the manifold ways in which it can be considered. (6) But what can be said of the parable of Reuben's mandrakes; the agreement betwixt Leah and Rachel, and the birth of Issachar? Involved in this

story there is hidden away the mystery of the Lord's passion, because of Reuben's gatherings, that is, man's sins, there came the burden of man's guilt upon him, and He is the true Issachar, crouching between two burdens, bowing his shoulder to receive the yoke, and becoming a servant for man's redemption. By Leah's sixth son, Zebulun—dwelling—there comes the beatific vision of divine illumination through the Holy Spirit; and there is also born unto her Dinah, or judgment. The parable whether as applied to the individual soul or to history is equally perfect; because it is only by spiritual conceptions in harmony with these thoughts in man, as a living power, that he will know the Blessed, be conformed to His gracious, patient, burden-bearing spirit, receive divine illumination by the Holy Spirit, and then pass judgment upon self; and then there will be fitness for spiritual conception, because the heart being pure God's face is seen. (7) Mercy has been working to reach this goal of purity, so that the seed of God may be sown, and when the church, or the soul, has reached this stage of experience in the divine life, then God will not forget His beloved; the approach of barrenness will be taken away and the beloved Joseph will be born, and with him there will come the prophetic thought and desire, "The Lord shall add to me another son." In other words, the beloved who is persecuted is not the last development in the story of redemption, there will also come in due time the Son of the Right Hand to rule in the world and in the human soul. He is our Hope, and our desire should be set on Him at this time.

CHAPTERS XXX., 25—43, XXXI., may contain the sixth cycle. (1) The sphere of thought is that of the human soul, or of the means by which the men of this world seek their own aggrandisement, in wealth, power, or position, in the world. Laban and Jacob are alike deceitful and wicked in their schemes; and self, vile self, rules their desires and emotions. Laban desires Jacob to stay with him, because through Jacob God had blessed him; and Jacob is content to stay with Laban upon his own terms. The field is the world of the soul, the farm, the exchange, the senate, the throne, and even the visible church; self rules, and men treat each other, not as brethren, but more like beasts of prey upon whom they live. (2) The schemings of the men of this world may be discerned in the crafty plans of Jacob; they gather all that is strong, good, and beautiful to themselves; the weak, vile, and worthless are left for those who are not so subtle, able, and clever. (3) Can such a method of life bring peace and contentment? Impossible; for envy and hatred reign supreme in the soul and amongst men; and unless God prevent, strife and murder would be the outcome of such passions. God is pleased to call His servant away from a life so ignoble, and by the influence of His Word there is preparation for a better life. (4) This can be attained only through breaking away from friendship with the world, and by seeking to find the things which God has promised to those who obey His voice, obedience to His Word brings protection, because the fear of God rests upon those who would touch His chosen. (5) The wicked pursue and would destroy, but the God of mercy prevents strife, yet the chosen of God are not holy, idols are

hidden away in the soul, and the things which are loved more than God are made the objects of dispute and of ill-feeling. (6) The remonstrance of Jacob with Laban, and the confession of his own miserable existence whilst in his service, is the fitting conclusion to such a life. The devil, the world, the flesh, self in its manifold forms, are all despicable task-masters; and it is only because God is good, and powerful to protect His servants, that they are not kept in bondage to the lusts, passions, and vile affections of the soul, and of men. (7) There is a peaceful separation betwixt Laban and Jacob; God is called to be the witness that there shall not be any more strife; a sacrifice is offered, and then there is a feast, and Laban bestows upon his children his blessing and departs to his own place.

CHAPTERS XXXII., XXXIII., may contain the seventh cycle. (1) There is preparation for peace, and at Mahansaim—two fields, or two armies—the host of God's gracious messengers meet Jacob and his party giving him a welcome back to the land of promise. Jacob also is changed into a peacemaker, because he has sent messengers to his brother Esau so that there might be reconciliation. (2) The report of the coming of Esau with an army of 400 men was a cause of trouble to Jacob, because he knew not the intentions of his brother. (3) But the way to the God of all peace was open for Jacob; and He could send deliverance from Edom then, even as He gave deliverance out of Egypt. The God of all grace, under whose guidance a man walks, is able to give peace in the soul, and also deliverance from external enemies. (4) Peace is sought by propitiation; a gift with kindly greetings is found to be more powerful than swords, spears, or guns; the former kindles the affections leading to love, forgiveness, and forgetting the past, whilst proud words and a display of force rouses the carnal man to deeds of strife and hatred. Herein lies the wisdom of God, He came to man in His Son, the Gift of God, and His weakness, suffering, and death have made more friends than all the thunders and lightnings of Sinai. (5) The past life of Jacob toward God and his brother was dark, because sin was not confessed nor forgiven; therefore, before the sense of forgiveness, the knowledge of favour, the assurance of mercy and peace can be realised the sinner must meet the past, wrestle with the recording Angel, and get sin put away. It is by God's mercy that men are preserved and permitted to wrestle out of self with its bad past into the beginnings of a blessed future. (6) When this experience has been passed through and there is peace through forgiveness of the past and hope for the future, then the soul can say, "I have seen God face to face," and the things formerly loved, which brought weakness, are abhorred. (7) The cloud is past; the brother offended has come, and there is peace and reconciliation. (8) The kingdom comes in figure at Shechem, and there an altar is raised and the nation is dedicated to God, the God of Israel.

CHAPTERS XXXIV., XXXV., may contain the eighth cycle. (1) The scene changes, and the uncircumcised Canaanites appear. The virgin daughter of Israel, the pure judgment of God, is defiled by them, and

l as an object of their pleasure. (2) To obtain their own selfish men of Shechem were willing to be circumcised; not that ed holiness, but because a profession of godliness would, as ight, be a profitable speculation. (3) The uncircumcised in dishonoured justice and judgment do not escape the cons of their foolish actions; they weaken themselves, and thus their defence in the day of conflict. (4) Simeon and Levi are instruments for bringing retribution on the head of the wicked; this is to be found in the secret workings of divine providence, will not permit justice and judgment to be made an object of or of gain by men. They may make the pure virgin of God lot, but if they do so then woe upon them, for the executioners anger will make haste, and in the day of weakness when the loins ed and the body is racked with pain, will come sudden calamity, e will be none to deliver. (5) God calls upon His servants to l such miserable professors of religion and justice, and to go Own house, there to be sanctified by the altar of self-sacrifice, g purified, to abolish all false gods and every evil way. (6) it Bethel that Deborah—the Word—died and was buried; in ords, the visible means of nourishment and guidance for the s its power upon men, so that spiritual realities may be under- In this cycle, that of purity and of persecution, there would e the great conflict with unbelief, and the weeping for Deborah a suitable figure for the grief of those who have lost faith in d of God. (7) At this point God blesses Jacob and confirms e of Israel upon him, giving to him also the promise that a r of nations would proceed from him, and that the promised uld become the possession of his seed. It is peace with God d will amongst men, and through these the consecration of r at Bethel. (8) At this point there was a removal from Bethel, r Ephrath Benjamin was born; in other words, the son of the nd comes; and at his coming the visible order of things so loved will pass away. (9) Israel was prosperous; and when ed in Mamre then he was buried by both his sons. These are hich must pass away, but when the kingdom is come in peace, ad righteousness, then Israel will be happy and prosperous, the g Reuben will be restored, and the spiritual Church and Spirit will bless the world.

FER XXXVI. may contain the first cycle as related to the spirit). (1) Esau is Edom, that is, the generations of the sons of us viewed from the standpoint of the visible kingdom amongst o understand this chapter thoroughly great study will require ven to the names and their derivation, because it would seem allegory of a most comprehensive kind is to be found in the d names and little incidents found in this chapter. In one sense ot be so very important, as it is not a means in the purpose of or redemption; but the sin of Adam, and the defilement of bed by Reuben, as well as the generations of Esau and the sons the Horite, are links in the chain of causation, and so they

cannot be left out in a history which comprehends all that is related to the redemption of man. The following thoughts may be suggested on this point: Esau married three wives in Canaan, Adah—assembly, daughter of Elon—strength; Aholibamah—tabernacle exalted, daughter of Anah—words, and daughter of Zibeon—iniquity; Basemath—confusion and desolation, daughter of Ishmael—God hears, the sister of Nebajoth—high places. Putting these thoughts together the idea evolved is that Esau united himself with others to become strong; he was exalted by words breathing iniquity, and the end is confusion, desolation, and idolatry. Further, the children by these wives seem to run in the same line of thought as history; thus Adah's son, Eliphaz means, to whom God is strength; the son of Basemath, Reuel—the shepherd of God; and the three sons of Aholibamah seem to speak of devouring, hiding, boldness, and baldness. It may be that these sons are figures of Shem, Japheth, and Ham, as the same spiritual ideas are linked with their names. (2) The generations of Esau in mount Seir are given; the idea being that in the soul of man there is to be found the hidden source of iniquity. (3) The sons of Aholibamah are given, and these suggest the thought of the wicked self-seekers, who have raised themselves to despotic power and authority amongst their brethren. (4) The dukes, the sons of Esau, are given in detail; these may suggest the despotic order of government as by despots, an oligarchy, or by a secret council. (5) The sons of Reuel are given, and these may point to men who have been the real or pretended servants of the Merciful One, the true Shepherd of His people. (6) The sons of Seir the Horite are given; and these seem without any exception to point to the corrupted spiritual intellectual nature of man as a moral responsible being. (7) The kings of Edom are given who reigned in that land before there was any king in Israel; and if this is applied to the world before the coming of Christ it will take in a long period of history. (8) The dukes of Edom have their families, places, names, and possessions in this world; the faithful servants of God dwell as in a strange land, possessing nothing; but they look for a city which hath foundations, and they are stronger and safer in God than in the rock-bound Petra, which is no longer in the possession of Edom. These ideas are mere suggestions upon a very difficult subject; it may be further suggested that in the kingdom of God, Esau is Edom, that is, Adam and man; Reuben the first-born of Jacob takes the same place in his own family; and as the birthright and blessing are taken from him and given to Joseph, so it is taken from Adam, Cain, and Edom, and given to Abel, Seth, and Jacob. The names and distinctions of the race of Esau and Seir may not be very interesting, but if these form a cycle, that of the rejected, it could not be omitted from the word of God.

CHAPTER XXXVII. may contain the second cycle. (1) All that is written about Esau and his two descendants, united with the people of Seir in the spiritual sphere, show that they were animated by the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life; but Jacob, to whom the inheritance was promised, was a stranger in this world.

God's meek spirit has been a very strange manifestation indeed amongst the rulers of this earth. The past series of cycles are specially related to Isaac, although Jacob is seen as the prominent figure in them; but if the present moment's consideration is given to the psychological aspect of the question, it is seen that this order is correct, because the conflict which exists in the wrestling with God for pardon and receiving favour and blessing, is in reality subjective and working from the heart outward, and obedience in the spirit of meekness. The grace of God in the soul is the true King; and He must reign by loving constraint, and by outward conditions, until the perverse soul and rebellious, deceitful spirit are changed and become meek and submissive to the will of God. In the generations of Jacob the mode of thought is seen to be changed, and the attention is drawn away from Jacob to Joseph. To put the same in another form, the real power in operation in man and amongst men is kept behind the scenes and unnoticed, whilst men are occupied with the outward manifestations; and it is not until they have analysed the effects produced, and find them to be relations, changing forms, that they try to get at the cause which produces such effects. The grace of God in the soul of a man produces twin powers of manifestation, an outward, the carnal man, and a Jacob, one who desires the heavenly brightness and blessing; and because the grace-power within lives and operates the effects are made manifest as in the lives of Esau and Jacob. When the meek and gracious spirit is the real king in a man, or in the world, then this power seems for awhile to disappear from the view and the passions and desires become the centres of attraction; they are the visible effects proceeding from the spirit within, and directed, unknown to themselves, toward definite ends by divine wisdom. If this thought is understood, it will open up in a marvellous way the divine allegory which is acted out in the generations of Jacob and the life of Joseph. The story is deeply interesting as matters of fact, it becomes more interesting when it is found to be a spiritual revelation of the method of God's kingdom of grace in the soul, and of its transcendent value when it is studied as the very work of the Invisible King, the Meek One, who possesses the Kingdom and reigns in it by His divine wisdom, even when His Name is not honoured, and His Word disobeyed. The attention is at once drawn to Joseph, the beloved of his father, the one hated by his brethren; it is the loved of God, the persecuted by man, that possesses the poor spirit in the kingdom of grace, and unto him is given the hidden wisdom of God, and the birthright and blessing. (2) The dream about the sheaves teaches that the beloved of God (that is Joseph, Jesus Christ, the gracious ones, the redeemed) are supreme in the sphere of service, and in all that fits man for the service of God. (3) The dream about the sun, moon, and stars, reveals the beloved of God as supreme in government. "Grace reigns." (4) To all men are given their duties, and it is their duty and privilege to live in conformity with God's order of government, but men have not been found at Shechem—government—but at Dothan—customs or traditions. In this is found the mystery of man's departure from God: some after time, they would not abide as subordinate shepherds with their flocks, but have tried to become as gods, or independent rulers. (5) The

conspiracy of the brethren against Joseph is like the words and actions of those who were represented as being unfaithful in the vineyard. "This is the heir, come let us kill him, and the inheritance is ours." (6) The beloved is despised, stripped of the coat which was a mark of his father's favour, and sold into the hands of men whose hands are against all men; given up to men of strife, and through them carried into Egypt, or made subject to the power of this world. (7) Evil deeds lead to deceitful thoughts, words, and actions; by strife the house is made desolate, the light and joy of the home are removed; but if it is disastrous for those who possessed the seed of grace and rejected it, still the light is not destroyed, it passes into a new sphere, there to radiate upon the world the sunshine of God's grace and favour.

CHAPTERS XXXVIII., XXXIX., may contain the third cycle. (1) The conception is that of the visible kingdom of Judah and of man within the kingdom of God's grace. What has the visible order of government been amongst men, and specially amongst the Jews, but like a marriage union with a Canaanite? Er, Onan, and Shelah, seem to represent the kingdoms of Judah and Israel before the captivity, and Shelah, the Jewish state after the restoration. As Er and Onan died because of their sin, so Judah and Israel were cut off from being nations. (2) The intercourse of Judah with his daughter-in-law points to the spirit of Judaism at the time of the coming of Christ. (3) As Tamar could show signs that she was no harlot, and could prove that she had been wronged by her father-in-law, so the Jewish church by its conception through Judaism of Christianity was not guilty, but the rulers were indeed guilty who would have put Christianity to death. (4) The mystery and wisdom contained in the allegory of Pharez and Zarah seem to point to the evangelical spirit of the apostolical church followed by the despotism of the Papacy and succeeded by the Evangelical movement of the Reformation. (5) The former events seem to express the visible order of things in Judaism and Christianity: what relates to Joseph is the spiritual movement which may harmonise with the times subsequent to the Reformation in Europe. It is at this point that Joseph reaches Egypt, is bought by Potiphar, and becomes the ruler in his house; the historic analogy being the spirit of Christianity in Christendom, and the great prosperity of the spirit of Christianity. (6) As the hour of temptation came for Joseph, so also for the poor and lowly followers of Jesus Christ: and as Joseph was sent to the dungeon as if he had been guilty of a crime, so have Christians been persecuted. (7) As Joseph found mercy and the favour of God in prison, and prospered even there, so the spirit of Christianity though persecuted has prospered, and it has been placed in high positions of trust in the State.

CHAPTERS XL., XLI., 1—45, may contain the fourth cycle. (1) The servants of the king are seen in disgrace and in prison, and in this condition they are placed under the charge of Joseph. The mystery of rebellion or treachery is at the root of their misfortune; but the innocent and guilty meet in the same place; the difference lying in this that the innocent is sent to instruct the guilty, and to show the ways of

gment to those who have transgressed God's laws. The a great prison-house, where the condemned of God exist ; prison the Holy Jesus came to teach men, and to reveal unto ags of God : and as with the world, so with the soul of Vord and Spirit alone can throw light upon the visions of ng to this life, and that which is to come. (2) The dreams, erpretation, are the great mysteries of God's mercy and man and men ; to the one pardon and favour, and to the

(3) These prophetic thoughts became facts on the King's n He who was so rich became for our sakes so poor that a place to lay His head. (4) The great mystery of the isdom and righteousness is to be found in Pharaoh's dream of he ears of corn ; they hold in their germ the history of the visible relations, but specially as related to spiritual truths. ght to have known such things, and they should have the mercy and judgment of God ; but prosperity is a trial ld not endure and prosper in their spiritual relationships to-

(6) As Joseph passes from the prison to the palace, so it ect man that Jesus steps from the cross and the grave to n of the throne in heaven, and by His Holy Spirit inter- l men the wonderful works of God, they are exalted to es in Him. (7) To no other Name known amongst men can be given as to the name of Jesus Christ. He rides in the t of universal dominion, and unto Him every knee shall en and earth. He too has received His bride (Asenath- the child of evil, and unto Him shall be ascribed glory, inion, and praise, for the great work of redemption He has

CLI., 46—57, XLII., may be found to contain the fifth cycle. of plenty harmonises with the period of God's mercy. The ver bestows upon men His gifts, especially the bread of His Son. Not only is there prosperity in the nation, but e bears two children, and these cause him to forget the toil the house from whence he came, and to rejoice and be he land where he had seen affliction. (2) The time of plenty comes to an end ; a famine for the Word of God then the longing eyes are turned toward the places where obtained for the soul. (3) In the house of God where l be plentiful there is famine ; the passions and guilty sold the beloved of God into bondage, and at last, the ir doings begin to come upon their own heads. The world l to spare, but those who hated and despised God's bread . (4) The wisdom, power, and mercy of God surpass pton ; men thought that they had got rid of Joseph when i into Egypt ; and of Jesus Christ when they put Him to uch wisdom is folly, and such power contemptible, for the ition comes slowly round and then the persecutors bend e footstool of the persecuted ; and in their turn, for their e treated as unrighteous men. (5) The effect of reproof

and correction is good, in this instance it led to a consideration of the past and to a confession of guilt. (6) The ways of providence in the sphere of grace are often mysterious; blessings come in disguise; they cause great fear in the soul, and the exclamation is oftentimes, "What is this that God hath done unto us?" (7) The dreaded clouds, so black and ominous, carry in their bosom both the lightning flash of divine wrath and the sweet merciful rain that will abolish famine; if men court the former by their disobedience, there is an awful power in God to judge and destroy; but if there is sorrow, repentance, the longing after God, and the crying for His mercy, with patience to wait the unfolding of His purpose of grace, then the cloud will fall with blessings upon the soul and upon the world, and in due time the rainbow of hope and the sunshine of returning favour will strike upon the pathway of life.

CHAPTERS XLIII.—XLV., 1—15, may contain the sixth cycle. (1) It is no strange thing for the darkness to become more intense, and the dread and fear of a coming doom to increase until all hope seems gone; death seems certain, and no remedy can be discerned by man; heaven is ominously silent, the earth is dumb, and as for men, they can give no comfort in such a situation. In such an hour God Almighty is man's only hope; He alone can send mercy and blessing to men in such a crisis. (2) The journey to Egypt was not a cheerful one; the past held a secret sin unforgiven, and so long as the brethren dreaded the vengeance of God upon their evil deeds they would continue unhappy and fear what would evolve out of the future. The brethren feared the rough and apparently unsympathetic ruler of Egypt upon whom their lives depended; and they knew not but that their portion might be the prison or death. The dreaded hour arrived, and then they were invited to dine with this ruler, and to find their brother Simeon restored to them. The cloud had begun to be dispelled, and they might hope for a favourable reception from the governor of the land. (3) The ruler of Egypt acted graciously toward them, asking of their welfare and the health of their father whilst they bended low before him. The ruler is a man whose secret heart is burdened with the affection that must be restrained; the king ruled well the small domain of his own body, and by doing so he prevented any disclosure of his identity and relationship to them. In secret the tide of the affections may be let loose and the surcharged soul relieved, but before men kinship is not manifested. Underneath the figure is there not a wonderful similarity betwixt Joseph and his brethren and Jesus Christ as He lived in the flesh amongst His brethren? There seems to exist the same gentle, subdued, and subduing power of meekness, which required to be guarded in every action, so that men may know only what is suitable for them at the time. As Joseph provided his brethren with a feast, bestowing upon Benjamin the choicest dainties in great abundance; so it may be said that the Lord Jesus Christ has dealt liberally and graciously with all His followers, but unto the beloved disciple, the Benjamin, who shall yet reign as son of the right hand, there is given the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of grace and of peace. (4)

of the divining cup in the sack of Benjamin may have a
 grace ; considering the position of the incident, it may point to
 it granted to the pure of heart who see God's face, and to that
 wisdom of God which shall be made known to men. The silver
 wisdom was placed by Divine Providence in the mouth of
 Joseph's sack, and thus wisdom and peace may come out of the
 granted to Benjamin. "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in
 the presence of Him : and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he
 shall be between His shoulders." (5) The plan carried out by Joseph
 in selling himself to his brethren is a strange one ; but it may be
 that the mercy of God has followed, in a certain sense, the
 peculiar method. There has been a testing and trying of men in
 various ways ; the precious gift of God that divines has been in their
 hands yet they know it not, neither did they understand how it
 is the highest blessing to them. The Bible is a marvellous
 divination, a Holy Book, a cup full of mercy, and yet it is true
 in some countries when men have been found with it in their pos-
 session have been treated as if they were thieves. (6) The words
 of the angel, "What deed is this that ye have done?" opens up a wide
 thought. It is the question of the All-seeing Judge who can
 see not merely the incidents of the hour, but the whole train of
 events which have brought about this last act by which there is
 a change. To the careless reader the words may seem to be limited to
 the incident in Benjamin's sack ; but to those who heard Joseph speak,
 the accusing angel of God laying his finger on the deed from
 which all their misfortunes had arisen. The double question, which
 brings about his superhuman wisdom or power of divination, brings about
 the confession of Judah, in which, with exquisite pathos, he
 confesses the grief of the father, his great love for Benjamin, of the
 father that is dead, and ends by proffering himself as a bondservant if
 Benjamin is permitted to return to be a comfort to his father.
 In selling his brother to the Ishmaelites, and living an immoral life,
 the repenting sinner, the unworthy, yet tender-hearted suppliant,
 may be sacrificed upon the altar of the affections, if only the aged
 and his beloved son may be spared and saved from grief and
 death. The discipline of famine and fear, a troubled conscience, and
 the punishment, have through the grace of God worked out a
 result, and there is fitness to receive the revelation which Joseph
 brings to make known to Judah and his brethren. These thoughts,
 are not to be limited to Joseph and his brethren ; they may
 be applied to the individual soul and to nations ; and this expe-
 rience far from pleasant, is very profitable to all those who are
 exercised by it. The leaves of the tree of righteousness may
 be bitter to taste in the bud, but the flower and the fruit are sweet to
 eat and good for the nourishment of the soul. (7) "I am Joseph
 her whom ye sold into Egypt." These words to his brethren,
 the effect they produced, can hardly be conceived ; but what will it
 be at that day when the Lord Jesus Christ reveals Himself to His
 people as their Brother whom they crucified, sent down into the

world of the Roman Empire in His Church ; and have afresh, through His Word, putting Him to an open shame the world? But as the day of Ascension brought His going up of reigning in heaven, so the day for the exaltation of His Holy Spirit draws nigh. A glorified Christ in heaven ; a spiritual Word amongst men in the world ; and a risen Holy Spirit in the soul ; these are the greatest events possibly happen in the Church, in the world, or in a man.

CHAPTERS XLV., 16—28, XLVII., may contain a cycle. (1) There is peace and reconciliation amongst all, and he who reigns over Egypt—the world—sends for him whom he may enjoy the good of the land. When the reign of peace comes then will the people of God possess the earth and reign over it. (2) The tidings of such a change in the world are marvellous indeed ; this has been a consummation long foretold by the sons of God, and it will surely come to pass, because God lives, and reigns in the universe ; and He will, in the course of such changes as will bring about the reign of perfect righteousness upon the earth. (3) God speaks to Jacob and it is by His faithful promises ; in that Egypt which was the place God's nation would be formed, so that it is the wrestling spirit of Israel and the meek spirit of Jacob. There the Jacobite spirit will pass away, and in peace will shut the eyes of men upon that past which would be forgotten. (4) The coming into Egypt of God's people and lineage constitute the mystery of the great work in all ages. What this movement was, in a figure, in the children of Israel, that the spiritual experience has been to all God's people the world has been their Egypt, and in it the beloved of God has prepared their way before them. (5) Judah (the Jews) is to precede Israel into Goshen—the approaching, or front there that Joseph met with his father. Translate this history, the day of mercy in the cycle of peace, and discerned Jesus Christ in the flesh, the true Goshen and like spirits of the Jewish church waiting for and expecting the Messiah. Looked at in this aspect there is something in the words of Israel, "Now let me die, since I have because Thou art yet alive." The words of Simeon by the Holy Spirit in the words, "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart according to Thy Word : for mine eyes have seen Thy Christ." The occupation of the people of God has been to be over God's flock : the Egyptians, the people of this world, in this service as an abomination : science, art, war, and the like, have found favour with the people of the world, but the sheep of God's pasture has not been viewed with favour. (6) The presentation to Pharaoh of Jacob and his sons is an analogy in history ; the kings of this earth have patronized the service of God, sometimes taken a kindly interest in their work, and had active men of God's house placed in charge of it.

herds. The connection betwixt the Jacob spirit in the kingdom of God and the world spirit in Pharaoh has also been manifested, because even kings have been blessed and anointed by the servants of God for their work as rulers amongst men. (7) The possession of Jacob in the land of Goshen was Rameses—that destroys or dissolves evil ; and surely this also has been the work of the kingdom of God's grace in peace in the world ; it has been the gentle power which has dissolved the mightiest powers of evil that have existed upon this earth. (8) The time was one of famine in Egypt ; and because of the severe famine the people of Egypt had to give up all their goods, property, and persons into the hands of Joseph. As they were given over to death through famine, and for want of the bread that sustains the body, so it is only too evident that the whole world was given up to an awful famine and death or separation from God, but the Bread of Life has brought redemption to the race and all who renounce self and accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and King will be saved through the famine that has been upon this earth. (9) The prosperity of Israel in Egypt may foreshadow the day of the millennial glory when persecution and reviling will be past, and in peace the kingdom of God will cover the earth ; yet even the peaceful earth is not home, Hebron and heaven are the symbol and reality.

CHAPTERS XLVIII., XLIX., may contain the eighth cycle. (1) There is sickness in the home, and the dark cloud of death hovers around ; this is the mystery which has surrounded God's beloved children in all ages. This is the theme of the Book of Job ; the strange thing which the Psalmist could not understand until he went into God's house ; and which in all ages of the world has lain so heavily upon man. It is the marvellous mystery of the love of God as seen in His Son ; and it is the sacrificial service of all God's people. All men have been sick, because they have been estranged from God, far from home, living in an impure atmosphere ; and the means used of removing the sickness, the disease of sin, has been very painful. (2) To the Father the sickness is seen to be absolutely necessary for recovery ; to the weaned child, resigned to the Father's will, the past is a strange blending of mercy and of judgment. Bethel and its gracious promises is the manifestation of the Father, for the Luz—separation or departing spirit of the wilful child. God has given an Ephraim and a Manasseh through His abundant grace, whilst men have generated a Reuben and a Simeon, through whom there has been defilement, cruelty, and judgment. But perhaps the most tender of all remembrances is encircled around Rachel, Benjamin, and Bethlehem, because it is here that the affections have been touched to the very core. Underneath the sad, and thought which Jacob could never forget, there may be discerned the more awful truth of what the beloved children of God have endured, because of the persecutions of wicked men. But a little way, and the house of bread would have been reached, but it was not to be, the travail of the ages came upon the beloved Rachel, and near Bethlehem her monument tells the sad story to this day. There is nothing more sad in history than the persecutions in Israel and Judah

in the days of the wicked kings ; and the killing times preceding and following the Reformation. These were the days of the travail-pangs of humanity, the Gethsemane of the Church in Israel and in Christianity ; the cup of death was placed in the hands of the martyrs, and woe was upon them if they did not drink it. The pathetic words of Jacob contain the germ-thoughts which refer to these things ; and when the present order of events is passing away the saddest remembrance will be the persecutions endured by the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. (3) There is a startling abruptness in the question of Jacob when he beheld Joseph's sons. Is it not because he knew them not, for they did not belong to the visible order of things, to the generation of Jacob and of Judah ? They were seen not with bodily eyes merely, but in the prophetic vision ; and it was by transcending the times of Israel according to the flesh, and in spirit entering into the times of Christianity that he uttered the words, " Who are these ? " They are Joseph's sons ; the spiritual seed, born in another land. (4) Manasseh represents the times after the Ascension of Christ, when the apostolic Church forgot the toil it had to endure and the source from whence it had come ; and Ephraim the fruitful child of the Reformation, so abundantly blessed in the land of affliction. Unto the latter pertains the birthright of this earth in the kingdom of peace, truth, and righteousness ; and the blessing that shall rest upon all nations. (5) Israel has prevailed, and the Amorite rebel is destroyed ; in other words, even the spirit of the wrestler will die ; God will be present with His people, He will bring them to the heavenly Jerusalem, the land of holiness, heaven the home of the fathers ; and to Joseph, the Lord Jesus Christ, pertains the double portion of the kingdom of holiness, of a pure morality ; and of the kingdom of grace by which men have been redeemed. (6) The words of Jacob to his sons are in germ the history of Israel and of man ; the kingdom of God's grace is in it, and also the means by which there is the punishment of sin and the salvation of man through the mercy of God. The pure in heart who see God's face in favour shall understand these things ; and it is at the end of the present age and the beginning of the times of peace that they will be made manifest to men. (7) As the family of Jacob stood around the death-bed of their father, listening to his words, so the day will come when all these things being fulfilled men shall stand around the death-bed of this spirit which has been such a power in the world. With what mixed feelings must such an event take place, and what conflicting emotions will stir men as they study the past as it is related to the spirit of Jacob, of Joseph, and of his brethren. It is a veritable place of judgment, and yet mercy not judgment must surround this death-bed. How much men have endured and suffered through this spirit who can tell ? This is the painful side of the vision ; but also what blessings they have inherited and experienced by the mercy of God through Jacob and his seed is past comprehension. Theirs is the past with the sickness, sorrow, pain, and darkness ; ours is the future with the dark cloud being dispelled, the rainbow of God's mercy and faithfulness shining fully in view, and the fringes of the cloud beautiful beyond description. Not

condemnation must fall from our lips upon this spirit of the past, but thanks unto God, grateful adoring thanks, for Bethel, Padan-aram, Hebron, Shechem, Beer-sheba, Dothan, and Egypt, and all that they present. This world has been an awful world to live in ; a place for pilgrims with their tents, and not for seeking permanent cities and abiding places. Thus it was with Jacob ; the supreme thought ruling his soul being that he might reach home, and that his body might rest with the fathers in the cave of Machpelah ; the soul to God who had deemed him from all evil, and his body to the dust, committed to the faithful God in the Hope of the resurrection from the dead ; and when all forms and symbols having passed away, God, the Father of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, will give unto them places in the spiritual and eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER L. may contain the ninth cycle. (1) The thoughts in it may be found to harmonise with the ninth blessing uttered by Christ, "which speaks not merely of persecution and reviling, but also of the reward in heaven." Beyond the figures which move in their cycle of visible things, the idea of hope and confidence in God is most prominent. The outward and visible life passes away, but the spirit is preserved throughout the generations of men. (2) The King's permission is granted that the land of promise should be the resting-place of the saints, and not the world of Egypt. (3) The consignment of the mortal and changeable things to the tomb has been a cause of mourning in all generations ; but this is not the ordinance of God, it is of the Egyptians and men of the world, because they know not the faithfulness of God, and His companionship with the redeemed, therefore they mourn. (4) The return from the burial of visible things is to the world and its duties, so that the world may be won for God by the spiritual power of Christ. (5) The residue of evil clings to men, and by suspicion and fear they are only too ready to rise up and threaten coming destruction : in all such instances men ought to take their suspicions and fears to the Lord Jesus Christ, and He will be found to be deeply grieved by such unbelieving and ungracious thoughts. He has not come for justice, but for mercy and peace, to nourish and to comfort His downcast brethren. (6) The spirit of Joseph will outlive the spirit of Jacob ; it will see the children of Machir—that knows—and in that blessed time of peace, purity, and knowledge, the world will possess a reward for all the toilsome, weary past. (7) But the things which occurred in Egypt are only prophetic foreshadowings of the great reality ; Joseph the son of Jacob dies, is embalmed, and in due time is buried in Canaan. Jesus Christ, the true Wisdom of God, the Preserver and Redeemer of men, lives for ever, because He is the spiritual manifestation of what Joseph dimly foreshadowed in his life. The things which are visible perish and pass away ; they are the transient means of man's education ; the things which are invisible are eternal, and they change not ; but it is through the former that man can reach the latter ; therefore thanks be unto God for these manifestations of His purpose of grace to mankind.

THE UNITY AND HARMONY IN GOD'S WORD.

THE BOOK OF EXODUS.

This Book contains a different cycle or series of thoughts as compared with the Book of Genesis. Into the first Book of the Bible there is, to speak, the inception, in the germ, of the kingdom of God, the universal order of things in Creation, Providence, and Redemption; the world-wide ideal as found in Adam, Seth, and Noah; the limited conditions as in the seed of Abraham; and the extension of the kingdom through Joseph, until the kingdom of God filled the land of Egypt, the great dominating world power of that age. The Book of Exodus contemplates the position of God's people in the world, and foreshadows in visible actions, laws, and symbols, the method of redemption, regeneration, and restoration to the favour of God. To change the form of thought, God works outward from the great world, in a visible nation, the same thoughts which He first wrought into it by His servants. The seed is sown not in the seed of Abraham by the flesh only, but also in the great world; and the gracious seed of spiritual life works by development until there is a manifestation of the merciful purpose of God amongst men for their salvation.

CHAPTERS I., II., may contain the first cycle. (1) The condition of God's people is that they are found in this world, they are fruitful, multiply, grow mighty, and fill the land; and this is the conception of the kingdom of God in all ages and in all lands. (2) This represents the state of the world under the rule of those who know not God and His Christ, and the method of their thoughts and actions toward those who as strangers and pilgrims have been dwelling in their midst. (3) Fraud and force, conceit and cunning, affliction and bondage, have been the method and order of the kings of this world toward the servant of God; the service has been rigorous in the extreme, a cruel bondage almost unendurable. The tender mercies of the seed of God in and similar powers, have often said, destroy the fruit of their harvest. (4) The oppressors have not spared the seed of God in well that the struggle has been one for bare existence. This mystery of the kingdom of evil and of grace. (5) In times of extinction, when the seed has been doomed to extinction, then specially gracious, and He gives in due time, in place, and in the a deliverer and a Saviour. In the first the name signifies the or purpose of God amongst men; it is to draw the holy seed waters, delivered from death, as was Moses; in the second salvation from sin through Jesus who saves, conquers, amongst men. (6) The seed of God may be thrown for its into the palaces of God's enemies, but it cannot breathe in a contaminated atmosphere; in due time, affliction is felt with God's people rather than the pleasures of the sinfully-ambitious. The struggle betwixt Moses and the Spirit of God in His servants in all ages pre-

their deliverance. There is an earnest longing after God's freedom ; men strike and fail in the purpose dear to their souls, and then come disappointment and flight. The spirit in Moses at this period may be found in Samson, in the Maccabees, and in the history of the times before the Reformation in Europe. It is not the doom to the seed of God, but it is the warning knell to the serpent in the world to awake, for the hour of struggle is at hand. (7) The struggle comes, but not at the full redemption ; there is for a period a sojourn in a strange land, the days of preparation, so that the seed may be prepared for God's purpose, and the wicked are permitted to carry out their diabolical designs. (8) To Israel this period is one of cruel bondage and groaning, the weaning of the affections from the spirit that is in the world ; to the evil seed it is as the time of the sunshine before the harvest ; God's sunshine of favour ripens them in their wickedness until they are not fit to live on the face of God's earth. These are the days of the great persecutions amongst men, and also in a man ; but the serpent that would destroy and swallow its victim is in due time made to change ; and instead of joy and pleasure, there comes the strong hand of God upon the sinful, and the serpent writhes in an agony hitherto unknown. Mercy has tended to the increase of the spirit of evil, therefore judgment without mercy comes, and the end shall be death.

CHAPTERS III., IV., 1—20, may contain the second cycle. (1) It is the revelation of God in a lowly Bush of the desert, in which a fire burns, and yet the bush is not consumed. This is a beautiful symbol of God manifest in the flesh, of the Holy One, to whom men may draw nigh. In the days of symbol, type, and shadow, the word is, "draw not nigh hither," because in these salvation could not be found, and this is the spirit of Mosaism in all its divisions of thought. The Lord of Moses and of mercy would prevent men from taking this way of visible things ; and He would teach them that it is in the Unseen they must trust, not in forms or ceremonies, not in a lowly bush and a flaming fire, not even in Jesus Christ in the flesh, but in the living God, in whom Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob live. Thus to know God is to know the great Reality, and men will surely hide their face from such a manifestation of Deity. (2) The Lord comes for the deliverance of His people, and it is by Moses that this great work is to be carried out. (3) What is any man for such a service ? In himself nothing, but as the servant of the King everything. The Name "I Am" embodies all this. The SELF-EXISTENT is the Name to be known amongst men, by which they may *not* know or express God. Wisdom in man cannot define the Essence, Source, and Manifestation of being. God is to men as the I Am, the Veiled, the Inconceivable. (4) God's memorial Name speaks of the revelation of His faithfulness, love, guidance, and protection over His Own people ; but if doubters ask who or what is God ? the reply is, "I Am," or the letting down of the veil which *prevents* revelation. If men listen to His servants, then the faithful promises, the seed of grace, the guiding, protection, and blessing of God, is revealed to them for their deliverance, and this is the mystery of grace and mercy in all generations. (5) The work of deliverance and of

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...cy is not an easy task, but God is able to punish the wicked, change the affections of the people, and to give unto slaves great wealth. The mystery of iniquity in the human soul is revealed in the questionings of Moses, or the spirit of unbelief; in the signs of the rod turned into a serpent, or God's power changed into the power to work evil in the leprous hand, or the state of the human soul; and the water turned into blood, or the good and gracious thoughts of God changed into hatred and murder. (7) As to Moses was given power and authority to become even as God, whilst the elder brother remained as a servant so Jesus Christ becomes Lord of all, and Mosesism with its forms the ministering servants who speak to men eloquently enough, but always charitably of the love of God. (8) The cycle closes with the departure of Moses in peace from Midian for his great work.

CHAPTERS IV., 21—31, V., may contain the third cycle. (1) The keynote is the kingdom of God as it is found in the words, "Israel is My Son," and of God's purpose of mercy for Israel, and of judgment on Egypt. (2) The circumcision of the son of Moses and the struggle with God is the subjective conception of the impurity within the soul which unfits for service, and only as by a painful, bloody rite can the soul be purified in God's sight. (3) The meeting of Moses and Aaron in "the Mount of God" is beautifully suggestive of the means by which the kingdom of God has been sustained amongst men. (4) The gathering of the elders of Israel, their belief in God's word, signs, and promises, is a revelation of the kingdom of righteousness upon the earth. (5) The pride, power, and folly of Pharaoh is in germ the manifestation of the thoughts, words, and actions of the powers of this world against God and His people. (6) Intervention betwixt kings of this earth and their servants, who are also servants of God, usually brings increased trouble and affliction to God's people; they are set as betwixt the anvil and the hammer, and upon them there is wrought out the purpose of God's grace in foiling sin, and also the manifold strokes of malicious men who try to thwart the purposes of God for their own selfish ends. (7) The despots of this world attempt the impossible; they will compel their slaves to make "bricks without straw." In other words, they act so unreasonably and immorally as to break, not the power of the people under them, but the links which unite slave and tyrant, master and servant, subject and ruler. These relationships are not easily broken; but when the impossible is commanded, and force attempts to cause it to be done, the last link of respect is broken, and open revolt is the only remedy. (8) This position is trying in the extreme; it makes wise men mad, and drives patient men to frenzy. In such a condition discernment is lost, and despot and liberator are equally feared and hated. This is the agony of disintegration, and the struggle after a new birth. If God's life and will is in the movement it is well, there will be development; but if the despot-slave of power and passion is overthrown to be succeeded by the slave-despot, there is no new birth, the agony and travail brings an abortion, and a living organic power formed by the will of God to bring redemption to men. If the people of Israel were in the furnace, Moses was i

ible and the concentrated fire of God, and hatred of men rested upon Under the intolerable fire by which he was surrounded, it was no ler that the law-giver complained, saying, "Neither hast Thou ered Thy people at all."

CHAPTERS VI., VII., 1—13, may contain the fourth cycle. (1) The note to this cycle is righteousness; and the seven "I wills" of God upon the redemption of Israel from Egypt by mercy and ment in divine righteousness. (2) The comparison betwixt the ful God, the gracious Redeemer, the King and Judge, and man, ry striking. In Him all power is possessed in heaven, earth, and and to Him all things are possible; in man there is utter helplessness and prostration of spirit so broken that even bondage seems more ome than deliverance; and indeed, before deliverance can come, Deliverer must animate those to be delivered by His Own Spirit. The earthly deliverer, the visible king, complains that as Israel will hear the Word of God, how unlikely a thing it must be for the ess men of this world to listen to the uncircumcised of heart and

God's reply to all this ignorance and unbelief in His servants is charge to Israel and to Pharaoh for the redemption of His people. he servants have realised their utter helplessness for man's redemp-; He will work, and unto Him must the praise of redemption be n. (4) The people delivered in the wisdom and by the power of are represented by the families of Israel. (5) At this crisis the ur of God is specially placed upon Moses and Aaron, Moses being e as a God in Pharaoh's sight, whilst Aaron is made as a prophet to brother, and their joint commission to Israel and Egypt, God's le, and the world, is embodied in the thoughts, mercy and judg- t. (6) The Lord is pleased to grant a sign unto men of this world, it is found in the rod turned into a serpent; that is Jesus Christ, rfect Son of man, made like unto sinful men. (7) This sign is ited by the wise men of Egypt with success; but indeed, it is no- el to find that God's wisdom in man takes such a form, the real el follows in the fact that the rod of God's wisdom and power lows up all other rods possessed by men; in other words, under strange figure men may discern the thought, "King of kings, and of lords; the "Word of God."

CHAPTERS VII., 14—25, X., 1—23, may contain the fifth cycle. (1) plague of blood shows the condition into which men are brought atred, murder, and other evil passions. They live in a sphere of e and ill-will; they breathe an atmosphere full of murderous ghts, and blood, war, death, and destruction are engraved into their ts. (2) The outcome of what is found in the world becomes the ctive in man, and it is found to be manifested in the ominous k, croak of the frog. Discontent follows as a natural consequence he footsteps of evil thoughts, hatred, and war, just as suitably as night succeeds the sunset. (3) Moral life does not reign, but ed and discontent, war and murder; therefore there follow disease, ne, filth, and lice. It is possible for man to increase hatred and

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strife, wars and murders, and the croaking of discontent; but famine and disease, and specially those visitations of God which are judgment upon men because of sin, are beyond the sphere of their operation. The "finger of God" is discerned in such things, and His Name revered. (4) At this point there is the special plague of which is named a fly, but in reality it is more like the mosquito that stings and causes swellings in the skin than the common fly. It is difficult to follow the figure very clearly; but it points in this direction that the people of this world are subject to this evil, and the saints of God are exempt. It touches the fleshly and carnal things, and not the mere external things as in the first three plagues, or the spiritual things as in the 7th, 8th, and 9th plagues. The plague of the fly suggests the false use of the power of the imagination and of perverted wisdom, and from these only God can deliver His Own people. (5) As the plague of the murrain touches not merely the skin but also the blood and muscles, it speaks of vital interests at stake as in the sphere of God's mercy and judgment, not indeed in open spiritual manifestations, but rather as found in Judaism. (6) The plague of boils seems to speak of a corrupt condition of the body, and thus of a State and Church in their visible organisations in the state of great immorality. (7) The plague of hail touches the spiritual in man and in the nations; but it also gath-ers up within its bosom all that had been in the past as found in the vi-olent and fleshly order of things. There is the special manifestation of destruction as in the destroying of herbs and trees, thus pointing to what men have considered as the means of supporting spirit-ual life. All this was in Egypt, but not in Goshen; in other words, thou-ands of men have been considered as the Bread of God lives, and and trees may be cast down, the Bread of God lives, and Christian men live and have their being. (8) The succeeding thoughts set loose amongst men for the destruction of all appearance of life. These do not seem to have been in the history of Goshen, but the whole of Egypt was covered, and the land there was light. (9) The ninth plague is that of the thir-teen spiritual forces in operation in infidelity have passed through a return to God's light that men can emerge from the darkness in which they have been. The cycle of mercies as related to the world ends be that the Lord Jesus Christ had this darkness in of the outer darkness within which there would be But it may be suggested that the cycle of God's the earth is not limited to the plagues which fr-om the earth to the deliverance of the bonds- The nine plagues may be c-

ion by His judgments, and only by these are despots made
ax their iron grasp upon those who serve them.

L, 24—29, XII., 1—30, may contain the sixth cycle. (1)
man is broken, and there is seen the relenting of the tyrant
g to permit service to the Lord, only property must remain
er of this world. (2) The reply of Moses and Aaron is
e must go with the people as a means of sacrifice ; with
is all things are God's, but with the tyrants of this world
seems unreasonable, and so they drive from their presence
of God. (3) In the order of the divine government still
ue waits to be poured out upon the world, that of the
f the first-born. By this visitation men will be deprived
m by which they hold power, and from them will pass the
arthy wisdom and of wealth to the followers of the Lord.
e must take time, but the issue is that Moses and Aaron

His instruments in this great work ; whilst the powers
l being blind see not their danger, and being vain and
onceit leads them onward in their evil ways, and the issue
tion of their wisdom and power. (4) The ordinance of
contains the hidden mystery of the kingdom of grace and
n the lamb, the blood, the eating of the flesh, the bitter
leavened bread, there may be traced, as in a figure, the
lvation by substitution, dependence on Christ, repentance,
ife. (5) The manner of eating the Passover feast may
attitude of man toward God's salvation ; there must be
all things, perfect trust in God, and to such a spirit the
memorial sign for all generations. (6) The feast of un-
ad speaks of the holy life after being a partaker of the
n Jesus Christ. (7) The separation and consecration of
lk of the favoured sons of God as priests unto Him ; they
d fully sympathise with, God's purpose of grace, and it is
to inform their children as to the meaning of this great
are a worshipful people, whose heads are bowed before
o Him the glory of the work of salvation. (8) The hour
ht darkness and the slaying of the first-born of this world
: time the hour of man's redemption ; God reigns, supreme
d men are compelled to listen to His voice, and the judg-
ings upon the earth.

XII., 31—51, XIII., may contain the seventh cycle. (1)
Egypt is seen to be broken, and Israel spoils Egypt as a
(2) The food taken by the souls of the redeemed for their
: unleavened bread of God's Word. (3) The period of
s for a fixed period ; the redemption is by God, and it is the
f God which men ought to study in all their generations.
nance of the Passover is the mystery of God's wisdom and
eans of reconciliation, and also the sign which God has
el for their comfort ; it speaks of deliverance from the
he world, but it also holds in it the promise and potency

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salvation from sin. (5) The judgment upon the world brings salvation to God's people; and all God's redeemed become His first-born in Jesus Christ, the sons of His grace and mercy, His by a bond stronger than death, therefore they are the sanctified by Him for His service of mercy. (6) Being redeemed and sanctified, and God's children by this internal change is to be made a visible sign to men, and it must be conformed to as the holy law of God. (7) When there is redemption and a full salvation in Jesus Christ then there must be perfect consecration and dedication of all things unto God; the head must be holy and devoted to God; and the hand active in His service, because through the wisdom and power of God men are redeemed. (8) The escape from Egypt, or the power of this world, is a fulfilment of the faithful promises of God by Joseph, whose bones were taken with the people when they escaped, and in all the journeyings of God's people, the pillar of cloud and fire; the guidance of God's Holy Spirit has been given to His people.

CHAPTER XIV. may contain the eighth cycle. (1) Israel is free, but the enemies of God are not pleased with the change that has taken place. (2) There is a change of purpose, and the people of God pursued by the enemy. (3) The redeemed of the Lord had been taken to place their confidence in man; and thus when the power of the world was like to crush them, they complained, and in their selfish they would have preferred to serve Egypt rather than be led by God. (4) The timid and fearful spirit of Israel is that of the re in all ages, when first delivered from bondage to the world; but God's salvation on their behalf, and the punishment of their because God fights for His people and their trust is in Him way of salvation by God's grace is forward, through the word of counsel to them has been to abolish fear, to wait patiently God's power the sea becomes a dry and safe path to the redeemed. (6) The Providence of God, His Angel of light and guidance and perplexity that the redeemed have been in is through His journeyings. (7) To the redeemed the light for their journeyings. (7) To the redeemed the instruments of destruction to the world the means to God's people. The overwhelming flood of God's judgment to God's course, brings trouble, fear, pain, flight, and desolation to the wicked. This is the consummation of mercy and judgment; to God's people salvation from all their iniquities, and fear God believe in Jehovah, and give honour to God.

CHAPTERS XV.—XVIII. may contain the first cycle. (1) The bond-slaves are set free and the Lord God has triumphed gloriously, and the redeemed and salvation of His people.

the external deliverance from powerful enemies ; but the scene is changed and man finds that deliverance from an external thralldom is led by the fleshly enemies within, and at this point the discovery is made that the soul is like a Marah, a place of bitterness, and that the only way of the corrupt soul can only be changed by the cross of self-sacrifice in and by Jesus Christ. (3) The paths of God's laws and commandments may be compared to twelve wells of living water ; and the strength made and power attained like seventy palm-trees under which there is rest and shelter from the scorching sun of this world, and the lustings of the carnal desires. (4) The wisdom and righteousness of God is the true bread for the soul in the great wilderness of this world ; and in this division, which is the hidden wisdom of God, seems to be a cycle within a cycle. (i. The wilderness of Sin and the desert like surroundings. ii. The murmuring of the people against Moses and Aaron. iii. God's rich promises to the people of the manna and bread. iv. The glory of the Lord in the cloud. v. The plagues of the quails and the manna. vi. The regulations bearing upon the Sabbath. vii. The Sabbath and its supply. viii. The manna placed as a memorial in the ark.) (5) The stricken rock is a figure of Jesus Christ and the water of the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit. (6) The fight with Amalek represents the struggle in the soul and in the world against all generations with God's bitterest enemy. (7) The feast of the manna thro' peaks of peace, unity, and wisdom in serving God.

CHAPTERS XIX., XX., may contain the second cycle. (1) The plagues of Israel are seen in camp before the Mount of God ; Moses was with Him there, and unto Moses was given the revelation of favour toward Israel. (2) The response of the people is that they will obey God. The appearance of God in a thick cloud ; and the glory conferred upon Moses. (3) The way to God is by sanctification, separation, and obedience to His will. (4) The wisdom of God for the ages is the presence of God with Moses in the Holy Mount ; words bearing upon the iniquity of men ; and their presumptuousness which would not be restrained. (5) The grace and mercy of God found in the work of redemption. (6) The moral law given by God for the guidance of the moral nature of man so that he might fulfil his duties and responsibilities. (7) The glory of God in Sinai : the people's choice of a Mediator. (8) The supremacy of God as Law-giver ; the means of reconciliation for the awful sins of man is by the way of the altar of self-sacrifice.

CHAPTERS XXI.—XXIV., 1—11, may contain the third cycle. (1) The judgments given to Israel are not permanent and eternal in their nature ; they are ordinances for the regulation of conduct, for the punishment of the wicked, and the transgressors of moral law. To all these judgments is the great intention in the life and work of Jesus Christ, as the High Priest of men, and these will all be fulfilled, no longer set before men, in the perfect kingdom of heaven. The hope of man is the Sabbath of God's rest ; it is not until the day when man and the world reach peace and rest in God, that the true

Sabbath will come to men. (3) The order of God's kingdom hinges upon knowledge of God's will, and living obedience to His laws. He is the Supreme, and no other God should even be named as God in His presence. (4) The feasts of God in the Passover and Unleavened bread; the feast of First-fruits and the feast of the Ingathering, or of Tabernacles, contain in figure the history of the redemption of mankind. (5) The Angel of God, His Messenger to men, is found in His Word, His Son, and Holy Spirit; obedience to God's Word in the day of mercy has brought blessing, whilst disobedience has brought pains and penalties innumerable. (6) The struggle of Israel with the Canaanites and other enemies, their success, and obedience to God, is the history of man's spiritual experience. (7) The covenant near Horeb, and the new covenant of peace in Jesus Christ are one in their spirit. In the first Moses is priest, and not Aaron; it is not Jewish, but world-wide in its spirit even as the true sacrifice of Jesus Christ is for men. (8) The feast of God is held upon the awful mount; but Horeb is changed into Sion, and the sunshine of God's favour rests upon His redeemed people.

CHAPTERS XXIV., 12—18, XXV., may contain the fourth cycle. (1) It is that of God's kingdom as represented in Judaism and in visible things, there being the engraven moral law in stones, and the written commandments which Moses would teach; whilst Joshua or Jesus is the minister waiting upon Moses. (2) There is a division in the forty days in the mount, there being six days of hidden glory, and upon the seventh the manifestation in the lightning and thunder; so in the life of man, the early period is obedience to that which is not written followed by a written moral law; and in the world the same thing, first the period without law, then the period of written law as amongst the Jews. (3) These periods are followed by that of a free-will offering for a Sanctuary, or the meek spirit of Christ. (4) The Ark is the symbol for the Lord Jesus Christ in whom are found all the treasures of God for man's salvation. (5) The mercy-seat from whence the words of mercy came to man. (6) The table of Shew-bread, which represents the Bread of God, His Word, that is, the Holy and the Righteous Son of God who is always in God's presence on man's behalf. (7) The candlestick of pure gold, that is the Truth, by whom men are enlightened in all the things pertaining to the will of God. It is by this Light, shining out of God's Word, that men are able to see and understand the pattern of all the things shown to Moses in the Mount.

CHAPTER XXVI. may contain the fifth cycle. (1) There is given an explanation of the Tabernacle which represents the human body; the body of Jesus Christ was the true Tabernacle within which the Shekinah dwelt. (2) The curtains were the portions which divided the Tabernacle inside, thus pointing to the soul of man, the invisible within the visible body. (3) The boards for the Tabernacle with the silver sockets point to the law, or things which would give stability and permanence to the structure. (4) The bars of Shittim-wood for the Tabernacle speak of God's power and faithfulness according to the

shion seen in the mount. (5) The veil of blue, with the cherubims on it, covered the Holy of holies, within which was the mercy-seat.) The arrangement of the things in their places upon each side of the veil show the relations of things in figures, there being at which is most holy, and those things which are holy; the things not holy pointing to the essential truths found in Christ, and emanating from Him as mercy, law, bread, and power; the holy place and things being the State into which Jesus and His brethren came, as God's priests, presenting to God and to men the Bread of Life, and that Light which enlightens the dark world. (7) There is also the hanging for the door of the tent, wrought with needle-work, which would hide from the contents of the holy place where the priests ministered.

CHAPTERS XXVII., XXVIII., may contain the sixth cycle. (1) The table of burnt-offering was placed in the outer court, thus typifying the world-wide method of redemption by sacrifice. (2) The court of the tabernacle is seen into which all men may come by faith in Jesus Christ. 1) The pure "oil-olive beaten for the light" brought as a free-will offering from the people; this is the statute for all generations of the children of Israel; in other words, it is the meek spirit, obedient to the will of God, shining forth His light and truth amongst men. (4) The wisdom of God is hidden away in the choice of Aaron and His sons; the kingdom of heaven is in the great High Priest of humanity and His spiritual seed. (5) The garments of Aaron are figures pointing to the true Priest-King—upon whom the spiritual realities abide. He is clothed with the garments of righteousness; the government rests upon His shoulders; justice and judgment cover His breast continually. He ministers as Saviour and Intercessor on His people's behalf before God. (6) Within the breastplate there was placed the Urim and Thummim, the light and perfection of God; in other words, by the intellectual knowledge of all that is true, and by righteousness or conformity to all that is holy and pure, God is pleased to speak to, or correspond with, man. The pure in heart see God; this is the key to the witness of man's nature, and the spiritual means of his communion with Light and Perfection. (7) The robe of the ephod of blue seems to speak of the perfect righteousness of the gracious and merciful Son of God; it is a perfect robe without seam, and they who wear such a robe appear in the King's presence with joy and with fruitfulness. Without these upon the robe of life it would be imperfect, and the wearer would be unfit to see the King. "Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." (8) The table of pure gold, with "holiness to the Lord" engraven upon it, speaks of the perfect consecration of the spiritual nature of man; when the mind of man is sanctified, then Satan's head will be crushed indeed, and the power of sin ended. (9) There is only one High Priest, but all members of His spiritual stock are made priests and kings; they wear the linen, the righteousness of the saints, girdles of truth and bonnets of salvation, which are glorious and beautiful beyond comparison, and being clothed with the sanctified linen clothes they are holy, and so no longer ashamed of their past nakedness and sin against God.

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servants, spiritual priests unto God, are to be made holy, consecrated for God's service amongst their brethren; this is God's Ordinance for themselves, upon His head confession must be made, and must take away sin. (3) There must be the complete consecration of the spirit, soul, and body unto God; yea, the meek spirit must rule the whole being, and by it thanksgiving and praise will be lifted up unto God in the spirit of peace. (4) As the Aaronic priesthood was an inheritance, so the redeemed priests of God in Jesus Christ have in Him their spiritual and eternal inheritance. (5) The consecrated are as one, not in flesh, but in spirit in their Lord by the spirit of self-sacrifice. (6) The burnt-offering of the redeemed soul is to be a continual sacrifice unto God, an offering with sweet savour by the Holy Spirit; and in this state the Lord will meet with His people, God's face will be seen, and God's temple in man will be sanctified with His glory. (7) God will dwell among His people, and then, when such a consecration of man and mankind has taken place, there will be full knowledge of the method of God's salvation, on that day of peace and purity.

CHAPTERS XXX., XXXI., 1-17, may contain the eighth cycle. (1) The altar in the day of restoration and of peace, or the state of soul harmony with it, will be specially that of incense, or prayer, thanks, grateful adoration to God. (2) The great ransom will then be accomplished, sin pardoned, souls cleansed, and the black plague of sorrow, and death banished from the souls of the redeemed. (3) All the plague shall be stayed, yet the fountain will not be perfect, thus the motives will require to be purified. (4) The Head of humanity redeemed will then be anointed with the holy oil of purification and purity, and through Him, descending from Him, the there will also be the sacred perfume which will arise from Him, the Lord and His people. The holy oil, and sweet, sacred perfume imitated by men, but no blessing can come through hypocrisy and pretensions: truth and righteousness, joy and gladness for the perfume of a truly consecrated life, it is as a sweet method of life, and these will not mix with earthly mixtures. (5) Besides the anointing in God's truth and rightness, His redeemed wisdom, understanding, and knowledge transcend the conceptions of men of this world. (6) His redeemed ways, so that they may understand and order all to the will of God. Bezaleel means—shadow of Aholiab—tent or tabernacle, Ahisamach—strength; or all the works of men, which are blessed, have God's light or truth for their method, and man works as God's thoughts for the raising up within the soul of beauty and of glory. The praise and glory of God view in all that men do, and in the spirit of God judgment, men know the sign of God follow the Sabbath-day, they

1, but if they seek to please Him, then the sign given by God, to be known and understood by men, is the sacred observance of the Sabbath.

CHAPTERS XXXI., 18—XXXII., may contain the first cycle of a new vision. (1) Upon the mount God gave to men the moral law written with His Own finger upon the soul. (2) Down upon the plain of the world, humanity was in a state of revolt against God worshipping creature instead of the Creator. (3) The order of man's departure from God is through sin to corruption; and through transgression they become children of Moses, of bondage to law, instead of the sons of God. Their doom is destruction, not redemption; and only through Jesus, and as his children are they restored to God's favour. (4) The mediation of Moses is the great mystery of God's work of redemption, the servant prays and works so that the children may grow up fitted for their blessed heritage in Jesus Christ. (5) In the descent of Moses from the Mount we may be discerned the spiritual descent of Jesus, in whom there existed the perfect moral law, and as it is at this point that Joshua appears upon the scene, so in history the Lord Jesus Christ was seen as subject to the law in His life. (6) The scene at the foot of the Mount of God is typical; the analogy seems to run in harmony with the scene at Jerusalem when Jesus was crucified, and the rulers of the Jews chose their idols and rejected their God. (7) The tribe of Levi was found to be the most faithful and zealous for God's glory, and they were chosen to serve God, and to be His first-born. (8) Mediation and forgiveness, sin and punishment, are linked together; but the Angel goes before the people of Israel, and He will lead them into rest.

CHAPTER XXXIII. may contain the second cycle. (1) There is a departure from Egypt, and also from Horeb; the land of promise, or the Kingdom of God, in whom all the promises are sure, is not to be found in the outside world of bondage, nor yet in the desert world within the carnal soul; it is a possession to be obtained by faith, and it is to be gained by the overthrow of the wicked powers which govern and usurp God's power over the soul. (2) This view of the method of salvation is not pleasant to the soul of man; it would be much more in harmony with man's carnal desires, if the Lord would reign as a despot rather than by deputy; the will of the Word, as an authoritative guide is inflexible, and yet the Lord will not be meek and obedient. The time is that during which God would wink at the iniquity of men, and it is during this period that the Sin-offering for ignorance is efficient for men. (3) During this time of separation, the tabernacle of God is not within a man, but an external thing possessed and regulated by the spirit of Moses. (4) The mystery of this period of the rejection, as manifested in the kingdom of God, is found in the facts that God and Moses stand face to face, whilst the people stand and worship afar off; and as Joshua was in the tabernacle unseen by men, so the Lord Jesus Christ, the Grace of God, has been seen by men. (5) Moses prays for the people under his care, and the Lord of mercy promises His presence and rest. (6) By the presence of the Lord there is separation from sin, and then grace being shed out upon God's people, they are named by His Name, become

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ly, and see God's face. (7) The glory of God is revealed to men in the grace and mercy of God ; there is an unveiling, but it is as if by incarnation, because the face is not seen at this period, but as it were the God of mercy and peace revealed in Jesus Christ in the flesh.

CHAPTER XXXIV. may contain the third cycle. (1) There is the divine command as to the preparation of the two tables of stone upon which God would engrave the moral law. This is the regeneration of man, as in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, in the spiritual kingdom of God, when the law is written no longer upon stones, or made known in visible things, but written as with the Holy Spirit upon the living tablet of the soul. (2) The work is carried out under the jurisdiction of Moses and in the Mount of God ; and the inmost secrets of the spiritual truth of God, known to men, meet in Moses and Christ. (3) The order of the divine government of the kingdom of God, in the spirit, is made known by the descent upon the mount. (4) In spirit it agrees with the Christian era, in which the mercy, grace, long-suffering, goodness, and truth of God has been so fully manifested. The Name of God is the hidden wisdom of God, and in this proclamation there is found the very spirit of Christianity. (5) At this crisis, when the Name is manifested, then the servant bows down before the Master, praying that the Gracious would be pleased to pardon sin, and to take the redeemed for His inheritance. (6) To this request there is the reply : i. that God has made a covenant, and through it He would do marvels amongst men ; ii. that they should be faithful in their inmost souls to God ; iii. that they should be meek of heart, and pure in motive ; iv. that there should be complete consecration through redemption, accompanied with free-will offerings ; v. that they should rest in the mercy and peace of God, or His holy Sabbath ; vi. that there should be a remembrance of first fruits, that is, of Jesus Christ risen from the dead ; and of the great harvest, " Thy kingdom come ; " vii. that redemption, resurrection, and restoration should be remembered as God's feasts, days of victory in which the King conquers His enemies ; viii. that the spirit of the redeemed should not be mixed with ill-will, hatred, forgetfulness, or cruelty ; and it is according to these principles, that the covenant of God in Jesus Christ is ratified. (7) When Moses came down from the Mount of God, he was transfigured ; to him the former things had passed away, and the light of the glory of God shone out of his countenance ; he had seen the Master face to face, and had entered into sweet communion with Him about the things of the kingdom of God ; but the people required the veil because of their unbelief, and until this day the veil remains on the face of Moses when the people look upon him. But with the veil Moses is unveiled ; the servant sees the Master's face with joy, being transfigured and become a child of God by faith.

CHAPTERS XXXV., XXXVI., may contain the fourth cycle. (1) It begins in the Sabbath rest and peace in God : in which man works in anything for his own selfish ends and kindles no false fire of affluence in the soul. (2) God is pleased to instruct His people as to the things which He can accept from them ; this is the revelation to the soul

God. (3) The people gave with a free, willing spirit possessed for the service of God; from Him all things of the meek spirit is ready to give freely all that is God's, spirit, and goods. (4) God calls Bezaleel and Aholiab, by to devise and carry out His purpose of grace; and in them work there is embodied the mystery of the kingdom of God. is the call to service of all those who have wisdom and ng; and all work, and give freely of all that they possess. there was such a free spirit amongst the people, so much l's work and His glory, the people required to be restrained re was too much given for the work of God. (7) The of the Tabernacle seems to contain a cycle in itself, there curtains which make it one complete tent; the curtains of for the tent over the tabernacle; the covering of rams' skins the covering of badgers' skins; the boards for the tabernacle; shittim wood; the vail with the cherubims, and the four the hanging for the tabernacle door of fine linen and with the five pillars. These all speak of the visible things creation, in Jesus Christ, and in man; these forms are the ithin there lives the unseen and the spiritual. The cycle of ss and of wisdom holds all things in its bosom; but they r after righteousness and truth advance till they reach the and even the Holy of holies, away far beyond the veil of ceremonial things.

XXXVII., XXXVIII., 1—20, may contain the fifth cycle. he order is, as it were, from the heaven of God's mercy ark of God with its treasures is seen as the central point om of mercy. In Jesus Christ men are to find the perfect he bread of life, and the sanctified, merciful power of God. rcy-seat is the place unto which men can come to find mercy o help them in every time of need; but like the cherubim, draw near to the God of mercy, it must be with downcast ; upon the mercy-seat and what is concealed from their view is God's Ark and Mercy-seat. (3) The table of shew-bread nen of the true Bread, even God's Word, upon which the ives and learns obedience to God's will. (4) The candle- e gold, and the light radiating from it, speak to men of ousness and truth; the means by which men see and under- urpose of God's grace. As the light banishes the darkness, light of God's truth drive away sin, sorrow, and death from e redeemed of the Lord. It is light or truth, that is the God, and Jesus Christ is the King of truth. (5) The r speaks of the priest, the intercessor, and prayer. He who m His brethren must have free access to God at all times in ce of His own soul, so that there may be power to serve at burnt-offering in the outer court. (6) The holy oil speaks tion as to the office of a priest or king, and the sweet the savour in the life of holiness by which the Name of fied. (7) The altar of burnt-offering speaks of the peaceful

Son of God, the Lamb given for the sacrifice, so that there may be reconciliation with God and peace through His atonement made for sin. (8) The laver of brass speaks of the cleansing from defilement, and thus from sin; but the means of purification is that of self-sacrifice. As the women gave up their mirrors in which they described their own beauty, so it is through penitence, persecution, patience, and prayer that men are cleansed from sin and are fitted for seeing the face of the King in the kingdom of heaven. (9) The court speaks of the extent of the kingdom of God; it is not limited to the Holiest in which the Lord Jesus Christ is found as King of grace and the High Priest of His people; nor to the holy place in which the Lord Jesus in the flesh and His brethren minister for man; but to all nations in which there is a knowledge of salvation by sacrifice and of cleansing through the washing of water, and of regeneration by the Spirit of God. The order must specially refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Archetype of the purpose of grace; but it may also be applied to all who live according to the same order of thought: that is, living outward from the pure motive power of a gracious spirit within, and not working from the external things toward the spiritual realities.

CHAPTERS XXXVIII., 21—31, XXXIX. 1—31, may contain the sixth cycle. (1) In the sum of the people's offerings, wisdom and understanding will be found the figure and foreshadowing of the kingdom of God's grace amongst men. (2) It takes a personal relation in Aaron with his holy garments, and also in every redeemed sanctified soul. (3) Upon his shoulders the government of the kingdom is laid; and upon the shoulders of each redeemed soul there descends the same personal responsibility in the government of his own nature. (4) In the breastplate of the High Priest there are found the names of all the redeemed, and it is seen that it is love that rules in the kingdom of God, directed by truth and perfect righteousness. (5) God's plan of mercy is like the robe of the ephod of blue from which the breastplate might not be loosed; and because there is holiness, mercy, truth, and righteousness, there will be gladness in the soul, and fruitfulness in the life. (6) As there were prepared for all the sons of Aaron, coats of fine linen, so for all the saints of God, the pure in heart, there is the robe of Christ's righteousness in which they appear before God. (7) The plate of the holy crown which had the engraving, "Holiness to the Lord," speaks of complete consecration unto God in thought, word, and deed; this is the consummation of the work of redemption in the Head, and through Him of all the members.

CHAPTERS XXXIX., 32—43, XL., may contain the seventh cycle. (1) It is in this cycle that the work of God approaches completion, all things are seen to be ready according to the divine instructions. (2) The symbolic things were taken to Moses and blessed by him, but the spiritual and eternal realities are blessed by the Blessed One. (3) It is in and by the meek spirit that all things are ordered in the house of God, there being the appointed places for all the ordinances of God in the soul and in the world. (4) There is the consecration or holy

which all things are sanctified into the service of God in righteousness. (5) Objective thoughts and things being dedicated and consecrated to God's service, there follow the sanctification of those who are the priests of God in His kingdom. (6) The kingdom of God, His tabernacle or temple is the soul of man, and this is as the beginning of a new cycle in life. (7) When there is reconciliation with God through Christ, the soul becomes a temple in which the Holy Spirit can reside, and the Word of God's testimony is placed in the holiest place, that is, in the soul, and is acknowledged as King. The Word of God is known to be the bread for nourishing the soul. The light of God is made manifest through the pathway of life, a man's actions being lighted according to God's commands. The golden altar of incense is used as the altar of communion with God. The altar of self-sacrifice is set up on the side of the tabernacle. The laver of brass for purification by washing is placed in the court. The whole is encircled by the court, with the entrance-gate, and when men are conformed to this ideal then the work of the law will be finished and the time will be come for a new era of the kingdom of God. (8) This will come when the Lord fills the tabernacle. Grace will reign, and Moses, the law, will not be able to enter in. This is the manifestation of the Kingdom of God within the soul and amongst men; and it is under the shadow of the cloud by day, and the fire by night that the people shall move onward toward the land of rest and peace through their journeyings in this world.

THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS.

—VI., 1—7, may contain the first cycle in this book. (1) The sacrifice of the burnt-offering by which there is atonement for the sinner and the sin offering. It is substitutionary in its character; in a sense an innocent creature dies for the guilty man, and thus there is a true atoning sacrifice offered by Jesus Christ for the world. His offering is by the sacred fire, that is, through the Holy Spirit in harmony with God's will, and so it is a sweet savour unto God. (2) The sin-offering is a free-will offering from man, expressing the gratitude of the soul for salvation; to possess a sweet savour must be offered by the Holy Spirit, from a gracious soul, in harmony with God's service. (3) The peace-offering speaks of reconciliation with God by faith, peace with God in Christ, and the assurance of the divine favour; but these are not obtained through the law; therefore pride and self-sufficiency must be eschewed, and a lowly, self-sacrificing spirit cherished. In the sin-offering there is typified the mystery of redemption, or the wisdom of God in the salvation of the redeemed. It is true that Jesus Christ may be compared to the burnt-offering which was burnt upon the altar of the outer court; but He is emphatically the sin-offering, as

prefigured by the burning without the camp of the carcass of the bullock and all its parts. He is the Saviour of all men as by the burnt-offering, if they will only accept the salvation offered to them; but He is specially the Redeemer of those who believe the gospel and put their trust in Him. For the sanctified priest, the minister of mercy, he is the Sin-offering, when he omits, as Christ's representative, to perform the duties of his office, or transgresses the laws of grace and mercy. For the great congregation He is the Sin-offering. (7) For the ruler, official representative of the King, He is the Sin-offering. (8) For every individual soul He is the true Sin-offering, through whom sins of ignorance may be forgiven, and reconciliation and favour granted in the kingdom of heaven. (9) The trespass-offering is akin to the burnt-offering as applied to the individual, and it is applicable for sins as related to the individual soul; as related to the holy things of God, as bearing upon trespasses against a neighbour. In Jesus Christ all forms of sacrifice and offerings meet, and the figures of Moses and the great reality teach that only through Jesus Christ can the sinful repentant, meek, ignorant transgressors of the holy will of God find mercy to pardon sin, and grace to help them in all their times of need.

CHAPTERS VI., 8—30, VII., may contain the second cycle. (1) The varied sacrifices are considered in this cycle, but it is the law, or the method of the offerings as bearing upon the individual soul. The burnt-offering in man embraces the thought of the renunciation of self and the birth of the poor spirit; and it is this spirit that must burn night and day upon the altar of the soul, and never be allowed to go out. It is strange that the poor spirit should overcome the proud, selfish one, but the former is as the sacred fire from heaven, whilst the latter is contrary to the will of God, and so it requires to be burnt out of the soul. (2) The law of the meat-offering expresses the method of the thankful, redeemed soul. The sanctified shall offer it as from a consecrated soul, and in actions which breathe of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. This is not a solitary repast, but a communion feast in which the redeemed and the Lord take part, only there must not be any insincerity or impurity in this fellowship. (3) But there is a meat-offering of which men may not partake; this is the meat-offering of the Priest-King of meekness, who poured out His soul unto death. His meat-offering was wholly burnt, as it is written, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart;" and again, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." (4) The sin-offering is the central fact in the work of redemption; it fits in with the burnt-offering, and in a sense supersedes it; "It is most holy." The Sin-offering, whose precious blood takes away sin, has no equal; His presence in heaven by His obedience unto death reconciles God and man, and of this work no man may eat, in the sense of being joint-saviours with Him in the work of redemption. (5) The law of the trespass is similar to that of the general sin-offering; but in this sacrifice pride and self-conceit are to be burnt up, for these are contrary to the meek and gentle spirit of mercy in Jesus Christ. (6) The law of the peace-offerings expresses the method in which the thankful soul will seek to offer itself

God ; sincerity of the spirit and holiness in the soul are of great tance, and that there should be no delay in the offering is also y taught. Purity of soul is essential in such an offering, because ut this God's face is not seen and His favour is not received, but oud of sin cuts the soul off from God. (7) The children of God' not eat fat or blood, that is pride and its results, and sin, or hatred, s issues ; these things can only work toward death and the separaf the soul from God. The peace-offering is not to be done by ity, but every man on his own account must come into contact he High Priest, and through Him the peace of God will reign in ul ; and by such a consummation there will be in Jesus Christ and deemed soul joy, gladness, and thankfulness for the great work emption. (8) In these anointings, sacrifices, consecrations, and ggs, may be found the kingdom of God's grace ; and they who ence what these things represent are in possession of the kingdom ven.

PTERS VIII., IX., may contain the third cycle. (1) In the first the objective thought of God is given as bearing upon the method means of redemption by sacrifices ; in the second, the law or the tive known rule for guidance in duty is explained ; and in this there is found the separation and consecration of Aaron and his o be priests unto God, and thus the men by whom sinners could unto the God of grace. The visible ceremony covers up the al significance ; the essential thoughts, however, are not the things are seen, but the veiled truths which underlie all that is external. visible bodies are adorned, but the reality is the adornment of the nd bringing it into conformity to the will of God. (2) Moses l the Lord ; Aaron and his sons were washed, clothed, and ed for their sacred duties, and in this way they were sanctified for vine service. (3) This high priest and his seed require a Sing upon whom they may confess sin, and by whom they may be iled to God, and as followers of the Meek One they too must ice pride and every evil way. (4) The Aaronic priesthood is ed by God's prophet ; in other words, truth and righteousness are r than rite and ceremony : it is Moses who represents the High of men ; and through the ram for the burnt-offering, the confes- sin upon its head, the sprinkling of its blood, the division of its the washing of its inward parts, and the burning of the ram as a sacrifice, men are taught that Jesus Christ alone, and not human , can offer a sacrifice of a sweet savour unto God. (5) The ram uecration speaks to men of sin and confession, substitution and ration in all things unto God. (6) There is a period during which s separation for consecration, and this is a whole cycle of time ; ring this time they who are consecrated must be obedient, and od's charge lying upon them lest they die. (7) The end of the of consecration brings a renewal of sacrifices with the peace- g ; but at this time Moses retires from the priestly office, and officiates for himself, his sons, and for the people, the ceremonies by Aaron lifting up *his hands* and blessing the people. (8) When

Moses and Aaron came out of the tabernacle then the glory of the Lord was seen, the fire from heaven descended, the sacrifices were accepted by God, and the people fell on their faces in worship.

CHAPTER X. may contain the fourth cycle. (1) There is the offering up of incense by strange fire, that is, by another spirit than that ordained by God; and because of this sin God's fire descended in judgment upon the transgressors and they were destroyed. How concise is this story, and yet how far-reaching in its conceptions. There are three thoughts to be chiefly noticed, these being that God gave the holy fire, that is the meek spirit obedient to God's will, and this was the means to be used in burning sacrifices and offering incense before God. Nadab and Abihu were not meek, but self-willed, intemperate, and disobedient, thus the emotions from their spirits were as strange fire or sin; the response of God to this ascending, perverted spirit is the descent of His fire changed into judgments which bring death to the transgressors of moral law. (2) The reason of this special judgment in His Own house and upon those consecrated to His service, is that His Own may be sanctified, and that men may fear and glorify the Name of God. (3) The servants of God must not attempt to justify the wicked, or to judge the King when His judgments are upon the earth; no matter how severe the blow may be, or upon whom it descends, the Judge of the whole earth can only do what is right. To side with the wicked in their sin is rebellion, therefore to fear God and worship Him is man's duty at all times and under all circumstances. (4) Because of this transgression of Nadab and Abihu the priests were instructed never to drink strong drink when they went into the tabernacle; but how much more careful should the priests of the order of Jesus Christ be, who are never out of His presence, that they may never be intemperate in thought, word, or action. They who are holy, and who teach others the statutes of the Lord, require to keep the temple of God sacred, so that there may be no intemperance, or offering up of impure worship unto God. (5) The spirit of mercy should animate the servants of God; but there ought to be sincerity, gratitude, and the offering of thanks for God's goodness and mercy. (6) Moses diligently searches to see if men perform their duties; and he is angry when for any cause the laws of God are not obeyed; specially does he call to account those who are placed in official places, so that by their actions the people may be helped forward, and not hindered in the way of life. (7) The plea of Aaron is that of mercy as opposed to sacrifice and mere ceremony; the formal duties have been performed, and in these things there is the open profession of subjection to the will of God; but to eat of the sin-offering under such circumstances was more than Aaron or his sons could do; to say, good is the will of the Lord, is one thing; but to be able to enter into fellowship with God in such visitations, and to praise and thank Him for mercy and judgment, is something very different indeed. It is not by compelling the soul to love the Judge that there is found peace and joy in the Saviour, but time must be granted to permit the wounds to heal up, so that mercy by love may triumph over judgment.

s XI., XII., may contain the fifth cycle. (1) The thought arises this division, or cycle, is sin and holiness ; the cleanliness which prevents or permits presentation to God. If man, there would be no separation ; but seeing that sin exists, if the world is not found in harmonious operation, and then of mercy there is a distinction made amongst the creatures, the rational and responsible creatures may be taught to rise from visible things to spiritual truths. The beasts that are upon the earth with whom he is familiar, are the first class, and they are divided into the clean and unclean by certain marks, as chewing the cud and having the hoof. The thought may be put in this form : the clean are like unto those who are merely intellectual in their notions and sympathies, but who do not separate themselves from reality as related to God and man ; whilst those who divide the clean and do not chew the cud, may be compared to those who live moral lives, but do not consider and ponder upon the will of God. (2) In the creatures which live in the waters, those which have fins and scales only are clean ; whilst those without fins and scales are unclean. The soul of man is like the sea, and within it there are many kinds of thoughts ; the clean rise upward out of the sea and move toward the light, whilst the unclean burrow in the darkness of the soul and hide away from the light of heaven. The creatures which fly in the air are also divided into the clean and unclean ; these things may teach that it is not power of intellectual vision that is blessed ; the eagle is unequalled in this respect, yet it is not fit food for man. Lucifer, the son of the morning, is like the very pinnacle of greatness and wisdom, but the fall is more complete than the rise ; the hands are almost placed upon the head of God, when the lightning-flash of God's anger touches the feet of Lucifer, and it is hurled down into the lowest depths. (4) The unclean among creeping things, and the things that they have been also explained ; and the thought is enunciated that the soul is kept distinct from everything of the creeping, serpent-like character, which there is spiritual defilement ; but God, the Lord, is to be holy ; men are to be sanctified unto Him, and then they will be holy. (5) The Lord is the merciful Redeemer of His people, they must seek to be holy as He is holy ; to make a difference between the clean and unclean, and only to eat that food which God provides for the nourishment of the soul. (6) When the question rises of things that are irresponsible, then the form of thought is directed to the hidden fountain of impurity within the soul is referred to the figure of conception in the womb, the birth of a child, the uncircumcision, and circumcision. These touch the moral man, the impure soul with its conceptions and births, separation from God, and sinfulness. (7) When the time of the purifying is reached, then by burnt-offering and sin-offering there is atonement, and reconciliation with God through His Son Jesus Christ—Sacrifice, Saviour, and King.

s XIII.—XV. may contain the sixth cycle. (1) The impure

soul is likened to leprosy, and throughout the Scriptures these two thoughts fit into each other. This disease is explained in its varied shades of manifestation, and these may be compared with the proud, sin-stricken soul. (2) the priest is appointed to inspect the leper and to pronounce him clean or unclean, according to the symptoms that are observed. (3) The signs of leprosy are given for the guidance of the priests, and these point to spiritual states in which the soul is turned from God, and self-assertion is manifested in varied forms. (4) If the priest pronounce the man to be leprous, then he is unclean; and with clothes rent, the head bare, and the upper-lip covered, he had to declare his own uncleanness to men. As with the leper, so with the impure soul; no human power can cleanse a disease so awful, and the fate of man apart from Jesus Christ would have been that of utter misery. (5) There is, thanks be unto God, a Fountain that will cleanse the leprous soul; and the law of cleansing by the separation of two birds, the killing of one and the washing of the other in the blood of purifying and the running water, is a striking figure of the way of redemption by His blood, and of sanctification by the washing of regeneration by God's Spirit. (6) As the blood and the water cleanse the soul within from the leprous stain of sin, so there is given in detail the law relating to unclean issues, or in other words, the sinful words and actions performed by men. (7) By sin-offerings and burnt-offerings, there were purification, cleansing, and atonement under the laws of Moses; but in Jesus Christ there are the purification of the soul by faith, and reconciliation with God. Only through the cleansing of the soul within—that is, by the new heart and right spirit—can the issues of the life become pure and holy; the perverted spirit can only produce unholy issues, and the regenerate spirit is the only means by which a holy life can be attained.

CHAPTER XVI. may contain the seventh cycle. (1) Under the Aaronic order of priests and the ritual of the Old Testament, there was a limitation as to places and seasons; only the high priest could enter the holy of holies; and he only once a year, and that after suitable purification and the usual sin and burnt-offerings for himself. (2) The people gave two goats for a sin-offering for themselves, these being presented before God; then there was the casting of the lots upon the two goats, to decide which would be sacrificed and which taken away into the wilderness. (3) After offering the sin-offering for himself, and by taking with him a censer full of burning coals from the altar with incense, he entered the holy of holies; and whilst the cloud of incense covered the mercy-seat, he took the blood of the sin-offering to sprinkle the mercy-seat once and before the mercy-seat seven times. (4) The high priest being holy, killed the goat of the sin-offering, and took the blood within the veil, and there sprinkled the blood upon and before the mercy-seat, to make atonement for the people; but during this time of making atonement for himself and for Israel, there was no man in the tabernacle. After the atonement within the holy of holies, then followed the atonement for the altar of sacrifice and its hallowing from uncleanness. (5) After the atoning, cleansing, and reconciling

of all within the tabernacle, then the high priest made confession of sin upon the head of the scape-goat, and by it the sins of the people were taken away. (6) This was followed by the high priest washing himself, changing his garments, offering sacrifices, burning the fat of the sin-offering, the cleansing of the man who took away the scape-goat, the burning of the bullock and goat which were for the sin-offering without the camp, and the cleansing of the man who burnt the sin-offerings. (7) This is an abiding statute ; it brings in a Sabbath of rest, whilst at the same time it is the day of atonement for sin, for afflicting the soul, and for consecration to the service of God. In this important cycle may be traced the relations betwixt God and men, through Jesus Christ, which manifest the method of redemption by visible signs, and also history as it is found in the development of the purpose of grace. 1. It shows that the pre-Christian era was preparatory; under the figures were hidden the facts that redemption and atonement were to be obtained by sacrifices, but they who ministered in visible things were not perfect or fit for the position they occupied. 2. In the scheme of redemption there lies a choice and a chance, as by lot ; if men choose the sin-offering, they will escape, and through Him there will be both atonement and forgiveness of sin. 3. By the Holy One there is a way opened up into the holiest place by His Own obedience unto death. 4. By His death as man's substitute, there is atonement ; and this is the mystery of redemption, the wisdom of God, and His righteousness by grace. 5. Through death there is mercy and pardon of sin. 6. Because there is pardon and acceptance, there is the cleansing of the soul from sin. 7. When the soul is clean, and the spirit loves good and obeys God's truth and righteousness, then there follow peace and joy in the Holy Ghost or the Sabbath-rest promised to the people of God.

CHAPTERS XVII.—XXIII. may contain the eighth cycle. (1) The sanctity of moral life is shown under the figure of blood which contains the life in the human organised body. The moral life is God's, it is given to man for righteous purposes, and he has no right to pervert or turn away from the right use what belongs to God. (2) Blood and life express God's thoughts toward men ; the uncovering of nakedness, adultery, and fornication the thoughts, words, and actions of men toward God and their fellow creatures ; if the higher symbol of life is despised then God is dishonoured by His creatures through their disobedience ; but if there is the uncovering of nakedness, then the creatures lose the sense of shame amongst themselves, they glory in what is contrary to the will of God, and they become abominable in the sight of God. (3) Men require moral laws which will be the rule of their lives ; they are to be kings, but not despots ; there must not be unrighteousness in their actions, but their thoughts should be righteous, their words true, and their deeds just and good. (4) In this division there is to be found man's relationship toward God, false gods, wizards, parents, neighbours, and the lower creatures, thus embracing all creation, as well as making mention of the promised hope, the inheritance that remains for the holy, who are separate from the

world as the redeemed of God. (5) The priests are specially referred to with instructions for their holiness and sanctity; if upon any of them be found a blemish then they would be unfit to offer to the people the bread of God. If physical imperfection unfitted the sons of Aaron for the ceremonial service of the tabernacle, how much more may moral and spiritual blemishes of character unfit the ministers of Jesus Christ from serving their Lord and Saviour. Blemishes of character will cut men off from ministering the bread of life unto others, but not from being recipients of the Word of life. Profanation must be avoided, whilst at the same time it ought to be remembered that it is through the mercy of God that men are sanctified. (6) The 23rd chapter gives details as to the persons and things hallowed for God's service. It is God's plea for the holiness of the people that they are His redeemed from Egypt, and because it is Himself that sanctifies them. (7) The feasts contain in their hidden thoughts and meaning the kingdom of God in truth and righteousness; from the Sabbath of moral purity onward through the redemption by the Passover, unleavened bread, first fruits, trumpets, atonement, and feast of tabernacles. These all possess important spiritual significance, and the whole cycle of feasts is the cycle of the inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. (1) As the Sabbath is rest, so the poor spirit is heaven and peace. (2) As the Passover means mercy and favour, so the soul that has sinned and is pardoned knows the mercy and favour of God. (3) As the feast of unleavened bread, so the meek spirit in its lowliness and sincerity. (4) As the first-fruits contain and express the promise of all blessings, so the desire for truth and righteousness brings the promise of filling and of fruition. (5) As the bread of the first fruits implies the blessing of Pentecost, so the risen Saviour the giving of the Holy Spirit. (6) As in the harvest men were to leave a gleanings feast for the poor and the stranger, so in the harvest of this world in its spiritual order of things there is to be plenty for all who labour and who glean. (7) As the feast of trumpets brought the joyful new year in civil things to the Jews, so it promises in due time a new order in the kingdom of heaven, and thereafter the reign of peace, truth, and righteousness. (8) As the day of atonement, so there will come a day when the world will awake to its condition in the sight of God, and that will be a day of sorrow and affliction. (9) But as the day of atonement was followed by the feast of tabernacles, so following the day of sorrow will come the days of gladness, and men will rejoice exceedingly in the light of heaven.

CHAPTERS XXIV.—XXVII. may contain the ninth cycle. (1) It is introduced by the instructions given to the children of Israel that they should bring pure beaten olive oil for the lamps of the sanctuary. Knowledge of God's truth and righteousness is implied in this ordinance. In addition to the oil given for light there is also the shew-bread as a memorial, which speaks of the Word of God as the means of sustaining the spiritual life in man. (2) The case of the blasphemer speaks of the corrupt soul and its affinity for the things which are sinful, even where there is much light of truth and knowledge of God's

ord. (3) But the order of God's dealings with such as will not believe His words or receive the truth is justice, and this order of fine procedure is not to be limited to one class or nation, but applied all men in all nations. (4) The end of the blasphemer, the sinner, a transgressor of law, of sin, is stoning, that is death, so that it may separate from men, and that they may be sanctified to God. (5) The day of mercy will bring the year of jubilee; they are linked together in God's purpose of grace. (6) Blessings rest on the obedient and curses on the disobedient, and this is God's order of dealing with responsible moral creatures. (7) The day comes when men will show their desire to please God by vows, but by free-will offerings; the grateful and thankful will freely return unto Him what He has been pleased to bestow upon them. Tithes may have been suitable in the days of bondage to forms and ceremonies, but when the children are princes in the house of the King then they will give freely for the King's service of the things supplied by the King.

 NUMBERS.

The Book of Numbers contains the history of the people of God in their wilderness journeyings; and it manifests the state of Israel as a nation in its relations to God, to the surrounding nations, and in its own internal life. The history of God's spiritual nation may be found in the study of this book; and the position and condition of Israel, if rightly studied, may throw much light upon the individual experience of a Christian as well as the history and experience of nations.

CHAPTERS I.—VII. may contain the first cycle. (1) The numbering of the people suggests the thought that in God's kingdom all men and things find their places; and that in God's order, with the widest variety, there is the most perfect harmony and unity. (2) As in the tabernacle, with the ark of the tabernacle, so in the human soul, the microcosm of the kingdom of God, all arrangements are made with reference to the grace of God. This germ of spiritual life is the living seed, and from this point there will be outward development by the overcoming of that which is sinful. (3) The King reigns in the soul of the nation, and all the powers of man and of a nation are called on to pitch their camp in their appointed places; and in obedience to His Word the standards of truth and righteousness, patience and wisdom, are set up in their places. (4) The Levites were not numbered with the tribes of Israel; they are the chosen of God; His first-born, through whom His blessings would go forth to the world. Whilst they are, in a sense, the conservators of the divine grace and mercy, it is not that they should retain what God graciously bestows upon them; but rather that the cisterns in which the water of life is received may become very many, so that there might not be any drought upon the earth. The Levites are like God's Own Son, in whom

the grace of God was made manifest, and as from Him grace and truth have flowed forth amongst men by His disciples, so through the tribe of Levi the blessings of God were meant to descend on Israel. (5) The services of the priests and Levites are given in detail, and these point to the work of grace and mercy which is the work of redemption. (6) Under the figures of leprosy as related to the individual soul; sins or trespasses as against a neighbour; and the trial of jealousy as related to God; there may be found the state of a man's soul; it is corrupt, unjust, idolatrous, and rebellious, and thus unfit for the service of God. (7) The state of the soul should be like that of the Nazarite, separate and sanctified for the service of God. (8) Under such a condition there come upon a man the manifold blessings of God; His Name is written upon the soul, and the kingdom of heaven is possessed. (9) The nation and soul being sanctified and dedicated to God's service, then there is the restoration of fellowship and communion with God. A voice speaks from the mercy-seat, and it is known that God is at peace with men.

CHAPTERS VIII.—X. may contain the second cycle. (1) There is to be a lighting of the lamp in a soul, and in nations with the divine grace and truth, and it is through this light from heaven that man can perceive that the kingdom of God is according to divine appointment. (2) It is the light of God's grace that regenerates the soul, but it comes that it may purify, cleanse, consecrate, and sanctify the recipient for service. (3) Under the new conditions there arises the question of the external powers which keep the soul in bondage, and as it was in Egypt with the nation, so with the individual soul, the great work of God for the redemption of the soul must be remembered, that is the Passover in which it is seen that the guiltless dies for the sinful before freedom can be obtained. The soul is not clean; there is within, as it were, the dead body of a man which is being constantly touched; this contact with the seed of Adam does not prevent communion in the Passover feast, but rather it ought to be made the means of strengthening the soul for the arduous duties that are to come. (4) Man's ways are not in himself any more than the ways of the nation of God; it is God's cloud and fire, His Word and Spirit, that lead and point out the way of life throughout all the journeyings of God's people in all ages. (5) The trumpets speak of the joyful sound of mercy, and of the Word of God; under all the varied conditions of life the voice of God in His Word through His Holy Spirit is to be listened to and obeyed. (6) God has His order of march for the mighty nation and for the individual soul; it is all traced in His Holy Word, but as yet men are only groping after a knowledge of the divine will in connection with this important matter. (7) Men must take counsel with Ragnel's son, the Shepherd of God, in their journeyings; He knows the path of life well, and He is the example men are called to follow. The journey through the wilderness has been as if searching out for a resting-place, and when the time has come for the cloud to rest, then God's enemies will be scattered, they will flee before the Word of God, and the Lord will return and rest with His people Israel.

CHAPTERS XI., XII., may contain the third cycle. (1) The ideal Israel has vanished from view, and there is seen a rebellious, lusting multitude consumed by their fierce desires, crying for what was not within their reach, and loathing the blessed bread which God gave them from heaven. The bondage of Egypt, with its fleshly things, is seen as rough a fevered imagination, and there is manifested an intense desire to gratify the strong passions which move the soul. (2) This condition of a nation or of a soul is intolerable to Moses, the law of God; the soul struggles through all the fetters that bind it, and, as if insane, it will not even listen to reasonable words. The cry is to God for help against the cruel passions and mad desires, and if God help not, the end must be the destruction of the moral nature, the law, and the dishonour of God. (3) God responds to such a cry in the promise of help by the bestowal of His Spirit upon seventy elders, and through them sustenance to the moral nature and law; and at the same time He will grant flesh that they may eat, but seeing that it will not be accepted with gratitude and used with thankfulness and moderation, it will bring a curse instead of a blessing. (4) In the giving of so much flesh, in a desert, Moses saw an insuperable difficulty; but not according to the measure of moral law is the grace of God; in the former the Lord's hand is shortened so that it cannot save, but in Grace, in the Christ, there is no limitation in God, and it is men that limit the Holy One by their own sins and unbelief. (5) God gives His Holy Spirit of Grace to men, and they are changed and become His servants; and the more the abundance of the grace is bestowed and received, the more is God praised by His servants. (6) Blessings come to men, and on the one hand they bring salvation; the same blessings when perverted by men become on the other hand the means of cursing and of death; to the pure all things are pure, but to the wicked even the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ made the means of destruction through lusting. (7) Men would limit the actions of God, and they usually think that His grace should flow in the channels they prefer. That it should flow in the sacred channels duly appointed by God is the right thing in their conceptions; but to pass from them to the despised, such as publicans and sinners, is hardly conceived by them. Privilege begets the idea of preference, preference of self-righteousness, and thus pride reigns in the soul instead of humility and meekness. The story of Miriam, Aaron and Moses, is full of suggestive thoughts as bearing upon history; and as the issue was their case, so with others, there has been the manifestation of the *prosy* in the soul, making the privileged as outcasts from God's favour, the confirmation of the meek spirit in the place of authority; and in due time, through the Mediator, restoration to the privileges previously possessed.

CHAPTERS XIII., XIV., may contain the fourth cycle. (1) The instructions given to the spies were that they should view the whole land, and so be able to bring a faithful report back to their brethren. If men must choose betwixt Egypt and Canaan, they require to know both countries; if the service of the world, or Christ, they must know both masters. (2) *The land of promise* was one of plenty; and around

the thoughts of God's fellowship and faithfulness with men there is found all that ought to encourage men. It is true that proud and wicked powers hold the fortress of faith in this world, and in the soul of man before there is occupation by the Spirit of God, yet ripe clusters of God's gracious thoughts hang by the living waters of truth, so that men may cut them down and use them as foretastes of richer blessings.

(3) The time for the spying out of the land was a period of forty days, equivalent to a dispensational era of mercy; and under the visible, tangible, ceremonial things of Judaism, Israel, according to the flesh, went no further than the spying out of the land of promise. Through unbelief they also rebelled when the spiritual land of promise in Jesus Christ was offered to them, and not in heart merely, but by word they went back to Egypt, when they cried, "We have no king but Caesar." (4) But Joshua and Caleb remained true and faithful, and they profane the True and Faithful, and those who in Him are found to be faithful and true in the kingdom of righteousness. (5) Israel, according to the flesh, would not inherit the promised land, therefore they were doomed to the wilderness and to death; whilst through their rejection of God as their King and the despising of His Word, their rebellion is made the very means by which the whole earth would be filled with God's glory. (6) Judgment falls upon the rebellious, their doom is death and never to reach the promised inheritance; whilst to the helpless little ones the promise was given of possessing the inheritance which their fathers despised. (7) Joshua and Caleb, Truth and Faith, these will live and possess the good land, whilst around them will fall the spirits of lying and unbelief, and they will lead, through the Faithful and True King, the people of God into their rest. (8) This cycle begins with great self-assertion and rebellion on man's part, and it ends in wilfulness and disobedience; the spirit of Canaan and Amalek, expediency and rebellion against the Most High, is manifested, and there is defeat and flight before the enemy. The body is a body of corruption as relating to Israel, the world or a soul; and in the Mediator's pleadings, God's promises, the truth and faithfulness of His Word, men must trust, and not in visible things. This cycle may have a very extensive application, for it seems to contain in its outlines all history, and hidden away in the visible things God's purpose of grace in all its fullness as found in the words, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."

CHAPTERS XV.—XVII. may contain the fifth cycle. (1) There is a change in the spirit of the legislation and of the view in which it is presented, the wilderness is past, and the people are considered as in possession of the promised inheritance. The spirit is that of Christianity in its method of free-will offerings, and as related to the oneness of laws and of sacrifices; the partition is broken down and Jew and Gentile are one before God in Jesus Christ. (2) Because of the greater light of truth, sin becomes more heinous, and thus sins of presumption, that is, men knowing the right and wilfully choosing the wrong, by despising and rejecting the laws of God, are summarily dealt with and stoned to death. This is not done because God desires the death of the wicked,

as an awful warning to men. As with Achan, and Ananias and Sapphira, so here also, it is that God's Name might be feared, and that a might become holy and obedient to His Word. (3) The order of His service to God is written in the story of Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and On; they are the visible figures, but history is animated with the spirit from Cain to the present day. The question of the birthright and the blessing really underlies all these successive struggles and in history, and Adam's son, the seed of the serpent, has always been ready to rise in rebellion against the seed of the woman unto whom God has given the birthright of government and the blessing of life. (4) The doom of the rebellious conspirators is destruction by fire of God, and to be swallowed up alive. An awful figure this of destruction of the spiritually wicked, who will no more be destroyed by water, but by the spiritual judgments of God, and by banishment from His presence and from the light of day. (5) The judgments of God do not often bring repentance, but murmurings against God's servants or messengers, by whom He executes His purposes of mercy and of judgment; there is the hardening process, as if by searing with hot iron, and not the softening as produced by the sweet influences of the word of God and of mercy. (6) The consequence is the plague and death, which can be stayed only by the High Priest of men standing in the breach until the plague is stayed; but the plague of sin is not stayed; the dead and the living lie side by side, and only by the intercession of the Saviour and Intercessor of men can the plague of sin be stayed amongst men. (7) The question of supremacy is to be settled by the coming of the Priest-King; and it is to be finally settled by the word of God's Word, His power amongst men, manifesting that in itself there is found a spiritual organic life, so that in one night of God's Word it will bud, blossom, and bring forth fruit. The Bible is the Rod of God's power, and whilst it will manifest the power of life, all other rods will remain as dead; therefore, this is God's sign unto men that He has sent His Christ, the Saviour of the world, Priest, King, and Intercessor, in whom Man upon whom God has been pleased to bestow the birthright of government and the blessing of eternal life and peace to all who believe in Him. This is God's token to men, and they will do well to study it, and to see its sign in its cycle so that God's peace may come to men.

CHAPTERS XVIII.—XX. may contain the sixth cycle. (1) The position of the priests and Levites is defined, and the positions which they are to receive from their brethren; but in all these things there may be discerned the thought that beyond the priests of the order of Aaron and the Levites, there is really to be conceived the Lord Jesus Christ as the High Priest of man, and that unto Him and to His spiritual seed there should be given the first-fruits of supremacy in all things. (2) The sacrifice of the red heifer without blemish, raises the question as to the means by which man may be cleansed before God and made fit to appear in His presence; and the reply is given in the thought that the offerings are to bring unto God, as a sin-offering, and as their substitute, One in whom there is no imperfection; and that through His death sin will be taken away and the soul cleansed. To find Jesus

Christ is to find what is signified by the red heifer, and it is only through His death that the soul of man can be purified from sin and uncleanness. (3) The desert of Sin, the murmuring at Kadesh, because of the want of water, and the complainings that Egypt was better than the wilderness, is a picture of the rebellious spirit found in man, when by their strife and vain-glory they grieve God's Holy Spirit and He departs from them; then the world of the soul is like a wilderness, the things and thoughts of God are not desired or loved, and the affections are set upon the things of this world. This is like a crisis in the soul and in history, and unless the servants of God, through the Word, bring the glory of God near to men, they would go backward to Egypt, or the world and its ways, and not forward to inherit the promises. (4) It is around the Rod of God, and the stricken rock that the mystery of God's purpose of grace revolves; they are visible signs of His power and grace. It was when the people of Israel left the wilderness of Sin and pitched in Rephidim that they wanted water, and by the striking of the rock in that place, abundant water was given to them. But in Kadesh, the holy or sacred place, it was not necessary that the rock should be again stricken, for if Moses by faith had spoken to the rock, the water would have gushed forth as from a living fountain to bless the people. In other words, it was necessary that the Lord Jesus Christ should be stricken for the transgressions of God's people once, so that the Holy Spirit might be given to men, but to strike the rock a second time, means the crucifixion of the Lord in His Church and Holy Spirit; putting Him to an open shame before men, as by despising and rejecting His Word; and is not this the great sin of men in these latter days, that they have not believed God's Word and have treated it, as Moses in figure did the rock in Kadesh? (5) Because of unbelief and disobedience the visible things, or means of grace and the moral law, do not lead men into the promises of God in Jesus Christ. They manifest before men the Meribah of strife; but in His mercy He will bring the time of peace and the possession of the promised inheritance. (6) Strife in the Church of God and contact with the spirit of the world have been and are the hindrances which prevent the entrance into the spiritual possession. Edom, or the spirit of Adam within, is too strong, and the spirit of Moses, the moral law, is too weak to overthrow the fleshly lusts and carnal desires. (7) The end of the cycle brings the death of Aaron on Mount Hor in the coast of Edom; the visible things, which are carnal in their nature, must depart, so that by Eleazar, or the help of God, there may be preparation for the coming conflict, and the promised possession in the land of rest.

CHAPTERS XXI.—XXV. may contain the seventh cycle. (1) The beginning of the successful spiritual warfare is found in the consecration of the spirit to God, in opposition to the carnal spirit of expediency which rules the world; to resign the self-will, and obey God's will in all things, is to begin the campaign in the right spirit, and the issue must be destruction to that spirit which is not subject to the will of God. (2) *But the way is a long and trying one; there is the whole land of Edom, the spirit of Adam, to be compassed, and it is no easy matter to go*

forward under the manifold hindrances which rise up in the carnal man. The worst of these are impatience and unbelief; men cannot wait patiently, obey willingly, and trust God implicitly, and thus the soul turns against God, it loathes His Word, and would find something more congenial to the depraved desires. The consequence is that the fiery serpent of infidelity rages, and it is only through the renewed uplifting of the Son of man that there is the return to health and peace. (3) But there is a change in the order of events, and in due time the well of salvation breaks forth in the desert, and the princes with the law-giver rejoice in the living water which springs up in their midst to refresh their souls. (4) The giving of God's Holy Spirit, as by revivals of religion, gives a new spirit to the servants of God; and encouraged they go forward and fight against the Amorites, or the rebel spirit, and gain the victory. (5) The spirits of Balak and Balaam may represent the most subtle enemies of the gospel of God's free grace in all ages; these being the intellectual spirit as linked with religion, and the traditional spirit linked with prophecy and sacrifice, as found amongst the nations of men. The spirit of God's religion is that of free grace to sinners and slaves, so that the down-trodden may be redeemed and changed into a nation; the spirit of Moab is that of pride in intellectual attainments, relying upon a culture and form of worship which is by and for a class, and through those who are by tradition the servants of God. God's method speaks of free grace to all men, even the worst of men; for their salvation; man's religion in all its perverted forms, including Judaism and Christianity, as found in sects, makes much of culture and tradition, and the sanctity of men. God's free grace exists as a means that it may be a blessing to sinful men, and to bring glory to God for His grace and mercy. Men's perversions tend to make the means their end; they seek the good of the selfish and the self-righteous; they make self their centre instead of God, and thus they seek their own glory as individuals, sects, or nations, in preference to the will of God, and the good of the down-trodden, despised, and afflicted amongst men. The false must give place to the true; and even Balaam, the prophet of culture and of tradition, has been instructed by God, the Source of all truth, to prophesy of the success of God's kingdom of grace, and of the downfall of all that is opposed to God's gracious will. (6) What Balaam could not do under the guidance of God's Spirit, that is, in harmony with truth and righteousness, he attempted to do by his carnal advice to the sons of Moab. If God will not curse His people, then let the devil's snares be set around them, and in due time the adulterous spirit will desire the thoughts of Moab, in its false wisdom, and through this departure from God there would come a new spirit amongst God's people of pride, conceit, and strife. (7) This cycle ends with the covenant of peace granted to Phinehas, and the command from God to oppose the spirit of strife and of divisions which existed in Israel.

CHAPTERS XXVI.—XXXII. may contain the eighth cycle. (1) The second numbering of the people is the sign that a new generation has arisen, and with the people, trained in the wilderness, a new spirit has

been manifested. The wilful, stubborn, selfish people who left Egypt have perished, and the future rests with Joshua and Caleb, Faith and Truth, and the meek, obedient followers of God trained in the wilderness. (2) At the end of this period there comes a change in social relations, which is equivalent to the enfranchisement of women; they receive the right to hold property, this may point to the restoration of the affections to their rightful place in man's nature and in the world as distinct from the lordly power of the intellect and desires which have been dominant amongst men. (3) At this point there is the preparation for the departure of the spirit of Moses from amongst men; the law and visible rites and ceremonies must pass away, to be succeeded by the Spirit of the Saviour, and obedience to truth, and faith or trust in God, as the internal guiding principles of life. (4) The spirits of Joshua, that is, truth in salvation, and of Eleazar, the help of God, seem to embody the great means of redemption in the kingdom of righteousness; truth, blessed by grace and faith, is charged with the mission of man's salvation. (5) The order of mercy is by self-sacrifice, and all the solemn feasts and sacrifices of Mosaism, including vows and free-will offerings, are visible signs of spiritual realities. (6) The conflict with Midian is a figure of the termination of strife and contention in the soul; and amongst the nations the victory falls to the Truth and those who obey Him, and theirs will be the spoil of all that has been perverted from the ways of righteousness. (7) With peace there comes the possession and the settlement of the two and a half tribes; this speaks of the inheritance possessed, if not in spiritual things, at least in dominion over the rebel power and the wisdom of this world.

CHAPTERS XXXIII.—XXXVI. may contain the ninth cycle. (1) The forty-two journeys of the children of Israel from Egypt to the plains of Moab, contain in the germ the history of the kingdom of God amongst men. (2) These journeys cover the great conflict of the strife in the breaking off from the world and the works of the flesh, but the spiritual possession is about to be inherited, and with this new movement there is required the spiritual vision and power, so that there may be faithfulness to God's Word, and meek obedience to His will. (3) The meek shall get the inheritance of this earth. (4) Eleazar, Joshua, Caleb, and others, who represent the gifts and graces of God's kingdom, will make this spiritual division. (5) The cities of refuge speak of mercy to the manslayer; in other words, in Jesus Christ, the Refuge of the soul, all who sin ignorantly, and not presumptuously, find mercy to pardon sin and protection from the Avenger. (6) For the wilful murderer of the soul there is no pardon or place of refuge. The rebellious, self-asserting soul pollutes the earth as with blood; and as God shall dwell in His inheritance, sin and selfishness in its every form must be taken away. (7) The book closes with the full enfranchisement of the daughters of Zelophehad, upon the condition that they will intermarry in their own tribe of the house of Joseph; in other words, the inheritance and blessing are theirs, if they remain faithful to God.

THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY.

CHAPTERS I.—III. may contain the first cycle. (1) After the introduction, explaining time and place, there follow God's instructions to Moses, which embody in figure the possession of all that is contained in the promises related to the kingdom of God. (2) The experience of Moses is that of the soul under Moses during the period of correction and instruction in righteousness; the flesh lusts against the spirit, and at the same time the burden of government is intolerable. (3) "That great and terrible wilderness" expresses the condition of the world, and of man, as subject to the law of the servant Moses, and the uncontrollable feelings and desires of the flesh. (4) The spying out of the land of Canaan expresses what men have been doing in the past, and their rebellion and rejection of Jesus Christ. (5) There was judgment because of sin, but through the True and Faithful King and Leader of men there is mercy and the inheritance. (6) History, in the Christian sense, may be said to consist specially of two thoughts, the compassing of Edom, or the power of man in visible things, and of Seir, or the occult spiritual conceptions. These are not to be possessed or destroyed in Israel, but changed so that God's grace may be magnified by compassing them. (7) But over the rebellious spirit there will be needed a victory, even unto the brook Jabbok, and there Jacob, the replanter, shall be changed and become Israel, a prince with God. (8) It is not Moses that will lead the sons of God into their possession, but the Son of God; whilst, as from a Pisgah top, the man who has gained the victory over the rebellious spirit will be privileged to see the land of promise, as fully manifested in Jesus Christ.

CHAPTERS IV., V., may contain the second cycle. (1) If there is to be faithfulness unto God, then His statutes and judgments must be obeyed; the soul must cleave unto God, and through obedience there will follow blessing. (2) The key to all true service is loyalty to God, and only through spiritual worship and service can this be maintained. (3) God is jealous, a consuming fire, when there is idolatry in the soul. (4) The consequences which follow from idolatry, wilfulness, selfishness, and self-assertion, in a man or a nation, are the judgments of God. (5) The Lord is King, and there is none to compare with Him. (6) The places of refuge are the places of safety for men in the mercy of God; and the laws, testimonies, and history of Israel make known to men the kingdom of righteousness. (7) The covenant of grace in Jesus Christ to be found in the Lord talking face to face with man, and in the Mediator who makes known the method of mercy. (8) The moral law or ten commandments is the order of moral life for the guidance of the soul in all its duties. (9) But man cannot obey God's law in spirit and in truth, therefore the Mediator greater than Moses is required.

CHAPTERS VI.—VIII. may contain the third cycle. (1) This is God's kingdom, and thus there is expressed the great principle of the order of the divine government in the words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy

speaks of the judgments of God upon the wicked, and the glorious deliverance which the Lord has accomplished for His people in Egypt and in the wilderness. These things have been experienced by the people of God, and it is becoming in them to love their Redeemer and obey their Saviour, so that they may possess the land of plenty which has been graciously promised. (2) The land, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the regenerate soul in Him, is all that is true, beautiful, good, and gracious. Faith believes this testimony, and hope looks forward assured of the fruition of all the promises. (3) By meek obedience in a diligent spirit and with loving service there will come the reward, but there is required great care lest the spirit becomes rebellious and idolatrous, and thus bring a curse instead of a blessing. (4) The kingdom of mercy and of righteousness is to be maintained in the soul and upon the earth by treasuring up God's gracious and righteous thoughts, by making them signs for guidance, by teaching the children God's statutes under all circumstances of life, and by sanctifying all things to His glory. (5) By obedience through faith, and by the mercy of God, the world shall become subject to the King of grace, and all other religions will vanish from before the Sun of righteousness as the morning clouds vanish before the rising sun. (6) Yet all this is in harmony with the fact that men can choose good or evil, blessing or cursing, Gerizim or Ebal. (7) The purpose of God standeth sure; men will possess the spiritual blessings God has provided, and, more, they will also be so changed that they will observe, love, and obey the gracious will of God.

CHAPTERS XII.—XXV. may contain the sixth cycle. (1) God's command to every soul is obedience to His laws, and the casting out of the soul of any and every idol or god that would find a place of worship there. (2) The place which God has chosen for worship is Zion, that is, Jesus Christ, His Son, in whom He is well pleased; but also and specially the inmost recess of the human soul where God should reign, by His Holy Spirit, and receive the adoration and praise of the spiritual powers in man. Not as Israel served God in the wilderness should men worship Him, but through the Lamb of God, in peace, and in that rest of soul which Jesus Christ has given to those who trust Him. (3) During the time of probation men were not to deprive themselves of the product of life, or cut themselves off from the Fountain of moral life; but whilst enjoying the product of life they must not eat that in which life in the essence flowed; life would be to them as a sacred symbol illustrating moral purity and communion with God. (4) Even after the enlargement of the borders of the kingdom, as when Judaism passed away and Christianity came to the nations, then as they were still under forms and signs, and not pure spiritual conceptions, the same liberty was to be enjoyed whilst the same prohibition would hold good as referring to blood; and to this agrees the decision of James in the council at Jerusalem when the visible order of the kingdom for the Gentiles was arranged. (5) By the grace and mercy of God, His promises will all be fulfilled in their due time and order; but faithfulness on the part of man is

also important, so there must not be any disloyalty to the God of grace and mercy. Perfect obedience to His will is necessary; and men must not add to, or take away from, the Word of God. (6) Chapters xiii.—xxv. contain the judgments of God against those who transgress His laws. These statutes exist not because they are in the order of God's moral government, but on account of those who are transgressors. They speak of corruptions wrought by man in his own being, and in nations, of the means used to prevent disobedience to law and to punish offenders. They do not speak of mercy, but of constraint, restraint, and punishment; penal if the sin is heinous and presumptuous, and also for chastisement, so that the way of mercy and of peace may be desired by the offender. They do not exist for the purpose of regeneration, but to make manifest man's wickedness, so that he may have no cloak for his sins; and the end and object of all such legislation is to turn men away from Moses to Jesus Christ, from works to faith, from the cursed altar, and its sacrifice on Ebal to Gerizim with its blessings. The statutes are against idolatry in its every form; desecration of soul or body; against unclean food for soul or body, cruelty, covetousness, an exacting greedy spirit, disobedience to God's laws, presumptuous sins, statutes relating to the duties of a king, divining and witchcraft, guidance by *the* Prophet, cities of refuge, witness-bearing, and various other matters, which need not be enumerated, terminating in the statute that men should be guided by the spirit of justice in all their actions, because every form of unrighteousness is an abomination in God's sight. (7) All these varied forms of judgments and statutes must vanish away before the Holy Spirit of God in men, in their obedience to God's moral law; as men conform to the will of God, they will be transformed into the likeness of Christ, and with the cessation of sin, and the desire to make the self-will the standard of action, the things of cursing will be removed from view. But if the restraining influences cease to possess power, then the spirit of Amalek, that is pride and self-sufficiency, will not die so easily; therefore, let no man say, "I am perfect," until this awful enemy of God is blotted out from the soul. "Thou shalt not forget," is God's emphatic testimony to man on this point; this is the last devil in man to be destroyed; and as he is as proud as Lucifer, and as full of enmity against God as Satan, it is well that men should remember this enemy of the soul, watch against his every motion, and pray that the God of grace may terminate his existence by His Word and Spirit.

CHAPTERS XXVI.—XXX. may contain the seventh cycle. (1) The first-fruits of all that man possesses in the land of promise is God's; in other words, all things are His; because in His mercy He redeems the soul from death, bestows every blessing upon those who love and serve Him, and gives joy and peace in the possession and use of His bounties. (2) The soul confesses its dependence upon God, and craves His blessing according to the promises to the fathers. (3) There is a mutual avouchment on the part of the Lord and His people; He is *their King*, and they are His loyal people, obedient and blessed above

all nations. (4) The altar on Mount Ebal, the Sacrifice, and the plastered stones speak of the mystery of sacrifice for sin, and how it would be abolished through the only Sacrifice that can possess any spiritual efficiency. After the sacrifice, then peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. (5) Through the mercy of God, men are reconciled to Him, made His people, and they are called to obey God's commandments with a new spirit. (6) Upon Gerizim God blesses men ; but upon Ebal the curse rests ; the obedient are blessed, but they who do not conform to the will of God are cursed. (7) Under the covenant made in the land of Moab there may be found expressed the great work of the King, on His people's behalf, from the redemption out of Egypt onward, including the blessing and the curse, the secret things of God, and the Word of grace so nigh to man that it is even in his mouth. **G**od deals with men according to their intellectual and moral nature, setting before them "life and good, death and evil ;" so that they may know, love, and obey Him. To do this is life, because life is derived from the Fountain of Life, and through obedience and cleaving unto God, He will grant length of days, even eternal life according to the promise and oath given unto the fathers and fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XXXI., 1—23, may contain the eighth cycle. (1) The work of the spirit of Moses is at an end, it has served throughout three long eras or prophetic periods of forty years, and it may not pass over into that land which is to be consecrated for the free spirit in Jesus Christ. Although Moses must bid them farewell, God is their leader and Joshua, the Saviour, goes before them in their march. The past is great because God has been in it with His servant Moses ; the future will be even more glorious because "God is with us," and He will not forsake His people nor fail to give them help. (2) As was the future to Israel in Moab, so may the future be to the individual soul and to the people of God ; now they know that they are going to move for the conquest of the world very soon ; but they are not quite certain as to the visible or invisible presence of the King. The day that is coming will decide this matter, then there will be unity amongst the people of God and the true Leader, seen by Moses, will be seen by the people of God, for "The Lord, He it is that doth go before thee ; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee ; fear not, neither be dismayed." (3) Moses gave unto the people of Israel, through the Levites, "this law," and it was to be diligently studied by them at the end of the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles ; they did not obey this command during history, except as, for example, when Ezra read the law of God after the captivity, which is a visible sign of a great spiritual reality. The day has once more come upon men when there will be another restoration and rebuilding of God's Temple ; and His law will assuredly be studied, that men may know and obey the will of God with a meek and humble spirit. (4) What do men wait for so that the kingdom of God may be manifested ? The gracious purpose and will of God, and the descent of His Holy Spirit upon men. (5) History, sacred and profane, clearly proves that God moves onward in His order of moral Government, and in His gracious purpose for man's salvation. The

wisdom and power of God are exerted in this direction for the overthrow of the works of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and because of sin, even in the great day of God's mercy, men fear judgment and know not that God is in their midst full of compassion, abundant in mercy, goodness, and truth. (6) To God all things that have taken place were foreknown; His Own goodness and grace, and man's most extraordinary wickedness; and that they might be condemned by words out of their own mouths, God gave them a song to teach unto their children; and this song is a record of the mercy of God and the wickedness of man. (7) As into Joshua's hands the charge was given to lead Israel into Canaan, even so the Lord Jesus Christ is King and Leader over the spiritual armies of the living God.

CHAPTERS XXXI., 24—30, XXXII., may be found to contain the ninth cycle. (1) The Book, with all its precious contents, the will of God, and His purpose of grace, was consigned by Moses to the care of the Levites; a sacred trust to be a witness against them in due time, because of their unfaithfulness. (2) Corruption, rebellion, backsliding, disobedience, evil doing, provocation of God, and judgment surrounded with mercy, is the history of man. (3) Yet heaven and earth are called to witness to the sweet doctrine, the gracious words, greatness, power, strength, perfection, justice, truth, and righteousness of God, as related to an ungrateful, corrupt, and perverse generation. (4) The saints of the kingdom of God in Israel ought to remember the faithfulness, goodness, and grace of God. The redeemed of the Lord are His portion and inheritance. He found them in the desert of a moral waste, and by His mercy He has poured out upon them the richest of His blessings, even "the pure blood of the grape," as in the life and passion of the Saviour of men. (5) But the redeemed have not been grateful. Jeshurun, the righteous, has become unrighteous, with pride and vain conceit, he has forsaken God, and despised the Redeemer who brought salvation to men. In his foolishness he has provoked the Almighty to jealousy by loving and serving foolish things, by forsaking the true God, and by forgetting the only Rock of salvation. This is truly the grave charge that can be brought against the people of God in this day of merciful visitation, and they are verily guilty in the sight of God. (6) But have they been successful in their wickedness? By no means, for they have been abhorred by God, His face has been hidden from them, and they have been provoked to jealousy by the success of other nations, who have not been known as the privileged people of God. The unreasonable, immoral, foolish creatures, despised God's goodness, grace, joy, and peace, and by so doing they met in full front the great judgments of God in their manifold diversities. (7) This great song is God's witness against men, showing forth His goodness and grace, and their ingratitude and wickedness. Obedience to the law of God is not a vain thing; it is moral life, and it is the means by which men will prolong their days into the life eternal. (8) The spirit of Moses may not enter into the rest prepared for God's people; but from Mount *Nebo*—that fructifies or prophesies—there may be seen the goodly land in all its spiritual beauty. Moses must lay aside the law, and the

ceptre, the power, and the greatness of the visible order of things; the old man must become a child again; and in a meek spirit, the ruler and the viceroy, must descend from his exalted position, become as one of the common people, and through faith, by God's grace, the great servant will become a beloved son, and surely he shall not be the last nor the least in the kingdom of God.

CHAPTERS XXXIII., XXXIV., may contain the tenth cycle. (1) It seems to be the record of the latest utterances of Moses, as bearing upon the kingdom of God upon this earth; his blessing upon the people of God under his training, at the time of their enfranchisement into higher and holier privileges. His thoughts are what God had done from Sinai, Seir, and Paran; the sterile desert of man's moral nature, the perverted spiritual nature, and in the manifestation of His goodness and grace. God loves His people; His saints are upheld by Him; and they receive His law. (2) Moses has been law-giver and king in Israel, and through him men have known and served God; his is the spirit ruling in the nations and amongst men in past ages. (3) The tribes are blessed as God's nation, and in the blessings uttered there are great prophetic thoughts which require to be studied in harmony with the blessings uttered by Jacob, and the names given to the children when they were born. (4) There is found in God the eternal refuge for sinful men, and they are happy who are the people saved by God. (5) Moses has seen in spirit and in history the land of promise, and God's great purpose of grace in Jesus Christ. (6) The spirit of Moses must pass away, yet though it has served God for the three great periods of history, it is still as powerful in the world as ever. (7) But in Jesus Christ men find truth and grace, and His is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA.

CHAPTERS I., II., may contain the first cycle in this book. (1) The charge given to Joshua after the death of Moses is in the spirit of the kingdom of God as in Jesus Christ, in its spiritual prosperity and conquest over enemies. Moses is gone, but the God who guided Moses remains true and faithful; and by trust in God and obedience to His laws, success in obtaining the inheritance is insured. (2) Joshua's command to Israel is that of preparation, because the possession is about to be enjoyed according to God's promise. (3) The people are found loyal to God and Joshua; they hate the spirit of rebellion, and they encourage their leader in his duties. (4) The spying of Jericho by the two spies may fairly represent the condition of the kingdom of evil, and the inspection by the servants of God and righteousness; what has been regarded as the impregnable and irreconcilable, is found to be weak as a reed, unstable as water, and its defence in all forms of self-glorifying is broken down. (5) The scarlet thread of Rahab is the sign of the

Evangel of Mercy ; only those sheltered under this sign can be saved from sin in the evil days of scepticism and infidelity. (6) The promise and oath of God to men abide sure even unto this day ; if men seek shelter under it, they will be safe, if not, their blood rests on their own heads ; God is clear, since He has been faithful and true to His Word. (7) The report of the spies is jubilant in its tone of trust in God ; by faith they already possess the land, and their enemies are bereft of all power. These thoughts may be translated into the spiritual experience of the individual soul, or into the hopeful aspect of Christianity at the coming of the Lord.

CHAPTERS III., IV., may contain the second cycle. (1) There is a removal from the Camp in Shittim to Jordan ; this is as the preparation before the great work of salvation begins. (2) The central point is the Ark of God, and upon it men must fix their attention. The Lord Jesus leads His people as a shepherd leads his flock ; trusting in Him, they are led in a spiritual way they have not travelled heretofore. (3) The ransomed host of God's elect must be a sanctified people, a holy nation, amongst whom the Lord doeth great wonders. (4) As Joshua was magnified amongst the people of Israel, so the Lord Jesus Christ is praised and adored in the redeemed soul, and He will be praised and adored by His people when He leads them forward to the spiritual conquest of this world, to truth and righteousness. (5) The great work of mercy is in the hands of the King ; from the time of His descent by death into the grave, there has been a suspension of the power of sin and death, and His witnesses have made the facts of His death and resurrection known to all men. (6) There was the descent into death and the grave, but also resurrection, ascension, and witness bearing, and the signs of the great spiritual conquest by the Lord remain unto this day. In prospective men look forward to another movement upon the same spiritual lines, but the manifestation will be of the mystical body of Christ in His kingdom for the subjugation of the world to truth and righteousness. (7) In that day the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will be magnified above Moses ; His Name will be blessed, and all men blessed in Him. All the people of the earth will know the power of God's grace, and they will fear the Lord God for ever.

CHAPTERS V., VI., 1—25, may contain the third cycle. (1) The fear of the Amorite and Canaanite kings, when they heard of the work of God, indicates the thought that the kingdom of evil totters, and is ready to fall. God with us, is the strength of Israel ; and when God arises, then His enemies will fall. (2) But the work of the Lord cannot be carried on by the uncircumcised and the unholy ; the reproach of sin must be taken away, so that there may be fitness for God's service. (3) This is a new time, the beginning of the sacred year, and thus redemption from Egypt, and salvation from the lusts of the flesh, are remembered by the Passover feast, which expresses the method of God's kingdom of mercy. (4) The manna, or figurative things pass away, and the true Bread is made man's spiritual food. In the Manna and Bread, the Word and Spirit, there is found God's truth and righteousness. (5) The

in of our salvation is in the field, therefore, let His servants worship Him with reverence, and be ready to obey His merciful commands in the conquest of the world to God, truth, and righteousness. (6) The fall of Jericho, the accursed city, was duly accomplished according to the instruction. And not by the might, wisdom, knowledge, or power of man, but by the Spirit of God will the same great spiritual end be effected in the soul and in this world. (7) As by faith Rahab was saved from the doomed Jericho, so the people of God in the world of unbelief will be saved through the faithfulness of God to His promises. The dominion of evil will fall, doubts and sceptical thoughts will be burnt up with the fire of God, and in that day the light of truth will shine so clearly, that the shadowy forms of unbelief will vanish away like the dark clouds before the rising sun.

CHAPTERS VI., 26—27, VII., may contain the fourth cycle. (1) Cursed is the kingdom of evil, which doubts, denies, and disobeys the will of God in a man or in the world. To permit the cursed thing to get a foothold upon the soul, is to kill the first-born, or faith in God; to go on with the cursed work of infidelity, is to wander into the darkness, where men find wailing and anguish. This is the mystery of doubt, unbelief, sin, hatred of God, and contempt of His will in the soul and in this world, and the end is death; but God through His Son, Jesus Christ, and through Him man can find salvation. The history of man is that of "trespass in the accursed thing;" because of doubting and sin, God's anger has been kindled against him. (3) The order of the kingdom of evil is first to receive the accursed thing, and by doing so to begin to build on a new foundation; second, the soul is accursed because of its possession, and thus there is a breach betwixt God and the soul; and third, there is presumption and a defiance before the enemy of the soul. (4) The mystery of man's salvation can be found in Joshua pleading with God for His discomfited people. Man is afraid, the enemy is triumphant, God's Name dishonoured, and His cause apparently lost; and what can God do in such a strait. (5) The reply to such thoughts is man's selfishness, pride, and cowardliness; and the remedy is separation from sin, purification by the Holy Spirit, and purification through obedience. In every man there is an accursed Achan, a troubler, who sees what is forbidden, covets that which is not good or true, and takes that which brings a curse upon the soul. (7) But the day is coming when this troubler in the soul, and amongst nations, will be put to death; his troubles will recoil upon his own head, and as with stones and fire, the accursed thing, sin, in its lustings and desires will be destroyed.

CHAPTER VIII. may contain the fifth cycle. (1) By God's grace the flesh of man is not permitted to reign upon the earth; God has His promise of grace by which the spirit of presumption shall be cast down, so that God may reign, and not the devil of sin and unbelief. The means of bringing down the presumptuous and rebellious spirit in man and in nations may be compared to the attack on Ai. His armies are not limited, but manifold; there are the visible and

the invisible powers, which are set in their places to execute His will (3) Presumptuous men sleep and think they are safe, but God's laws are in operation for destruction and salvation. (4) Men attack visible things which seem to flee before them; but lo, in the hour of apparent victory, God's invisible armies arise, they seize the stronghold, His enemies are put to flight and utterly destroyed. That which was proud and presumptuous is brought low, and being burnt up by the fire of God's judgments, it will remain a heap and a desolation for ever. (5) As the altar on Mount Ebal was the means by which the land was sanctified, so the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, in the likeness of man for sin, is the true spiritual altar and sacrifice for the sons of man. (6) The writing upon the stones, and the uttering of the blessings and cursings on Gerizim and Ebal, speak of the moral nature of man and the means by which it is regenerated and sanctified. (7) When man have the law of God written upon their souls, and know all the blessings and the cursings which flow from obedience to His laws, or disobedience to His will, then they become like Joshua and Jesus in their thoughts, words, and actions.

CHAPTERS IX., X., may contain the sixth cycle. (1) There is seen the six-fold powers of the enemy united to fight against God and His servants. (2) The story of the deceptive policy of the Gibeonites seems to be a parable having a very extensive application. The word Gibeon means hill, that which is without, lifted up, and the elevation of iniquity. The principles upon which the Gibeonites acted is that of the policy carried on amongst nations, that of expediency, of mere worldly calculations without any respect for God's will or His glory. This is the spirit that rules man in his perverted condition; the Jacob spirit in Padan-aram; the supplanting, deceitful man who would fain get God's blessing, but who also desires to possess, retain, and enjoy as the supreme good the things of this life. It is the carnal man guided by a carnal policy seeking safety and peace for selfish ends, and not because it is God's will. It is like the moral law and order of things in man, and in the state, during the period of the subjection of the Spirit of Christ and of Grace; but when grace is triumphant then the visible order which was self-seeking seeks after peace, not willingly, but because there must be a choice betwixt those who are altogether opposed to God and those who are His followers. As Gibeon was no mean power, but a royal city, so this power in a man, and amongst the nations, has been the regnant power in the past. (3) But when Grace reigns, then the visible things of the moral order must give place to the higher spiritual order; in other words, moral government will become like a hewer of wood and a drawer of water for mankind, a means to an end, and not, as at present, the great end for which ambitious men strive that they may gain power. (4) This question touches the birthright; and it may here be discerned that the Gibeonite spirit of the perverted moral order takes the lower place, the servant, and not the master, the subject of king and altar, that is of the pure moral law and of the laws of grace. (5) Against moral law and grace the rebellious spirit of the Amorite is always in rebellion;

and the manifestation of grace to the rebellious, when it is accepted by them, is made a cause of war; and to this agrees the word of the King, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." (6) Those who are in league with the King of grace have a right to appeal to Him for safety, and He will hear their cry, and come forth for their protection, and grant them a great victory over their enemies. (7) This is a great war, the opposing armies are powerful, and the day of the battle is long and very protracted. Over the moral nature of man the royal Gibeon, God's Sun of righteousness has been shining, silent, and yet all powerful, shedding down His light of truth upon men, and guiding them onward to victory; and the moon—the intellect, or reason—has been over Ajalon—chain, or strength—that is, kept so far in its place as to be a means of helping forward God's great work of salvation in the earth. This is a great sign; it is a day that has no equal in history, or even in the universe; because on this day of God's grace He has listened to the voice of the man Jesus Christ; and by the method of mercy and of grace He has been fighting for the Israel of the redeemed. Who can explain this sign, or the means by which it took place? This is not within the sphere of man's knowledge; it is not in the order of progressive events, or in harmony with physical law; but rather a cessation of the operation of the physical order by the divine will. God's prerogative over the visible things is put in operation, and the invisible power beyond nature is seen to be the Lord Paramount over all things. But this sign in the physical world has become a great reality in the invisible world of spirit. In other words, during the day of grace the supreme ruler, that is the sun in man's moral world, and the moon, or the intellect, have been in a sense suspended, and they have been made subject to the grace of God; a seven-fold sun, a true spiritual Pleiades, whose sweet influence has reconciled all things in heaven and earth. This sign covers the cycle of grace, mercy, and peace; it is in the spiritual world seen to be the exercise of God's prerogative of mercy; and although He does not work contrary to moral law, or the reasonable thoughts of men, still these must remain silent, being unable to explain this higher order in which God is pleased to move amongst men. The armies of Israel went forth from Gilgal—revolution of a wheel—to the conflict, and after the victory was won they returned to the same place, in other words, the cycle of events run their course, and the issue of events is the downfall of the wicked, the prosperity of the kingdom of God, and the glory of His Name through His great work of salvation. Physical things and signs may be used as analogies in the kingdom of grace; but the physical order cannot explain spiritual realities. The science of grace and mercy reigns as queen over all the sciences; they cannot explain her wise and gracious thoughts, but they must all bend low at her footstool.

CHAPTERS XI, XII., may contain the seventh cycle. (1) This campaign is against the Canaanites and others in the land of Galilee and toward Syria. It is the third and decisive campaign in which the whole land is subdued by Joshua, and taken possession of as the inheritance of

the children of Israel. The order of events, in their spiritual significance, seems to be, first, the spiritual, or belief against unbelief; second, the visible order, or as Jerusalem is the leader in the struggle, the fleshly and carnal forms and ceremonies against spiritual truths; and third, the trafficking spirit of the world which reigns so powerfully in the souls of men. The devil of unbelief or the pride of life, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, or the world with its wealth, pleasures, and organisations may be discerned in these three campaigns. (2) God promises to overthrow the spirit of infidelity, the fleshly and carnal conceits of men in their visible forms; and the power existing in visible, social relations, and in due time the great victory over these enemies will be gained by man. (3) It is said that Hazor was the head of all those kingdoms; the word Hazor means court or hay; and it is added that the city of Hazor only was burned with fire, all the others being spared. The line of thought here seems to be interesting; it is that order of things which speaks to men, not of what really consists in power, as for example, in those great officials who govern in the State or in the Church, but rather of those who seek after pleasure or society, or to bask in the sunshine of a court, and to pass away their time with such trifles as may be classed under the term vanity. The lust of the eye, with the vain and useless frivolities of a court and society, seem to be expressed in this campaign; whilst the lust of the flesh covers power in politics and in the visible Church; and the pride of life is in harmony with the sceptical, infidel spirit which rejects the Word of God, and seeks to exalt self and the devil of selfishness and self-seeking. (4) The war has been a long and arduous one; it has been God's pleasure that it should be so; not that He loves strife or war, or the things which have brought about enmity betwixt the Creator and the creature; but because man having chosen his path, it was necessary that a full manifestation of the effects of disobedience, sin, and death should be made known, whilst at the same time God's work of grace and mercy might be made manifest to men, and His Name glorified. It is of the Lord both the good and the evil way in which men move and have their being; and by mercy and judgment the Name of God will be glorified on the earth and in the highest heavens. (5) The real Anakims are not those who possessed Hebron and the mountains of Judah; they were the living figures pointing to a spiritual reality in man, and the strongest of the giants are men's spiritual enemies, who usurp and neutralise the promises of God, and by unbelief and scepticism take away all their power for growth in knowledge and in grace. But through the mercy of God in Jesus Christ the promises have been inherited, and in due time there will be rest from war. (6) The victories on the Moab side of the Jordan speak of the great conflicts in the spiritual nature under Moses; this being the time of preparation, so that there may be fitness for spiritual service. The victories under Joshua speak of the three-fold spiritual victories under the spiritual Captain of salvation; in and by Him all blessings come to the children of men.

CHAPTERS XIII.—XIX. may contain the eighth cycle. (1) The

Joshua of the visible and prophetic order becomes old, and when his time for serving God was ended, there still remained much of the land to be possessed. The spiritual world lay beyond the shadowy forms, but in due time these would be occupied under the true Joshua. (2) The possession of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh was the inheritance bestowed by Moses upon these tribes before the conquest of Canaan; it speaks of the struggle under fleshly conditions and of the successful warfare against evil in the soul of man and in the nations. It is in this struggle that the spirit of the self-seeking Balaam is killed, and the issue is that men become meek of soul, and prepared through trial and obedience to receive a better, even a spiritual inheritance. (3) To the nine and a half tribes their inheritance was given by lot according to the command given to Moses by God, and when this is spiritually come to pass then the meek shall be found possessing the earth. (4) The possession of the faithful Caleb was Hebron with its sacred treasures; and it is in Hebron, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that the faithfulness and truth of God are hidden away; they are visible signs, and beyond them there are to be seen the great spiritual realities of the kingdom of God. When there is fellowship and communion with God through His faithful Word, then there will be rest from war. (5) It is in the tribe of Judah that the mercy of God is hidden away; this tribe has a large portion, but its highest interests are centred upon Caleb, Hebron, the sons of Anak, Kirjath-Sepher—the city of the book—Achsah, Othniel, and the upper and nether springs. These things form an allegory of the portion of Judah and of its inheritance in the kingdom of God. (6) The portion of Joseph is specially referred to as the lots of Ephraim and Manasseh, and here also an allegory bearing upon the Christian era may be discerned. Beyond the visible inheritance, the sons of Joseph seek for a greater portion, they are a blessed people; unto them was given the mountain with its woods, and they were to be the means of driving out the Canaanites who trusted in their iron chariots. The spirit of Christianity has been a blessed power in the world; in due time it will bring a blessing to the whole earth, changing it into the mountain of God, and the spirit of the Canaanite with its reliance upon visible things will pass away. (7) The people came to Shiloh—peace, abundance—and there the tabernacle was set up when the land was subdued; but only Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh had taken possession of their inheritances; in other words, there remained the seven tribes who would take possession of the promised land and of the promises of God. Here also is allegory; there is a pointing forward to the time when there shall come peace upon this earth and good-will amongst men, and then the first lot will come forth for the Son of the Right Hand, followed by the possession of the whole earth for Christ. The inheritance being divided then men will unite in giving to the true Joshua His inheritance in the earth. As King of truth and righteousness He will reign supreme amongst men.

CHAPTERS XX.—XXIV. may contain the ninth cycle. (1) Sin brings death: but for sins of ignorance there is a refuge; thus the cities of refuge are a figure of *Him who is the Refuge for all who sin against*

God. (2) The portion of the Levites is God; they are sanctified for His service, and the consecrated servants of God will be found living, not for selfish ends, but for the good of man and the glory of God. It is through such a spirit that all men become priests unto God and true Levites, and when this spirit predominates in the world there will be peace, and the good and gracious promises of God will be fulfilled to obedient and the meek in spirit. (3) The two and a half tribes were highly commended by Joshua for their faithfulness; and they received valuable counsel from him as to their duties in serving God. (4) The altar of Ed is a memorial altar, and not one of sacrifice, it was made the means of suspicion and ill-will, and unless a cautious, pacific path had been followed by Phinehas and the deputies from the ten tribes there might have been war and bloodshed. Christians also have had their memorial altar placed at the spot whence their victory was achieved by the Captain of salvation; and there has also been suspicion and ill-will about this altar; some supposing that it has been raised up as an altar for sacrifice, and thus a means of division and schism, whilst in reality, in spiritual things, it is the great memorial of God's love, and not for sacrifice. It is a witness speaking of the Lord God in the past, the present, and the future, and it ought not to be the means of strife or ill-will amongst those who love and obey God. (5) The address of Joshua after the land was possessed is an encouraging word to all the followers of Jesus Christ; it speaks of the faithfulness and mercy of God, the promises of God for the future, the fealty of the soul toward God, the King, and of prosperity if there is obedience to His laws. (6) But if there is backsliding then as surely as mercy had been their portion during the time of obedience, so likewise judgments would follow if there was disobedience. (7) At Shechem, the place of government, was the last gathering of the representatives of the tribes to hear the words of Joshua; and he was careful, as God's true and faithful witness, to make known unto the people the mercy of God toward Israel in the past through the call of Abraham, and the redemption from Egypt. The meeting closed with the covenant at Shechem, in which the people avowed their desire to serve God. (8) Joshua, Joseph, and Eleazar found resting-places in the land of promise in the portion of Joseph. In figure they possessed the inheritance and the promises of God, but the day will come when the spiritual realities which lie beyond the forms of visible things will find their fulfilment in the kingdom of God.

THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

CHAPTERS I., II., may contain the first cycle. (1) This history begins with the inquiry as to the leadership of Israel according to the visible order of things, and Judah is appointed for this work. As yet the spiritual order was not manifested, therefore the visible order in which the Lord Jesus Christ would come according to the flesh receives the most

prominent position. (2) By obedience to the will of God there was success against the enemy, and by becoming the master over the Word of God, and the thoughts of men as found in the books of wise men, here was found God's blessing, the sunshine of God's favour, wisdom, and understanding. (3) The Kenites—possession—took up their abode with the tribe of Judah; being obedient to God this tribe was successful against the enemy. By expelling the sons of Anak from Hebron, the descendants of Caleb held possession of what was to Israel the sign of God's truth and faithfulness. (4) The tribe of Benjamin was not successful in driving out the Jebusites from Jerusalem; the day for the manifestation of the power of the right hand was not come. In his may be found the mystery of the kingdom of grace and mercy as found in this world, as it has been seen in the spirit of the evil one, and the spirit of grace existing side by side, in the same soul, city, and nation. (5) The house of Joseph, in whom is found the spiritual inheritance and blessing, was successful in the taking of Bethel, God's spiritual house of mercy in Christ; but Manasseh, Ephraim, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan were not successful in their fighting against their enemies. God's purpose of grace in Jesus Christ has been attained, but men have failed to overcome those enemies in their midst which ought to have been subdued. (6) God's instructions to Israel, through His servants, have always been words recalling God's mercy in the past, His faithfulness to His promises, warnings against unfaithfulness, their disobedience to His laws, the punishments which follow sin, repentance, sacrifice, and reconciliation. (7) But the history of man is one long record from Joshua to Jesus, and from Jesus Christ to the present day, of ingratitude, wilfulness, disobedience, rebellion, and idolatry. God's ruth, faithfulness, and mercy, yea, even His justice and judgments are all to the praise and honour of His Name; but the ways of men are full of shame and they have been altogether unworthy of the care and mercy of God. The Lord has permitted sin to exist side by side with His grace, mercy, and justice, so that men might be proved, and that the exceeding sinfulness of sin might be made manifest; but the day will come when there will be separation from sin, sorrow, and death, by those who accept God's grace and mercy. There has been a marvellous development of evil and of grace side by side; the different seeds bearing seed have been thrown into the earth and the harvest and the vintage are at hand.

CHAPTER III. may contain the second cycle. (1) As the Philistines and others were left to prove Israel, so in man and in nations there are to be found wilful and corrupt desires which are not destroyed. Such enemies become dangerous when they are permitted to influence men's thoughts, words, and actions in opposition to the will of God; but it is also a great truth that they are the means of educating the soul and strengthening the spirit if men cleave unto God and obey His laws. As in a man the merely sensual is not sinful if kept in its proper place and made the servant to obey law, so these subject nations, if Israel had kept faithful to God, would have been their hewers of wood and drawers of water, and not their lords and masters. (2) The road

of departure from God is a broad and easy one; it is to follow the carnal lusts and desires, and to let them govern and sway the soul in its service and worship. The way of obedience, peace, and joy is strait, narrow, and difficult; and it is only by keeping the eye of faith constantly fixed on God and His Word that there is safety. History is a long record of the dominance of the lusts, the passions, and the intellect, above truth, righteousness, and faith; in other words, God has been dishonoured, and the vain thoughts of men, with their carnal lustings and passions, have been deified and worshipped. (3) To put this great perversion in very few words, men have done evil, forgotten the Lord their God and Redeemer, chosen Baal, or their own idols, masters, or gods, and thus they are found to be opposed to the Almighty God. (4) Such a choice leads onward to one goal, the outer darkness, and the bondage to evil. (5) Through the mercy of God there came for man's salvation, in due time, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the true Othniel, and He has brought to men spiritual deliverance and rest. (6) Men were redeemed in the day of God's mercy from bondage, but they did not choose obedience and life, but disobedience, sin, bondage, and death; and because of this transgression, Moab, Ammon, and Amalek, the proud, carnal intellect, the ambitious, fierce power, and the hellish spirit of infidelity, prevailed, and Israel was given up to these abominable rulers. These ancient enemies of Israel represent spirits still living amongst men, and in the individual soul; they are the great tyrants before whom men tremble, and they do so because they fear men instead of fearing to sin against God. (7) But God's mercy and faithfulness endure for ever, therefore a Son of Benjamin was and will be raised up to give deliverance from bondage, and a great victory over such enemies of the soul and of nations.

CHAPTERS IV., V., may contain the third cycle. (1) The kingdom of the Canaanites and the kingdom of God's grace ought to be found in strong opposition to each other; the one is in the descent of the accursed Canaan, the other the means by which all men shall be blessed, and yet in the wisdom of God, because of sin, Israel is made subject to Canaan, and the iron chariot of war, the devil's handiwork, is the power that subdues and grinds the face of God's redeemed. It is written, "He mightily oppressed the children of Israel;" foolish men soon get wearied of the loving yoke of the Merciful One, and the soft, silken bonds of His loving constraint; and by rejecting His counsels and disobeying His laws, they are given up to their own choice, and find the issue to be a bondage that is unendurable. This is the merciless, despotic kingdom of man; and history testifies abundantly to the domination of this spirit in the world, and the mighty oppressions brought to bear by it upon the Israel of God. (2) Deborah—the word—joined with Barak, is the great instrument in God's hand for the deliverance of Israel from this power; in other words, it is by God's Word, and the kingdom of God's grace in man, that the kingdom of God is able to overthrow the kingdom of evil. (3) As Zebulun and Naphtali are the tribes specially engaged in this war, so it may be said, *that waiting upon God through His Word, and wrestling with Him in*

prayer, are the means by which the carnal spirit of the Canaanite can be subdued in the soul and in the nations. (4) It is the Lord that gives the victory over this enemy, and all other enemies, and unto Him alone should all the honour and praise be given. (5) Mercy, or the kingdom of God, will triumph over sin, and the day will come when the arch-enemy of God will be put to flight, and all his power will perish. (6) Not by the wisdom or strength of man shall such an end be accomplished, but by weak things in the estimation of men, as God's Word to direct men in their actions, and by the Son of a woman, who was despised and rejected by men. (7) The song of Deborah and Barak is a grand, prophetic, spiritual poem. Away beyond Canaan and Israel there will be found the great spiritual principles of the opposing kingdoms of evil and of God's grace; and the prayer of God's redeemed is that of Deborah, "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

CHAPTERS VI.—VIII. may contain the fourth cycle. (1) Again there is evil-doing in Israel, and God permits His people to fall under the bondage of the Midianites. The spirit of Midian is that of strife, which engenders ill-will and hatred, and it may fairly be acknowledged that this spirit is one that impoverishes the soul, and roots out that spirit of love and mercy which is in harmony with the will of God. If men depart from God into this fatal path, by which men strive to satisfy themselves that they are right in their wrangling disputes, and that their opponents are wrong, then they do not find the truth, neither have they a sincere love for that which is righteous, but they become contentious and vain, striving about words and not about great principles. God, by His Prophet and by His Word, keeps men in remembrance of their redemption, from the power of the world, of His promises, and man's disobedience; but the evil spirit in man will not be controlled, and so God's will is disobeyed. (2) When the angel of God comes to a man or a nation, and there is reconciliation and peace through sacrifice, then there is true help received from God, and power to stand up against the enemy. (3) Through the meek spirit of the regenerate soul false gods are overthrown, and God alone is acknowledged as Lord and Master. (4) The powers of evil cover the face of the earth, and command all the powers of the soul and of nations; but when the spirit of the Lord is poured out upon men, then with God's help there is hope that the enemy will be met and vanquished. God is pleased to grant signs unto His servants for their encouragement in His work. He is able to limit the dews of His grace, and cause them to concentrate upon a single family, or He can pass by the family so highly favoured, permitting it to remain dry, whilst all around there is poured out the rich blessing of God's grace from heaven. As God in His wisdom gives and withholds His grace as seems good in His sight, and men can look upon these things as signs of His will, so He also teaches men that it is not by man's power nor the strength of his arm that salvation comes to men, but by those whom He is pleased to choose, upon whom His spirit rests, and who zealously seek His glory. (5) The kingdom of God is revealed to men by signs, and the gracious work of God amongst men

by dreams and their interpretation ; and it is not an uncommon thing for men in the providence of God to utter thoughts which foretell their own destruction. As one single cake of bread was made, through the vision, the means of revealing the means of destruction of the hosts of Midian by Gideon, so Jesus Christ, the true Bread of Life, is not only the sign of peace to men, but also by Him the conflicting opinions of men will be made to vanish away. He is the true Gideon, the Breaker, and the Cutter off of iniquity, and by His Word and Spirit all such enemies will be put to flight. Within the letter of the written Word, and inclosed in the fleshly form of Jesus Christ, there is hidden away the living fire of God's gracious spirit, and it is when these give forth their light, by death, by a breaking of their forms, that a new power enters into man, and God's Spirit and God's Word are made the means of destruction to the enemies of truth and righteousness. (6) The spirits which have dominion over men when they strive against each other are those of Oreb—raven, Zeeb—wolf, Zebah—immolation, victim, Zalmunna—images or idols forbidden ; in other words, the spirit animating men in their controversies is anti-Christian, being selfish and self-asserting. Yet in the enthusiasm of strife, men may be found willing to make themselves victims to false gods, instead of lowly sacrifices to God in the spirit of Christ. (7) As Gideon was chosen ruler over Israel, so God's Word will in due time reign over men in their spiritual being, and in the love of truth ; and in obedience to righteousness men will be set free from the strife of tongues, only let them not become idolaters instead of Israelites by worshipping the ephod form instead of the true God.

CHAPTER IX. may contain the fifth cycle. (1) Abimelech, the son of Gideon, is the representative of the wilful, self-seeking man who claims the inheritance ; he is an illegitimate son not received in harmony with law. His is the spirit of Cain, and to gain his purpose he does not hesitate to destroy those who have a better claim than himself to the rulership over the kingdom. (2) Jotham—perfection of the Lord—has a different spirit, and in his pleading with the men of Shechem may be heard another voice in the soul amongst the nations speaking against the rule of the murderer. It is when men hearken unto this voice within and are obedient that God hearkens unto them. The parable of Jotham about the trees utters important truths which lie at the root of all the true and worthy actions of men. In the olive, the fig, and the vine there are found those who live for the good of others, satisfied with their lot, if they are useful and in the position God has been pleased to place them ; but the worthless bramble, or thistle, is useless for protection or sustenance, and yet man chooses and serves this boasting bramble, or foolish kings, instead of the King of kings, who is unto men as the true olive, fig, and vine. According to their choice so are men repaid. If their choice is God and His Christ it is well ; if not, then the fire is sure to come forth from the contemptible king which man makes for himself, and the people are scorched as by fire. As with men in a nation, so in the individual soul. If men choose to serve the Lord it is well ; but if Manuon, in riches, pleasure,

ambition, or any other worldly form, the end is the scathing fire to destroy. (3) The reign of the usurper and the murderer is an unhappy one; there is an evil spirit from God in the rebellious soul and amongst men, and thus jealousy, hatred, plotting, scheming, and treachery are the outcome of disobedience to the will of God. (4) Treachery and deceit, division and strife, are the history and the mystery of wicked men from the beginning of man's revolt against God. (5) They have rejected the Merciful and Gracious, and cruelty, bloodshed, and tyranny have been their miserable portion. (6) The government over men has been a thing for which worthless men have striven, and by their cursed ambitious projects and wars they have oftentimes made the seat of government like a place sown with salt, wherein nothing could grow or the blessing or benefit of man. (7) The end of all such schemings, treacheries, and abominations is a death of shame and the suicide of the soul; the cycle of man's iniquity rolls on, the darkness being partially relieved by the sweet sunshine of God's grace upon men. The small world of a man's soul, or the great world in which man lives, moves onward enshrouded in clouds, and yet men love the darkness, and will not receive the sweet sunshine of God's mercy. God is glorified in those who accept His grace; but it is also true that it is God who sends evil upon wicked men, and His judgments are holy, true, and righteous.

CHAPTERS X, XI, may contain the sixth cycle. (1) The history of an is that of subjection to rulers who rise up to defend the people; those who rule for their own interests and in that of their families, and of departures from God by the mass of the people; by their following vain things, and of bondage under the domineering spirit of self-asserting men who appeal to the sword as the great arbiter of peace and war. (2) Such conditions bring in due time the oppression of the many by the few, and when such grievances are brought upon the oppressed by the oppressors, then they are glad to turn to seek after God with confession of sin and repentance. (3) As in the hour of man's extremity he finds that in himself there is no strength or hope against the enemy, and that if safety is to be obtained it is to be gained by the recall of the one formerly despised, so in man's experience self will, and the King of kings alone can bring succour and strength. (4) The salvation of man depends upon this question, whether he will be content to sink self, and in humility and meekness request the Lord's return to the soul, or nation, or remain self-conceited, and despising the only Man by whom salvation is brought nigh to men. As the Gileadites were wise enough to understand their duties in this matter, so every man, or nation, should be ready to do that which is right in the sight of God. (5) The plea of the enemy of souls is the pre-existing right of possession; but although the world and the soul has been possessed by evil powers, they have no right by law or by grace. Being rebels, their rights are forfeited, and God alone can claim the possession whether for mercy or for judgment. (6) The means which men use to attain their ends have not been in the spirit of Christ, that is of total self-resignation into the hands of God, but by promises and vows, and

these, like the vow of Jephthah, if faithfully carried out, have led onward to a clearer conception of God's will, and to the giving up of what has been most highly prized. (7) Success very often leads onward to the spirit of jealousy and of strife. Ephraim envies Gilead, the preference obtained, and words and signs become the means of hatred and of death. The issue is that the son of Gilead—testimony, is successful, and in other words, the Word of God is promoted as ruler over the soul.

CHAPTERS XIII.—XVI. may contain the seventh cycle. (1) The ways of man are evil, evil only, and evil continually; but God is good and gracious, and from Him through His servants there have come to men the manifold offers of His grace as the means of man's redemption from sin. His servants, so chosen by Him for service, are called to be like Nazarites, the consecrated of God, for His service. (2) When there is consecration to God, then by sacrifice peace with God is realised, and the assurance of His favour enjoyed. (3) The spirit of God works in man in accordance with His Own purpose of grace, in a manner suited to the times, and in conformity with the position and condition of men. A Samson is born to be a scourge and destroyer of the Philistines, a Luther, Zwingle, or Knox, to overthrow the Papal power in Europe. God has a work to do in the world, and His Spirit, in contact with the spirit of men, works out His thoughts. Viewed in this aspect, the divine and the human in the actions of men are a strange study; and it is wonderful what results God has attained through such instruments as the giant of Israel, or the no less renowned giants, in intellect and spiritual power, of the pre-Reformation and Reformation periods. (4) The work of these men, in the service of God, and in the kingdom of truth and righteousness, when the Spirit of the Lord comes upon them, is to face lions, seize them, and rend them in pieces. Having done this, when they return and consider what they have performed, by God's help, they find that the carcasses so rent asunder become the treasure-stores of divine grace. The roaring lion has given birth to the true Bread; and the strong to destroy has yielded a new form of sweetness in which is found divine strength; God's Word is sweeter than honey, and the power of His Holy Spirit is stronger in mankind, through Jesus Christ, than sin, death, or hell. (5) God's method of mercy is pure, peaceable, and gracious; but when it comes in contact with certain forms of humanity, then it is changed in its mode of expression, and becomes a veritable firebrand, a destroyer, an iconoclast, and not a saviour or a builder-up of God's kingdom. Such men become Ishmaelites, with their hands turned against their brethren; and yet for such, God is the "God who hears," and who opens up for His servants a well in the desert, or out of a jaw-bone. God in His wisdom, power, and mercy, grants a great deliverance to His people by such men; and He also gives unto them reviving draughts of His grace, that they may live and serve Him. It may be easy indeed to find fault with such men and their work; but in doing so, it is well to consider the times in which they lived, the lions they faced, the training, and experience of these giants; and above all the fact that the King called them, and gave them grace

for their work ; and as He has been pleased to use them, and set His seal upon their labours, surely men who are reaping the fruits of their superhuman labours may be careful in their comments upon God's servants, whilst they are truly thankful for the greater blessings they enjoy. (6) The relations of Samson with Delilah, when carried into the moral and spiritual sphere of man's being, and into the relations between Church and State, or God's people and the spirit of the world, are not so very strange after all. History records in several places where the chosen of God has sought after unlawful alliances, and the consecrated head, has been found lying on the lap of a Delilah more subtle and dangerous than this woman of the Philistines ; and men have got very easily indeed through this world, in their Christian experience, if they have never found themselves ensnared by sweet, plausible enticing lusts and desires which have taken off the consecration from the spirit, and left them in the hands of enemies as fierce as the uncircumcised Philistines. It is at this point that the struggle betwixt good and evil is most subtle and intense ; all the wiles of the devil are set in operation to seduce the soul from its allegiance ; and if there is an awful fall, thank God, His grace is more powerful than all the devil's ingenuity, and by His mercy the soul will be saved. (7) Sin brings in its train bondage and blindness ; and oftentimes a grinding of the thoughts upon the past which is intolerable ; but when His grace returns, in all its power, then the soul is revived, there is divine strength realised, and the enemies of God are overwhelmed in the last struggle. Life to such men is an awful struggle ; the soul is beset on every hand with enemies ; the depths are stirred up, and God's great billows seem to swallow up the soul ; but at the evening-time it is light, and the grace of God accomplishes a great victory in a soul, amongst men, or in the earth. This great struggle is possible in fallen man alone, and under the influence of God's grace ; and it is fully manifested only in great men, in whom the power of God and the power of evil come into the most intense opposition.

CHAPTERS XVII., XVIII., may contain the eighth cycle. (1) Covetousness, theft, restitution, idolatry, sacrilege, and the manifestation of self-will in opposition to the will of God, is a short summary of the history of the ways of men. (2) The soul of man is full of deceit and conceit, superstition and will-worship, and there is nothing more common than for man to take up a wrong conception of God and His worship, and to assume that, because there are certain forms and ceremonies being attended to, therefore the Lord will be pleased with such worship, and do the worshipper good. (3) But men reckon without considering the will of God in such things, and the issue is not peace and safety, but visitations of the judgments of God. Men are not living in harmony with the divine will, therefore, though they may say to themselves there is safety and peace, the clouds soon begin to gather on the horizon which will destroy their false security. (4) Men have not usually been thoughtful and foreseeing in the days of peace and plenty ; they forget the past with its bitter experiences, and they do not provide for a stormy future ; and it is because of their thoughtless-

ness, indifference to their future welfare, or the duties and responsibilities of the present, they become unfit to govern themselves, or to stand up in defence against an enemy. God oftentimes grants to the careless and wicked a day of sunshine, and an hour of mercy, but it is misused, and the harvest is disaster and death, instead of defence, safety, and life. (5) Micah had put his trust in an image and in a Levite who was not a priest; in a moment these were taken from him, and the god in whom he trusted was unable to help or save its worshipper. God's judgments point in the way of mercy, because it is surely well that a man should be deprived of that which is false, so that he may be prepared, in a humble spirit, to receive that which is true and righteous. (6) The soul bereft of its god is cast into great sorrow, because the true or the false are equally prized by the devout spirit; if men or God take away what is the stay and comfort of the soul, then all seems lost. Micah was helpless against a power so strong, he returned home bereaved of the false god and the self-seeking priest; but such a bereavement is usually the means of breaking the self-will and of humbling the soul; and unto such the Lord of mercy looks with compassion; and in giving a true and spiritual worship, there is received hope through God's grace that a better inheritance and a purer worship will be granted to the humble soul. (7) There is no record given of how Micah was comforted; the destruction, or removal of the false makes way for the raising up of the true, and all that is true and righteous belongs to the kingdom of God; when all false gods are taken away by the judgments and mercy of God, then there will be manifested the kingdom of heaven on this earth, and those who have been persecuted and bereaved, for their good, will possess the earth, and bless God for the mercies which have followed in the footsteps of His strange judgments.

CHAPTERS XIX.—XXI. may contain the ninth cycle. (1) The time was that of lawlessness, when men and women acted according to their own will, and thus immorality and unfaithfulness were rampant. (2) The erring one having been sought and found, there was a movement to return home, but in the way there was a turning aside for a time because of the night. (3) Wickedness and lewdness, equivalent to the wicked Sodom and Gomorrah, reigned in Israel. (4) Thus deeds of shame were committed which were utterly antagonistic to the will of God, and because of these Israel was summoned to consider what should be done against the transgressors. (5) The people rise with indignation against Benjamin because of sin and the protection of evil-doers. (6) There was a great conflict in which the cause of truth and right was successful. (7) The end was punishment of evil, and the restoration of Benjamin to the inheritance forfeited by sin.

THE BOOK OF RUTH.

THIS book may contain a cycle of thought in the kingdom of God. (1) As showing man's condition when away from God and from the

Father's home. (2) Bereavements of the soul and bitterness are experienced when earthly stays and hopes are removed; these being followed by the reception of the grace of God, which is as a true Ruth—filling and satisfying—to the soul. There is a return to the House of Bread, but it is in weakness and meekness, self is empty, and the soul knows the bitterness of self-seeking ways. (3) The kingdom of God may be compared to the harvest field within which the faithful servants of God are gleaners. (4) The Lord visits the harvest field of this world, and His benediction rests upon all the faithful who serve Him. (5) It is by drawing near to the Lord Jesus Christ, lying humbly at His feet, and being covered with His garment of mercy, truth, and righteousness, that there is gained the favour of God. (6) He redeems the soul from death, and through Him the soul is blessed. (7) It is by the grace of God that the soul is restored to God's favour, and the consequence of pardon and reconciliation is that the redeemed soul becomes a willing servant in the service of God, and through regeneration a beloved son of the heavenly Father.

THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL AND KINGS.

It does not seem necessary, and it might become tedious and wearisome, at the present time, to follow out in detail the cycles that might be suggested as finding a place in these books. If the suggested thoughts thus far upon the former books have shown that the science of God's Word and His purpose of grace lie in this direction, then it will be well; and in due time God's people will follow up this science more closely, and find out even more wonderful results springing out of God's purpose of grace.

It is not, it must be stated, that the subject in its general, historical, prophetic, or spiritual aspects is contracted; but rather that the boundary of thought is so enlarged that there is the greatest difficulty in following the many convergent lines of thought which meet in the thoughts, words, and actions of Samuel, Saul, David, and Solomon. To put this idea in an organic form, it may be represented by conceiving of the history of Israel as a manifested unity—that is, a visible manifestation of the kingdom of grace in the conception, birth, life, subjection, development, success, backsliding, restoration to favour, wilfulness, obedience, and the glory that comes through the mercy of God upon His people. This idea can be worked out in the life of a man or of a nation, and, in both, the same laws will be found to operate so that the microcosm and macrocosm will agree. Following this line of illustration, there are found three great divisions in the history of Israel according to the flesh, and also of every Christian man. 1. First, as referring to Israel, there is the time of conception and formation; that is, from the call of Abraham onward until the birth of the nation out of Egypt under the hand of Moses. During this period of 430 years, there was being inwoven into the Israel of God all the capabilities that

would be found in it after birth, and all the possibilities of its future history. This is the divine order throughout creation, as found in individuals; therefore it may fairly be assumed and accepted as true, that the divine order of the kingdom of grace in a nation will be found to follow the same order. The birth of God's gracious nation was accomplished in the great deliverance out of Egypt; and the child thus delivered was, in a figurative sense, God's first-born as foreshadowing the spiritual Israel in Jesus Christ. The passage through the Red Sea is like the baptism of the infant unto Moses, under whom there followed the experiences of Marah, Elim, Zin, Rephidim, and Sinai. During this period, the visible world was the instructor of the child; and the child, by its world within, corresponded with and was educated by the world without. In due time the child became capable of understanding good and evil, right and wrong, and then there followed the fiery law of Horeb, the judgments, and the visible ordinances for the worship of God. After the experience of Horeb, the child is found under training in the wilderness; and it is in the great desert, with fierce lustings and desires, strong passions, and amongst deadly serpents, that the youth grows into a man; and by God's grace, through His faithfulness and Word of truth, there is at last gained power to overcome the rebellious spirit. At this point the day of majority is reached; Moses, the servant and tutor, is superseded by the spirit of Joshua and of Christ, and there is the beginning of a new era of conquest and of new experiences. The spiritual experiences of a man, or a nation, embrace a very large cycle of thought. This is in reality the time of responsibility and trial, of great struggles, important duties, and of far-reaching results, through the opposing powers which come into conflict with each other. There is to be found a cycle within a cycle of spiritual experience, and these are figured forth in the books of Joshua and Judges, where the young life is active in subduing external foes; but, through becoming weary with the struggle too soon, there is a reaction, with the result that the spirit becomes the bondman, and also loses its freedom and power to liberate itself from the yoke of the fleshly lusts and spiritual enemies. The grand cycle of national spiritual life begins in the nation of Israel with the birth of Samuel; and also in a soul by its reception of the Word of God as the light for the feet, and the guide in the pathway of life, and as the chief counsellor for the soul. The heaven-descended guide in the pathway of life being found, then there is progress forward in the divine order of development. As in the nation there is a Saul and a David, so in the human soul there is found the carnal man who strives for the supremacy, and a spiritual man who seeks to obey the will of God. At first the carnal power is supreme and the spiritual power is persecuted; but in due time the order is reversed, and the carnal spirit grows weaker and weaker, whilst the spirit that obeys God waxes stronger and stronger. The consummation reached by the spirit in David, God's beloved, in the nation, and in man, is supremacy over all enemies; the issue being the time of praise, power, peace, and plenty, in which a glorious temple is built for the glory, majesty, honour, and worship of God. The lines of experience, history, allegory, and of

Christianity, all converge at this point ; this is the good time
 ordained by God—when the serpent's head shall be bruised, the devil
 , and man will be enabled to live in harmony with the will of
 God. The early part of the reign of Solomon is a picture of the great
 the millennial glory ; for a moment the converging rays of all
 wise, beautiful, good, true, just, and gracious, meet upon Mount
 and the light flashes forth which enlightens all lands. What the
 Solomon has been to all nations in the east and west, as the glory
 of Christ, the same in a thousand-fold greater degree will the Lord
 Christ be to the whole earth in the day of the millennial glory
 as about to dawn upon man. These are facts which will not be
 denied by the servants of Jesus Christ who study the Bible and
 history ; the great Power at work evolving the history of Israel
 according to the flesh, and the Israel of God in the spirit, is not
 different or depending upon circumstances, but it is the Power of God
 at work in history, and the one purpose of grace is to be traced in the
 different forms and in spiritual truths. The whole manifestation of
 the purpose of grace is the work of God as seen in the living germ,
 the noble structure, and the spiritual order ; and as truly as there is
 a science of organic life, so there is assuredly a science and order of
 spiritual life, which has for its purpose the raising up not merely of a
 temple which had fallen down, but of a glorious temple of grace in
 Christ, the Head of the redeemed nation and house of God.
 These are the lines of thought which, it is assumed, converge upon
 the history of Israel ; it is not mere history or detailed
 facts which meet the student, but he is called upon, if he can use
 the scope of faith, to look forward to the spiritual consummation
 which is foreshadowed by the historic facts, and, if he can use the
 scope of God's wisdom, to trace backward into the germ-seeds of
 the purpose of grace all that is manifested in the organic, developed
 as found in the nation. Who is sufficient for these things ?
 Who is not the work for this generation of the children of men, who, as
 yet have not reached their majority in the knowledge of God's thoughts.
 The men of this age, the truly spiritual is still beyond their present
 ; they are groping onward toward the light, and it may be
 that the first rays of the morning sun have banished former con-
 ceptions and brought in a new order of thought ; but, as compared
 with the grey dawn and the noonday sun, so is the light of spiritual
 truth now possessed with that which shall be known hereafter.
 From Solomon to Zedekiah there is a great descent : it is as from the
 height of glory to the abyss of shame, or the perfection of visible
 things to the upheaving and destroying of all that is strong, beautiful,
 noble, in the external world. By conformity to law there is
 stagnation, development, grandeur, beauty, and wisdom ; by want of
 conformity to law, or the giving freedom and scope to internal powers
 and passions, evil desires and passions, there come disintegration, and
 confusion, and apparently ruin to the works and purposes of God.
 Usually such is the result ; but in reality, these changes,
 confusions, or cataclysms, are only steps of retrogression for a further
 evolution, and a higher development of the thoughts and purposes of

God. As the wreck and ruin of the physical world, by its changes in form, has been subservient to the introduction of physical life in all its manifestations, so the wreck and ruin of the moral world in man has been used as the means of manifesting the divine life in its highest order of love and self-sacrifice as found in the kingdom of God's grace. As in the external world of nature there is first the visible and then the spiritual, so in the Bible there is first the visible order as found in the kingdom of Israel, and then the spiritual in Jesus Christ, and His spiritual seed. And as it was upon the ashes of the destroyed Israel, that after the restoration, there was the spiritual kingdom in Jesus Christ, so in man, it is only by the destruction of the kingdom of self in the carnal man, that there can come, in due time, upon high and holy principles and laws, the manifestation of the kingdom of heaven in the soul.

These recurring, but ever-ascending cycles of God's thoughts and actions in their order as found in nature, in the Bible, and in man, deserve the most careful study, if men are desirous of knowing the thoughts of God and His method of working in nature and in His purpose of grace. This thought is specially presented in varied forms as the critical point as related to nations and to individual men; and it is that of the condition of fitness for the seed of grace to take root and live in a soul and in humanity. This point is that of the third Beatitude in the kingdom of grace; because until man is willing to accept, and obey, the will of God, in meekness and submission, this is the great hindrance in man to all spiritual improvement. This thought is worked out as related to the antediluvian world; Moses and Israel in the wilderness; the kingdom of Israel; and the kingdom of the restoration within which Jesus Christ came in the flesh. These all perished in their stubbornness and unbelief, their love of sin, lustings, idolatry, pride, and envy; the old man had no power within himself to overthrow the world, the flesh, and the devil; and only by the coming of the meek and lowly, the good and gracious, Son of God, did the kingdom of heaven become possible, as a spiritual reality first, and afterward by visible manifestation in the world. It is the necessary order of events that the works of the devil must first be manifested and destroyed, so that the kingdom of grace may be raised up; and it is this thought which seems to throw light upon the words referring to Jesus Christ as coming to this world when "the fulness of the time was come." In the Old Testament, the whole kingdom of God, and His purpose of grace, is manifested in the germ and in visible forms; but the experience of men falls far short of the revelation, because, only in exceptional men, and never in a nation, did the spirit reach the standard of meekness and obedience to the will of God.

I., II., BOOKS OF CHRONICLES.

It has been suggested that the whole Bible harmonises with the Beatitudes uttered by the Lord Jesus Christ, and that they give the key

which unlocks the doors of heaven, and opens up to view the treasures of God's wisdom, power, and grace. Up to the end of Kings there is a continuous history, giving first in germ, and then in a visible kingdom, the method of the kingdom of grace and mercy; and at this point, the end of the book of Kings, the visible things are found to have crumbled away, and the kingdom of God's grace is seen as dispersed throughout the world. From henceforth there may be traced in history a two-fold development, the first being a movement in the world, through the dispersed Jews, as a means for preparing the world for the advent of Jesus Christ; and the second, through the restoration at the end of seventy years, by which there was a narrowing of the circle of the visible and elect, so that in the race of the Jews, the Saviour and the Messiah might come. There is an evolving visible movement, which in its cycles of development can only be limited by the sphere of fallen humanity; and there is the involving movement, which involves upon itself until there is produced in history, the merciful, pure, peaceful, and persecuted Son of God. To put this thought in another form, it is at this period that the treasures of God's purpose of grace as found in the history of mankind from Adam, up to about the year 600 B.C., culminate, and take their permanent form; this being God's revelation of grace unto the nations during the long period of the conception, birth, and development of the spiritual kingdom in Jesus Christ as found in Christendom. At the end of the ages, the visible and spiritual will coincide; and though kept apart for many centuries, working upon different lines, yet they will be found, when brought face to face, to be in substantial harmony. The fourth Beatitude, which is a blessing upon all who hunger and thirst after truth and righteousness, with its promise of being filled by that which is desired, may seem at the first glance to be in the wrong place, and as more suitable to follow after purity, peace, and persecution; but according to divine wisdom, it is the fourth in order; and it is like the great cleaving wedge, which separates the visible from the spiritual orders of God's thoughts. The kingdom of heaven, in truth, righteousness, goodness, and mercy, is not limited to the great spiritual manifestation in Jesus Christ; it is also linked to, and allied with, the visible and ceremonial order of things, suitable for children, and those who in their minority are subject to tutors and governors. There is a development to the fourth beatitude which in all nations is known as obedience to truth and righteousness, in the spirit of meekness; but to the Christian, Jesus Christ is truth and righteousness, and from Him, in spiritual things, there follows a higher development, and a kingdom which far transcends that of hidden wisdom and duty.

If these thoughts are understood then a new light will flash forth upon these books in the Bible from the Chronicles to the Song of Solomon. They are the concentration of the kingdom of God which harmonises with the fourth Beatitude, and they are God's truth and righteousness to men who serve in visible things, and who are not the inheritors of the revealed spiritual blessings in Jesus Christ. These books may not seem at the first glance to have any special unity; but if studied in *this aspect*, they are seen to possess not merely a unity of

structure, they also harmonise with the whole of history, the kingdom of grace in the world, and the kingdom of heaven in the redeemed soul. If, as suggested, these books are the microcosm of the kingdom of God in truth, wisdom, righteousness, and grace, then it must follow that they will be in harmony with the great macrocosm of the kingdom of God as found in the Bible, in Jesus Christ, and in mankind. If the Books of Chronicles are considered in the light of the first Beatitude with its promise, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," then it would be expected that in a parabolical or allegorical sense, or by prophetic thought, the history of man will be found in them; and this is, as a matter of fact, the case, because the Chronicles cover the great era of history from Adam to Cyrus king of Persia, who gave instructions for the rebuilding of the second temple at Jerusalem.

It may be interesting to notice the harmony that exists betwixt the Beatitudes and the Chronicles as bearing upon families, because it would seem that here, in a very interesting manner, history and the Bible are in spiritual agreement. To follow the cycles little more is required than to notice the order of the paragraphs, and these will give the divisions.

CHAPTER I., 1—34, may contain the first cycle. (1) Adam to Noah and his sons are in reality all humanity inclusive. (2) In the sons of Japheth there is worked out the spiritual kingdom as in Christianity. (3) In the sons of Ham, the kingdom of this world. (4) In the sons of Shem, the hidden kingdom of God's truth and righteousness. (5) In the line of Shem to Abraham, the kingdom of God's mercy. (6) In Ishmael, the strife in spiritual things, in nations and in man. (7) In the children of Keturah, those who bring the sweet incense of praise and thanksgiving to God in times of peace.

CHAPTERS I., 35—54, II., 17, may contain the second cycle, which harmonises with the state of the human soul, the kingdom in man. There are found, (1) in the sons of Esau, the perverted first-born carnal man. (2) In the sons of Seir, the spiritual powers at enmity with God. (3) In the kings of Edom, the wilful rebellious spirit of man. (4) In the dukes of Edom, the manifold powers of evil which represent the mystery of evil. (5) In the sons of Israel the kingdom of mercy. (6) In the sons of Judah, the iniquities and transgressions of man, and also the blessing from God through Jesse. (7) In the sons of Jesse, the kingdom of God in One greater than David.

CHAPTERS II., 18—55, III., 1—9, may contain the third cycle. The genealogy passes to Caleb, in other words, to the faithful and the meek, who possess the inheritance. (1) In Caleb's children there are found by Ephrath, fruitfulness; Hur, liberty; Uri, light; and Bezaleel, the shadow of God. (2) In Hezron, dart of joy, division of the song; which speak of the new experience in the soul. (3) In Jerahmeel, the love of God. (4) Sheshan had no sons, but daughters. One of these was given in marriage to an Egyptian named Jarha; and is there not in this a picture of the kingdom of grace and truth given to sinful man

for redemption, for, as if the daughter of Sheshan had remained alone, there would not have been any seed to Sheshan, so if God's grace had not been manifested, the kingdom of heaven would have remained barren, and man unblessed. (5) There is another Caleb, the brother of Jerahmeel, the love of God, and he speaks of God's faithfulness in His mercy to man. (6) Still another Caleb, the son of Hur, and the predecessor of Rechab, and he speaks of purity of heart, and of faithfulness to God and to parents. (7) The sons of David, in whom the kingdom of God was successful and established.

CHAPTERS III., 10—24, IV., 1—23, may contain the fourth cycle. (1) The genealogy begins with Solomon, the wise king of peace. (2) In the sons of Jeconiah are found the princes of the captivity in Babylon, and in the restoration. (3) In the sons of Judah, the Jewish kingdom. (4) In Ashur, with his two wives and their children, may be discerned the happy and prosperous kingdom of truth and righteousness, in its twofold divisions. (5) In Jabez there is found the great allegory of the kingdom of mercy; the child of grace, born with sorrow, "more honourable than all his brethren," whose prayer has always been for blessing, enlargement, and abstinence from evil, so that God may not be grieved, and unto whom God has granted his request. (6) In Zebub, the brother of Shuah—pit or humiliation—there may be found the mystery of evil in the soul of man as well as of faithfulness, as in Caleb, the son of Jephunneh. (7) And in Shelah, that breaks or unties, there are found the ancient things of God's power and wisdom.

CHAPTERS IV., 24—43, V., may contain the fifth cycle. (1) The sons of Simeon, those who hear and obey the word of God, are not so many as those of the house of Judah. Grace and mercy come to mankind, but too many will not listen to the divine message. (2) But the princes of those who have heard and obeyed the word, have taken possession of the land once held by the sons of Ham; and it is a good land with fat pastures; they have also taken possession of the land of Edom, and they will also utterly destroy the rebellious spirit of Amalek. (3) In the kingdom of God, Reuben, the first-born, has lost his birthright, and it has been given to Joseph, the beloved son; whilst to Judah has been given the position of the chief ruler; and to this the tenor of the spirit in the scriptures agrees. (4) The kingdom of God in truth and righteousness, or the spirit of prophecy, and defence of the word of God, is given to Gad. (5) The record about the sons of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, seems to point to the work of God in the era of Christianity and analogous periods of history, and of the success of God's Word. (6) The mighty men of the house of Manasseh seem to speak of the servants of Jesus Christ in conflict with their enemies. (7) But as the day of mercy to Israel ended in the captivity, so the day of mercy in Christendom has ended in a spiritual bondage.

CHAPTER VI., 1—53, may contain the sixth cycle. (1) The attention is turned to the sons of Levi; and in Levi there are included all the thoughts bearing upon the priesthood, the service of God, the teaching of the

people, the purification of the soul, and intercession with God. This is God's rational and responsible first-born, who in holiness, truth and righteousness, is made the means of atonement, reconciliation, and the favour of God. (2) In the priestly line of Eleazar to the captivity, there may be found the work of Christ, by the Holy Spirit, in the soul and amongst the redeemed. The ministration of the priest in the tabernacle or temple is a figure of the spiritual fact in man, and of the mystical temple of redeemed mankind. (3) In the sons of Gershom there are found the Levites, who had the charge over the visible tabernacle; that is the tent with its hangings and curtains. (4) In the sons of Kohath, are found those who had charge over the ark, and the things in the holy place; and it will be remembered that it is to this family that Moses and Aaron belong, and also Samuel the great Seer; in other words the order of hidden things in God's word in truth and righteousness. (5) In the sons of Merari, are found those who had charge of bars, pillars, sockets, pins, cords, and vessels, of the tabernacle; in other words, the visible things of the kingdom of mercy, upon which the grace of God operates as a means to bless mankind. Remove these things from the tabernacle and it is a shapeless mass; but place in due order the pillars of God's truth, faithfulness, and mercy, with all things related to them, and then the coverings carried by the sons of Gershom can be put on, and the sacred vessels in charge of the sons of Kohath put in their place; and the tabernacle becomes the house of God, where the sons of Aaron minister in holy things. (6) Then there is strife and war, and the reconciliation is not complete, the tabernacle is specially used for sacrifice and intercession; but when there is peace and joy in God, there is added a service of song, in which the redeemed join to praise God. (7) To the High Priest of humanity, the Lord Jesus Christ, pertains the offering of spiritual sacrifices and the incense of prayer; but in the days of ceremonial things this service was limited to Aaron and his sons, and they alone were permitted to draw near to the King Immortal and Invisible, the only true God. Men are even now waiting for the coming of the Priest-King, who will bring reconciliation and peace with God to the world, and good-will amongst men.

CHAPTERS VI., 54—81, VII., 1—29, may contain the seventh cycle.

(1) The possessions of the Levites in Israel are the cities of refuge and other cities with their suburbs; in other words, the strongholds of God's faithfulness, truth, peace, and safety. The Levites are the peacemakers in Israel, and they are called to be the sons of God. (2) The sons of Issachar in this cycle are the patient, peaceful sons of God, "crouching down as between two burdens;" they know that the rest in Christ is good, and they learn to bear and endure as did their great Master. (3) The sons of Benjamin possess the inheritance through the "Son of the right hand." (4) The sons of Naphtali are like the hinds let loose; that is, the Bible unveiled, giving forth the goodly words and thoughts of God, in which there is satisfaction and blessing. (5) The sons of Manasseh touch the tender chord of mercy, and of the first-born son of the well beloved Joseph; and it is in this family that there is wrought out the knowledge of God's Word.

testimony, and the redemption of women from the oppressive laws of men. (6) The sons of Ephraim speak of fruitfulness, but also of persecution to death by the men of Gath, the mourning of Ephraim, and the children descended from him, from that time until the coming of the great captain of Israel, Joshua, the son of Nun. (7) In the possessions and towns possessed by Ephraim there seems to be an allegory which harmonises with the blessing uttered by Jacob upon Joseph, and the Beatitudes of Jesus Christ. He possesses eight principal cities with their towns, and these in their order begin with Bethel, the house of God, and from this there is developed the government or birthright, power over death, fruitfulness, and an everlasting habitation. The allegory in this cycle seems to be specially interesting; and it is so because underneath all these names there are hidden away great spiritual truths of history, which will be found to be most valuable to the men of this generation. These words and names may seem to some men to be mere historic facts; but the truth seems to be that underneath the forms and letters there is a living spirit, waiting to be set free, that it may disclose to men the marvellous thoughts of God.

CHAPTERS VII., 30—40, IX., 1—34, may contain the eighth cycle. (1) The sons of Asher—the blessed and happy, who possesses bread, and yields royal dainties. He is blessed with children and is acceptable to all his brethren. (2) There is a return to the tribe of Benjamin, for the purpose of tracing out the line in which Saul, the son of Kish, the first king of Israel, is found. This is the line in which Ehud, the judge, who delivered Israel from under the bondage of Moab is found, and thus there is special reference to the kingdom of heaven in the soul as well as in a nation. (3) The visible kingdom comes in the family of Ner, and rests upon Saul; but he is found to be like a ravening wolf, devouring the prey and dividing the spoil. But this description is not of Saul only, it includes all men who in this stage of the third development are self-asserting kings, and are not meek and obedient to the will of God. (4) As all Israel were reckoned by their genealogies, so in the kingdom of righteousness and truth the spiritual Israel are numbered. (5) As in Jerusalem there lived some of the tribe of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh, so in the possession obtained in the day of mercy there have been found the spiritual successors of these tribes. (6) The priesthood of the Israel, according to the flesh, passes away, and the holy city has within its border the redeemed by Jesus Christ, the High Priest, who are become the priests of God. (7) All Christians become the spiritual keepers of the temple of God, ordained and set in their office by God's Beloved, and by the great Seer, God's Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, and they also sing His praise, because His mercy endureth for ever.

CHAPTERS IX., 35—44, XI., 1—9, may contain the ninth cycle. (1) There is found another return to the sons of Benjamin, in the line of Gibeon. The word Gibeon means a hill, or the lifting up of iniquity, and thus it is the central thought in the perversion of the true worship

and service of God. It is the very centre of self-asserting worship; and thus the perversion worship did not cease in Israel until God appeared to Solomon at Gibeon, and he had built the temple at Jerusalem. There seems to be a very extensive allegory here, teaching by this family the history of the world, the Israel of God, and the condition of the soul of man. The fallen sons of men are all descended from Ham, and they are spiritually descended from Gibeon, and the spirit of Gibeon is in them; and it is because they are in this line that they find within themselves a proud Saul who persecutes the beloved son of grace in the soul. (2) But this spirit of Saul, being proud and rebellious, is not successful in the struggle against the Philistine desires and passions of the depraved soul; there comes a great revolution, a burning in the soul, a veritable Gilboa, and in the awful struggle the grace and gift of God, the willingness to obey God, and the power to know or to take counsel from God, are lost. Here this allegory seems to run side by side, if it does not intermingle with, the story of Jacob the Supplanter. Jacob at Jabbok, on the evening before the wrestling with the angel, and Saul on Mount Gilboa, though they are pictures differently painted and framed, seem really to teach the same truths of the spiritual world. As in Jacob, the selfish self-asserting spirit is subdued, and emerges from the struggle another man, so in the nation, the Saul spirit dies and the spirit of David the beloved, obedient prince, with God reigns. Those who have had an experience of the new life of grace in the soul, and know what is meant by the old man as opposed to the Spirit of Christ, will have little difficulty in following out this allegory. (3) The end of the supplanting, the proud, rebellious spirit is not merely death, but also shame and exposure. (4) The hidden things are made manifest, and there is a time of fasting, because this spirit, once anointed by God, has been brought low. (5) The reason of all this strange experience in man and in nations is easily explained; it is on account of sin, "even against the Word of the Lord;" and because any other means of gaining knowledge was preferred before the Word of God. There was a complete revolution in the soul; God was despised and forgotten, and then there followed death, and the coming of the kingdom to the beloved of God. (6) A free people chose their King, and He is to be found at Hebron, in the faithful promises of God, in Jesus Christ. He is King of kings, the anointed over Israel, according to the Word of God. (7) It is at this point that Jerusalem is taken from the Jebusites, those who tread under foot, and condemn the word of God; and this city becomes Mount Zion, the city of the living God. From this time the cause of God is prosperous, because the Lord of Hosts is with His Beloved, to whom He has given the kingdom.

It is not necessary at this time to follow out in detail the remaining cycles contained in the Chronicles; it seems evident, from the rapid glance given at the portion from Adam to David, that there is a design in the work. The theory suggested tries to explain that design; there seems to be a wonderful fitness in the method applied, and if this study is prized it will be duly followed up by those interested in the Word of God. The field of thought, historical, prophetic, and spiritual, is a

ge one, because, if the first Beatitude and its promise contain the kingdom of heaven, and that blessing harmonises with the others, then in them there ought to be found the kingdom of God in the germ, and also in the perfect visible manifestation. The kingdom is found in the names of the patriarchs from Abraham ; and the manifested kingdoms of good and evil, and sin, in the history of all the seed of Terah and Abraham, and spiritual. It will be observed that the Chronicles form really a divine work, divine in its structure, and scientific in its details, but do not understand the organic development until the organic body is formed after its kind ; and then, from the spiritual seed, by the organised forms, the kingdom of heaven may be discerned. It is that men are at last to be privileged to enter into communion with God in these things ; if the work seem marvellous as viewed in the light, then let men remember that it is the Word of God, and all things are marvellous. As Moses from Mount Pisgah was privileged to see the whole of the land of promise, so it may be said that the man who sees the spiritual history in Chronicles stands upon a great hill, and the transfiguration in Jesus Christ the promises of God, from the great Restoration, are all open before his clarified vision. His thoughts may prove to be like finger-posts, pointing in the way in which God would have men walk in their spiritual march toward the Kingdom of God. If so, then let the followers of the true Cyrus, the Heir of the Kingdom, listen to His words, " All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me ; and He hath charged me to build the house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among all His people ? the Lord his God be with him, and let him

THE BOOK OF EZRA.

In this book the theme is the rebuilding of the temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel, and the restoration of the worship of God under Ezra. To transfer these thoughts into the language of spiritual truth, as applied to a man or to the whole world, it is a book which deals with the fallen condition of man and of the world, and it points out the means of the rebuilding of God's temple in man into the likeness of Jesus Christ—the real stranger in the Babylon of this world—the restoration of the spiritual world by the Holy Spirit, man's Helper.

It is not advisable to consider, in detail, this book, or to point out the details to be found in it ; but the leading thoughts will be touched, so that it may be seen that this book, beyond the history it contains, is a prophecy with very important spiritual teaching. (1) As the plan for rebuilding the temple was given by Cyrus, who also gave the keys of the house of God to the people, so the God of all grace, the Heir of all things gave commandment for the redemption of

and all they possess to their Lord and
the altar was set up in the *seventh* in
Tabernacles held, so the time of the
worship upon the earth will not harm
over and the Crucifixion, in the first
the seventh month, or the beginning
the time for suffering will be past, as
be come ; and it will be after the
Trumpets, and the Day of Atonement
feast in spiritual things which was
Tabernacles. (5) As the setting up
of the foundation of the temple, and
month in the second year, so in spi
sin by Jesus Christ, and then the bui
the spiritual is not found in the first
the second cycle as found in the New
of the temple commenced in the
hindered by enemies ; begun again
inquires ; and finished in the 12th in
light imposing silence, so the great
by Jesus Christ, prospered for awhile
by the enemies of truth during the
the days of the Reformation, and it was
when the King of Truth flashes forth
light that His enemies will be com
(7) As Ezra, when he returned to Jeru
in open sin, united with the heathen
united to them by marriage, made
because of transgression and sin, and
the time is surely coming, when the

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH.

ook the subject of study is not the temple of God, but the
 l its walls; in other words, the visible kingdom of God, is seen
 fenceless, covered with shame, a byword amongst men, and a
 reproach against those who are the people of God. The 48th
 presses what the kingdom of God should be as "the city of
 King;" but Nehemiah is led to consider what the state of the
 after it had been destroyed by fire, and left in the hands of a
 al enemy. The pictures presented of Zion in all her beauty,
 salem in ruins, are very different; but they truly express the
 state of the man obedient to God, and defended by Him; and of
 less, self-willed, dishonoured, shameful creature, who has been
 and a rebel to the King of kings. The state of Jerusalem and
 lition of Nehemiah's soul is expressed in the 102nd Psalm,
 e Psalmist prays for "mercy upon Zion; for the time to favour
 set time, is come."

ut entering into the cycles that may be found in this book, an
 s object may be gained by taking a few of the leading thoughts,
 idering their relationship to things that are spiritual. (1) As
 h—conduct of the Lord—the name embodying the chief
 in the third Beatitude, one whose chief desire was obedience to
 l the glory of His Name, was in great sorrow because of the
 1 of Jerusalem, and received from Artaxerxes a charge to rebuild
 3, so it is those who are meek and lowly, grieved because of
 ess in the world, in the Church, and in the soul, who receive the
 rom the King, through His light-giving Word, to arise and
 the sacred walls, by observance to His laws, by which men
 be governed and defended. The strength of a nation is not in
 fortifications, or ships of war, but just laws, and law-abiding,
 izens, inspired with love to God, patriotism for home, and love
 kind. If God's moral laws were supreme in man and amongst
 ons, and the spirit of Christ animated them as the sacred fire,
 nsive, aggressive warfare would be impossible, and defensive
 ld be unknown. Every man who disobeys, obstructs, or dis-
 the moral law, disintegrates the city walls set for his defence,
 natter what his pretensions to loyalty may be, in reality, he is a
 rebel, and a traitor to God's common-weal. (2) As Sanballat,
 and Geshem conspired to keep back the work of God, so those
 ve the lusts of the eyes, the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of
 in reality the devil's servants, and not the servants of Christ.
 r ambition, fleshly expediency, and the devilish policy of politi-
 ill not help the State; and when God's light flashes forth then
 ll be banished from amongst men. (3) As the building of the
 as carried on under great danger and disadvantages, in very
 is times, so the rebuilding of God's moral government amongst
 been carried on by men who have had to work with one hand,
 ect their lives with the other. This has been a special feature

brethren. (5) But what may be grievous in the sight of God and man, traitors within the city of Jerusalem, so there have been, and there are still more fervently than their friends, the kingdom of God, and who would hands of godless power, carnal policy of the men who above all things fear and with the fervent zeal of Nehemiah faithful in his duties, and careful to grace and mercy, or gift of God—careful to gather the people and reckon man, and in the State, there must be care in appointing men to offices and keeping such a register of men, property, so that no injustice may be done. I listened to Ezra, when he read the covenant that they would be faithful from the ordinances of man, or even the State; and there must be the voluntariness in all that is true, right, and just. It is a great mercy to some Christian nations that have been one whit less wonderful than the others, and not until there is full consecration and then, nationally by its representatives, the many difficulties by which they are surrounded. Loyalty and faithfulness to God is the test of the Sabbath; this is the crucial test with which all nations will be blessed, or continue to be. Not by compulsion ought such

on. May God send, and that right early, His Own Holy Spirit, the Helper in such a work, and faithful, zealous men like him, who will seek the glory of God, and the highest good of the world in Church and state.

THE BOOK OF ESTHER.

Books of Chronicles form a long historic record, bearing in their view the kingdom of God, as it has been manifested in the world; the Book of Ezra contemplates a desecrated, fallen temple, and its restoration; the Book of Nehemiah the rebuilding of a city's walls, or the nation in its struggles with enemies who hate the commonwealth; and the Book of Esther—secret, hidden—reveals the strange workings of Divine Providence, in frustrating the devilish schemes of the wicked, serving the people of God, punishing the wicked, and causing the righteous to prosper. A glance at this inspired Eastern story, in its relation to the foregoing books, and in its spirit as related to the rest of the Bible, shows that in it there is to be found a manifestation of the power of truth and righteousness in opposition to the power of evil in the world. Looking at this book from the stand-point of the fourth volume of the Bible, the hidden wisdom, truth, righteousness, and invisible workings of God in the world, the following thoughts may prove themselves bearing upon the spiritual position it occupies in the kingdom of God and in His Word of truth. (1) As in the story there is revealed the magnificence of Ahasuerus, and the great feast given by him in the drama of human life history begins with a great feast in the garden of Eden, where man possessed full liberty, limited only by the will of the King of kings. (2) As Vashti disobeyed the king, so she disobeyed God, and through sin brought shame upon herself, and dishonour from the moral garden of God's goodness and favour. (3) As Esther was chosen to be queen, and was the means through her uncle through which the king's life, and Mordecai received no reward at that time, so the power of God, that hidden power in the midst of men, has been the means of their salvation, but still remaining unknown and unperceived until the overthrow of the evil one. This is the order of the workings of grace in the world, and throughout history it has been ever the same, hidden to men, remaining humble, and sitting in the gate, and not on the throne, or judgment-seat. (4) The mystery of evil is found in the person of the wicked Haman, the Agagite, and son of Amalek, the inveterate enemy of God and of His people; and the means he took for destroying one man, by including all the Jews, with his religious reverence in casting the lot, or Pur, deserve to be studied and pondered. (5) The mercy of God is seen in the king's dream, the intercession of Mordecai, and the intercession of Esther on the behalf of her people. (6) Suddenly the positions are reversed, Haman is hanged, and the man who was intended for the chosen one of God; and the despised and despised—contrite and bruised—is elevated to be the prime minister of

a great empire. (7) As through the exaltation of Mordecai the Jews were safe, and had peace and joy, so it shall be with God's people in this world, the day is at hand when the hidden spirit of grace will reign in the souls of men, and the Man of Sorrows will reign over the whole world. The secret drama of God has been on the stage of history for a long time; but the issue is clearly seen to be the destruction of the spirit of Amalek, and of those who hate God and good, whilst grace, goodness, truth, and righteousness will be exalted in the earth and reign supreme amongst men.

THE BOOK OF JOB.

FOLLOWING the line of thought introduced as bearing upon these books, and their relation to the fourth Beatitude as interpreting the whole, and to the cycle of Beatitudes as showing the harmony in their individuality and their unity, it will be seen that this book expresses the mercy of God, as found in the secret kingdom of God's truth and righteousness; and as it has been understood by the wise, good, and gracious saints who lived under the Old Testament dispensation. The great question of truth and righteousness, as related to God and man, is as expressed by Job, "How should man be just before God?" and the mystery of the age of mercy has been, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" It is not difficult to see that these questions are not fully answered in this book, neither is a clear answer given to them in any of the books of the Old Testament. But this book of Job is a marvellous production; and it considers in a unique manner some of the greatest problems which humanity has had to consider. No opinion will be given as to the structure of this book as bearing upon its authorship, or the cyclical theory, because these are questions which require much careful consideration; but if it can be shown that the book is one of a cycle, and that its place is the cycle of mercy, and its contents an inquiry into good and evil, mercy and judgment, then the other questions will doubtless in due time receive attention.

(1) The book represents the patriarch Job—who weeps or cries—as prosperous, good, generous, and gracious; but underneath all these things there was great care and fear on his part lest sin should bring a curse on his family; and there was a constant want of trust in God, as expressed in his own words, "For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me." This seems to be the key to the man, the book, and the age; there is an undefined, inexpressible something, intangible and yet most real, which casts its gloomy shadow over the path of the wise, good, and righteous, and being deficient in the knowledge of the method of God's grace, faith is enfeebled, distrust rankles in the soul, and thus in every cup there is a bitter drop, and in all pleasure or happiness there is a damning doubt, which prevents peace. (2) Of course, this unclean, bitter, evil thing is sin, with its consequences of trouble, sorrow, affliction, losses, and crosses;

d even in the holiest place of worship, God's temples in man, society, and in nations, there comes a Satan, an enemy of God, to present himself, not for worship, but to breed mischief, and to bring evil upon men. This Satan, whether as a personal devil or as a devil incarnate in self, always manifests the same contemptible spirit of envy, malice, hatred, and all unrighteousness; and in the day of mercy God has been pleased to permit in man, society, and amongst men in nations, a certain amount of freedom to this evil spirit, so that its deeds may be made manifest. To the extent to which evil is permitted to go is a very wide sphere of freedom, for it can take away property, cause bereavements, bring disease and corruption on the body, cause the nearest and dearest to give wicked counsels, and change the words of friends into mockery; but it is opposed at the centre of being in the spiritual life, and over this God holds His shield of protection, so that the trial of the grace of patience may receive a due reward. (3) The peculiarity of Job's position is that he is chosen, the best of men, good, patient, just, and merciful, with all wisdom, moral, and gracious qualities, is suddenly visited by overwhelming calamities, and he is seen to be suffering as if he were the very worst of men. It is this that constitutes the mystery of grace, and of the ways of God with men. (4) Job did not understand why such things could come upon him, although he feared that they would; still, in his afflictions, Job held firmly to this thought, that these visitations were not special punishments inflicted on him because of wilful sin, but that he had lived to the utmost of his power a pure, moral life, and he could not trace the connection of a cause and its effect. Job's friends thought that the goodness of God would prevent His permission of such afflictions upon a just man; and thus they conclude that Job secretly is a great sinner, and because of his own sins he is punished, and Job is unable to lead them to believe in his innocence. It is at this point that man's conceptions of God fall so far short of what He is in His revelation in Jesus Christ; the whole tenor of the arguments on both sides is principally based upon the order of moral law, sin, and punishment, and is in a hazy manner recognising the mercy of God without perceiving the method by which His grace must operate upon and in man, for his justification and sanctification. The great wisdom contained in this book is truly marvellous; and it may be a question worthy of consideration whether four philosophers of this nineteenth century would argue so wisely, so truly as these men, who may have been alive about five centuries before Christ. (5) The great facts of sin, sacrifice, redemption, a Redeemer, holiness, resurrection, an Intercessor, and immortality, were thoughts familiar to these sages; and if they are to be seen groping toward certainty, rather than walking on a path on which the sun is shining, the fault lay not with them, but with their times and surroundings; for assuredly their conversations on the great mysteries are incomparably superior to those of the sages in their search after wisdom, and of many others who have sought to make known to men all forms of knowledge and truth. They were true, earnest men, speaking about facts familiar to themselves; and it would be well if their spirit of truth and honesty was fully sought after by all men who seek to know the truth and the righteousness.

of God according to His method of mercy. (6) The questions of the zealous Elihu, and the voice of God speaking out of the whirlwind, with the thoughts that are suggested, bring Job to another state of soul. At first Job would limit God, and even suggests the thought that God would be unrighteous should He permit an innocent man to be afflicted; but when Elihu and God have spoken, then the self-righteous man confesses himself to be a sinner, and unfit to speak unto God. Job tried to justify himself, and in doing this he was wrong, for the spring and current of man's life is unrighteous, and thus out of harmony with the good and gracious will of God. It is not God's method of grace to turn man back upon the foul fountain within, or the selfish, soiled current of a sinful life; but when He is challenged face to face, then He can show that God alone is just, and at the same time that He is the Justifier of the ungodly. The words and experience of Job are nothing strange, and it is enough to say that, set in the light of God, every saint, even the holiest, and all saints, would at once say with Job, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." This is the common end of the experience of a Daniel and a John, of Old Testament saints, and the Christian dispensation followers of the Lord Jesus Christ; they are in themselves vile, but by God's grace and mercy made righteous in Jesus Christ, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and prepared for the inheritance of the saints. (7) The tried, afflicted, humbled, meek, patient, redeemed children of God become His priests and intercessors for others; it shall not be always sorrow and suffering with them, but in due time the dark clouds will pass away, the sun of blessed prosperity will shine upon the friends of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the great conflict will be past. Job received the double of what he had lost; but those who know the mystery of grace have heard about the followers of the Divine Grace receiving an hundred-fold, with affliction, even in this world, and in the world to come eternal life. If men knew the gospel of the grace of God, and were determined to obey its laws, then sorrow and suffering would be stingless; and surely the faith of a Christian should be greater than that of Job, an Edomite, that is, a man of the great world; and the fit language for them to use is that of the apostle Paul—"In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

"BLESSED are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." It seems almost useless to begin to explain the relations which exist betwixt this book and the sixth Beatitude. In the Psalms there are to be found the manifold utterances of the souls of men in past ages; and the language of God's saints in the times of old is still the tongue of the people of God in these latter days of the Christian era. In this division of the Word of God, the New Testament does not contain anything to be compared with the Psalms, because even the greatest and most pathetic

ices of the New Testament seem to be borrowed from the Psalms, press the cycle of the experiences of the human soul. This may strange, and yet is it not what men might expect? for surely the saints in the days gone by had the same varied experiences; and were plunged into the same gulfs of sorrow, they were also led to cherish the same glowing hopes from the promises of God. A study of the Psalms that the great unity of the Church of God and; time has not changed the state, surroundings, conditions, emotions, desires, passions, hopes, and divine aspirations of the soul; and the souls living now, when they read the thoughts of saints in the olden time, find their own experiences fully expressed, and that in a manner that they may try to imitate but cannot do. As this cycle of the Bible has specially to do with the hidden of God, and of the soul, the mystery of the kingdom of grace, we expect that this part would be specially rich in expressing the life of man's soul in all its experiences.

Without pretending to give a detailed account of this book in its entirety, the thought may be suggested that it runs upon an eight-fold cycle which seems to harmonise with the Beatitudes. For example, the first Psalm expresses the condition of the blessed, who are poor in spirit and who delight in God's law; and the state of the ungodly, who do not desire. Psalm II. reveals the rebel soul, evil kings and their overthrow, and God's decree for the overthrow of evil, and for the establishment of His kingdom of grace in all those who trust Him. Psalm III. reveals the soul in the midst of enemies, yet it is calm, trustful, obedient, and blessed. Psalm IV. contains the mystery of evil and the mystery of grace. God's gracious choice; man's communings with God; the light of God's countenance shining upon the soul who possesses gladness, peace, and safety. Psalm V. reveals the soul looking away from itself unto the God of mercy and of purity; the soul for guidance and protection, and assured of the favour and blessing of God. Psalm VI. touches the very core of a soul in trouble, the soul of sin, weak, sore, and vexed, beyond the help of man, and with groaning and consumed with grief, yet enabled by God's grace to hate evil, and to be separate from all that work iniquity. The seventh Psalm reveals the soul trustful and waiting upon God; the soul in the past, the victory gained, and there is peace with God and in His will. Psalm VII. This psalm requires to be read in the light of the ninth blessing, that of the peacemaker; and there must also be read the Son of God as coming forth amongst wicked men, who are compared to wild beasts. It is a picture common enough in the New Testament, and familiar on the lips of God's beloved Son, as an example, when He sent forth His disciples as sheep among wolves. This psalm expresses in a wonderful manner the great principles of the cycle in this cycle of thought, from the forthgoing of the Son, His presence in God, the awful wickedness of men, the innocence of the Son, the prayer of the Gracious One, His implicit reliance upon God, the wickedness of the wicked and the consequences of their evil as coming back upon their own heads, and how under all circumstances the righteousness of God is praised by His peace-seeking Son.

Psalm VIII. This is a hymn of praise such as the redeemed, the persecuted, and the victorious will delight to sing. The fountains of the great deeps in the soul are broken up, and the excellence of the gracious Name is extolled above the heavens. The wisdom of God in making babes in grace to be the power of God in the overthrow of evil is a great thought for a gracious soul; it is the climax of God's glory, showing that the foolishness of God is wiser than all the wisdom of which men can boast. From this mountain of grace the redeemed soul considers the visible creation, man, and the lower creatures, with man's dominion in glory and honour over the works of God; yet the glory is not man's, but the Lord's, whose Name is excellent in the earth. The despised and persecuted have become victorious in their Lord, and His is the kingdom and the glory.

Having shown that Psalms I.—VIII. contain a cycle of thought in the kingdom of grace, and presuming it will be found that the same construction runs through the book, it may be useful to take one psalm out of each cycle in rotation, in the first nine cycles, and by doing so this will indicate that the same spirit and method are followed throughout. Psalm I. and also IX. express the goodness and grace of God toward His redeemed; and the evil that shall fall upon the wicked. The latter psalm being specially related to the redeemed soul in the second cycle of thought, the relationships of the soul toward God are more fully explained. Psalm X., second cycle, represents the soul in trouble, the Lord is afar off, and His face hidden from view; the wicked are seen as successful, full of boasting, working all kinds of evil, and deluding themselves with the thought that God forgets, and that He does not see their evil deeds. At verse 12 there is a sudden change of thought; the grace of God, the fire from heaven, has descended into the soul, there is the upward look and prayer for help, with the petition, "Forget not the humble;" and then the foolishness of the wicked is understood and condemned; and God is known to be the King and Judge upon the earth. It is not necessary to show in what way the principles of grace which underlie this psalm are applicable to the soul in its hour of trouble, to a nation, or even to all mankind; but it may be useful for men to compare the opening and closing verses of the psalm, so that they may be trustful, patient, and full of hope in God, who is the King of grace for ever and ever. Psalm XIX. is the third in the third cycle, and in it there is laid down very plainly the rule of life as found in God's laws for the guidance of the meek soul. There are four great thoughts in this Psalm: (1) the perfection of the divine order in the external universe; (2) the fitness of the divine law for the human soul, the internal universe; (3) that the errors, impurities, secret tendencies, presumptuous desires, and passions of the soul seek to obtain the dominion as a rebellious kingdom against the King; and (4) it is by God's grace, in answer to prayer, that strength is obtained through the Lord, the Redeemer. Psalm XXVIII. is the fourth in the fourth cycle, and in it there may be traced the thoughts of a soul musing upon the great mysteries of sin and grace: not, indeed, in the language of theology, but in the experience of the human soul. The great mystery to a gracious soul, trusting God, is the awful

nce of the heavenly Father when the soul is in an agony, afraid
 the silence should continue, whilst the feet are as upon a slippery
 ce on the very verge of the horrible pit. The cry arises from such
 oul in plaintive supplications, and though surrounded by the dark-
 a the arms of faith are stretched out toward the sanctuary and the
 cle of God's Word. That the soul is indeed gracious is seen through
 desires and sympathies for good and against evil ; and in due time
 yer is heard, there is deliverance from wickedness and the wicked,
 [God is praised as the strength of His redeemed and the One who
 sees His inheritance. Heaven and hell are in the Psalm, and the
 tral figure visible is the gracious soul redeemed by God. Psalm
 XVII. is the fifth in the fifth cycle. Some men have supposed
 t it was written in Babylon to console and encourage the people of
 d in their afflictions. Whether this is so or not may be an interest-
 question for some men, but if it express the condition of the
 rs in their captivity, then it must also embody the great principles
 the kingdom of grace and mercy during the long, long thralldom of
 y centuries of the children of grace to the powers of the world,
 flesh, and the devil. If the redeemed will try to conceive of this
 lmn as an utterance of the King of grace through His servant from
 own experience to His afflicted, down-trodden, and despised people,
 a the field of view will be wonderfully enlarged ; and the moment
 mercy for a life, the hour of grace for a nation, and the day of
 cy for the world, will take their due proportions. The eye that
 and the voice that speaks is from the centre of the circumference
 he kingdom of mercy ; and thus the gentle advice to the gracious
 to avoid fretting, to be patient, and to be trustful comes to a
 ng consummation in the promise that the meek shall possess the
 ritage of the earth, and that they shall have abundance of delight
 he blessings of peace. The works of the wicked and the retribu-
 that must follow are expressed in this thought, " Their sword shall
 r into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken." The
 parison betwixt the wicked and the righteous is very striking ; at
 the wicked are prosperous, possessing great power, and spread
 ad like a green bay-tree ; but the end is less than contemptible, for
 object once so great has vanished away, and not even a trace of
 existence is to be found ; whilst the end of the perfect and the
 ight is peace with God, and the permanent possession of the in-
 itance. This Psalm is a history of the kingdom of mercy in its
 est range ; and verses 39, 40, make known the source of the stream
 grace, righteousness, and strength to man ; and also the means of
 verance and safety, which is faith or trust in God. Psalm XLVI.
 he sixth in the sixth cycle. The position is peculiar ; it is that of
 deemed soul, safe in the mercy of God, which is no longer a hidden
 g, but well understood in human experience. The condition of
 soul, as related to its surroundings, is that of a tempest in which
 earth is leaving its place, and the mountains of strength are being
 ied into the midst of the tumultuous sea. The consummation of
 g has come upon man and his works, and yet the redeemed find
 ; God is their refuge, strength, and help even in such a period of

and his name shall be exalted :
with us, our hope, refuge, and strength.

Psalm LV. is the seventh in the cycle, and requires to be interpreted in the light of the eighth, indicating the spirit of the Psalmist in the presence of his enemies. The psalm is truly I am an utterance of the King of glory, who has come to walk in His footsteps. The King's heart pain ; and under the awful shadow of death surround the soul the terrors of the spirit. At such a time the aspiration of the Psalmist is expressed thus in the words of the dove : for then would I fly away from the hatred of enemies, I would not be a traitor, as an Abithophel or a betrayer, a fearful one ; sin, death, and hell are the portion of those who betray. Psalm LXIV. is the eighth in the cycle, and is studied in the light of the eighth, and the possession obtained in the first part of the psalm depicts the effects of their falling upon themselves, and the issue to such a work they will find that the righteous will be glad and the wicked will be eighth of the ninth cycle. The reward that there is a reward for those who are in this psalm there can be seen to be a reward which shall be given to a greater peace, truth, and righteousness.

THE PROVERBS.

may be assumed that this book has a specific relation to human conduct and character ; it is an accumulation of the wisest sayings of the wisest man who lived during the Old Testament dispensation. The object of his writing is to give to young men, the inexperienced and immature in judgment, such instruction, understanding, and wisdom as will fit them to understand proverbs and parables, to give good counsel, to fear God and serve Him, and to avoid the company of evil-doers and their ways. This being so, the wise king expects thoughtful, meek, obedient pupils and companions ; and without the fear of God, love of truth, desire after righteousness and the highest wisdom that can be attained, the student is not fit to sit at the feet of the wise king of Israel. Character and conduct, not self-conceit and self-glorifying, is the object desired ; and it may well be granted that this book cannot be equalled by any other work of the same kind in pre-Christian literature. This work of Solomon's is the highest flood-tide mark of wisdom attained in the world before the coming of Christ ; therefore in this book men will find, in germ or in detail, the constituent parts of the possible knowledge and wisdom which would be available to form character and produce conduct. The product is the best man all round all things in which man should possess character ; and as it may be assumed that the wise master was not surpassed by any of his disciples, a fair estimate of this cycle of wisdom may be attained.

The object of Solomon's wisdom was character and conduct ; the master was a great failure, and the master's son through his folly lost his kingdom. This was the issue of his character and conduct. If now the principal thought in the seventh Beatitude is seized, an analogy may be found which will throw some light on this book ; it is that of the Master whose character and conduct was that of a peacemaker, and whose special work was the formation of character, and the production of good conduct. To put the object of the mission of the work of Christ in very plain words, it was to regenerate men, and so give them a new character that He came into this world ; and if the disciples follow the Master, the conduct manifested will be not merely wise and good, but righteous and righteous in the highest possible degree. It is not necessary to enter into details upon the contents of this book, or to compare the wisdom of Solomon with the wisdom of Jesus Christ. They are not rivals, neither should they be supposed to belong to different schools of wisdom or philosophy. The master of the Old Testament raises a temple to wisdom, but he does not enshrine himself as the object of worship ; he was only the servant of Wisdom, bringing to men the wise thoughts he received, and at all times in his teaching the attention of the student is turned from Solomon to the Lord, and he repeats this thought, that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and also of knowledge, and all that makes man wise, good, great, or gracious. The term "fear of the Lord" is not meant to express dread, but rather it may be viewed as expressing the

same thought, as when "Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac." It is the conception of the reconciled child, as related to the heavenly Father, in whom love has its place as the great motive power for conduct, whilst there is also the fear lest the behaviour should be such as would bring shame upon His Name. The root-thought in Solomon's wisdom is the same as that which is found in the wisdom of Jesus Christ; the difference lies in this, that Solomon raised an external edifice in harmony with the spirit of his age, and suitable to that age of development in the kingdom of God; whilst Jesus Christ manifests in Himself the gracious wisdom and righteousness of God, and thus He is the Temple in which the only Wise God is enshrined as the Object of worship to fallen man. The temple of wisdom raised by Solomon is like the visible temple he erected in Jerusalem, it is generally a thing of externals, of visible pictures, wise instructions, careful warnings, pithy sayings, deep thoughts, and fatherly words of guidance. The child in years, or understanding, is turned away from self and from Solomon, and the Temple in which there is an invisible spirit is the object of study, for education, and to which character and conduct should conform. The Temple of God in Jesus Christ is not visible, but spiritual, external forms, ceremonies, and laws for guidance take a secondary place; and instead of living and learning inward, as in Solomon's ideal, His Temple is inhabited, and the Spirit of Christ lives outward, breathing from within the sacred House, the spiritual life inherent in it, and thus completely transfiguring that which is built upon visible things. The difference betwixt Solomon and Jesus Christ, as related to their positions and conditions in history, is very great. The former is a peaceful king reigning over a peaceful people, raising a temple of peace and of wisdom where all men may worship and serve, and the end, in a very brief space of the man and his labours, is that the visible glory passes away, because they have no inherent righteousness in them in harmony with the nature of things. They are passing figures in the great show of life, not eternal realities. The latter comes forth from God, the King of peace, the peacemaking Son of God, into a world at war with God and with itself, into a bell of discord wherein there was no heavenly music. But because He brought concord and harmony, peace and wisdom, in Himself, inherent in His very nature, the germ-life of divinity in its highest manifestation, the consequence is that the light of truth, righteousness, and peace in Him has flashed forth upon men, dispelling the darkness of ignorance, injustice, hatred, and war. Solomon points through his temple of worship to the Invisible who inhabits eternity, and through his temple of wisdom, which makes character and conduct a way to Him who is the Fear of God; but Jesus Christ stands forth before men, the divine Man, saying to fallen men, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." In Him the invisible Spirit of God is made conceivable, and the Father of mercy is seen inviting to His bosom those who have disobeyed His laws, left His home, and despised His love, and by receiving His Holy Spirit there is a spiritual organic union with Him, and thus in the redeemed the character and conduct become in Him a divine, inherent life, a manifestation of the highest will of God. This is the highest

wisdom, the mystery of godliness, even God manifest in the flesh ; and the humblest believer in Jesus Christ may say truly of himself in his mystical union with the Lord, "A greater than Solomon is here." The issue of this matter, as illuminated by the seventh Beatitude, which specially bears upon character and conduct, is that the temple of Solomon's wisdom is good in its place as a means for guidance in the duties of life ; but the all-important thing for a man is to be made a temple of God in which the Holy Spirit dwells, and by this indwelling so changing and subduing the fallen, sinful nature, that the divine nature which is truth, righteousness, love, joy, and peace may become supreme in all things.

ECCLESIASTES ; OR, THE PREACHER.

"BLESSED are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This is the utterance of the Peacemaker, who knew all that constitutes life as bearing upon the past, the present, and the future. He rises above all earth's vicissitudes and personal experiences in His teaching, and He says the summation of life to be obtained is righteousness under persecution, whilst the outlook for the future is "the kingdom of heaven." Beyond a doubt this is the glory of the kingdom of grace, and it expresses in one short sentence what a Christian may expect for his life in this world, and in that which is to come. If a man starts in life knowing exactly what he may expect, then he cannot be disappointed if events prove the foreknowledge to be correct. The Master gives in this text His Own life, and that of His faithful servants ; and surely it must be admitted that so far as this world goes He holds forth no vain hopes. It may be said that the Master sets His seal upon the sermon of the Preacher, because as the latter had gone through the whole cycle of earthly vanities, and having found them to be so, the Master simply accepts his experience, ratifies it, and says unto His followers, what Solomon experienced and wrote is true ; below the sun, that is below the moral law, the fear of God, and the keeping of His commandments, all is vanity and vexation of spirit ; therefore begin where he left off, at the "fear of God," love of truth, and obedience to righteousness, and in this temple there will be manifested the gracious will of God, which is the highest that man can know of God. Can man add anything to that which was uttered by the Preacher of righteousness, or the Saviour of the world ? By no means, because Solomon sums up in his sermon all that man can try or do to make themselves happy, wealthy, wise, or great, and his conclusion is, "Fear God, and keep His commandments : for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." The Saviour begins where Solomon leaves off ; He inhabits, so to speak, the structure raised by the Preacher, and by adding the seventh and eighth Beatitudes, He completes and animates for a divine life what was only

a visible thing containing a living germ whose powers were not known to Solomon. Men can add nothing to the thoughts, words, and actions of Jesus Christ, for the simple reason that His valuation of this world is perfect. His method of a gracious life leaves nothing to be added to it, and beyond sun, moon, and stars, all the lights that shine down upon this earth, He has opened the door of heaven into which men may look, from whence they can receive divine strength, and into which, by God's grace, they may hope to enter.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

"BLESSED are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad : for great is your reward in heaven." On earth and in the world persecution and reviling ; in the heaven of the soul in its communings with the Saviour, and in the highest heaven, joy and gladness : in the world, tribulation ; in Christ, peace. Is there any analogy betwixt these thoughts so familiar in the words of Christ and "The Song of songs which is Solomon's" ? The name Solomon means peaceable, perfect, and that recompenses ; and thus there may be found in the name all that is embodied in the promise following this Beatitude. The key-note of this song, like the Beatitude, is very high ; it transcends mere earthly thoughts and feelings, and thus the great difficulty of those who live on this earth as amongst fogs and clouds being able to enter into sympathy with the expressive figurative language used by the poet. (1) Are the fervent desires, the glowing thoughts, the figures of speech, true or false in their nature ? (2) Do they express what is merely sensual ? (3) And is it impossible that the spiritual affections should rise so high that only such apparently strained language should give a fair representation of the state of the soul ? In reply to these questions the reply may be that there are souls whose desires have been as fervent ; they have really felt what they have thought, and to them language has been a vehicle too clumsy to express their feelings of heart and soul ; therefore the feelings are true, and they have been found in the highest natures. The merely sensual must be subordinate to, and a figure of, what is super-sensuous : there is harmony betwixt the spheres, but it must follow, in the very nature of things, that sense cannot express spirit ; and the lower cannot explain or contain that which is higher in its kind. Further, as the sweetest and most harmonious music produced from an imperfect instrument cannot equal that which could be made upon a perfect instrument, so it must follow that even "The Song of Solomon," as a sensuous production, or as a spiritual allegory, falls short of what men may be able to conceive of as the highest spiritual ideal. If objections are made to this song upon any of these grounds, then it is to be feared that the objector, or critic, lives far away from the third heaven of God's

love and purity, and is swathed amongst the clouds, and shrouded by the dense fogs which surround this earth.

The question for consideration is whether a redeemed soul, say the most loving, gentle, and affectionate, swayed by love, and not by the intellect, would desire, feel, speak, be at home in such an atmosphere of love; and if an earth-born seraph could possess such emotions then surely it may be assumed that the angelic heavenly seraphs must transcend the imperfect creatures of this earth. The key-note of the song is expressed in the words, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine." Passing by the mere sensual sphere, and entering into that of spirit, the idea is that of a thirsting soul, receptive with a keen desire for that love which breaks down all barriers, and which brings about union and communion betwixt the beloved and the one who loves. The love here is not exclusive, earthly, or sensual, because there is joy in the thought that all the pure virgins love and are beloved. The King is the object from whence there is joy and gladness; and there is more joy in love than in wine; in the spiritual than in the sensuous. The aspect of the thought is changed and the soul is seen in communion with itself and its surroundings; and the comparison shows the sinner full of sin, ignorant, despised, intrusted with duties, and yet unfaithful. This feeling becomes oppressive, and companionship is sought, so that through loving refreshment, grace, and strength may be obtained. After confession and petition there is communion and comfort granted; and these lead the soul to express in beautiful, sensuous figures the intercommunion of spirit with spirit in the loving and gentle affections. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

CHAPTER II. Here the Beloved speaks of himself as a rose and a lily beautiful and humble; and of the loved one as a lily among thorns; a sweet, humble soul, surrounded by proud, contentious spirits. The loving one compares the beloved to an apple-tree from whence there is better, fruitfulness, communion, and union in love. The soul is inclined to rest in this experience, it is all that is desired, but not all that is desirable; because whilst it is well to rest in love as a permanent state, experience is progressive, and so there should not be a falling asleep upon the past or backsliding from the higher to lower conditions. This is a great danger, but as the soul is getting drowsy, there is a divine call to wakefulness, and the soul is aroused to listen to the feet and the voice of the Beloved. The voice that speaks is animated with love, but there are sad remembrances of a winter of chill affections, and of a rainy season without sunshine, and it is because a new spring season has come into the soul that there is this wooing and winning from the bitter and unfruitful past to a summer of sunshine and of joy. The soul of the loving one responds to the Beloved; and the experience of this portion of the song may be expressed in the words, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

CHAPTER III. Here is a new experience; the mountains of Bether, and divisions and the shadows, cover the loved one's soul, and it is night;

the beauty and perfection of the re-
the Beloved for the spouse or Ch
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expresses in a wonderful manner th
Saviour's relationship to the rede
righteousness; and man's desire to
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CHAPTER V. Here may be disc
events in the history of mankind, th
in His Church. The first verse seen
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grieved. To seek after the Beloved
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"altogether lovely." The Beloved

ime are gathered for the King's table : for "He feedeth among the lilies," it is His meat, drink, and delight, to be with those who manifest such a spirit. The visible Church of Christ is manifold in its orders, diversities of operations, forms, ceremonies, and surroundings ; but the one, and the undefiled is only one, the Spirit of Christ in whom all are one ; and it is in this peaceable and perfect one, the holy and the sanctified, that the King takes delight. Do not the words, "Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God," find a suitable expression in His description of the Church of Christ in its relationship to the Divine Saviour ?

CHAPTER VII. There may be discerned in this chapter the redeemed Church of Christ, the beautiful and peaceful daughter of the Prince of Peace, going forth upon her mission ; and the same thought will be found in Isaiah lii., 7, where the Church is seen publishing the good tidings of salvation. At verse 10 there is union in the work ; the spouse and the Beloved are united in their efforts to make known God's way of peace amongst men, with all the pleasant fruits of the kingdom of truth and mercy, the things old and new, which have been measured up for God's people. "Blessed are the peacemakers : for they shall be called the children of God."

CHAPTER VIII. The effects of the forthgoing spirit of peace may be discerned in this longing desire that another should become as a brother, that would drink of the same spirit of grace, and be found in the same house ; then with such a relationship the Church will give free vent to her affections, and will not be ashamed of this brother, or near relation, but the bonds of the gospel. Such a blessing will bring more intimate communion and fellowship with the Saviour ; and there will be a strong desire to rest in His love. But the day of the wilderness experience, the birth-place of the Church, has passed away, and there is seen the young one leaning upon her beloved as they emerge into the more blissful experience of the land of promise. Since the Saviour has redeemed and saved, surely that which has been redeemed and saved is His ; and it is because He has so loved that He prizes so highly what He possesses, is exceeding jealous for its spiritual state, and cannot endure the thought of separation. If man will give all that he possesses to gain the affections of one he loves, then did not the Saviour also do this, lightly esteeming all the glory of heaven so that He might redeem the lost children of men ? There is a little sister beloved by the Saviour and His redeemed, but she is a strange, unloving, and unlovable creature, for she has no breasts of consolation. She has been despised, but we will find her to be a wall of strength, and we will place a palace of favour upon her ; the one without breasts shall have breasts like towers, and then she will find favour in the eyes of the King. The vineyard is a large one : it has been under the care of keepers who have not been so faithful as they ought to have been in their duties ; but the Sayer of the Church, and its desire should be that the King may come sickly, and by His coming bring an end to the things that are evil, and thus bring to men "the kingdom of heaven."

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH.

THE word Isaiah means "the salvation of the Lord;" in other words, the grace of God revealed to men in His mercy, so that there may be pardon for sinners and reconciliation through the Redeemer or Saviour of the world. This is a book which begins a new cycle in the Holy Scriptures; and in the prophetic sphere of thought, it is in harmony with the kingdom of mercy, not as limited to the Jewish people, but as bearing upon all the nations of the earth. It is in harmony with the first Beatitude, and thus it may be assumed that there is in it "the kingdom of heaven" in its order of organic development. Into the question of authorship and other interesting critical questions, which are closely related with this book, there is no intention to enter; but seeing that this book is so important, it may be well to glance briefly at the succeeding cycles, and by doing so it is probable that a spiritual unity may be found in its construction.

CHAPTER I. seems to be an introductory cycle; and in it there may be discerned: (1) The complete cycle of the perversion of Israel and of the world, and the unnatural and ungrateful actions of the children of God. (2) The corrupt state of head and heart; yea, the whole being has revolted against God's order of nature; thus desolation reigns instead of plenty and blessing; and only in one spot is there to be seen an oasis in the great desert. (3) The order of service given to God, the King, is abhorrent in His sight; and He is represented as shutting eyes and ears against a people whose "hands are full of blood." (4) His counsel unto them is that they seek truth, love righteousness, and do judgment. (5) In His grace He invites men to draw near to Him so that they may be pardoned, become obedient, and receive blessing; whilst rejection of mercy will bring the sword of judgment. (6) The condition of the redeemed, once faithful, is that of a harlot, and iniquity reigns supreme; but the Purifier is about to purge away the evil and then the nation will become pure and righteous. (7) Judgment and punishment will fall upon the wicked and the rebellious idolaters.

CHAPTERS II.—V. may contain the first cycle. (1) Chapter ii., verses 1—5, express the kingdom of the Lord in its spirit, intent and extent; it is a glorious vision of a spiritual kingdom of men walking in God's ways and in obedience to His laws. (2) In verses 6—22 there will be found the corruptions existing amongst men; and also the judgments that shall come upon those who forsake God. (3) In chapter iii. the condition of the kingdom of Judah is described, and the punishment that will fall upon it because of sin. (4) In chapter iv. the kingdom as restored by the King is described, with a glowing description of what the tabernacle of God shall be for those who find a refuge in it. (5) In chapter v., 1—7, there is found the song of the vineyard in the fruitful hill, which should have brought forth grapes,

st in its perversion it produced wild grapes. He planted a dom of grace and mercy amongst men, and they have made it an unment for oppression, wickedness, lying, and unrighteousness. In verses 8—25 will be found a record of their iniquities and evil s. Judgment is upon such a people ; and the anger of God rests i them. (7) In verses 26—30 there is given an account of the gn that is to be raised up on the earth as a rallying point for and the source of their strength ; whilst upon the enemies of God e will fall darkness and sorrow.

CHAPTERS VI.—X. may contain the second cycle. (1) Chapter vi. be considered not merely as the vision to the soul of Isaiah, but to other men and to nations. It is the revelation of God's glory nners, and the message He sends to the soul and to nations. (2) hapter vii. there is found an account of the confederacy of Syria Ephraim ; and the sign given to Ahaz of a virgin bearing a son to amed Immanuel. As in the great world of humanity this sign has fulfilled, in God with us, so for the soul of man there is the use and the realisation of the same blessing through the indwelling od's Holy Spirit. (3) In chapter viii., 1—15, there is a warning ist all earthly confederacies ; and men are instructed to sanctify ord of Hosts, so that He may be their sanctuary ; whilst at the time He would prove to be like a stumbling stone and an usive rock to His enemies. It is not necessary to emphasise this ght as bearing upon the individual soul, or a nation : loyalty to the ; must bring safety, whilst rebellion and confederation with evil : bring destruction and every evil. (4) In verses 16—22 will be d instructions for guidance in the kingdom of truth and righteous- God's law and testimony bring light, joy, and peace ; but wizards, liar spirits, and other vanities can only bring in their train trouble, ness, and anguish. (5) In chapter ix., 1—7, the day of mercy is dawning upon the earth ; and the people living in the darkness of world are privileged to see a great light. In this King there is d the Child born and the Son given unto men, and upon His lders shall rest the government of that kingdom which shall have nd. (6) In verses 8—21 may be discerned the message of God icob, and Israel. Those who have been privileged to receive the : have despised it ; therefore judgment follows mercy as surely eace and death follow sin. (7) In chapter x., the judgments of are continued against the ungodly ; Assyria or Rome may be used he rod for the judgment of Judah, but when God's purpose is d through the boastful and the proud, and they are raised up in own conceits, then it is that the rod will be destroyed, whilst the ; remnant shall be set free and blessed because of the anointing that upon them. This cycle deserves careful study in its spiritual iples as bearing upon the experience of an individual soul, as found e history of Israel, and as bearing upon the history of mankind ; the ctive representation of great truths are here amply manifested.

CHAPTERS XI.—XXXI. may contain the third cycle. (1) In chapter xi.,

1—9, there is given a description of the peaceful kingdom of Christ in the earth. (2) In verses 10—16 this kingdom is made the object of desire, as the rallying ensign and the place of rest. As this is the ensign for all nations, and the means of putting an end to strife, envy, pride, and hatred amongst them, so it answers the same purpose for the redeemed soul, and it is the means of bringing peace and joy into the soul. With this great redemption, as from Egypt under Moses, there is a new song to be used for the praise of God; and chapter xii. contains this song. (3) In chapters xiii.—xxiii. will be found the burdens and woes upon the nations who have set themselves in opposition to the kingdom of God in the earth. The kingdom of Babylon, as found in Babel, Babylon, and the spiritual Babylon of Revelation, is the great kingdom opposed to God. Palestine, Moab, Damascus, Egypt, Assyria, Edom, and Tyre are all as subordinates or satellites to the great sun of this world. (4) In chapter xxiv. the mystery of iniquity and the judgments upon it are to be found; this earth possessed by wicked men is made empty, and a desolate waste, and confusion, and shame reign supreme, whilst in Mount Zion the Lord of Hosts will reign in glory. (5) In chapters xxv., xxvi., 1—11, may be discerned the great day of the mercy of God amongst His people, in which the Lord opens up a feast for His people, destroys darkness, overcomes death, and tramples under foot the conceited Moabite. After the victory then this song making known the glorious city, and the open gates ready to admit the true and the righteous, that they may find perfect peace in trusting the Lord. (6) In verses 12—19 may be discerned the great day of the resurrection, in the soul, in its purification, as by the travail-pangs of a spiritual birth in the soul, or as in the nations by the great struggle betwixt good and evil, grace and sin. (7) In verses 20, 21, and chapters xxvii.—xxxi., there may be discerned the work of God in punishing the wicked; His care over His people in their affliction; the downfall of wickedness in spiritual places; the crown of glory which the Lord shall wear; and His judgments and mercy upon the people.

CHAPTERS XXXII.—XXXIX. may contain the fourth cycle. (1) In chapter xxxii. the King of righteousness and truth is revealed with the just princes who shall be rulers in His kingdoms. It is a Man that is to be to men all that they can desire in truth and righteousness; and through Him the Spirit of God will be poured out, and all the blessings of the kingdom of truth and righteousness given to man. (2) In chapter xxxiii. may be discerned the soul in its aspirations and desires after truth and righteousness, with the result that great blessings are received, sickness is abolished, and sin pardoned. (3) In chapter xxxiv., as in the nations, so in the soul, there is the mystery of iniquity which will be punished by God; if there is not obedience to His laws, the condition is that of rebellion; the proud and wilful will be brought low, whilst they who are meek of spirit will possess the earth as their inheritance. (4) In chapter xxxv. may be discerned the great change produced upon man by the kingdom of righteousness; the wilderness and desert are changed, and the voice of rejoicing, abundance, and prosperity fill the earth. The blessings of the gospel, and the joy of the ransomed of the

are shown forth ; and in this jubilee of joy and gladness there is
om found for sorrow and sighing amongst men. (5) In chapters
i., xxxvii., there is given in detail the facts relating to the invasion
dah by Sennacherib ; the boasting words of Rabshakeh ; the sorrow
ezekiah, and his message to Isaiah, the prophet ; the message of
Lord to Hezekiah through Isaiah ; the message from Rabshakeh ;
prayer of Hezekiah ; the message from God to Hezekiah ; the
action of the Assyrian host ; and also the death of Sennacherib.
a these things there may be discerned the great mystery of the
of mercy in Judah, so the same principles may be applied to the
idual soul, and to the nations. This is the great work of God in
world and in a soul ; His great purpose of mercy by which He over-
rs the proud in their vain imaginations, whilst He saves those who
heir trust in His Word of salvation. (6) In chapter xxxviii. there is
the story of the great sickness of Hezekiah ; his prayer to God for
h ; the sign given to him through Isaiah of the going back again
e shadow ten degrees upon the sun-dial of Ahaz (one that takes
possesses) ; the song of thanks uttered by the king ; and his re-
ry from the disease that afflicted him. The region of thought here
ensely spiritual, although it may seem to be occupied with disease,
and signs, and songs. The judgment has gone forth against all
oms of men, in the words, "Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in
: : for thou shalt die, and not live." The law is irrevocable by man ;
a law as sure to be fulfilled in its time, as that the earth shall turn
s axis, and thus cause the shadow to progress upon the sun-dial.
ere then no remedy for disease, sin, or death ? Is not this the
; mystery which men have been continually in sorrow and trouble
t ? God's reply is, that His purpose of grace and mercy, or His
tion to those who are taken and supported by God, and thus made
g in Him, is to be compared to this great power which turns back
ts onward progress, sin, disease, and death ; and it is as easy for
to do so as to cause the earth to turn backward, or to stand still in
station. How ? Stop ; the how is not explained ; these are visible
s, analogies, for the most important spiritual truths ; they speak of
power beyond nature and order ; and they seem to say, study these,
see in them something like the purpose of grace, its order being
unknown, and banish the thought that God is not able, or willing
elp those who trust Him and His salvation. The order of the
ose of grace is now partly divined ; but the greatest mystery, that
he redemption of the body, is still unknown ; and as for the re-
ction from the dead, in its figurative and spiritual meaning, who can
hat they understand the method ? yet it may be supposed that these
really the great spiritual truths which underlie sin with its con-
ences, the sign with its apparent reversal of law and order, and the
with its deliverance from disease in the mercy of God. (7) In
ter xxxix. there is introduced to notice the messengers of Merodach-
lan—the son of death—the gladness of Hezekiah because of their
, and his foolish action in showing unto them the treasures of his
dom. This action is condemned by God ; and it seems to point to
akness in Hezekiah, whose eyes were turned toward Babylon for

help against the Assyrian. But this false hope, vanity, pride in self, in things possessed, and reliance upon worldly alliances, is brought suddenly to an end; the sentence is uttered that Babylon shall prevail over Jerusalem, and in that struggle comes the end of visible things, and the preparation for the great spiritual movement that must follow. As with Hezekiah, so with the nations, and with an individual soul, to trust princes or their power, wisdom, or riches, is vain and foolish, because that which is trusted is king, and if anything, power, or person, is preferred to God, this is the sin of Hezekiah, and it will bring serious results in its train. This may be considered as the highest mystery in the nature of man, and the most difficult to overcome; to be able to stand alone, hoping and desiring nothing from man, trusting God, obedient to His will, and strong in Him. This experience is not for the day of visible things, and not until the coming of Jesus Christ could such a man be found.

CHAPTERS XL.—XLIX. may contain the fifth cycle. (1) In chapters xl., xli., there is introduced the spiritual kingdom of mercy, by a message of comfort to the people; by the voice of the Baptist, and by the coming of the King as the Shepherd to care for, and tend, His flock. This revelation of divine mercy calls forth a manifestation of divine wisdom, as found in the wonderful thoughts which follow, as bearing upon God, and what He can do for men; and those who put their trust in idols are compared with the worshippers and servants of the true God; the folly of the former being made manifest, whilst those who trust in God and serve Him are blessed. This portion of the Word seems to contain a cycle of thought of its own in the kingdom of heaven; and as this is the prophetic dawn of the day of mercy in Jesus Christ, this may well be so. As for example: 1. God's message of comfort and pardon. 2. The voice in the wilderness of the soul and of nations. 3. The coming of God as King and Shepherd. 4. The wisdom of God. 5. Man's perverted worship, and the great mercy of God. 6. The great struggle in the soul and amongst the nations. 7. The coming of the great and peaceful King, who will, through His Word, overcome all His enemies. (2) In chapters xlii.—xliv. there will be found the Servant of God who carries on in man, and in the nations, the great work of mercy and of restoration to the divine favour. Here also a cycle may be discerned which represents the dealings of the Saviour with the soul and with His redeemed. For example: 1. The Servant of God and the Spirit with which He is endowed. 2. His mission to, and in, the soul. 3. The power of the King and His great work. 4. The mystery of the kingdom of mercy and truth. 5. The Redeemer: "the Holy One of Israel thy Saviour." 6. The great struggle in the soul and amongst nations. 7. The coming of the King of peace, the Shepherd and Heir of all things, who restores the temple of God in a soul, and upon the earth. (3) In chapter xlv. 1—4, the King is revealed who is able to subdue all things to Himself, and unto whom all the treasures of the darkness and the hidden riches are given. (4) In verses 5—19 there may be discerned the great wisdom of God and the mystery of the kingdom of righteousness and truth. (5) In

verses 20—25 there is found the just God and Saviour, unto whom all ends of the earth must look for salvation. (6) In chapters xlvi.—xliii. there may be discerned the great struggle betwixt God and idols, bylon and Zion, the Saviour and self; there is redemption for those who trust God; but there is no peace for the wicked. (7) In chapter x. the kingdom of mercy is seen extending until it covers the whole earth; and thus the day of the kingdom of peace through God, the Saviour and Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob, is seen resting upon mankind.

CHAPTERS L.—LIX. may contain the sixth cycle. (1) God speaks to the redeemed and shows them that their iniquities are their own, and that they had no means by which they could redeem themselves, but that He is able to save to the uttermost through Him, who though He is wise, gentle, and obedient, yet gave Himself up to the persecutors. (2) In chapter li. the redeemed who follow righteousness are taught: 1. To remember the past. 2. To consider the marvellous work of mercy which God has produced such results in the earth. 3. To study the law of God which brings light to the soul. 4. To hearken unto that righteousness which destroys wickedness and makes the truth to shine for ever. 5. To think upon that strange strength of God's mercy, which casts down the mighty and ransoms the redeemed. 6. Not to forget that it is the Lord of Hosts who divides the seas of strife and sorrow, bringing man comfort and peace. 7. And to hear and understand that "the word of trembling," the judgments of God, are about to pass from the ears of the redeemed to the mouth of the oppressors; and where will they find one able to deliver them out of the hands of the Judge of all the earth? (3) In chapter liii., 1—12, may be discerned the restoration of the city of Zion the far greater restoration from the power of Satan, so that there is joy and gladness in the gospel of peace, and obedience to the God that reigneth in Zion in holiness, peace, and equity. (4) In verses 13—15 and chapter liiii., there may be discerned the great mystery of righteousness, mercy, and purity, in the Servant of God, exalted so high, and yet He is as One causing astonishment among men, because of the marring in His face and form; and yet although these things do not seem to harmonise, they become the great power of revelation to the world, an offence to the kings amongst men, because they are through Him told about things which they had not known, and they would be called upon to consider that which they had not heard. (5) The revelation of God, in Him who is God's mercy in the kingdom of peace, as related to the followers of Jesus Christ, is a great mystery among men and thus the report, the doctrine of God's free grace, through a suffering Saviour, and a persecuted Church, has not been generally believed. Still though the powerful, rich, and wise amongst men, reject that which is contrary to their thoughts and wishes, and it is as a stumbling-block and foolishness to them, yet it is the power and wisdom of God in their highest manifestation, and the most blessed gift that man could receive. (6) The Jew and the Greek, the self-righteous and the self-conceited, reject the truth of God, and they are rejected; but the barren, the longing, thirsting souls, who have nothing

In verses 10-12
clothed with righteousness; raising up the
and confirming the covenant upon His peo

CHAPTERS LX.—LXVI. may contain the
great day of peace and joy, grace and truth;
the gates of the city are thrown open, and
to God, they worship and serve the H
chapter lxi. the Servant of the Lord is see
them comfort, joy, heavenly beauty, and th
order of the world's deeds is changed, i
murder, righteousness and the praise of (n
nations. (3) This great change upon ma
brought about by the King of righteousne
people of God, who inherit the earth, are ca
redeemed of the Lord;” and “a city not
lxiii., lxiv., may be found the great myste
out of all his troubles and distresses; th
truth and righteousness; and the conditio
their time of trial. In the vision of the
Adam, or man—with the dyed garment
distress—there may be discerned the King
and the Saviour saving the afflicted, an
righteousness of God. (5) In chapter lx
discerned in another form; He is no long
the gentle Shepherd, seeking the lost, a
who aforesaid knew Him not; whilst
privileged have become rebellious and
joy and peace; to the rebellious, sorrow
His followers He gives a new name, so t
of truth may rest upon men.

cing ; because there is no longer a curse, that is, a difference
 in the ways of God and of men, they are in complete harmony
 with the will of God, and thus they are satisfied with the grace, mercy,
 and righteousness of God. But whilst it shall be well with the
 righteous, upon the wicked there shall come the judgments of God,
 and the end shall be that the glory of the Lord shall be declared
 against all nations.

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET JEREMIAH.

After entering into details in the consideration of this book, or even to consider
 the cycles that may be found in it, is not advisable. The first
 of this division, or cycle, is most comprehensive in its dealings
 with the kingdom of God as related to the nations ; and it may be
 used to show that the succeeding books, in their place, harmonise
 and follow in due order, the spirit that is found in the Beatitudes,
 and in other parts of God's Word.

The name to this book is that of Jeremiah, and the meaning of the
 name is exaltation of the Lord, or that which gives glory unto the
 Lord ; or the power of God which fulfils this purpose is His Grace, for
 it is the means of His exaltation in the earth, and by it the greatest
 glory comes to His Name. In the midst of a wicked generation, and an
 ungodly people, the Lord was pleased to reveal Himself to men by
 the prophet, of whom it is related that he was sanctified in the womb
 of his mother's service. When the prophet was called by God, his confession
 was weakness, even like that of a child ; but no excuse was permitted,
 and duty was obedience in the spirit of meekness, fearing not the face
 of man, and by this servant, through God's Word, the greatest changes
 had been wrought in the world. To help the prophet there was given
 to him two visions ; the first being that of the rod of an almond tree,
 which speaks of the performance of God's purpose of grace ; and a
 silver-pot, which speaks of commotion and trouble amongst men.
 The purpose of grace is set in Jerusalem ; against it all nations would
 rebel ; and upon them there would come the judgments of God.
 Before all these things the servant of the Lord was to stand forth
 undismayed ; in the strength of God he would be strong,
 and against him the enemies of God would not prevail.

It would almost seem that the man, the call, the visions, and the
 work of God to the prophet give a picture of the great truths which
 this book teaches ; also there are to be found the facts of the subjective
 experience in the soul of man ; and the history of man during the
 reign of grace. The whole vision is that of God's purpose of grace
 through His Servant known to Him, sanctified in the womb of time ;
 though apparently a very child in strength and wisdom, yet by
 the greatest revolutions have been brought about upon the earth.
 It comes as an almond rod, bringing a revival of God's favour, with
 peace, and yet with power ; it is the Rod of the King, by which His

great work is performed. The grace, strength, and wisdom of God come to that which is totally opposed to itself, even unto the seething-pot of the mass of humanity ; and it is because the grace of God is in Jerusalem, that is, in the place where God works, there must be turmoil and commotion until the great mass is purified. How is it that the spark of grace, this divine life, has never been extinguished amongst men? Simply because the Lord has been its defence, and those who have fought against it have not prevailed, and cannot prevail, against it ; but upon the nations, ancient and modern, there have fallen the judgments of God, and they must vanish away in that day when the King of peace comes to reign. As the figure has been applied to the macrocosm of the great world, so it is equally suitable to the individual in his experiences, but this will not require further exposition.

The great thoughts upon which Jeremiah touches are, the backsliding, treachery, and idolatry of the people of God, who are His by redemption ; His gracious purpose and blessed promises on their behalf ; the judgments that fall upon those who are unfaithful to Him ; the righteousness of God in punishing the wicked ; the absolute sovereignty of God ; the wickedness of man ; "the Lord our righteousness ;" the length of the time of the captivity ; the judgments upon the nations ; and the restoration of Israel. The whole book is intensely subjective in its contents ; a book of sorrow, mourning, and woe, uttered by a man of sorrow. It carries in its bosom the hope of righteousness, and of restoration to the favour of God ; and yet it ends in the gloom of Babylon and captivity, with the people of God subject to the alien and the enemy of God. To study this book the spiritual vision requires to be extended so that it may cover the history of all the nations, and the widest and deepest experiences of the human soul in their relations with the Spirit of grace and the Word of God. The end of this servant's burden is captivity ; not because it shall be so to those who truly serve God, for they have their hopes and promises upon which they rely ; but for the simple reason that this servant serves unto the prophetic, visible, and carnal things, whilst *the* Servant brings in due time the true Restoration to all nations. In the meantime Babylon—confusion—reigns ; and though the light of the Christian era shines upon the pathway of men, with its rich promises and hopes, so far as visible things are concerned, there is still mourning and woe, sin and death ; and not until the day of the great Restoration, when the light of immortality will abolish death, can this book of the prophet Jeremiah be set aside as completely fulfilled.

LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH.—The writings of this prophet are of a very sorrowful kind ; and the intense subjectiveness of the thoughts of this servant, chosen by God, can be clearly traced throughout all his writings. From beginning to end the sad music produced is upon the minor key ; and amidst the surrounding gloom, only at very brief intervals are there to be found soft glimpses of sweet sunshine. This man of sorrow is full of the spirit of *the* Man of sorrow ; and if there had been no hope beyond this world and its experiences, his mission would seem to have been hopeless and fruitless. The lamentations

harmonise in spirit with the utterance of Christ as He looked down upon Jerusalem from Mount Olivet, and spake of its destruction, because it knew not the day of merciful visitation which had been granted unto it. In the Book of Jeremiah, sin and the wickedness of the people are awful facts, which cannot be put aside; and because of sin, the breaking of God's covenant, self-assertion, and the wilful choice of evil ways there is judgment, rejection by God, and captivity under the power of Babylon. This is the gloomy picture which throws its shadow, not merely over the people of Israel, but over all men and all nations. This is the fruit of man's evil ways and actions, in himself there is no salvation, and no means by which restoration to God's favour can be attained. It is in this dark, dark hour of helplessness and hopelessness that the light of God's truth comes to man for his salvation; and at such an hour, the absolute sovereignty of God in the universe is a terrible thought for the sinner, whilst at the same time it holds forth the hope that the gracious Sovereign will in His mercy grant pardon and blessing to those who put their trust in Him. To such a hope there is revealed, "the Lord our righteousness;" and with the breaking dawn there is revealed the end of the domination of evil, restoration and freedom, and punishment upon God's enemies.

The Book of Jeremiah seems to hold in its bosom all these important doctrines which have to do with sin and its consequences, and the grace of God with its promised and realised blessings; and the Lamentations seem to contemplate the condition of man in his ruined state; a soul, a nation, or a world in servitude and in affliction. (1) The fair city, once full of inhabitants is solitary; the once happy wife is a lonely widow, bereft of her children; and the nation once so favoured by God is in bondage in the hands of the enemy of God and of His people. Why is there sorrow and weeping in the night? It is because the gods and lovers trusted have been found treacherous and helpless; the Lord had been rejected, His mercy despised, and other gods sought after and served, and the issue had been the judgments of God, the cruelties of the heathen, and so between God and men there came an awful strait, and there was none to deliver. (2) Sin has been the cause of all this sorrow to the people of God; and it is when this sad condition is realised as the consequence of transgression, that there is heard the loud cry, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, herewith the Lord has afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger." 3) "The Lord is righteous;" His ways and works are in justice and equity; the King and Judge is not to blame for this condition of His people, but they have done foolishly in rebelling against His holy will. 4) It is a strange and mysterious study to think of "the daughter of Zion" and "the beauty of Israel" under the cloud, and the Lord turned to be as an enemy; the altar cast down, the sanctuary abhorred, and the slaces of the great King in the hands of the enemy; but unless this was permitted, so that the chosen of God might show their base ingratitude, and the enemies of God their pride and cruelty, how could the mystery of grace be fully wrought out in the sight of all men? Man is permitted to take his own wilful, sinful ways, mani-

festing the fruits of that seed of evil within his soul, so that men might see and consider how foolish and fatal their choice has been; whilst side by side with man's manifestation of evil there has been revealed the marvellous grace and mercy of God toward ungrateful, proud, sinful men. (5) How shall man be saved? Shall it be by permitting him to destroy his own soul by taking the downward path of the scorner and the infidel, or by allowing him to become sensual and the servant of pleasure? No; it is by affliction and the rod, and by being led into the awful darkness, and not into the light. These are bitter experiences, but they lead the soul onward, until it can say, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him." (6) But if a man will learn, like the Saviour, to give the cheek to him that smites, and to be filled with reproach because of the evil deeds of men, then new experiences of deeper sorrow will be felt; enemies will surround the soul; it will be cast down as if into a deep dungeon; and as the waters of destruction flow over the head, the cry will arise to God, and His response will be, "Fear not." The Lord redeems those who place their trust in Him; but His enemies shall receive sorrow of heart "in the day of judgment." (7) How is the pure gold of a holy and self-sacrificing life dimmed and changed amongst those who are the chosen of God? How are the precious sons of God, inestimable in value, become as valueless as the common herd of humanity, who live that they may gratify their sensual appetites, or their intellectual desires? And is this the issue of the grace of God in this accursed world? and is the daughter of Edom exultant because Zion is in affliction? Rejoice not, O spirit of Adam, for the end is not yet; the cup will be placed in thy hand, and Zion will be set free; and in that day thy sins and iniquities shall be made known. "Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us; consider, and behold our reproach." The inheritance of God is in the hand of aliens; and the people of God are like orphans. On the one hand they give their hand to the proud and powerful world, and on the other to ignorance and superstition; sin and iniquity have made the sons of God to be as slaves, and they have no power to deliver themselves. As the Babylonians did in the destruction of Jerusalem, so have men done in these days, and thus "the joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning. The crown is fallen from our head; woe unto us that we have sinned." To Jeremiah there was a vision of hope, through the faithfulness of God and the eternal stability of His throne of righteousness; but to men now there may be discerned the rising Sun of God's favour, and so whilst they pray for true repentance and regeneration they do not require to end with the sad thought, "But thou hast utterly rejected us; thou art very wroth against us." Thanks be unto God for the great light in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, by it a new heaven and a new earth are revealed, and in these truth and righteousness, freedom and peace shall reign over the whole earth.

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET EZEKIEL.

EZEKIEL—the strength of God—is the third great prophet ; like Jeremiah, he also was a priest as well as a prophet ; but his mission came later in time, and the burden of his prophecies differs very widely from those of Jeremiah. The visions of this seer were given by God to him near the river Chebar—strength or power ; and they have to do with the people of God, and also with the powers of this world under whom they were in bondage. The great thought involved in this prophecy is God's nation in its history amongst the nations ; and Ezekiel, as the strength of God, is the prophet and priest, servant and king, in meekness, by whom the nation has been preserved during the great captivity, and will be at last restored to a better Jerusalem than that which was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar or Titus. It is not possible to analyse the book in its cycles of thought, but it may be well to glance, as briefly as possible, at the cycles which it may be found to contain.

CHAPTERS I.—VII. may contain the first cycle (1) The condition of God's people has been that of exiles from home, and bondslaves to the power of this world, but unto such the Lord has been merciful, having expressly sent by His servants messages to His people in the days of their affliction. (2) To man the manifestation of the grace and glory of God by His Holy Spirit may be compared to the marvellous vision of the four living creatures with the four-fold manifestations of divine truth given to them. The spirit in Moses, in the prophets, in Jesus Christ, and in the apostles, may harmonise with the fire which unfolded itself, and which is the only light of truth which men possess. The Holy Scriptures may fairly be compared to the revolving wheels with their bright eyes, all animated by one Spirit, and all moving in the same direction. As the firmament over the living creatures was seen to be of "the colour of the terrible crystal," so holiness surrounds and envelops the pure Word of God ; and it has also had, by God's Spirit, a voice like that of many waters, the voice of God to men. (3) Through His marvellous manifestation of God, there was given to men the revelation of the throne and of the King who had the appearance of a man, and yet so glorious that the glory of the Lord was around Him. Such a vision of God brought Ezekiel, Daniel, and John upon their knees before the King of kings that they might be privileged to hear His Word. (4) There is a commission for the servant of God who would recede or follow the King ; the message of mercy is not to the good and gentle, but to the rebellious sons of men. The message is God's Word, and whether men will hear or not, it comes to them, and they must be held responsible for the manner in which they receive it, and the use they make of its gracious summons. This message ought to be one of peace and joy to men ; but in the first instance, it proves to be full of mournful warnings and woes upon the wicked. To the meek and obedient God's Word becomes sweet as honey in the mouth, and it

is from the nourishment it supplies that God's servant speaks the thoughts of God, "whether they will bear or whether they will forbear." (5) The servant of God is made a watchman unto men; the hand of the Lord is strong upon him, and in the spirit he must obey the King's commands. He goes forth to men to bring unto them the words of peace and mercy; they respond with bonds, and maintain their state of rebellion against God. (6) In the types of the siege and of the divided hair may be discerned the judgments of God during the cycles of the ages upon Judah and Jerusalem first, and also upon His people who have forsaken Him. (7) And to the visible order of Judaism, ceremony, mere external things, there is desolation and destruction.

CHAPTERS VIII.—XIV. may contain the second cycle. (1) The state of the temple of God is described, and the description is one which fits into the depraved human soul, the temple at Jerusalem, or the great temple of humanity; all have gone astray from God, and every conceivable idol is worshipped, except Him to whom the soul's devotion should be paid. (2) Men serve the idols they love and the images they make for themselves, but the jealous God will not permit His temple to be desecrated with impunity, and so the vision of the marking of those who were idolatrous for their death is a sign to be studied. (3) In the vision of the living creatures, the cherubs, the wheels and the coals of fire, may be discerned the hidden purposes of God's mercy and judgment, the method of the divine government amongst men. (4) The mystery of iniquity may be found in the vision of the caldron and the flesh, doomed to destruction. (5) Yet out of this mystery there arises the mystery of grace, by which God is as a "little sanctuary" to His redeemed in the days of their affliction, and in which He graciously changes "the stony heart," which is enmity to God, and gives the heart of flesh," which is in sympathy with the divine compassions and tender mercies. (6) The promise of mercy is overshadowed by future calamities, the judgments of God come upon men, and their troubles are increased. Under such conditions false prophets arise, but their visions are vain, and their cries of peace useless. There cannot be peace in the soul or the world until the Prince of peace comes, and any who speak otherwise are false prophets. (7) The judgments of God are to be and they have been grievous upon men; but a remnant shall be left who will find comfort and joy in the ways and works of God.

CHAPTERS XV., XVI., may contain the third cycle. (1) God's vine, which should have supplied to men the wine of His mercy, had proved itself to be barren and fruitless; therefore being useless, the doom pronounced against it is that of burning and desolation. (2) The figure is changed, and the Lord wishes to make known to men the abominations of the unregenerate soul; and the comparison is that of a helpless, new-born child, descended from the idolatrous rebels amongst men, cast out without an eye to pity or a hand to save. (3) The Lord sees this pitiful object, and in His compassion the poor creature, polluted with blood, is graciously told to live and receive the blessings and favour of God. (4) The recompense of the outcast child toward the

zions Benefactor was of the most shameful kind ; instead of gratitude affection, love and loyalty, there were sin and shame, idolatry and ltery. (5) But the adulteress who had received so great mercy, and sinned so foully, must be taught by sad experiences what the sequences of such conduct must be, and thus the impudent harlot, with all her ornaments, is exposed to shame before those who were her companions in evil deeds. It is when God's mercy is changed into fury that the fire of His anger burns strongest ; and this is because objects of His affections have so shamefully misused His grace and mercy sent to them. (6) What is bred in the inmost soul, in the perverted, sinful state of man's being, is not easily remedied. The hateful it will lust, and the appetites and passions will seek their own ends. Jerusalem may despise Samaria, and Samaria abhor Sodom, the lusts of the flesh burn in all three sisters, and in the end they all equally sinful, whilst Sodom is less guilty than Samaria or Judah. The allegory is plain ; the heathen have defiled themselves, and punishment came upon them ; but of how much sorer punishment shall Jew and Christian be worthy when they have been so ungrateful toward their Redeemer and Saviour? (7) To all the heathen, to Jew and Christian, belong shame and confusion of face ; to our God praise and glory, and dominion, because of His mercy ; all are alike guilty ; His mercy covers all, and they ought to remember His great love, and to be no longer envious or foolish.

CHAPTERS XVII.—XX. may contain the fourth cycle. (1) The kingdoms of this world, Babylon and Egypt, are compared to two trees, and the kingdom of God to a humble vine. Babylon represents science, commerce, art, and philosophy ; whilst Egypt more truly represents the pride and power of empire in government. (2) The vine which God has planted in the earth has not been instructed to possess empire in such things ; but the vine has not been satisfied in its place, and to do its own work, and thus the pride of empire and of intellect have alike had their strong attractions upon the chosen of God, the result being assimilation to the world and departure from God. But God has His purpose of grace, truth, and righteousness, which we do not comprehend ; thus the highest branch of the cedar-tree of the gospel of God's grace will take root and become a goodly tree, and the boughs of which all nations may take shelter. In that day the high tree in which man boasts shall be brought low, the lowly tree of the gospel of grace will be exalted ; the green tree of profession and glory will be dried up, and the dry tree will break forth anew and flourish like Lebanon. (4) "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and children's teeth are set on edge." This expresses the law of cause and effect, of sin and its consequences ; but the day will come when it shall not be applicable, because when the mercy of God is fully revealed then all souls will be God's in a new sense : and if there is obedience to God and obedience to His will it shall be well ; but "the soul that sinneth it shall die." (5) The mercy of God is for the merciful, the obedient, and the just ; and in no sense is God unjust or unequal in His ways. (6) The conception of the kingdom of God held by Jew

and Christian has been a mistaken one; they have been like lions amongst lions, catching the prey and living like wild beasts. The true conception is that of the lamb which becomes a sacrifice, and of the humble vine which gives its juices for the nourishment of man. Because this spirit of contention has been manifested, the end has been subjection to the wild beasts with whom there has been strife; and the vine has not produced a strong rod which would be a fitting sceptre to rule over men. (7) The record of the dealings of God with His people is that of mercy; and He has given unto them redemption from Egypt, His Sabbath as a gracious sign, and His laws; but Israel according to the flesh has not served God, and thus the fire of His judgments has been amongst men; and instead of sitting in the light of God's truth they have been puzzling themselves about the parables of God, which they should have been able to understand.

CHAPTERS XXI.—XXIV. may contain the fifth cycle. (1) There is a new movement in progress, and through it terrible things are about to fall upon the sons of man; the face, the words, and prophetic utterances are toward God's people; and during this revelation of the gospel there has been manifested to men the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. To the obedient the gospel is glad tidings; but to the wicked and rebellious it brings sad news, for by it they will be made weak and helpless against their enemies. (2) The sword of the Lord's Word is sharp and powerful; in other words, the gospel becomes the means of discerning the state of the soul. (3) There is the sword of the king of this world, which is also drawn against the people of God, but it shall not prosper; the divination of the wise men of this world shall not be successful against the servants of God. (4) Upon none of the kings of this world shall the diadem and the crown rest; but He shall come whose right it is, and to Him the kingdom of mercy, truth, and righteousness shall be given. (5) The sword is drawn against evil-doers; and whilst mercy reigns to those who fear God, judgments fall upon those who sin against Him. (6) The people of God sin wilfully, and judgments fall upon them because of their great wickedness. (7) In the great judgments of God no man shall be able to stand; it is against God that men sin, and are rebellious, and thus the holy city is changed to be a bloody city; and the object which is supremely loved is taken away. This cycle of mercy seems to be surcharged with sin, wickedness, and the judgments of God upon His people; this may seem strange, but surely it is a true conception of Israel according to the flesh; of all external systems of worship; and of all experiences which fall short of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and a realisation of the spiritual method of life introduced by Jesus Christ. There must be judgments upon the heathen world, upon Judaism, and upon Christianity, and not until the false is overthrown, can the merciful, true, and righteous King reign over men.

CHAPTERS XXV.—XXXII. may contain the sixth cycle. (1) Upon the proud and fierce self-sufficient sons of Ammon there must fall the judgments of God; and this spirit shall perish and be destroyed.

Upon Moab and Seir, the exulting, sceptical enemies of the truth, shall execute His judgments. (3) Upon Edom, the power that was God's inheritance of this earth in opposition to Israel, there shall be desolation and the sword. (4) Upon the uncircumcised Philistines, revengeful, hateful enemies of Israel, God will stretch out His hand, and execute as with great vengeance His judgments upon them. Upon the exulting Tyrus there shall fall great calamities, so that the Mart of the world will become a ruin, and her rocks a place for the landing of nets. The great mistress of the ancient world, in trade commerce, which in its pride deified itself, must be cast down. Along with Tyre shall fall the city of Zidon, God being sanctified by the judgments he brings upon this power. (7) Upon Egypt, the mighty power in the earth, the great dragon, who claims independence, shall be thus the great rebel power in the earth, God brings His great judgments; yea, upon all powers opposed to Him punishment must come because He is God, and the Lord over the whole earth. Upon the kingdoms and their spiritual representatives there must come the judgments of God's judgments; they are not living in harmony with His holy will, and so they cannot please Him; therefore, since His city is despised and rejected, His judgments are set in operation, and shall be in their order fulfil the will of God.

CHAPTERS XXXIII.—XXXVI. may contain the seventh cycle. (1) The prophet is set as the watchman over the people, and it was his duty to warn the wicked, and to teach them of the mercy of God to men. Such a watchman requires the spirit of the peaceful Son of God, so that he may influence the wicked for their good, and that they may be turned to love and serve God. (2) But if there is the love of evil in the souls of men, then the words of the prophet are not understood as the stern words of rebuke, or gentle words of grace are nothing more to them than a sweet song; they hear, but the words have no effect upon the hearts of such men. (3) In the great fold of God's people there are many shepherds set over the flock; but woe upon those who feed themselves, and do not feed the flock of Christ over which they are made the overseers and rulers. (4) Upon them there shall fall the judgments of God; and He will require from them an account of their vice. (5) The Good Shepherd will come, and He will seek for and lead the wandering sheep which has been driven away during the dark days of persecution; and He will be the One Shepherd appointed by God to feed His people, and to be their King. (6) Upon Mount Seir, the spiritual enemy of God, there shall be brought perpetual desolation; its arrogant power has claimed the authority over the spiritual and temporal worlds; but God will consume and destroy this boasting power, and when the whole world is full of joy, it shall be desolate. To Israel there is the promise of restoration and abundance of blessings; even the spiritual blessings which are yet to be manifested in the kingdom of Christ during His gracious reign of peace.

CHAPTERS XXXVII.—XLVIII. may contain the eighth cycle. (1) A resurrection power coming upon men, so that the dead may live to

praise and serve God. (2) There shall no longer be disruption and schism amongst men, but unity under the One King and Shepherd who will be their Prince for ever. (3) Upon the enemies of the King will fall the judgments of God. (4) Israel will gain the victory over her enemies, and be restored to the divine favour. (5) Then shall there be seen in the spiritual Israel a new Jerusalem, or city of God amongst men. (6) Also a new temple within which spiritual worship shall be given to God. (7) God's glory shall rest upon the city, the temple, and the kingdom; out from the altar shall proceed the river of life, and whithersoever it flows, life and blessing shall come to men. In this great restoration the Lord shall receive a new Name—Jehovah Shammah, or "the Lord is there;" and in His presence men will find fulness of joy, and at His right hand heavenly pleasures which shall never pass away.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

THE book of Daniel is the fourth in order amongst the great prophets. It is hardly necessary to point out that the man and his work harmonise with the fourth Beatitude, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Daniel means the judge, or the judgment of God; and in this prophet there is found not merely one of the wisest of men in truth and righteousness, but also one who as God's judge pronounced the doom upon Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. The time of the life of Daniel, in a public sphere, as related to the empire, was from the third year of King Jehoiakim to the first year of King Cyrus; in other words, he is the central, God-appointed figure that appears throughout the whole of the seventy years of the captivity. This book is a great spiritual revelation; it is to Christianity what the story of Joseph in Egypt is to Israel and Judaism, and the analogy that exists betwixt these two movements is the more clearly understood when they are studied side by side. A brief glance at the cycles contained in this book may prove useful as well as interesting.

CHAPTERS I., II., may contain the first cycle. (1) The choosing of the four Hebrew youths to serve the King. (2) The purpose of Daniel and his friends, that they should keep themselves pure and undefiled, and their success in what was proposed. (3) The great wisdom of Daniel and his friends for God gave them knowledge and understanding. (4) The mystery of the will of God is found in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, and in his forgetting what he had dreamt. (5) Amongst all the wise men of this world none could make known God's thoughts to men, or interpret their meaning; and because of this failure to do what was beyond their reach, they were doomed to death by the despotic king. (6) Through Daniel there was interposition on the behalf of the wise men, with the promise that the dream and its interpretation would be made known. (7) The secret was revealed to Daniel by a

vision; thus he could ascribe wisdom and might unto God, for He alone can reveal secret things, the darkness and the light are alike clear to Him. (8) The dream and the interpretation cover the whole old of history from the time of the supremacy of Babylon until the consummation when the kingdom of Christ shall be supreme in the earth; but during all this time, though Daniel is promoted to be chief of the governors, yet he is found sitting in the gate of the Kingdom's wisdom, truth, and righteousness have been honoured by the people, and unto these oblations have been offered; but the man in whom wisdom, truth, and righteousness dwell has been found sitting in the palace, an unwelcome visitor in the courts of kings, or to the souls of men.

CHAPTERS III., IV., may contain the second cycle. (1) The pride and glory of self-asserting man is seen in Nebuchadnezzar, and the great image he set up for worship. (2) Against the three friends of Daniel who were faithful to God there is seen directed the enmity and jealousy of wicked men; they will not conform to a despotic ruler and his laws, and their enemies report the matter to the king. (3) In the rage, fury, and madness of Nebuchadnezzar may be discerned the spirit of tyrants who have ruled over men in their foolishness, as well as the unregenerate spirit of man when it is foiled by being brought into contact with the spirit of God working in the soul. (4) The fire seven times heated; the children of God in the midst of the flames accompanied by the Son of God; their freedom in the furnace; the dead soldiers; the frightened king and his counsellors; the great deliverance from the fire; and the promotion of the sons of God to rule over Babylon, is a picture of the great mystery found in history of the grace of God in His children, and of the help that He has given the followers of Jesus Christ in their terrible conflict with the power of this world. What took place at Babylon was a concrete picture in which the history of the Church of Christ was spiritually prophesied; and assuredly one day tyrants will be able to see that the furnace of persecution cannot touch God's children, because at their side, in their midst, there has been found the Son of God who has overcome all enemies. (5) The subject of the proclamation to men is in reality the mercy of God, His mighty signs and wonders, and His everlasting kingdom. (6) But man is chiefly guilty, because when he knew God he chose to forget that it is from Him that all power, honour, blessing, and greatness comes, and he is found to be so foolish as to exalt himself, and in his folly and rebellion to think of himself as god. In the sphere of intellect amongst kings, philosophers, statesmen, men of science, and others, this has been their great crime; the great tree of God's beneficence and mercy has been misused as the work of man, or even of something less than man, and because of such God-dishonouring thoughts, words, and actions, God's favour is removed from His creatures, and they tremble in His awful vengeance. (7) God's wisdom alone can interpret the visions of men seen by their thoughts, words, and actions, and the interpretation must be in harmony with the holy, just, good, and gracious will of God. (8) The doom and punishment which follow and fall upon the proud,

self-sufficient spirit are madness and moral insanity, and to be cast out from God's presence, and treated like a beast of the field; but in the mercy of God there will come a day for the restoration of reason and of moral sanity, and then men will be amazed at their own insane behaviour as it is found written in blood in history. Shame and confusion will cover the face of man, but the Name of God will be praised and honoured, because "His works are truth, and His ways judgment, and those that walk in pride He is able to abase."

CHAPTER V. may contain the third cycle. (1) The kings and lords among men have been holding a great feast in this earth, and in their debauchery they have forgotten the distinction betwixt things sacred and profane, what pertains to God and the things which He has given to man. Licentious man is the lord of the feast, and God has been banished from His kingdom and from the presence of men. (2) But revelry and blasphemy, though these banish the Saviour, cannot shut out the Judge; and thus in the hour of exaltation the Hand of God is seen, and the record of judgment is written upon the wall, or in the soul, as in letters of fire. (3) The Hand of God causes tyrants to tremble, and it makes proud, selfish, and licentious nobles to pause, ponder, and fear, lest God's judgments fall on their heads; and even the wise men of this world, though they know many secrets, do not understand or know the secret designs of heaven, and they also are helpless in the hour when judgment comes upon a man or a nation. (4) To the divine wisdom it is given to reveal the secret thoughts of God, and to utter and interpret God's judgments. (5) Before kings, princes, and wise men the Wisdom of God speaks, and without fear; there is brought home the charge of wickedness and blasphemy, sin and sacrilege. (6) The past is recalled, and the judgment pronounced upon the godless who have sought after vanity and wilfully forgotten God, in whose hand man's life and actions are found. (7) God's judgment is short and severe; three words are enough for condemnation, and these include all men who are not reconciled to God in Jesus Christ. Number and weight express the awful failure of man's existence. That which is lost cannot be found or numbered, and that which is deficient in weight cannot be added; and thus being out of harmony with the divine order, there is division and the loss of all the great privileges possessed. This judgment is God's record against a lost soul, or a nation; it is the final sentence, the doom upon the self-seeking, self-glorifying spirit.

CHAPTER VI. may contain the fourth cycle. (1) Daniel is seen as set over the kingdom, a true prince in whom truth and righteousness ruled supreme. (2) But envy and hatred, duplicity and cunning, find means for bringing a charge against Daniel, so that evil may reign, and judgment and justice be dethroned. (3) Whilst men devise death to the righteous man he is calmly engaged in his duties, and in the worship and service of God. This is the order of the righteous man's life, the conscientious attendance to duty, and the stated worship of God. (4) In the kingdom of righteousness there is nothing more strange than the

fact that the good are persecuted, and evil men seem to be successful. Good men would seek earnestly to help the righteous, and save them from being wicked; but it is in vain, deceit and duplicity reign in the counsels of men, and thus a means of deliverance cannot be found. (5) In the day of mercy and the awful night of persecution, as for example the stormy times during the Reformation, men were found in the lion's den throughout Europe. The night passed away to find the spirit still alive, and Daniel preserved. (6) The preservation of the good is a cause of great joy, because through goodness and grace the soul of man and the nation can be preserved. (7) The enemies of God and His saints are doomed to destruction. (8) All men shall praise this God who is able to deliver His people from the mouths of the lions; and all men shall fear and obey the God of Daniel, the living God, whose throne and dominion have no end.

CHAPTER VII. may contain the fifth cycle. (1) The manifestation of the mystery of evil in the four great beasts, and in the horn with eyes, is the symbolical revelation of the powers of evil in the world and in man, but specially the great anti-christ in its method of development. (2) In opposition to the beasts' kingdom there is revealed the kingdom of God, and also the King seated as Judge. (3) God's judgments fall upon the beast, and its body is destroyed. (4) In the midst of these changing scenes the kingdom of the Son of man is set up, and His dominion and kingdom of truth and righteousness shall never be destroyed. (5) This has been the great wonder to the saints of God throughout the ages; they have not been able to discern the kingdom of evil, the moral kingdom of God, the Judge and His judgments upon the wicked, and the kingdom of grace in Jesus Christ. These great movements have been going on side by side, and it is no wonder that the saints of God have been perplexed. (6) But God's servants can explain these things, and make known to men the events of history. (7) The time will come when the reign and the power of the beasts will be at an end, and then the King of saints and His redeemed will possess the kingdom, and at that day all dominions shall serve Him.

CHAPTERS VIII., IX., may contain the sixth cycle. (1) Here is given in detail Daniel's vision of the ram and he-goat. The sphere of thought may be represented as being in the moral sphere of men's actions, and in the government of the nations. There is a conflict betwixt opposing powers, and in the struggle the power of Greece gains the supremacy. (2) This means that the sanctuary of God, His temple, is desecrated, and that it should remain so for a long period of time, but at the end of the time that is named the sanctuary should be cleansed. (3) The method of this power is explained, which seems to be that of the East, through Persia, Greece, the divisions of the Grecian Empire under the four generals of Alexander, and in the end of their empire, and the rising of the Mahometan power. The interpretation given through Gabriel is peculiar; the broad outlines are given of historical facts, but it is to understand that it is "at the time of the end shall be the

vision" in its fulfilment and interpretation. (4) This vision, and also the former vision of the beasts, are both true, but they are shut up, these hidden things of God, for many days. The vision was matter of astonishment to Daniel, and throughout the past ages no one has been able to discern or understand these thoughts of God. (5) But the day of mercy and the time of the end of the desolation could be discerned, for the years are numbered. (6) Confession of sin and prayer to God are the means by which His favour is obtained; the pure in heart see God, and are prepared for the revelations He is pleased to make to men. (7) In these revelations the means of abolishing sin, making reconciliation, bringing in righteousness, sealing the prophecy, and introducing the Messianic kingdom, are made known, and these are all the marvellous thoughts of God which require the divine wisdom to understand them.

CHAPTERS X.—XII. may contain the seventh cycle. (1) There is made known a time of fasting for three weeks, during which Daniel ate no pleasant food, and at the end of that time the King was revealed in His glory to His faithful servant. (2) This revelation of the Lord to the soul of Daniel caused him to see his own inward corruption and his weakness. In the light and presence of Truth and Righteousness even a holy and wise Daniel is unable to lift up his face, or to speak a word to God. (3) The method of the King of grace with His servant is full of sweetness and kindness, and His words are full of encouragement. (4) He comes to make known the great struggle that is going on, and its issues in the latter days. (5) In the meantime grace flows from His lips, and to the humble penitent He gives strength for duty, and to understand the will of God. (6) The conflicts and struggles amongst the nations, the great changes that must take place, are all clear to His vision, though not to the sons of men. (7) But it is certain that the things revealed to Daniel shall have their fulfilment; the time of purifying and trial shall come to an end, and the blessed time of peace and joy, prosperity and contentment in the fear of God, shall dawn upon this earth.

It may be further stated and remembered, in connection with this book, that the place in the cycle and the name of the book indicate what may be expected in it, and what the spiritual-minded students may draw from it for their instruction in righteousness. Each cycle is a separate vision, so to speak; and whilst they harmonise with profane history from its spiritual aspect, they also agree with the great principles contained in the Beatitudes. To do justice to such thoughts, much work would be required; but it may be sufficient at this time to take a concrete view of each cycle as one picture.

The first cycle reveals a world prostrate under the heel of the Babylonian despot, the people of God rebellious and scattered throughout the earth; but through the dispersion, God's wisdom and grace in weakness are carried into the world as the means of its salvation. The king's dream, the ignorance of men, their doom, God's gift of wisdom and grace in revealing the vision, and the promotion of Daniel, fill up this picture—revealing how the man poor in spirit becomes the ruler over Babylon.

The second cycle is objective in its great outstanding figures, but so intensely subjective in its method of application to the desires and passions of men. God alone should be worshipped, but men set up their god or gods; they hate those who differ from them, and persecute them to the death; but the death of persecution is the means of purification to eternal life and communion with God, whilst pride and self-adoring ends in madness. If men will fear God and obey Him, their portion is the fire of purification and heaven; if they follow pride and other vile passions, then the path is downward to bestiality, and only through God's grace is there repentance and restoration.

The third cycle reveals the kingdom of man, the sowing and the reaping, the feasting, and the doom upon sacrilegious rebels. Here the inebriates are awakened to their danger, the licentious to the curse they have drawn down upon themselves, and the cruel and unjust to the justice and judgment that follow sin through the will of God, the Judge of mankind. The time may seem long to those who have watched the feast of kings and their great lords and counsellors for the past 6,000 years; but the Judge has been at the door, and the visible hand has been silently writing the words—"Mene, Tekel, Sharsin," upon the wall of history.

The fourth cycle reveals a spiritual picture in the exaltation of Daniel, his enemies, their envy and jealousy, the persecution of the righteous, the safety amongst lions through God's preserving care, and the judgment that fell in due time upon the wicked conspirators. Men propose, and their schemes are all that can be desired; but God frustrates their evil designs, and lo! their doom is that which they designed for others. His is God's wisdom, truth, and righteousness; and they alone are happy and safe who follow the godly Daniel in the palace, in the house, and in the lion's den; if they do this, then they will stand in the King's palace, and to God's Name all the praise and glory will be given.

In the fifth cycle, the revelation is co-extensive with the great day of mercy. The chief figures being the powers of this world, perverted from righteousness and become like wild beasts; the King eternal as a Judge, the King of grace, the overthrow of the beasts, and the giving of the kingdom to the saints through their King.

In the sixth cycle, the attention is drawn to the combatant beasts who seek to obtain supremacy in the earth; the desecration of the temple, the temple of God, and of the earth; the vision of God hidden from men for a long season, the restoration, the penitence of God's servants, and God's revelations to them through the Messiah.

In the seventh cycle, the Lord is seen as gracious and merciful, messenger of peace to men, granting them His favour and affection; whilst the servants of God are humbled to the very dust in His presence, as they listen to His gracious promises and revelations as to rare things. They shall be blessed who see the promised day of peace and of Sabbath-rest "at the end of the days." It may be that the King sun begins to touch the hills of time, but what the glory of the midday light of truth and righteousness in the fear of God shall be, man can at present know or understand.

THE BOOK OF HOSEA.

THE meaning of the word Hosea is saviour or salvation ; and the place in the cycle of this book is that which harmonises with the fifth Beatitude or the mercy of God. The prophetic intention of the book, it may be assumed, is to teach men what their condition is before God, and to point out the mercy of God through the Saviour who has brought salvation to His people. There seem to be five cycles in this book, and they will be glanced at in succession to see what the thoughts of God are toward His Israel.

CHAPTERS I., II., may contain the first cycle. (1) How shall the mercy of God come into contact with the depraved, rebellious, and adulterous sons of men? This is the mystery of redemption as pre-figured in the visions in Eden ; a clean soul cannot be brought out of the unclean race of man except by a new creation, revelation, and manifestation of God. The Saviour takes upon Himself the nature of man ; He becomes one with the adulterous sons of men, so that through Him a true Jezreel—the seed of God—may be manifested. (2) Again there is contact with the adulterous seed, and the child born speaks of judgment upon Israel and mercy to Judah. Israel is scattered amongst the nations, whilst Judah is saved by the Lord, and not by the power of man. (3) There is a third conception by the adulterous seed, and then the chosen people are cast off ; Israel and Judah are alike rejected by God. (4) But though the visible Israel and Judah have failed in their mission, yet the spiritual Israel and Judah shall become “the sons of the living God,” and they shall anoint the King of Israel, and great shall be the day of the seed of God. (5) God, the Lord, is gracious and merciful—a true and faithful Saviour ; but His Wife, Spouse, or Church has been shamefully idolatrous and shameless in her adulteries. A very harlot, giving herself up to adultery for bread and water, wool and flax, oil and wine. (6) How will the gracious Saviour treat such a worthless, ungracious, ungrateful Church? In His mercy He will put thorns in her path, and make her blind, so that she will not obtain the things she desires. Failing to find what her carnal desires crave after, she would fain return to her Husband ; but He cannot show favour to such a spirit ; and thus, for correction, the carnal things are taken away, the feast-days with their mirth cease, and the creature of shame is discovered as a lewd and shameful thing before her lovers. (7) But all this strange experience is in reality the weaning process by which the soul, or the Church, is changed in its spiritual condition ; the object in view is not to cast away, but to redeem ; not to sustain the formal relationship of a lord and bondservant, but for a spiritual betrothal and for the most endearing ties as symbolised by the union of a husband and wife.

CHAPTERS III.—VI., 1—3, may contain the second cycle. (1) The Israel which was according to the flesh in its history did not fulfil the

will of God ; therefore the Saviour is represented as being united with another adulteress—presumably the Gentiles—during the Christian era. During this period, the children of Israel, of the seed of Jacob, are to be outcasts—without king or prince, sacrifice or ephod ; and it may be said that the spiritual Israel in the Christian Church were found in the same position. But the day of mercy will come, and then all men will seek the Lord their King in the latter days. (2) The condition of Israel is represented as that of complete demoralisation ; no truth, mercy, or knowledge in the land, and swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and adultery being the pastimes of priest and people. (3) Because of this depraved condition, the people having in their ignorance rejected knowledge, they are rejected by God as His priests and their glory ranged into shame. (4) In their superstition and ignorance they ask counsel of stocks, things which cannot reveal the will of God ; and because they offer their sacrifices with harlots, they fall into all kinds of sin and iniquity. (5) Israel slides backward, and Ephraim is joined to his idols, and this is the reward given to the Lord of mercy for His ungrateful-kindness and pity upon the sinful outcast. (6) But there fall judgments of God upon the people for their wickedness, and the almighty God becomes like a lion to punish, and none can rescue out of His hands. (7) The judgments of God bring repentance ; before affliction they went astray, but after the affliction the Lord's face and favour are sought, and on the third day the dead receive life to live in His sight.

CHAPTERS VI., 4—11, X., may contain the third cycle. (1) The King and Saviour seeks the redeemed, but it is to find that the first rush of love has passed away even as the morning cloud and the early dew vanish from sight before the rising sun. (2) The Lord desired to heal Ephraim, but his wickedness and iniquity were discovered ; the redeemed do not seek their God, but rather pleasure and sin. (3) The hour of danger comes, and Ephraim flees for help to Egypt, and not to God ; but this is displeasing in God's sight, and so He uses means to bring down the spirit of pride by chastisements. (4) Mere profession is of no value ; the trumpet may be sounded for the feasts of God, and His Name held in outward reverence, but if any other idol fill the soul, God will not hear prayer. (5) Israel chose the golden calf as a god, but it turned to be a plague ; by turning away from God men sow the wind, and in due time they reap the fruits of their ways in the terrible whirlwind of God's judgments. (6) There is no true prosperity in those who disobey God, they find distress and trouble, captivity and shame. The womb bears no fruit ; and the breasts contain no consolation ; and because men will not hearken to the Word of God, they become wanderers who can find no peace or rest for their souls. (7) God's Israel should have been a vine giving rich clusters of gracious fruit, but it is found empty and selfish, seeking only what will gratify itself. This is altogether wrong ; and men must learn that it is by sowing in righteousness that they will be able to reap in mercy. It is the will of God that His face and favour should be sought, so that righteousness may be rained down upon the earth.

CHAPTERS XI., XII., may contain the fourth cycle. (1) "Out of Egypt have I called My Son." The Son of God was obedient, but Israel went after Baalim and graven images. When the children of God have been weak and sick, then the Lord has been their Helper and Healer; full of compassion, and gentle as a mother with a wayward child. (2) But the redeemed have been ungrateful, and they have chosen Egypt and Assyria, power and pleasure, which bring pain, rather than the gentle and easy yoke of the Saviour. (3) The Saviour looks upon those who reject Him and seek other saviours and lords. He cannot give up, or deliver to death those whom He has redeemed; anger and destruction would be a suitable recompense for the rebellions and wilful, but the Saviour is God, and not man, and thus His mercy triumphs over justice and judgment. (4) Man seeks after what can never give the soul satisfaction; but God is in controversy with man in this matter. (5) Jacob has been a supplanter from the womb; yet he shall prevail in prayer and have power with God. Men seek after their own things, and think that they are rich; but in this they deceive themselves, because the Saviour alone can cause men to dwell in peace and safety. (6) Iniquity and vanity are with men. (7) By God's Word men are redeemed from Egypt, and preserved for the great feast of God.

CHAPTERS XIII., XIV., may contain the fifth cycle. (1) By humility and the fear of God there is exaltation, but in pride and disobedience there is death. Men know these things, and yet too often they choose evil to be their god, and reject the lowly and blessed Saviour. (2) Those who act such a foolish part choose the wilderness and drought for their portion; and the enmity of God instead of His favour and blessing. (3) When given up to destruction they cannot help themselves; in the meek King alone can salvation be found. (4) The Saviour is all powerful to ransom from the grave and to redeem from death. (5) The Saviour pleads with men to return unto God, and He puts a prayer into their mouths for that purpose. Other gods and powers fail in the day of distress; but in God the fatherless find mercy. (6) The Lord is gracious and merciful, and He receives the backsliding children when they renounce their idols. (7) The ways of the Lord are truth and mercy; the righteous shall walk therein in safety, but evil-doers shall fall and perish in their disobedience.

THE BOOK OF JOEL.

THE word Joel means one who wills or commands; he is the sixth in order amongst the prophets, and it is presumed that his prophecy may harmonise with the sixth Beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." (1) The burden of this prophet's message to Judah is one of lamentation because of sin; the judgments of God are abroad in the land, joy and gladness are cut off from the people,

and all nature cries unto God because of the great distress of the nation. The evils realised are indeed great, but an awful day of trouble and darkness hangs over the land, the Lord is a great and terrible God, and who can abide His coming? (2) There is a call to repentance, and if this is true then the gracious and merciful God will grant a blessing to His people. (3) When there is sanctification of the people and prayer unto God, then He will remove the army of troubles, and bring peace to His people. (4) Great things will be done by God for His people, and they shall know that He is God alone in the midst of Israel. (5) In that day of mercy the Spirit of God shall be poured out upon men; and all who call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved. (6) There shall be a time of restoration and blessing to God's people. (7) In the day that the Gospel is proclaimed among the heathen then there will come the mercies and judgments of God upon the nations; and the Lord shall dwell in Zion.

THE BOOK OF AMOS.

THE meaning of the word Amos is a heavy burden; the prophet brings a burden to men, in his message from God to them, thoughts which are weighty indeed in judgments, reproofs, and exhortations. (1) The Lord's coming is described as roaring from Zion, and uttering the voice from Jerusalem; and by His coming the false shepherds will be brought to mourning, whilst Carmel—the vineyard of God—will wither at His presence. The figures are strong, but they are true as related to the effects of His mission; the gentle voice of truth may not be heard with the ear, and yet the power exerted and the work effected may be very great. The coming of Christ in the flesh, though so unobtrusive, was really the cause of the fall of Judaism and the destruction of Jerusalem; and since that time false forms of worship and empires have been overthrown through the mighty power of the truth in Jesus Christ. (2) Upon Syria, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah, and Israel the judgments of God descend; these have all perverted the ways of God by cruelty, captivity, treachery, want of mercy, rapacity and horrors unspeakable, injustice, disobedience to law, and unrighteousness in the sight of God. Specially is the Lord grieved because of the wickedness of Israel, for when so much was done for him, the ingratitude and sin were increased a thousand-fold. This burden is too heavy, and one that can hardly be endured. (3) God has been specially gracious to Israel, therefore there follow special privileges, duties, responsibilities, rewards, and punishments. There is no means of evading this great truth of the authority of God as King, and man's duty of obedience. (4) Because of oppression and idolatry by the favoured people of God who had obtained favour and mercy, and had become rebellious, unmerciful, and idolatrous, judgments as great as that brought on Sodom and Gomorrah shall be their portion. (5) God pleads with Israel to seek Himself, and not the gods of Bethel or

and plenty in Israel ; and there shall no
God, or judgments because of sin.

THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

THE meaning of the word Obadiah is serv
from God by this prophet is the judgmen
persecution Israel suffered at the hand
once so powerful, is seen to be small, w
and boasting has been the great character
(3) But no matter how conceited man r
able to bring him down to the dust from
has been the wisdom in Edom amongst
brings to nought the wisdom of man, s
destroyed. (5) The reason for this jud
Edom and the spirit of man has been c
of God ; and as there was no mercy for
of trouble, so the day comes when the
and find judgment. (6) The day of G
man, and as they have sown so shall t
persecuted servants of God there shall
of God shall be God's judges amongst n
be the Lord's."

THE BOOK OF

ion of the whole book in harmony with this central idea. (1) Nineveh—dwelling—may represent the fallen race of men in their wickedness ; and the mercy of God as drawn out for their redemption. (2) Jonah is a figure representing the chosen servants of God ; as, for example, the priests in the nations, the prophets and the priests in the kingdom of Israel, and the ministers of Christ in the era of Christianity. They have had a commission to preach and to teach the sinfulness of man, the mercy of God, and the doom upon the wicked, but they have shirked their unpleasant duties and taken their own ways. (3) Though men chosen by God fail in their duties, yet the purpose of God's race must not fail ; disobedience will not bring peace, but a terrible storm upon men, and in their extremity God is remembered. (4) The mystery of redemption lies in this thought, that men were helpless to find a remedy for their trouble ; and, as the sailors found a Jonah to throw overboard so that the ship might be saved, so the chief priest of the Jews pointed to Jesus Christ as the Jonah that must die so that the nation might not perish. (5) As Jonah was in the belly of the fish, dead to men, yet alive to God and restored to carry on his mission, so in his figure, the Lord Jesus finds His Own death, burial, and resurrection from the dead, and the new life manifested which will be the means of salvation to a sinful, doomed world. (6) Christianity has been life from the dead to this world ; men have repented, and God has been gracious and merciful unto them. (7) There has been joy in the presence of God over the repentance of sinners and their salvation, but amongst the selfish and self-righteous, wilful, unmerciful servants of God there has been envy and anger because God has been pleased to use means for this end which did not agree with their foolish conceptions. They have been sitting under the shelter of gourds, instead of under the Tree of Righteousness ; and when their temporary shelter has been cut down, they have fretted and been angry instead of rejoicing in the mercy of God, which is so free and full to the sons of men. God grant that such Jonahs may be led to know, love, and experience the mercy of God in their own souls, and then they will rejoice when He grants mercy to sinful men.

 MICAH.

THE word Micah means poor or humble ; and if changed to Micaiah—like to Jehovah. (1) God, by His servant, calls upon the people toarken, because the Lord God is about to be a witness against men from His holy temple. The Lord is seen coming forth in His majesty and glory, and before His face even the mountains of evil will melt away. He comes forth because of transgression and sin, so that judgment may fall upon the evil-doers ; but also to bring an heir to this earth who shall be the glory of Israel. (2) There is a woe upon those who devise iniquity and work evil, on the covetous and violent, who hate good and love evil ; upon such the night shall be dark and

they shall have no heavenly vision, or answer to their prayers from God. The servant of God must be strong to declare before men their wickedness and the consequences of their evil deeds. (3) For a time evil shall prevail, but in the last days the nation of God shall be established in the earth ; then the law and the Word of God shall be the guide for men ; justice and judgment will be known, and in peace and prosperity men will walk in the Name of the Lord God. (4) Out of the daughter of Zion shall come the kingdom, and also the King, but this travail is not for the final deliverance, because it is in Babylon that the Lord will grant deliverance and redemption from all enemies. But the King and Judge of Israel shall be contemned, put to shame, even smitten on the cheek with a rod. Out of Bethlehem shall come the visible Ruler, whose goings forth have been from eternity. (5) He shall be the Saviour and Shepherd, feeding His flock in the days of ignorance, injustice, intolerance, idolatry, and strife. (6) Whilst men are vexing themselves about the method in which they shall draw near to God with acceptance, He makes known to them that which is good and what He requires ; and His thoughts are summed up in doing justice betwixt man and man, loving mercy, and forgiving enemies and evil-doers, and in keeping the soul humble in the presence of God. (7) Enemies may be on every side, and the workers of iniquity may seem to be prosperous, but the man that trusts in God, and waits upon Him, shall be safe. The enemy rejoices too soon when the righteous man stumbles and seems to be sitting in the darkness ; he will arise again and the Lord will be his light and salvation. God will not cast off His heritage, or retain His anger, for He delights in mercy. He will be gracious and fulfil His promises given to Abraham. Grace and mercy, truth and righteousness, faithfulness and the fulfilment of His promises, are the powers that surround His throne ; all the redeemed shall acknowledge that sin must have been their destruction, and it is through God's grace, in its manifold developments, that there is the salvation and restoration of men to the divine favour.

NAHUM.

THE word Nahum means comforter, or a guide. The subject throughout is "the burden of Nineveh." This city is the proud kingdom of, and in, man, as opposed to the kingdom of grace in Jesus Christ. (1) The vision represents God as jealous, and seeking revenge upon His enemies ; vengeance is His prerogative, and He will cause His wrath to fall upon His enemies. All this is true in the highest spiritual meaning ; and according to the divine method of justice, judgment, and mercy. But men are not called upon by God to sit in the judgment-seat, and to settle how God can be just or merciful, and yet at the same time punish men for their misdeeds. The figurative language *may*, or it may not, express what God is toward the rebellious sons of men ; but it is important they should know that He is slow to be angry.

mighty in power, and that the wicked will not be acquitted in His sight. The Lord's ways are not, to wicked men, in the sweet sunshine, and the peaceful open heavens, but in the storm, the darkness, and the tempest. The Lord is all that is majestic, awful, and terrible to the wicked; but to the righteous He is good and the strength of those who trust Him. (2) The enemies of God have been permitted in the past to take their own ways, and through them the people of God have been afflicted; but this affliction must cease; the Deliverer has come; His feet are upon the mountains, and to men there is the publishing of glad tidings of peace. (3) The conflict is expressed in flowing figurative language betwixt Nineveh and the Lord of hosts; and the end of the struggle is that the enemy is overthrown, and his messengers are no more heard upon the earth. (4) Woe upon the bloody city! that is the power that has existed by war, murder, lying, and robbery; great have been the whoredoms of this harlot amongst the nations, but the day will come when the gaudy trappings that have been worn will be torn off, and then the glories of war, the subtlety of statesmen, and the rapaciousness of monarchs, will be seen in their true light, and detested by all who love truth and righteousness.

HABAKKUK.

THE word Habakkuk means he that embraces, or a wrestler. (1) The burden of this prophet is the strange fact that the righteous are subject to the wicked; and that struggling and violence, strife and contention, are supreme in the earth. Because of this strange permission of truth and righteousness the law of God is despised, and justice and judgment are unknown amongst men. (2) Is this a very strange matter? Certainly it is to men who do not know or understand God's marvellous, gracious wisdom. In such things God is working a work which men would not believe even though it were told them, for surely it passes the comprehension of men to conceive by what means God will by His great work of grace make the wickedness of men a means of good, and also bring honour, glory, and praise to His great name. The fierce and terrible Chaldeans will be permitted to injure and persecute God's people; but in doing so they will purify Israel, work out God's purpose of grace, and at the same time bring the judgments of God upon themselves. (3) The method of God is not quite clear to the vision of the prophet, but he wrestles through the conflicting thoughts in his soul in these words, "Art Thou not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, Thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, Thou hast established them for correction." These words express faith; it is to Habakkuk, and other wrestlers in the kingdom of God, the strange fact that idolatrous rebels should thus act, is not easily understood in the light of God's truth, justice, and faithfulness. (4) How should God's servants act when such thoughts trouble them, and they find in

their own souls an enemy against the Most High? Follow the prophet to the watch-tower, stand upon the watch against the enemy, read the Word, and listen to the Holy Spirit within, and in meekness receive the reproof that may be expected, because of unbelief. The Lord's response to man is, "Write the vision:" make known the facts, so that all may see and read; but as for the interpretation of the vision, the explanation why such strange things should take place, leave this alone, the vision is for an appointed time; at the end the revelation will come in truth, therefore wait, for it will surely come. The man who lifts up his soul and sits in judgment upon God's vision is not righteous; but the justified man, meek and lowly in soul, who is obedient to God's Word, he "shall live by his faith." (5) Pride, violence, covetousness, and rapine, fill up the merciless ways of men; they labour as in the very fire, and all their struggles are vain. This is their portion from the Lord of hosts; but the mercy of God shall prosper, "for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (6) Men are drunken, to their shame, with the spirit of pride and vain-glorying; and in this condition they become so foolish as to raise up idols and worship them. This is sacrilege, and the desecration of the temple of God. Away with all such vanities, "the Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him." (7) The prayer of Habakkuk is a sublime description of the glory of God in bold and marvellous figures; His majesty is so awful that the prophet trembles and realises his own sinfulness. (8) The climax of faith is reached when the prophet declares that although all visible blessings should vanish away, yet he would rejoice in the Lord, and find joy in the God of his Salvation. The Invisible has become his strength, and the Immutable his confidence; and so he no longer drags along in doubt as to the purposes of God's grace amongst men. The wings of faith have given him a new power, the visions of earth recede from view, and he walks upon the high places in the third heaven of God's grace.

ZEPHANIAH.

THE word Zephaniah means the secret of the Lord. (1) The condition of the earth is that of great sinfulness; sin, rebellion, and idolatry are the things opposed to God, therefore these must be utterly consumed from off the face of the earth. The means of effecting this end is by the coming of the King, by a sacrifice, a feast, and guests; and under this figure may be discerned the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. (2) The Lord comes to search and to try men; they have settled down in a formal, sceptical state, and their opinions of God amount to this, that God is not to be considered as a factor in events; practically He will not do good or evil, but simply leave men to their surroundings, and to those laws of development which are eternal in their nature. This is the secret thought, the hidden desire of men's souls who are the enemies of God; but it is a vain conception, unworthy of rational,

, responsible beings, and they are indeed blind who clasp in their
 ce the devil's unbelieving lies, fair as they may appear to be, when
 ry nature of man's being revolts against any such idea. Men in
 own small sphere are as gods, with free will, reason, moral
 isibility, and the power, within certain limits, of doing both good
 ril, and of bringing men to account who do that which is wrong ;
 h puny gods, mere effects, can do such things, then how much
 is God, the First Cause, able to interpose in the order of events,
 mony with His Own counsel and design ? To those who reject
 hrough unbelief, the great day of the Lord is very near, a day of
 , trouble, and darkness, and this is one of the judgments that
 fall upon such men, "they shall walk like blind men, because
 have sinned against the Lord." (3) Nations and men may not
 to serve the King, but they are advised to seek the Lord, and to
 neekness and righteousness, so that they may be kept safe in the
 f the Lord's anger. (4) Before mercy, truth, and righteousness,
 come supreme in the earth, the enemies of God must be brought
 and false prophets and priests must be set aside. (5) The Lord
 se up to do this great work in the earth, and it will be done by
 ; to men a pure language out of pure hearts ; with new
 which are obedient to the will of God the Father. (6) The
 ;le betwixt good and evil will be a desperate one, and it will seem
 vil is to prevail in the earth ; whilst mercy, righteousness, and
 will be followed by an afflicted, poor people, who trust in the
 of the Lord. (7) But this seeming victory of evil over good is
 nt, and not real ; because God has been permitting evil to work
 n destruction, to carry on the secret and marvellous work of
 and when both these great mysteries are wrought out, then the
 of Israel will be in the midst of the righteous and merciful, and
 will be the joy and the rejoicing over the great victory achieved
 Lord Jesus Christ over all His enemies

 HAGGAI.

word Haggai means feast, or turning round. The subject of
 rophecy is intimately connected with the rebuilding of the
 e in Jerusalem. (1) God has had a controversy with the people
 se they say that the time is not come that the Lord's house should
 lt ; but whilst neglectful of God's honour, service, and house, they
 aken care to look after their own selfish interests ; their ways were
 ; and so they have not been prosperous. (2) God's way is that
 hould build His house and glorify His Name by spiritual services
 rcy, truth, and righteousness ; the ways of men, and their experi-
 ave been great carnal expectations, but small realisations, because
 blessing has been withheld from self-seeking men. (3) When
 is obedience to the voice of God in His fear, then the response
 heaven is, "I am with you saith the Lord." (4) It is the Lord.

who gives grace and strength for this work by His King and High Priest, the Saviour of men, and with Him men work for the building of His temple. (5) The first temple, that of Solomon, was built as a glorious palace and temple for the worship of God; but the second temple of the restoration was destined to excel in glory; the first was the visible manifestation of the glory of Israel after the flesh; the second was to receive the desire of all nations, "and through Him there would come peace on the earth." The first temple was the full realisation of visible things; but the second temple was a prophetic anticipation of the latter day of glory. The rebuilt visible edifice would receive the spiritual temple of God, then the visible fabric would vanish away and not until the great restoration should the real glory of the second temple be consummated. The glory of Solomon's temple seemed to excel in glory the temple of the restoration, but in reality when heaven, earth, sea, and the dry land are shaken, and the Christian temple of a restored humanity is built up, then this spiritual glory shall far excel the material splendour of the temple raised by Solomon. (6) Are men clean or unclean? Unclean. As they are unclean in themselves, in their inmost souls, can their prayers, service, or offerings, be clean in the sight of God? They cannot be clean unless perfumed, purified, and sanctified through Jesus Christ, the temple and priest of God, who has become the head of God's redeemed nation. If men will realise this fundamental truth and build upon it, then from this time God will bless them in temporal and spiritual things. (7) The message to men through the King of kings is that the heavens and earth shall be shaken, and the kingdom of this world shall be overthrown; and in that day the Son of Man, born in the Babylon of this world, chosen by God, shall be King over all the earth.

ZECHARIAH.

THE word Zechariah means the memory, or the man of the Lord. The ideas suggested from the name of the book are, that the thoughts of God are to be made known; and that *the* Man of the Lord, the Prince of Peace, will be revealed in the visions of this prophet. (1) There is a call to repentance, and overtures of peace from God to the people; but the repentance must be true, and not like the repentance of Israel in past times. (2) There is a night vision of a man upon a red horse, with other horses behind him, red, bay, and white; and these are the spirits that have been moving through the earth amongst men. Their report is that the earth is at rest. The prayer of the angel is that mercy should be granted to Jerusalem; and the response of the Lord, in His grace, is, that His house shall be built, Zion shall be comforted, and Jerusalem shall be His chosen place. In these figures the facts are made known that men have utterly failed to help themselves, that no progress can be made in the restoration of man to harmony with the will of God, and that it is through God's mercy, and that alone,

that the restoration can take place. (3) The vision of the four horns and the four carpenters represents the supremacy of the world power over the kingdom of God, and the great change that is about to take place by the downfall of the Gentiles, and the success of the kingdom of Christ. (4) The vision of the man with a measuring line in his hand ; the promise of plenty and happiness in Jerusalem ; that the Lord will be her Salvation and Glory ; of deliverance from Babylon ; and the rejoicing in Zion because of God's presence ; these all speak of the mercy, truth, righteousness, and faithfulness of God toward His people. (5) It is in the spiritual world that there is antagonism ; the intellectual, sceptical spirit which produces rationalism, and faith in the grace and mercy of God, and these cannot be brought to harmonise ; the former is continually finding fault and bringing accusations against God's people and His ways ; whilst faith passing by these things, and leaving God to rebuke and punish such a spirit, looks upon the charred brands of humanity whom God in His grace has drawn out of the fire. The devil of unbelief in man may prate and speak foolishly about things he cannot understand, but the great fact to the redeemed is the pardon of sin, the change in the soul, the favour of God, and love for holiness. The redeemed receive God's favour, and if they are obedient to His will, and walk in His ways, then they receive a charge in God's house, and find new companions amongst the holy who are the servants of God. But the redeemed, whilst they are objects of wonder because of the great work of grace in them, it is not upon them that men's eyes are to be turned, but upon God's Servant, the Branch. The Stone, the Rock of Salvation, is perfect in truth and righteousness, wisdom and knowledge, and it is through the mercy of God in Him that the iniquity of man shall be taken away. In that day of mercy and of purification there will also come peace upon the earth, and through Him alone can such blessings come to the sons of men. (6) The next vision is a peculiar one, and the means by which the prophet came to see it, is also strange. He was awake, and yet the angel had to wake him up as a man is wakened out of his sleep. This is a picture of the carnal condition of man ; and before the light of God's grace and truth can enter his soul, an awakening to spiritual realities is required by the touch of God's Holy Spirit. The candlestick of gold, with the seven lamps, is a representation of the perfect, sevenfold wisdom and truth of God ; and the two olive-trees supplying the oil for the light of truth, the Holy Bible in its two parts. To the Seer's question, "What are these, my lord?" there does not seem to be a definite answer ; but in reality the answer is embodied in the message of the Lord to Zerubbabel, in this great truth, that the mountain of man's iniquities cannot be removed by man's wisdom or power, but through the effectual operations of His Holy Spirit, through the olive-trees and the golden candlestick of God's eternal grace and truth. The hands of the Blessed Saviour laid the foundation of man's salvation, and He alone will finish the great work of restoration ; and when the temple of God is complete in all its parts from the foundation to the headstone, every redeemed soul will shout aloud that salvation is of grace, and of grace alone. The past has been the day

of small things, but these are not to be despised ; because not only has a glorious work of grace been wrought out, but the mystery of evil has been so effectually manifested, that men will be led to abhor that which is so abominable in the sight of God and man. Truth and righteousness have prevailed ; but the palace built upon the sand is rocking under the storm by which it is being tested, and the fall will be great and terrible. There is no cause to fear for the Word of God, or the light of truth ; the Lord of the whole earth stands by His anointed ones ; in due time they will give forth their precious oil, and then the dark world will be illuminated by the sevenfold perfection of God's wisdom and truth. This vision is applicable to a soul, a nation, or to the whole world ; God's Word of grace and the light of truth, these alone can save and purify the soul. (7) The next vision is that of the flying roll, written on both sides, carrying with it a curse upon all who lie or steal ; this is the judgment of God upon the unjust and upon liars ; they may think that they can sin and be safe, but in reality by such deeds men destroy themselves, and as surely as the rot in timber will destroy a house, so lying and robbery, or injustice, will undermine character, and destroy a man, soul and body. Men may choose lying and robbery for their portion, but they do not choose the curse ; this is of God's appointment, and it follows in due course, as the night follows the day ; there is law here also, it is God's method of dealing with liars and thieves. (8) The next vision seems to speak of the measure and mystery of evil ; the measure being found in the ephah, and the mystery in the woman named Wickedness. The destination of these was the plain of Shinar, Babel, Babylon, and the mystic Babylon of Revelation. (9) The next vision reveals four chariots coming out from between two mountains of brass ; they come out from those things which are eternal and stable ; and they are the diverse spirits of God which go forth from His presence upon His service. What these represent it is truly difficult to say, but it may be suggested that they may possibly represent the spirit in Moses, the prophets, in Christ and the gospels, and in the apostles. These prepare the way for the coming of the King, and for the restoration from captivity ; but it is the Man named the Branch, who shall build the temple, bear the glory, sit upon His throne as a Priest-King, and bring in the reign of peace, truth, and righteousness. Upon the Priest-King all crowns shall rest, they are His by right as King of kings, but He is graciously pleased to grant unto those who have been persecuted and reviled for His Name's sake, that they also shall wear crowns in the temple of the Lord. All this will surely come to pass, and they will be partakers of the glory who obey the word of God.

At the beginning of the seventh chapter there seems to be a change in the order of the visions of this prophecy. (1) The question raised is not merely that of fasting and mourning, but of the genuineness of their fastings, prayers, and service in the sight of God. These had been unreal, thus judgment, mercy, compassion, pity, purity of thought, and charity in deed, are commanded as well-pleasing to God ; but they would not hear, therefore God would not hear their prayers, and He

rought upon them the evil of their own deeds. (2) This punishment was not permanent, but for correction, and a means for higher ends. With the restored favour of the Lord, the place where hypocrisy and lying were known and practised, and desolation had reigned, this would be changed, and truth and holiness, revered old age, and happy childhood would be seen. With the restoration of favour there would come prosperity, blessing, joy, gladness, and cheerful feasts to all those who love the truth and seek peace. (3) Upon the nations which are the enemies of God there shall come punishment; but to the daughter of Zion the King shall come just, having salvation, lowly and riding upon an ass. The false trusts of God's people shall be put aside, and His dominion shall be from sea to sea, even over the whole earth. (4) If the redeemed will ask of the Lord for His blessings, they shall be granted in their season by Him who knows what is according to mercy, truth, and righteousness; but those who follow after idols and divination cannot find comfort, and they do not find the Shepherd who is able to give them suitable refreshment. The false shepherds shall not be ways prosperous, but all the enemies of God will be visited by His judgments. (5) The flock is not nourished by the shepherds who have been placed over them, but rather they have become like wolves, and the flocks are kept to be fleeced and for slaughter. The good Shepherd sent forth to feed this flock, but in doing so the false shepherds have been cut off; the covenant has to be broken with the Jews; the shepherd betrayed to death; a separation made betwixt Jew and Christian; and a foolish, wicked shepherd raised up who would be a wretched unmerciful wolf in destroying the flock of God. (6) After the coming of the good Shepherd, and during the reign of the wicked shepherd, the Jerusalem of God, material and spiritual, would become like a cup of trembling, or a burdensome stone for the nations. In this day of trial the Governor of Judah, the Lord Jesus Christ, has been like a fire to all His enemies round about; but the day is coming when there shall be a change: God will favour His people, the flood-gates of repentance will be thrown open, and there will be great mourning because of the great sin, the piercing of Him who died on the cross, and who still lives to be pierced by those who sin against God. Through repentance there is forgiveness and cleansing from sin, and by being made pure in the sight of God, idols and unclean spirits will pass out of the land. The pure in heart shall see God, and the false prophets will be judged and condemned in the light of God's revealed truth. When this day of light arrives and men begin to discern the form of the Lord Jesus Christ as the central figure of the universe, then their attention will be concentrated upon Him and the wounds in His hands, the marks, the sad marks of what He has had to endure from His professed friends. But who is He, this Shepherd, against whom the sword of God has been used? He is God's fellow, the good Shepherd that gave His life for His sheep. But the sword falls upon the sheep as well as the Shepherd; and to them it is like a refiner's fire to purify their dross, so that being made pure in heart they will call on God's Name; He "will say, It is my people, and they shall say, The Lord is my God." (7) *The day of the Lord is at hand; the day for the*

great battle amongst the nations ; the great day of His coming, a day not clear and not dark. This is a day known unto God, and at the evening time it shall be light. In that day living waters shall flow amongst men, "the Lord shall be King over all the earth : in that day there shall be one Lord, and His Name one." All the nations shall offer spiritual worship unto God, and keep the Feast of Tabernacles ; and if any families do not serve God, upon them no blessing from heaven shall rest. Holiness unto the Lord shall be the stamp upon all man's possessions ; and in that day the selfish, trafficking, immoral Canaanite shall not find a place in the house of the Lord.

MALACHI.

THE word Malachi means the messenger. (1) There is the sovereignty of God in His choice in preferring Jacob to Esau, Israel to Edom, and Jesus Christ to Adam. Sovereignty does not mean partiality ; but it does mean that God has a method by which He acts toward His creatures by goodness, justice, and by grace, and He has a right to choose for His purpose and work of grace the fitting instruments for that purpose. Edom, or the seed of Adam, is represented as wilful and rebellious—they will rebuild what God has cast down ; but their work is vain as they become known as the representation of evil against whom the Lord is angry, whilst it shall be seen and known that the Lord will be glorified through Israel. (2) God passed by Edom and chose Jacob ; but was he a son that honoured his Father, and a servant that gave respect unto his Master ? By no means ; the chosen priests of the chosen people offered unto God things polluted, and instead of giving the first and the best, which was His due, they gave the blind, the lame, and the sick. They acted toward God as they would not have done toward a human governor, and they were rejected because of their unbelief and unrighteousness. Although Edom is rebellious and Jacob unrighteous, yet God's purpose of grace will stand ; because as a Sovereign in grace, He will pass by Jacob and choose from amongst the Gentiles in all lands gracious souls who will become merciful, true, and righteous. (3) Profanation, contempt, and indifference in man cuts off the living stream of grace from God, and a curse instead of a blessing rests upon those who despise the marvellous love and grace of God. Though man breaks God's covenant and destroys himself, yet God is true and faithful, and His covenant with the true Levi and Phinehas of life and peace remains in force in Jesus Christ, the meek King of grace. (4) The abomination of which Jacob or Judah was guilty was that of treachery and rebellion. The Lord chose Jacob, and became united to Judah ; but this power, or spirit, profaned the most sacred ties and obligations by departing from God the Redeemer, and becoming united in the tenderest affections with strange gods, which are opposed in spirit to Jehovah. This spiritual adultery was aggravated by the thought

that it was surrounded with a cloak of hypocrisy, for there was a form of repentance because of sin, and crying out because the Lord did not answer prayer. All this, even though it may be well meant, is a weariness to God; the spirit manifested is out of harmony with the divine will. Evil is considered to be good, and men are led to say that the evil they do is well-pleasing in the sight of God. This is the mystery of iniquity in Jacob, the thing that has been repeated in Christendom; but evil cannot prosper even though it is misnamed good, for the Lord is a God of judgment, and the evil and good, the true and false, the righteous and unrighteous, are seen by Him as they are, and not as men would try to represent them in His presence. (5) Unto such a generation would the forerunner of the Messiah and the Lord, the Messenger of the covenant, come; but who would be able to abide His coming, when with fan and fire He would begin to purify the servants of God, so that they might offer spiritual, true, and righteous offerings unto God? At His coming mercy and judgment would again be specially manifested to Israel; and it is because the Lord is true and faithful His servants are not destroyed. (6) Can a man rob God? Verily men have robbed Him by their perverted affections, and through their false and hypocritical worship and service; and because the affections have been alienated, and the service untrue and unreal, men have brought upon themselves a curse. The curse rests upon man, and the way to remove it is to have the affections so changed that God shall have the supreme place. When men are obedient to His gracious will, then, in the very nature of things, the blessings of God will be so abundant that men will be unable to receive or enjoy them all. The words of men have been stout, bold, even defiant against God, yet they have been found standing up as if they were innocent of such a great transgression, and asking, "What have we spoken so much against Thee?" Men have been found who have declared that it is vain, and without any profit, to pray unto, or to serve, God; they call the proud men happy, wicked men are set up for an example, and blasphemers who tempt God seem to be delivered from trouble. These things are not new upon the earth, and they are far from being strange. This is the anti-Christian spirit in its full development, the apparent success of evil, and lying over goodness and truth. In these days of the supremacy of evil upon the earth, the Lord's people have found consolation in speaking one to another about the grace of God. The Lord has been pleased to listen to His followers: their names have been written down in His book of life, and they shall be spared and be kept as His most precious jewels. During these many centuries men have hardly been able to discern betwixt the righteous and the wicked; but in that day there shall be no difficulty in understanding the eternal distinction which exists betwixt good and evil, righteousness and unrighteousness. (7) This day is near, perhaps nearer than men suppose, and the issue must be the downfall of the proud, and the tearing up, root and branch, of all that is wicked. To the righteous the glorious Sun of righteousness shall arise, bringing healing to men by truth, joy, and peace; the wicked shall be put down from their thrones of power, and the meek who have been persecuted

shall inherit the earth. The day draws nigh, therefore let men remember the Word of God, and obey its precepts; let them watch and pray lest they be taken unawares. He comes to bless mankind; but if there is no preparation for His coming by reconciliation with God and conciliation amongst men, then the earth may be smitten with the curse of dissatisfaction, hatred, rebellion, and desolation. "Watch, therefore: for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

THE greatest events of history had taken place by the rejection of Jesus Christ, His death on the cross, resurrection from amongst the dead, and ascension into glory. The fulfilment of the mystery of redemption had been accomplished, through the awful struggle in which the serpent's head had been crushed, whilst the physical body of the Lord Jesus Christ had been bruised in the contest. From the day of the Ascension until Pentecost there is, as it were, a momentary pause, so that men might consider the past, and be prepared to move forward in the direction in which the kingdom of grace is destined to move. The days of God move slowly with measured tread, and on His part there is no hurry; because all things are foreknown, from the sowing of the seed to the appearance of the blade, the bursting of the flower and the ripening of the seed. As in the physical world of life so in the kingdom of evil and in the kingdom of grace, there are marked periods of growth and development, but the seed, its nature, design, flower, fruition, and all circumstances in connection with the development being known, divine wisdom exercises patience, and in due time the inevitable results are worked out. The King of mercy and the God of all grace had appeared amongst men, and by His coming a new era of spiritual thought and action had been introduced amongst them. The fundamental principles or laws of the kingdom of mercy had been fully manifested in Jesus Christ; but His life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension whilst fulfilling the prophecies of the past, were also a spiritual seed which should take root in the earth, so that there might be a plentiful harvest of the same spiritual kind. The King of grace came fulfilling all that had been embodied in the past; but He also brought a new beginning of a cycle of time during which the seed in Himself would live and work out, according to its nature, the will of God. It is at this point that the book of the Acts begins; the spiritual seed of grace and mercy in the world is as yet invisible, and therefore the science of the kingdom or the order of its manifestation could not be understood by men. The peculiarity of the position of Christianity during the Christian era is very fitly expressed in these words, "And it shall come to pass in that day that the light shall not be clear nor dark; but it shall be one day which shall be known to the

Lord, not day, nor night; but it shall come to pass that at evening-time it shall be light." If these thoughts are remembered as the facts related in the Acts are considered they may prove useful.

It may be suggested that this book divides itself into two great cycles; the first giving the manifestation of the spiritual kingdom of grace amongst men in its unity and in its method of revelation; and the second, the spirit and power of the kingdom as seen in the work of the apostle Paul. Of course these important themes can only be glanced at, but the thoughts suggested may be useful in following out this line of thought.

CHAPTERS I., II., may contain the first cycle. (1) The kingdom of grace rests upon the Lord Jesus Christ, His teaching, works, death, resurrection, ascension, and promises to His followers. (2) The disciples were ignorant of the method or science of the spiritual kingdom, and thus they sought instruction from the Lord; being prepossessed by false conceptions, such as the restoration of David's visible kingdom, they were not in a state to receive spiritual things; thus they were instructed to wait the development of God's purposes. Faith and not knowledge must be the key to their communication with heaven; and full of faith then real power would come upon them for the carrying out of God's work. That the trial of their faith might be complete, the Lord's visible presence was taken away from them by His ascension; but He left the promise of His return to be the hope of His followers in the dark future. (3) They were obedient to their Lord; and by faith, prayer, and service they were guided to understand the treachery of Judas, and to appoint His successor to be a witness to the gospel. (4) The time being come, the spiritual kingdom descended upon men, and under the figure of tongues of fire, resting upon the followers of Christ, there was the reality of a spiritual baptism, by which, as temples of God, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and became obedient to this new power revealed to and in men. (5) This manifestation of grace transcended Judaism, and showed itself to be a world-wide dispensation of mercy through the gift of tongues, in which men forgot themselves and their nationalities, and spake of "the mighty works of God." It was in very deed "new wine," but it was the divine wine of the kingdom of heaven sent down to men from their King and God. (6) Peter, as taught by God's spirit, spake to the people showing them that the effects they witnessed were not from intoxication, but through the gift of God's Spirit; and the cause of this strange manifestation was Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, but whom God had raised from the dead according to the prophetic words written by David. They had been looking for a restoration of the kingdom of David; this was the very event that had taken place, in a new form, and Jesus of Nazareth was demonstrated to be both Jehovah and the Messiah of Israel. (7) By the effectual operation of God's Holy Spirit this word was blessed; the keys of the kingdom of grace had been used, and three thousand souls entered into it. (8) The kingdom had come with power, and all who had received the same Holy Spirit were brethren; thus joy and gladness, prayer, praise,

and thanksgiving with unity in spirit and community in property marked the birth of this kingdom of God's grace.

CHAPTERS III., IV., may contain the second cycle. (1) Faith, grace, and healing; and then joy of soul and praise to God, because the spiritual powers so long paralysed are set free. (2) To the souls of men there must be given a testimony as to personal sin and unrighteousness; faith, repentance, the favour of God, restoration in the future, and the faithfulness of God to His promises must also be exhibited. (3) But these are the very thoughts which move men to works of unrighteousness or to deeds of persecution; to the people this gospel is the glad tidings of salvation; but oftentime it has been the theme that troubles rulers, because of their guilt; and as they reject Christ, they use force to put down what is a witness bearing against their own evil deeds. (4) The question of the healing and restoring of humanity by Jesus Christ is one that wicked men try to avoid; but the truth will come out that it is in His Name that all power for this end is to be found; and they who reject Him put away the only foundation upon which men can build safely and with certainty for eternity. (5) This is a marvellous truth, and it cannot be gainsaid, whether it is spoken by an illiterate fisherman or by an accomplished philosopher; the miracle of grace exists, it has been and is still working by men, and though rulers amongst men may threaten and punish those who speak the truth, they who make it known are God's servants, and He is on their side. The work of God's mercy is not a thing done in a corner; it has healed men and nations, and thus the facts are too well known to be disputed. (6) The servants of God may be threatened and persecuted, but their trust is in the Word of God, which through the Psalmist long ago pointed out the work of the rulers of this earth, and the consequences which would follow their evil deeds. As yet the opposition of kings is the great fact manifested; but the day is coming when His rod of iron shall fall upon them, and they shall be broken to pieces like a potter's vessel. (7) Opposition against God's servants does not destroy their hidden power, but rather it is made the means by which new power is obtained; the unity of the body is made more perfect, and the community of the spiritual life more full. The spirit of self-sacrifice is manifested, and men give not merely their possessions but also themselves to God's work for the consolation and comfort of His people.

CHAPTERS V., VI., 1—8, may contain the third cycle. (1) It is in this cycle that the spirit of evil works, as well as the meek spirit of the regenerate in Jesus Christ, and the story of Ananias and Sapphira may be pondered with profit in this aspect. (2) They who tempt the Spirit of the Lord are foolish indeed, because to the meek spirit all that is false is manifested; the power to discern spirits, it must be remembered, is specially that of Jesus Christ, and it is given as a gift to His servants animated by His Spirit. (3) But the manifestation of the kingdom of grace is not merely for the discernment of evil, it is specially for the healing of man in the widest aspect of this word, so

that the healed may walk in the ways of God. (4) The success of this kingdom causes the spirit of jealousy to arise amongst the men who rule the people according to the method of this world; and in this manifestation of wickedness may be found the mystery of evil in its mysterious workings. (5) The servants of Christ and of grace may not abate one point in their testimony about the guilt of man, and the forgiveness of sin through Christ the Saviour. (6) When brought face to face good and evil cannot agree; there must be a struggle for the supremacy, and evil would fain put forth the hand and destroy that which is good and gracious. At this point experience and expedience step in to moderate betwixt the contending powers; and for a time the evil spirit is restrained, not on account of love for the truth or of goodness, but for fear of the results that may arise. (7) They who suffer dishonour for the Name of Jesus Christ are blessed, and they are made the means of blessing to others; their labours increase, but with these the power to organise and labour is increased, and in this way many became obedient to the faith in Jesus Christ.

CHAPTERS VI., 9—15, VII., may contain the fourth cycle. (1) In Stephen—a crown—there is seen the spirit of wisdom, grace and truth; and by this spirit he was enabled to work great signs among the people. (2) Such a spirit, faithful unto God, soon found many enemies; and a charge brought against him, by false witnesses was that in following Jesus of Nazareth he had proved a traitor to Moses. (3) Though accused falsely before men, yet the light and glory of the truth within as so powerful in Stephen that he was seen as if transfigured in the council chamber. (4) The wisdom of God's purpose of grace may be found in Stephen's words before the counsel; it touches the most interesting points in the history of Israel according to the flesh, and in doing this he traversed the whole field of spiritual truth as it could be represented to such an assembly. By grace Abraham had been called, and unto him had been given promises which he had never possessed. Joseph, through jealousy, had been sold into Egypt by his brethren; and Moses, the great law-giver, had been rejected by the slaves he sought ransom; therefore it was no new thing to teach them that God's mercy is by grace, and that sinful men have rejected the men who have been their greatest benefactors. (5) But Moses had expressly revealed the coming of the Prophet of God; and this Prophet had been with their fathers in the wilderness, and at that time he had been rejected and a golden calf chosen in His place. David and Solomon had brought the kingdom to its pinnacle of outward glory, and then there followed idolatry, and Babylon, the fall of the visible things in which they trusted. (6) Their actions in killing the Righteous One was nothing new; the history of Israel was full of similar deeds; thus in their ignorance they had become the betrayers and murderers of their own Messiah. (7) Such a charge brought against proud and prejudiced men drove them to madness; whilst Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, and the third heaven of God's grace opened to his view, and the glory of God revealed to him. They stoned him to death; every stone cast by them being a witness for their own destruction through their own

folly ; but Stephen, calm and serene, prayed for his murderers, and fell asleep. Saul was consenting unto his death ; thus the blood of the martyr was not lost : a new seed was sown that day which would not touch Jerusalem only, but would set the whole world in a state of fermentation. Though misguided men consent unto what brings death, the wisdom and grace of God can, in due time, change the persecutor so that he may become a saint, and a servant of Christ ; the wisest man in the Christian army had been slain ; but God's wisdom is seen in His method of paying back his enemies by taking the best man in the enemy's camp and causing him to become a champion for the truth of God and for righteousness.

CHAPTERS VIII., IX., 1—19, may contain the fifth cycle. (1) The wolf of persecution scatters the flock of Christ, and lamentation is made over the death of the wise and the righteous. It is the hand of Mercy that restrains Justice, so that through mercy the seed of life may be scattered abroad and men saved. (2) Philip, the evangelist, proclaiming the Christ at Samaria, with thirsting souls drinking in his words, unclean spirits being cast out, and the palsied and lame being healed, is a figure of the means by which the Evangel of God's mercy has been successful amongst men. (3) Whilst Simon, the sorcerer, represents the false spirit of the world which had possession of men and lost its power by the preaching of the gospel. (4) The preaching of the gospel is good in its place, and all true evangelists ought to be honoured in their work of proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation ; but signs and miracles, the casting of the devil out of the soul and being baptized is not enough, all this is only preparation work, this casting down of the false gods and cleansing of the temple are to the end that God's house may be ready for His coming. The apostles Peter and John were endowed with another gift, higher in its order, and more blessed in its results ; through them the Holy Spirit took possession of the temple, and then the soul was regenerated and made a temple of God. But were Peter and John endowed with this power as a gift given unto themselves for their glory or sanctity ? By no means ; they stand forth, Peter representing the visible order of things, and John as the spiritual ; whilst James, or Jacob the supplanter, whose spiritual descendants lay claim to an apostolical succession in the order of ceremonies, is not even to be found following in the footsteps of the gospel during the Christian era. Peter possesses the keys of the kingdom, and he opens the door wide to Jew, Samaritan, and Gentile ; but having admitted men of all nations within the sacred inclosure, it is specially to John, who possesses spiritual gifts for edification and growth in grace, that men must come if they would permit the Holy Spirit to transform their being into the likeness of Jesus Christ. In this sphere money, position, influence are as nothing ; and if any man use these as a means of buying spiritual gifts, for the edification and upbuilding in grace, truth, and righteousness of the soul, or of the Church of Christ, then he is not spiritual but carnal ; there is a gall root of bitter poison in the soul, and an iniquitous bondage holds that man apart from the free grace of God. This is a very important paragraph, and

requires to be very carefully studied ; this is the kingdom of truth and righteousness in the cycle of mercy, and thus it has special teaching for all men who are the spiritual followers of Jesus Christ. (5) The Gospel finds its way to Samaria by Philip through persecution, and great blessing followed the preaching of the Word ; but the methods of God are not limited to preaching, the reading of the Word, for conversation upon it, as with the Ethiopian eunuch, is also a blessed means of grace ; and the seed quietly sown may bring forth abundant fruit to the praise and glory of God's gracious Name. (6) In Saul the persecutor, on the road to Damascus, and the method of his conversion, there may be seen the marvellous work of God in the soul of man. Whether the scene is considered subjectively or objectively the results are the same ; and these are that a man who is the "chief of sinners," because he is found persecuting the Son of God, in His members, is suddenly changed and becomes a follower of Him whom he hated. His sudden change is enough not merely to paralyse the physical vision, but to suspend the actions of the soul. It is a special intervention by God, a miracle and sign to men worthy of study. (7) The proud Saul was humbled to the very dust ; the invisible gospel chariot of mercy moved toward Damascus, and bound to it, there followed in silence this man, who deserved judgment ; and, lo ! he is a prisoner of grace awaiting a gracious pardon from the Saviour and King of men. (8) By the hands of Ananias, this chosen vessel of God, Saul received his sight and was filled with the Holy Ghost. Grace reigned in him, and his future lay in bearing the Name of Christ amongst men, and in enduring suffering for His sake. This is one of the greatest miracles that is found on record in God's Word ; it is mercy straining its prerogative, and with a power that has no equal or comparison seizing a man who is, in his ignorance and wilful rebellion against God, found destroying himself, and the kingdom of God. The transformation is marvellous ; the wolf is changed into a lamb, the scourge becomes a willing sacrifice, and the charred brand is changed not merely into a diamond, but into a heavenly star of the first magnitude.

CHAPTERS IX., 20—43, may contain the sixth cycle. (1) The spirit of persecution and the darkness have passed away from Saul ; he has seen the Saviour, the Son of God, and it has become his work to preach that He is the Christ. (2) Because of this change wicked men in Damascus sought to kill Saul. (3) The disciples were afraid and suspicious in Jerusalem when Saul tried to join them, and this was not to be wondered at ; but Barnabas opened up the way for conciliation, and so he became one of the followers of Christ in Jerusalem, and one of His most zealous servants. (4) It is when there is peace that there is edification and upbuilding in the soul and in the Church ; and it is when men fear the Lord and enjoy the comfort of the Holy Spirit that there is multiplication of the spiritual seed in the Church of God. (5) The good work of mercy, of healing in soul and body, and the praise of God progresses in the earth. (6) It is in this part of the cycle that there is the power of resurrection to a renewed life of devotion to the will of God, and of self-sacrifice for the good of others.

The vision of heavenly life, peace and joy, so long lost is restored. (7) This power of raising the dead to life, the dead soul to renewed energies, a dead world to the service of God is a great fact; and it is when such an event takes place that people are led to believe in the power of the gospel. Is it not nearly time that this sign should be more abundantly fulfilled in the Church of Christ as a whole, as well as in individual members?

CHAPTERS X., XI., may contain the seventh cycle. (1) There was granted a vision of the King of peace to Cornelius, the centurion, and he was instructed as to the means by which peace with God might be obtained. (2) Those who are to be used as the instruments in God's hands for making known His will are oftentimes strongly prejudiced against those to whom God intends to be gracious; thus the necessity of the vision which points out that the unclean can be cleansed by God, and as His grace is toward them men must not despise those upon whom His favour is bestowed. (3) When men are prepared to obey God, but not until then, is the vision of God's will explained and the way of duty made clear. (4) Obedience to the truth of God by Gentile or Jew is the all-important duty; this is the way by which the knowledge of the doctrine is to be obtained and the assurance made clear that God is the Hearer and Answerer of prayer, and the Rewarder of those who trust and serve Him. (5) This is the great truth in the sphere of mercy, "that God is no respecter of persons," and that, "in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him." The way of salvation is open to all; and the facts of the gospel are everywhere the same; men are sinners; Jesus Christ, the Grace of God, is the Saviour of men; He died for sin, a true sacrifice; He has risen from the dead and ascended into glory; prophets and apostles are His witness to these truths; and the man who believes in Jesus Christ, be he Jew, Christian, or heathen, is saved; and by the reading of the Word and the work of the Holy Spirit there is growth in grace and growing conformity in likeness to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (6) This great work of opening the door of heaven for the Gentiles, by "a new and living way," gave great offence to the Jews. Ignorance, superstition, pride, and bigotry, had blinded their eyes to spiritual things, and so they were found magnifying the things which were of little importance. This one fact that God had granted repentance unto life unto the Gentiles could not be mistaken; but the way, whether by means of ritual, or by the Holy Spirit, was not clearly understood by the Jews. (7) The door of the kingdom of grace in Jesus Christ had been thrown open to the Gentiles by Peter; but at Antioch—for a chariot—the chariot of the King was brought forth, the Græeks received their King, and Barnabas and Saul laboured amongst the people. Here and at this time the chariot of God's grace received its name; they who followed the King were named Christians, and the new kingdom has been called Christianity. (8) Famine of bread, or of the Word of God, is a serious matter, but under the reign of this King all men become brethren, and thus those who feast are able to supply the wants of those who are famine

ricken. There is an awful famine in the earth of the Word of God, and the sons of grace, mercy, and peace, send relief unto their brethren, that the gracious blessing of God may descend on all men.

CHAPTERS XII., XIII., may contain the eighth cycle. (1) The era of persecution has burst upon the Church through Herod the Edomite ; but although he may be able to cut off James, and all that he presents in Judaism and ritual ; he is prevented from destroying Peter, or touching John, with the principles they represent. (2) What are the results of persecuting the Church of Christ, and following the spirit of Edom ? They are to be seen in the false glory of the Idumean king, and in his death. (3) Evil falls despised and corrupt ; but the Word of God liveth for ever. (4) The seat of the kingdom of grace is no longer Jerusalem ; Ichabod has been written upon its walls and the glory has departed. The future lies with Christianity and with such men as Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul ; but especially with the first and last, in whom the spirit of the era is found, they are the Lord's ministers, separated from their brethren for His work ; and with the benediction of the Church, after fasting and prayer, were the greatest knights in Christendom, went forth to conquer the world for their Master. (5) Cyprus, Bar-Jesus, Sergius Paulus, and Saul, form a wonderful study ; Bar-Jesus represents Judaism with the curse of blindness resting upon it "for a season ;" Sergius Paulus, the Roman Empire ; and Saul the spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ. To Judaism there is the curse of blindness ; but to the Roman Empire, peace and light through the teaching of the gospel ; to the Jew, judgment, but to Greek and Roman bond and free, the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, through Saul—become Paul—once a persecutor, but now the servant of God and of His Son. (6) The gospel of God's grace and mercy goes forth to seek and to save the lost under conflicting circumstances ; and it is offered to the Jew first, but also to Gentiles. (7) The Jews foolishly blasphemed the Holy Name and cut themselves off from salvation in Jesus Christ ; whilst the Gentiles heard the Word, received it, and were made glad. "And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost."

At this point there is a break, and a new cycle may be discerned ; it is not so abrupt as to draw particular attention to it, and yet there is a spiritual cleavage, or rather such a change that the former part can be seen to be one cycle whilst that which follows is the natural outcome of what has gone before. Up to this point there has been a natural, yet apparently a strangely miraculous, development of the spiritual kingdom of grace ; and gift upon gift has been added to the Church until the seven-fold diversity is distributed amongst the followers of the risen Saviour. There has not been any haste, but in due order there has been given the Holy Spirit and the gift of tongues ; the gift of healing ; the discerning, meek spirit ; the spirit of wisdom and understanding ; the evangelistic spirit ; the transmission of the Holy Spirit's influence, by which men are purified and brought near to God and to see His face ; and the persecutor is seen changed into a peacemaker and a son of God. The harmony of the Beatitudes with the spiritual gifts is

apparent, and thus it is not necessary to enter into details on this point. Following the establishment of the spiritual kingdom amongst men, in due time, there followed the opening of the door of the kingdom to the Gentiles; the formation of a new centre at Antioch, which really became from that time the centre of the Christian influence; the persecution in Jerusalem and the death of James, which cut off the Christian Church in its spiritual life from Judaism; the call of Barnabas and Saul by the Holy Spirit to go forth amongst the Gentiles; the judgment upon Judaism through Elymas, or Bar-Jesus; and at last the rejection of the gospel by the Jews and their persecution of the Christians at Antioch in Pisidia. Here the cycle ends, the spiritual kingdom of God is fully manifested; the Jews in Palestine and in Asia have rejected their Messiah and they have been judged and condemned; from thenceforth during the Christian era their doom is spiritual blindness, whilst the Christian Church as a young power goes forth to conquer the Roman Empire to God and Christ. Another link worthy of notice is this, Saul—the destroyer—as a persecutor, as God's judge upon Elymas, is changed, and from that time He is Paul—the worker—the devoted servant of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTERS XIV., XV., 1—35, may contain the first cycle. (1) The story of the preaching of the gospel during the Christian era is this: some believed, and some have been evil affected; God has granted gracious signs and wonders by the gospel; there have been great divisions among the people; persecution and fleeing from the persecutors, and through persecution extension of Christ's kingdom. (2) The impotent man at Lystra is a figure of the Roman Empire; by the Word of God it received a new life, and the ignorant heathen would have deified the men who were the servants of God. Jupiter and Mercury, power and learning or oratory, these have surely been the chosen gods of Christian Rome, and the commissioned servants of the King have too often forgotten His Spirit, and become the servants and priests of Jupiter and Mercury. (3) The faithful servants of Jesus Christ followed their Master, and persecution was their portion; they told the disciples that tribulation would be their portion, and that through this rough pathway they must enter the kingdom of God. (4) What has been the history of the Church of Christ in its internal life during the Christian era? It may be summed up in the spirit of Judaism; the necessity of rites and ceremonies as the means of salvation, strife amongst brethren, the continuous going back to Jerusalem and to the apostles, and the never-ending self-assertion of Christian Pharisees, bound in the spirit of Moses, and ignorant of the free spirit of grace in Jesus Christ. (5) Against these things Peter, Barnabas, and Paul have been constantly protesting; the former showing that God had by him opened the door of salvation wide to all men, and that salvation was by faith through grace, and not by Judaism; whilst Barnabas and Paul have testified that not merely are the words of Peter true, but by them God had been pleased to grant His gracious signs and wonders amongst the Gentiles. (6) The thoughts and words of James are those of a Christian Jew, and he dealt with the whole

question as his spiritual successors have done; there is a general acknowledgment of the truth uttered by Peter; this is found to harmonise with the words of the prophet; and as it is not well to limit Christianity by the spirit of Judaism, there is a falling back upon the world-wide Noachian institutions for the Gentiles, whilst the Jews are left at liberty to follow Moses. The spirit of James and the spirit of official Christianity may be studied and compared with profit by the men of this generation; but let those who do so see that they have apprehended the spirit of Jesus Christ, so that they may make no mistake in this matter. (7) What has been the spirit of official Christianity to the people in the Church? It has been to a great extent that of the Jerusalem counsel, the shirking of great principles, and the adoption of mere schemes of expediency and of compromise, so that there might be a hollow truce without any permanent peace. There is found the authority of the Church from whence the glory had departed; but here is no word of the King, and of the spiritual freedom that He had conferred upon His people. (8) The church at Antioch rejoiced for the consolation brought to them by the deputies from Jerusalem, but the free spirit of Christ was gone. Although there were no visible bonds, yet from that time forward the glory of Christianity was taken away, and in its place there was strife about rites and ceremonies. The generation of the spirit of Moses and of self-righteousness became certain, and though there were no visible idols worshipped, no act of fornication committed, nor the body made unclean by eating blood, the motives were changed, the children had become servants and slaves, instead of sons of God. This indeed is a fatal fall away from the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and it must be admitted that in these things the spirit of the Christian era may be clearly discerned.

CHAPTERS XV., 36—41, XVI., may contain the second cycle. (1) Strife and division are the key-note to this portion of human experience and of history; on the one side there stands the spirit of consolation, grace, and truth; and on the other the spirit of work and of grave thought. As then, so even now, the more spiritually minded have retired from public work, whilst the busy hands and brains have kept the world not merely alive but in a state of constant fermentation. (2) The spirit of Judaism is seen in the circumcision of Timothy. The fear of man and the desire to please are strong motives, and it is possible that these secondary considerations had rather too much influence on Paul. But as Timothy means honour of God, here also a new and very strong motive is introduced, and one that is well known in the churches. The desire to honour God is not to be condemned, but men know that this motive has led to deeds truly diabolical in their nature by carnal men. This spirit, which would take charge of God's honour in the spirit of the world, as it has been so often manifested, is anti-Christian; the Spirit of Jesus Christ is, that He emptied Himself of all honour, and became of no reputation for His work; and the servants of Christ were not called upon, in this day of grace, to make innovations upon His Spirit or to make new laws for His kingdom. (3) Man proposes what course shall be taken for the extension of the kingdom

of God, but God's Spirit oftentimes prevents such purposes being carried out, and in His Own time and way directs all events. This vision is an important thought in connection with the spiritual work of Christ's kingdom, because it removes the spiritual government from the visible and official church, and shows that the Holy Spirit is really the Ruler of events and the Administrator of the kingdom. (4) Where shall the Church be found during the Christian era? Men have said, in Rome, in Constantinople, and in other parts; but the Holy Spirit points to the humble meeting-place on the river side near Philippi, and to the affectionate, God-fearing, generous Lydia and her household; and to this the Holy Scriptures agree, as found in the words, "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." (5) The spirit of Lydia is that of the Christian convert and disciple; the spirit of grace breathes in her words and actions; having received grace she would be found faithful to her Lord in all things. (6) The conflict during the Christian era betwixt good and evil, is set forth in the incident of the maid possessed by a spirit of divination; the false is brought into contact with the true and the divine; the false is compelled to confess the truth; this has been a struggle for many days, but the end is the casting out of evil in the Name of Jesus Christ. (7) The maiden was the bondservant of sin, and Paul and Silas the servants of God; they were men of peace, bringing peace to a sinful world, and yet selfish men are their enemies; and because through righteousness their hope of making gain was ended, they persecuted and prosecuted in a most unlawful manner the servants of God. Selfish men have persecuted, unjust rulers punished, and cruel jailors put the sons of God into the deepest dungeon, so that they may be kept safe; but at the midnight hour God speaks by His voice in the earthquake, the prisoners are set free, and those who were the tools of oppression become the sons of God. Marvellous sign of the presence, power, and work of God; and surely it is as easy for Him to shake the nations as He did the gaol at Philippi, and to bring millions upon their knees crying for salvation, as was done by the Philippian jailor. (8) As the magistrates of Philippi awakened to find that they had done wrong in beating a Roman citizen, and were compelled to make public profession of their error and unrighteous conduct, even so the day is at hand when the verdict of men will be that the citizens of a kingdom far greater than that of Rome have been cruelly misused, and that guilt lies upon those men who have acted such a part. Christians will also learn the fact that the suffering and the persecuted sons of God have been the beloved of God, whilst the persecutors and unrighteous rulers have been workers of iniquity.

CHAPTERS XVII., XVIII., 1—17, may contain the third cycle. (1) The Holy Scriptures are God's Word, and they are the only standard of authority in matters relating to the kingdom of God. The method of grace is based upon these facts: that it was necessary the Christ should suffer, die, and rise from the dead; and that Jesus is the Christ. These principles are fundamental; and it can be seen at a

glance that they are the two pillars upon which the kingdom of grace rests. These principles cut asunder from the true all that is false, or formal in ritual and ceremony ; Judaism and every other ism must fall to the ground and worship this King, or else there is no point found for spiritual harmony. (2) Against the house of Jason—he that cures—the Jews and others create an uproar ; they reject the King that saves and heals mankind, and they choose Cæsar and his decrees. Is there not a wonderful concentration of thought in this incident ? the Holy Spirit seems to teach in a truly marvellous manner the facts of history as bearing upon the soul and God, Christ and Cæsar. (3) The spirit of Christ and of Christianity is to receive the Word of God willingly, and to examine it carefully ; faith in God and obedience to His laws will open the Word of God to all those who love truth and righteousness. (4) Athens, the eye of Greece, its spirit, and its philosophers ; and Paul alone in a city full of gods preaching Jesus and the resurrection ; what a contrast is here, and yet does not this picture express the spiritual life of the Christian era to the very letter ? (5) The sermon preached by Paul on Mars-Hill is worthy of the man and the place ; for amongst philosophers he reveals the highest philosophy. Whilst he talks about what pleases them he commands their attention ; but when the wisdom of God for the salvation of men is touched upon, through death and the giving of a new life, he loses his audience. Practically the preaching of Paul on Mars-Hill has been the teaching of the Christian schools, only they have not always been quite so comprehensive. Creation, dependence upon God, providence, repentance, righteousness, and the judgment to come, are subjects which the wise men of all nations have studied ; and Paul very concisely touches these great truths ; but the gospel of the grace and love of God for perishing sinners is not a theme loved by philosophers, or the schools. It might be easy to state that Paul is not seen as the servant of Jesus Christ in Athens ; and that he failed to proclaim the message of mercy to dying men ; but in doing this there follows the fact that Paul is a prophetic figure of the many men who in the day of mercy have been found talking about everything else that would please men except the love and mercy of God in Jesus Christ. (6) To wise philosophers of a class resurrection from the dead is not a theme for serious discussion, but rather a matter suitable for raillery, wit, and mockery ; to another class it is a matter for speculation, but not of immediate importance or of any practical value ; whilst there have been a few who have believed in a spiritual death, and have found a new life in Jesus Christ. The resurrection and the hope beyond the grave, the throwing off of the body of sin and death and rising to a new life in Christ and God, is the germ of the gospel ; but this seems, as men have been taught to think, a matter for the future, a hope, and not a present reality. The figure presented to view is a grave, light flashing into it, and a new life manifested ; and the picture is suitable for a soul, the Church of Christ, or the whole world ; but the great difficulty is to lay hold of the complex thoughts, and beyond the figure to see a dead soul, the Word of grace and truth, and the soul alive to God. In this lies divine wisdom, because the word ‘resurrection,’ embodies man’s state as a sinner cut off from God, the

method of salvation, and the risen life in Christ. The resurrection implies the gospel; but it is so involved, shrouded away in the figure, that it is not discerned; there is life in the seed, but it is a hope rather than the present realisation of the grace and love of God in Jesus Christ. Still, as it is the wisdom of this world and the divine wisdom that is here brought face to face, there is a fitness in this hidden wisdom to such men, whilst to the ignorant it is made known in the glad tidings of great joy. (7) Paul takes his way to Corinth, and in that city he finds meet companions in Aquila and Priscilla who had been compelled to leave Rome; and in Silas and Timothy, who join him at this time. The gospel was blasphemed by the Jews, but there was a special revelation given to Paul, by a vision, to teach him that the King was with him, and that he would be safe in the work of teaching the Word of God. (8) Persecution followed, but under the sagacious Gallio it completely failed. A new time had come, at least in prophetic figure, because there is seen a great extension of the kingdom of God amongst men, and what is more strange a governor tolerating any religion, it may be added, caring for none of them.

CHAPTERS XVIII., 18—28, XX., may contain the fourth cycle. (1) Corinth, Ephesus, Cesarea, Jerusalem, Antioch, Galatia, and Phrygia: teaching in Corinth, sailing to Syria, undergoing penance in fulfilment of a vow, reasoning with the Jews, landing at Cesarea, saluting the Church, conferring with friends in Antioch, and establishing the disciples in Asia Minor, these are some of the manifold works carried on by Paul. This sketch may not contain very much information, but it reveals the spirit of the man in his intense activity, unselfish obedience to duty, and self-sacrifice for the Church of Christ. (2) At this point Apollos appears upon the scene, a zealous man, but imperfectly instructed in the Christian doctrines; he did teach the things concerning Jesus, although he knew only the baptism of repentance, but when fully instructed he became a great help to the Church, and a powerful opponent to Judaism. Here the student will find a subjective study; in the eloquent Apollos, there is seen the liberal Jew, the follower of the Baptist, or of pure Mosaism, a disciple of Jesus Christ, and a defender of the faith. (3) Paul found in Ephesus, certain disciples in the same condition as Apollos had been before he met Aquila; they knew about John's baptism by water, but not about the baptism of the Holy Spirit; but being baptized into the Name of the Lord Jesus, into the kingdom of grace, they, by the laying on of Paul's hands, received the Holy Spirit and His gifts. This is a remarkable stage in the history of the Church in its spiritual experience, it is nothing less than a reformation and the laying down of a new foundation. This is a new Pentecost; the founding of a Pauline church as distinct from the original church at Jerusalem. (4) The work at Ephesus has special features, there is a long period of intense discussion, followed by the testing of the disciples, the hatred and evil speaking of enemies, separation, reasoning in the school of Tyrannus—a prince, or that reigns—the diffusion of the gospel, and the special gift of healing used by Paul. The strolling Jews, exorcists, and the failure in exorcism of

sons of Sceva, all these fill up a picture in the concrete, which needs to find its fulfilment in the events of the Reformation in Europe. Antioch and Ephesus, and the Reformation in Germany in the revolt against the Papacy, with the second Reformation in breaking the yoke of the divine right idea in kings, may be studied side by side in their mutual import with profit. (5) The Way means the method of salvation; Paul and his friends preached Jesus Christ; Demetrius and his friends, for the sake of gain, Diana—the luminous, or perfect. Both ways could not be right, therefore the great uproar in Ephesus. Change names and put down the reformers, and the gospel of Jesus Christ the other way; and on the other side, some of the Roman Catholics and the Virgin Mary as their way, and transfer the stage and the scene to Rome, and the analogy is complete. It was Jupiter, the god of power, who gave the image of Diana to Ephesus, and it was power, not grace, which gave the image of the Virgin to be worshipped instead of the Christ. (6) For a time Paul departed from Ephesus: there was a plot to take his life; he reached Troas in safety, and there whilst he was sleeping until midnight, occurred the fall of Eutychus, his death, and his revival to life again. These things may point to spiritual movements in Europe during the Reformation period. (7) Troas, Assos—coming from Tarsus to Miletus, the purpose to sail past Ephesus and to be at Jerusalem at Pentecost, seem to point out the way that Paul was being led, and also the path of the Church in the fulfilment of prophecy. The farewell address to the elders at Ephesus reveals Paul as a faithful pastor and teacher; and the spirit manifested in his words and actions is perhaps the noblest of the many noble things recorded of him. It is the spirit of Paul leaving Ephesus—that the Church of Christ must much require in her pastors and teachers; men lowly of mind, trusting in the Lord even with tears amidst their trials; teaching all that is profitable, and testifying to all men that repentance toward God and faith in Christ are necessary for salvation. Paul bound in the spirit as he went to Jerusalem, yet knowing that bonds and afflictions awaited him, a grand picture; life and self are lost sight of, and the work intrusted to him swallows up all other thoughts. The future was surrounded with dangers; the friends listening to his words would see him no more, yet he had been faithful, so ought they to be in every duty. Not contentious, but self-denying, and giving, ever giving to others, according to the blessing uttered by the Lord Jesus. Paul was a true man; and the blessing of the King rest upon all who possess his spirit. In the person of Paul is almost transfigured into the likeness of his Master; Jerusalem lies before him, persecution, bonds, imprisonment, and death; in the inmost recess of his soul he was blessed, for his was the kingdom of heaven and of God's grace.

CHAPTERS XXI.—XXIII., 1—10, may contain the fifth cycle. (1) The former cycle terminates with the spirit of grace, truth, and righteousness, this cycle opens with the premonitory signs of what awaits those who are the sons of mercy. Jerusalem brings the vision of life; but to the prophets of God, the Son, and the apostles, it means death and death. (2) In Cesarea, Agabus, by the sign of the bound hands

and feet, made known the future more clearly; but the faithful soul is ready not merely to be bound, but also to die for the Name of the Lord Jesus. (3) The method of mercy may fairly be expressed as going up to Jerusalem; and the companion specially to be chosen is Mnason—a diligent seeker, betrothing, or remembering. The figure of the lamb being led to the slaughter—of Jesus Christ and His mission of mercy—fits into the thought introduced here. (4) The next paragraph is a study in the light of truth, righteousness, and mercy; and in the face of the visible Church and the principles by which it has been guided, the noblest son and the bravest spirit stands before the assembled elders, and rehearses before them the mighty works of God among the Gentiles. They listen with interest to all that he has to say, and when he has finished, they glorify God. So far, good and well; but as if the work of God amongst the heathen was nothing as compared with peace in Jerusalem, they instantly begin a long story about the Jews who are zealous for the law, and recommend that as they are sure to hear of the arrival of the great missionary, that he should take a vow, purify himself, and thus conform to the ritual of the Jews. Paul acceded to their request; but the whole affair is false in principle, contrary to the spirit of Christianity, and thus a snare and a delusion. Who ever heard of the blessing of God resting upon such an unbelieving spirit of expediency and of the service of evil? Paul may be excused because he had been trained up as a Jew, and he may have thought that it was a suitable thing to please his brethren in such a matter; but Christians ought to know that such a spirit and conformity to such principles are base, false, and unrighteous. This way, as it is false, must lead to bondage and strife; and conformity to the wishes of brethren in such a direction is treason to the King. Christian charity will endure and be patient under many things, but there is nothing of the Spirit of Christ in acting a deceitful part for the purpose of keeping peace. The men who recommend what is expedient, and not what is true and right, have fallen from the high position they occupy as the followers of Jesus Christ; and the man who conforms to the wishes of such men forgets his allegiance to the King of grace, truth, and righteousness, and man—foolish, sinful man—becomes his ruler and his king.

(5) The man who had been most active in the footsteps of his Master in purging the spiritual temple of God, was found amongst carnal men in a visible temple, trying to purify himself in a carnal manner. He had left the stream of living water to wash in a stagnant cistern. Was it any wonder, therefore, that a cry was raised against him when found in such a place and under such conditions? The passions of men are easily let loose by such things, mercy is forgotten, and they would pat to death those who would take away their gods. (6) The defence of Paul contains a brief account of his history as a Jew, a persecutor of Christians, the means of his conversion, the charge from God through Ananias; God's words to himself in Jerusalem that his testimony would not be accepted by the Jews; his reply to God, and the command, "Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." What then, seeing that these things are true? Why was Paul found in Jerusalem, and why had he left that charge which God gave him as

ostle of the Gentiles? Why? Simply because Paul was a man
 other men, imperfect and disobedient, as the generation of the
 an Church—even of the Reformed portion of that Church has
 The fact is plain, Paul was instructed by God not to stay in
 lem or imbibe its spirit; again and again he was found there
 a true and righteous call from God, and thus the man con-
 his own wilful actions and the transgression of God's holy will.
 the light of these facts upon history, and if men have not been
 returning to a visible Jerusalem, they have been found constantly
 ing to a visible, corrupt Church, when their instructions have
 to come out and separate themselves from such a communion,
 go forth and preach the gospel to the heathen who know not the
 of God. Is there any inconsistency in Paul and in the Reformed
 h acting such a part, when apparently they have done what they
 been constrained to do? This raises not merely the question of
 saint, inward emotion, and desires, but also the question of duty
 edience to God's Word in the spirit of faith. Men desire and
 ved to go back towards Rome and a historical Christianity, and
 eeling becomes intensified until there is a constraint upon the
 so to act. Is then this desire, emotion, and constraint of the
 to dictate what should be done, and not the Word of God, duty,
 and daily obedience under the influence of the Holy Spirit? It
 be admitted that personal desires, emotions, and constraint of
 irit are not safe guides; these are carnal influences, desirable by
 rnal man; but they are not for a moment to be compared with
 Word, faith, obedience to daily duties, and waiting constantly
 ; Holy Spirit for guidance. God's Word said to Paul, Depart
 Jerusalem and preach to the Gentiles; Paul's desires, emotion,
 nstraint of spirit lay toward Jerusalem and his countrymen; it
 e that he presumed that God was calling him to go to Jerusalem
 h thoughts, but surely his soul could not harmonise these con-
 ; ideas; therefore it might fairly be concluded that self, and not
 was the strong constraining power to do that which did not
 nise with a special revelation from God. But this is a very intricate
 on bearing upon God's foreknowledge, man's free-will, and his
 ability. God cannot err; but if men sin wilfully, or through
 nce, it is to God's glory that He is merciful, and that He turns
 he carnal actions of men into a means for their good. (7)
 y with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he
 live." Such has been the cry of the ignorant and the bigoted,
 se and the wicked, against the sons of God in all generations;
 ey might fairly have responded, in the words of Paul to the
 ion, as to the lawfulness of persecution, or scourging, upon those
 re the sons of God. It was a great thing to be a Roman citizen,
 w much greater a privilege to be born into God's kingdom of grace
 be His messenger of peace to mankind? (8) The scene before
 uncil at Jerusalem ends this cycle of the history of the work of
 in the Roman Empire, and there is seen an unjust high priest and
 a clamorous council, a persecuted Christian, but one without the
 of meekness, causing contention and strife, and all this followed

by the authority of the civil power who removes the prisoner from men who are incapable of being his judges. Perhaps men who can see may have discerned, upon a larger scale, a scene in Europe not unlike what is so forcibly pictured in this incident.

CHAPTERS XXIII., 11, 35—XXIV., may contain the sixth cycle. (1) There is a special revelation from God bringing comfort, confirming the testimony uttered in Jerusalem, and pointing out the path of the apostle for the future. (2) Men may conspire as they please against the servants of God, but they will find that the Unseen takes cognisance of all their thoughts, words, and actions. (3) The method of a perverted Church has been death, by any means, for those who have refused to accept its authority and obey its laws; but the civil power has been usually more just in its methods of action. (4) Truth and righteousness, in the higher acceptation of these words, have not been known in the Roman Empire during the Christian era, but there has been a certain amount of justice toward prisoners. The despotism of the East and the absolutism of the Papacy and its supporters have been horribly unjust; therefore the spirit of ancient Rome, in its conformity to law, has been a beneficent power amongst men. For law and justice to reign, and the prisoner and the accusers to be brought face to face, this has been a very important matter to Europe; it has maintained the spirit of justice amongst men. (5) The plausible speech of Tertullus and his charge against Paul has been, in principle, the method and the manner of the persecutors of Christ from that day till now; they have praised the civil power, and blamed the humble followers of Christ for being wicked men, insurrectionists, ringleaders of sects, and profaners of the temple of God. (6) From such things Christians have defended themselves, by showing that the charges brought against them have been false, and such as could not be proved; whilst they have freely confessed that they have followed "the Way," which their enemies have called a sect and not the Church. Still they have been serving God faithfully according to His Word, and they have even agreed with their persecutors in the hope that there shall be a resurrection from the dead of just and unjust; and it is, in reality, upon this question of the resurrection that they have been called in question. It may be suggested that this recurrence of the question of the resurrection at this point is significant; because, at bottom, the strife between Jew and Christian, Roman Catholic and Protestant, rests here. Jew and Roman Catholic agree that there will be, in the indefinite future, a resurrection of the just and unjust, and this is their hope; but Christian and Protestant maintain that the resurrection is an accomplished fact through Jesus Christ, that conversion is a spiritual resurrection, and that they also hope for the great resurrection yet to come. The important principles involved in the doctrine of the resurrection can easily be perceived, and to show that the Jew and the Roman Catholic have sinned because of their wilful ignorance would not be difficult; in plain words, they have rejected or despised Jesus Christ and His gospel, and thus the spiritual facts are not accepted by them. (7) This question is not one for Cesar or his

lieutenants; therefore, as civil judges and governors have generally known more about such matters than the accusers have supposed, they have usually acted wisely in postponing their decision until further light could be thrown upon the subject; in the meantime, liberty and indulgence have been permitted to those of "the Way," and so the accusers have been foiled in their purposes. (8) Felix, Drusilla, and Paul are a study: the latter speaking to the governor about righteousness, self-control, and a judgment to come, and the governor terrified before his prisoner is a unique scene in the judgment-hall of this world. The picture is a great revelation in the kingdom of heaven; and it is a prophetic representation of that time when the proud shall be judged by the meek in the kingdom of heaven. In the meantime, there is another picture, and it is the guilty judge putting away his opportunity for reformation, the supremacy of the covetous spirit, and the deceitful man gaining the favour of the people by injustice.

CHAPTERS XXV., XXVI., may contain the seventh cycle. (1) Paul, and in him the gospel, the reformed Church, and in it the Word of God, these are what the Jew and the Roman Catholic cannot endure. Influence, duplicity, and even unlawful schemes for murder, are considered as legitimate to gain the end they desire; but the civil power is supreme, therefore Cesar protects the gospel although He has no love for it, or for the King of kings, who is the Prince of peace. (2) The position of Paul and of the gospel is a peculiar one; there is persecution by those who should love and protect grace and truth; and it falls to the civil power, the moral order, to see justice done betwixt a persecuting, perverted parent, and the child sprung from its loins. The bitter enmity of the Jew to the Christian or of Roman Catholic to Protestant, may be discerned in the grievous charges preferred, but which could not be proved; and the persecuted could reply that neither against Jewish law, the temple, nor Cesar, had they sinned. As the unstable Festus was unwilling to offend the Jews and yet unable to condemn Paul, and proposed the trial at Jerusalem, so rulers have often been found in a similar position. However, the case is one of truth and justice, and it cannot be settled in such a manner; the appeal is from a time-serving Festus to Cesar, and unto Cesar this question must be taken. (3) The statement of Festus to Agrippa may be considered as a fair summary of the aspect of this question as it is related to the civil power. The judge has considered the evidence of the persecutors and the whole case, and he finds that the question is one about religion; and whether it be true or not that one Jesus who was once dead is again alive. Any judge would feel perplexed to have to decide upon the truth or justice of such questions; in fact the judge is helpless, if he acts justly, to give any decision upon such matters. (4) In the words of Festus to Agrippa, there is the more private opinion upon the whole matter; but when Paul is introduced to king Agrippa and all the great people, there is the open confession that the charges were irrelevant. Festus finds himself in the strange position of having as a prisoner an innocent man, and yet even against his will he is

thought upon which all the Jews were
attain. The charge brought against his
Hope of Israel, and to no other subject
God should raise the dead? Paul and
story of persecution, conversion, and
means, getting behind the figure, see a
lift his hand against God brought to life
God's mercy, and because living, preach
in Christ who suffered, died, and rose again
and the Gentiles might have the light of
living men and churches now; because
the Pharisee should be converted as
Roman Catholic Church there should be
spiritual manifestations, either of these
Jesus rose from the dead, and yet, he
would say that this story of Paul is a
of the past three hundred and sixty years
who think, speak, or write thus are
Festus stamp who are unable to come
with such men is folly except by asserting
the saneness of the speakers. This is
debate, but of knowledge and of belief
because the things spoken by Paul were
as to the believing heart, here indeed
thrust that the king must have written
look of this strange prisoner on his
held him as if in a vice, and compelled
that is, really granted that these things
disputed; but between such a belief,
lay the whole diameter of the king's

because the effect of this appeal in Paul's case is not recorded in the Scriptures.

CHAPTERS XXVII., XXVIII., may contain the eighth cycle. (1) Following the same line of thought, it may be assumed that the figure is somewhat changed, and the gospel ship has set sail for the desired haven. From the Reformation to the Millennium is a long voyage and varied, greatly varied have been the past experiences. (2) A terrific storm, even such as made men give up hope, has been endured, but again God speaks, bringing both hope and comfort through His servant. (3) A shipwreck in which the visible order of things seemed to go to pieces, but from whence spiritual things were saved. (4) Fire, and the viper; persecution and unbelief, and yet the Church of God lives; and through the great change that has taken place and greater changes that shall yet take place, the Word of God shall be honoured. (5) The merciful work of healing the sick and preaching the gospel in Europe and among the heathen to which there is a loving response by those so blessed. (6) The voyage has been a long and circuitous one, but in due time a safe harbour is obtained; friends are found; and Rome reached. (7) Again there is an appeal to the Jews, with great freedom of discussion about the Hope of Israel, and with the usual results. (8) The story ends with Paul as a prisoner in Rome, with ample freedom to preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; and it may be said that the Church of Christ is now in a sense subject to the civil power, and yet there never has been in former days such liberty throughout the world for preaching the gospel. Nero, or Christ, is the next question; in other words, are men going to be subject to Cesar for ever, or are they going to be ready to welcome the King of kings at His glorious coming?

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

THE first great cycle reveals the spiritual kingdom of God's grace in its method of administration, and the gifts and graces conferred upon those who are the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The second great cycle, it has been assumed, presents to view in the microcosm life of the apostle Paul, the spirit and the history of this kingdom during the Christian era. In this book, or epistle, it may be assumed that the subjective conception of the method of its operations is considered, and this is following out the spirit in the Beatitudes, and the order of the kingdom of grace.

CHAPTERS I.—III., 1—18, may contain the first cycle. (1) The introduction states the object of the epistle to a soul, or to the whole world; and it is that Paul, the servant of Jesus Christ, has been commissioned to carry to all nations that gospel of God, promised by the prophets, concerning His Son born of David's seed, as related to His flesh or bodily form, but in reality the Son of God in power and purity,

MACROCOSM, GOD HAS MANIFESTED HIMSELF, chosen to become thankless, conceited, given themselves up to all forms of idolatry, up God, and took their own ways, He vile and dishonourable; permitting the truth, and to serve the creature instead have refused to know or obey God; and are worthy of death. (5) Men are the sight of God; they have been found to condemn others, even whilst they are but they cannot escape the righteous judgment of the goodness and grace of God which vouchsafed them, then they must bear the penalty of their disobedience, and obedient to the truth, then God will punish who have transgressed His laws. God is just, and in no sense is He partial; but His dealings according to His moral and gracious laws, the law of Jesus Christ is the supreme law and is God's standard; that is to say, a perfect life. The Jew may boast of and rest in his ceremonies; but unless the spiritual laws, moral and gracious laws of God, then they become a stumbling-block instead of a help, he possesses none of these things obey God's will, then he is accepted of God, to his advantage in being a Jew, or, say also, to his great advantages gained by these, he trusts God's Word, His sacred oracles, salvation of men. If some, Jews and Gentiles, have faith in these oracles, will their unbelief to His promises? "God forbid;" His Word is the true oracle of God; and that which is essentially true and right.

should a man be judged to be a sinner when through his evil greater good has come to man, and glory to God's Name? Is the minister of evil, the devil, to have no credit, and receive no benefit, when he has been the tool used to work out such an end? No; absolutely none, for the simple reason that sin could work evil, evil only and continually; and it is the grace of God, and that only, which could bring additional glory to His Name. The condemnation is perfectly just upon all men; but upon the men who would reason in such a fashion, who can conceive what their deserts should be? (8) Are Jews and Christians in a worse position before the Judge than the heathen, because they have had such privileges and responsibilities? By no means; but the conclusion is that Jew, Christian, and heathen, it matters not by what name they are known, if they are unbelievers, are all sinners, and guilty before God.

CHAPTERS III., 19—31, VI., may contain the second cycle. (1) Because all men are sinners they are placed under law, that is God's revealed will, as given through Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, the prophets, Jesus Christ, and the apostles; God's moral and gracious laws confront all men in all nations, and unless they conform to these as known to them, they are guilty before God. Can a man save himself by being moral and even gracious? By no means; because every breach of the moral law tells him that he is a sinner; and every omission of a gracious privilege condemns him as unfit to be a follower of the gracious Saviour. It is through law, that is, the knowledge of God's method of life, or salvation, that there is the knowledge of sin; and thus to heathen, Jew, and Christian, by the unwritten law, the written moral law, and the teachings of gracious laws of Christ, there is the increasing light of grace and truth, of knowledge and responsibility; and the highest is to man that which condemns him most, because it is calculated to teach him how infinite is the distance betwixt the Good and Gracious and a sinful man, whose every emotion is selfish and self-seeking. This is a strange fact, but it seems to be God's truth that the illumination of the gospel, through man's inability to obey its precepts, is in reality a law radiating the most intense light, for his salvation certainly, in one sense, but also for his self-condemnation in the sight of God. This is the climax of divine truth; it sets man in a light that pierces through body, soul, and spirit, and standing naked before God, the utterance of the spirit is, "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer Thee?" Self must stand aside; all that a man can think, say, or do is absolutely without any value for his salvation, and so the thoughts must be turned in another direction if salvation is to be obtained at all. Thank God, apart from all law, so far as the sinner is concerned, a righteousness of God has been revealed in Jesus Christ, and it is unto all who will believe in Him; distinction as to heathen, Jew, or Christian vanishes from view, because all are sinners, and all have fallen below the divine standard of perfection in life and conduct. Christ, therefore, is *the* Propitiation, through faith, and by His death His righteousness is the great reality; and it is by Him that God is just and can justify those who turn away from self,

even when unrepentant, a Christian, who walk in his steps, are also the same way, because they believe on God from the dead, who had been delivered unto from the dead as the means of our justification in God, in this sense stand as justification, enmity that existed is abolished, and is by faith that this grace is attained : possess peace rejoice in the hope of the Not only so, but what is more strange than in life, a man rejoicing when in trouble, hope are made strong. Not that this is fruit of trouble, but because it is made being shed abroad in the soul through the Therefore, that is reviewing the whole sin, and through it death ; and so death sinned. Sin is not imputed where there until the giving of the moral law to death reigned. What then, was there period ? Certainly there was ; but the of Adam, who as an unfallen moral creature that of sinful creatures, under grace, ever have been, only their light was more extensive, and their responsibility less. figure of the perfect, moral Jesus ; and the Head of humanity ; remove this light has no claim or right as a man for the and then He becomes the moral Head of of men. But not as it was with the first race, who by one sin brought ruin upon grace to men in Jesus Christ, the second God by Him is of innumerable sins ; but of sin there came judgment upon the

in the personal realisation of its iniquity and vileness ; but as in the individual soul where the knowledge of sin and its heinousness has abounded, God's free grace has abounded more exceedingly, so in the world the same effects have been manifested. Sin has reigned in death, that is, in the darkness of the ignorant soul, and in the gross darkness of a world lying in sin, but by God's moral and gracious laws, His lights shining upon men, the yoke of sin has been made intolerable, and thus men have turned to Jesus Christ, the Grace of God, who reigns through righteousness unto an eternal life. (5) What shall men say in response to such thoughts? Let us go on in sin so that grace may have room to abound? Away with the Satanic idea, for how is it possible for grace and sin, light and darkness, life and death to cohabit together? When men are dead to God they serve sin ; but when alive to God, in Jesus Christ, they are dead to death and free from sin's thralldom. What then, can men wear the chains of the enemy and yet declare that they are freemen in Jesus Christ? The idea is as absurd as that a man can serve two gods, or prove loyal to two kings whose interests are opposed to each other. Only through ignorance and love for sin, could such a plea be made by any rational creature ; because when men are baptized into Jesus Christ they are really baptized into His death. There is union with Him in death and in life ; and this means crucifixion of and for sin, and not cohabitation with it. To change the figure, men must keep their eyes constantly fixed upon the Lord Jesus, and in Him they will see the mournful spectacle of the Good and the Gracious in bonds, chained to the triumphant car of sin, moving slowly onward to death and the grave. This is the most marvellous sight in the universe, except the one that followed it, where the King of life is seen casting aside the chains which held Him in His body for a time, and in triumph putting sin, death, and hell below His glorious feet. What does this figure mean? Simply that each soul should seek to realise itself as in that procession in the Lord Jesus Christ ; and also that there is resurrection power by His new life, so that sin and death being put down below the feet of a man it is his privilege to live unto God. (6) King Sin is dethroned, therefore serve him not in obeying any selfish lusts or desires ; but rather make the soul, spirit, and body a living sacrifice unto God. Sin has no lawful dominion over man ; and the law cannot condemn a son of God ; his Lord is Grace, the ever blessed Grace of God. (7) What then, following this hideous enemy of man still further, shall a son of God sin because the law cannot condemn him, and he is found to be a gracious follower of the God of grace? What! shall a man who has seen his Lord and himself dragged at the triumphant car of the devil, in chains, suffering every form of ignominy and shame, after rising to a new life, and putting the vile enemy under his feet, turn round and present himself to the devil, that his hands may be chained, and his eyes put out, so that he might serve such an abominable tyrant? The idea is awfully absurd, and yet it is only too true that men have been found doing this very thing continually. God help His helpless, foolish, erring children ; they are indeed great sinners when they do this thing, because it is crucifying the Lord afresh, and

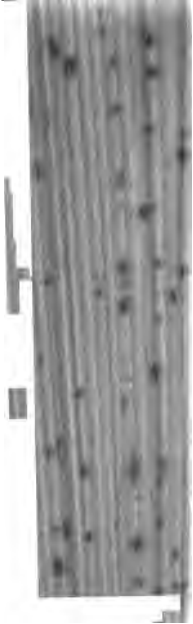
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but there is deliverance through Jesus Christ our Lord. (3) To the soul that is alive in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation ; and it is the spirit of life—the risen life—in Christ Jesus, that gives this freedom. The laws of God (moral and gracious) could not attain this end on account of the inability of man to conform to what is true, right, good, and gracious ; therefore God sent His Son in the flesh as an offering for sin, and so sin was condemned in Him. What then ? Why Christ became Lord over sin and death ; they have become His servants and slaves, and His redeemed ones being set free from such tyrants, no longer serve sin, but walking in the Spirit of Christ, they receive the law and it becomes to them the guide or chart for their actions in life. When the Spirit of God dwells in a man he is spiritual ; but if a man has not the Spirit of Christ he is carnal. With Christ in him the body is still dead because of sin, that is, the flesh, or the carnal man ; but the spirit is alive to God because of righteousness. What then, is there no deliverance for the body ? Yes, if the spirit of God dwell in a man, then He that raised up the dead body of the Lord Jesus Christ shall also quicken the mortal bodies of men by His indwelling spirit. (4) Therefore, because of all this, men are found to be debtors to God through Jesus Christ ; and as by the spirit they crucify the fleshly lusts, and are being led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. The spirit under which they serve is not that of a bond-slave animated by fear of punishment for sin, or of offenders, because of transgressing law, but of adoption, and so the child-like cry of the soul is *Abba, Father*. The Spirit of God and the spirit of man are in harmony, and thus the children become heirs of God for all that He can supply, and joint-heirs with Christ in suffering with Him so that there may also be glory with Him in due time. (5) Suffering is not a pleasant thing ; but the suffering that any man may have to endure during the day of grace is not to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. What is the earnest expectation of the whole creation ? It is the revealing of the sons of God. The creation has been in subjection to vanity ; but in this subjection there has been the hope of deliverance, and of bringing the redeemed children into liberty and glory. The creation has been groaning and travailing, as in pain ; and those who have received the first-fruits of salvation by the spirit are also found groaning, waiting for the redemption of the body. By hope (through faith) men are saved ; but a realised experience, that is, the first-fruits of the spirit, is not hope ; the hope of the future is the perfect adoption and redemption, and may God grant the grace of patience to His children so that they may wait for it. (6) Turning the thoughts inward upon the soul, it also is seen to be in a state of perplexity ; because there is not a perfect knowledge of God's will, or power to pray ; but there is an Intercessor there, and He can pray without words ; and His prayer is heard because it is in harmony with the will of God. Those who love God attain to this knowledge ; that all things work together for good to all those who are called according to God's purpose of grace. Those foreknown by God are also fore-ordained to become like His Son, that is, to take His image, because He is the First-born from the dead, the gracious living One ; the fore-ordained have also been called, the

come one who can condemn? It is Christ who possesses the place of power and redeemed are absolutely safe under such a love as this. So then who or what in the universe can do it, for such things are conquered through Christ. Grace reigns in the universe, therefore there is no enemy but the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.

CHAPTERS IX.—XI., 1—12, may compare with Paul, in his measure, for his kind of ceasing pain of heart, so with the Law according to the flesh. Paul might have said if they only could be saved, but upon anathema before man could be saved as a privilege, but Christ's brethren have what God can give; and yet they have not surpassed the Jews in faithfulness. Have they failed? By no means, all who have been the spiritual followers of Christ have the promise, not the children of the flesh. God. Ishmael was older than Isaac, but Jesus Christ; and the wisdom of God and His grace, is found in these words, "The Law and in this thought—"Jacob I loved and shall men say to the wisdom and grace of God righteous when He acts thus? No; His mercy as well as of His justice; have any right to question His plan.

free-will of man ; but the man would be mad indeed who when questioning the sovereignty of God, rejects His free-will and fore-knowledge, resting His reasonings upon this truth, that God can only act toward His creatures according to His wise, holy, just, good, and gracious laws. (3) Since God is the absolute Sovereign of the universe, and all things obey His will, then is there any room for Him to find fault, seeing that He ordains all creature existences? Such questions on the lips of the creature are blasphemous ; pride and rebellion are in them, they bear within them the hiss of the serpent, and not the lisping cry of the child saying Abba, Father. Men have no right whatever to question the perfect truthfulness, goodness, or justice of God ; and far less His marvellous free grace ; but if they will do so, God is very patient with them, He permits them to take their own way, and in doing so they make manifest His patience and long-suffering towards creatures fitted by their own pride, self-will, and sensuality for destruction. In doing this men have seen not God unjust, but the Just One put to death by His Own creatures ; they have seen the vile creatures attempting to sit in the throne of God upon the earth, whilst they have crushed under foot, tormented, and persecuted God's children. They have been raised up, and they have been permitted to work iniquity, but they will also be cast down, and then the Name, power, and glory of God will be made known in the earth. They would have made the earth as Sodom and Gomorrah, but God will arise and cut their work short by His judgments upon the ungodly ; whilst the seed of promise so long trodden down by the proud and the wicked shall be saved and inherit the earth. (4) What shall men say about this mystery of righteousness, the wisdom and truth of God? The whole matter is very simple ; the unrighteous are made righteous by faith in the Divine Saviour, when they absolutely renounce the world, the flesh, the devil, and everything that is in self. Those who follow after laws, rites, and ceremonies, making these their end, or righteousness, become self-righteous ; and so what was meant to lead them to the Saviour is made a great stumbling-block in their path to prevent attainment to righteousness by faith. (5) The world is full of such men amongst the heathen, the Jews, and Christians ; they have great zeal for God in their worship and works, but it is not in harmony with knowledge and righteousness. Such men are ignorant of this one thing, God's righteousness, which is by faith ; they are not subject to Him in this matter, which is vital, but they are ever seeking to make themselves righteous by conformity to laws. It is evident that if men continue to run in the circle of laws, and always breaking them, they can reach no terminus ; but the man of faith surmounts all laws, places himself in Christ the Author of law, and by doing so he finds a beginning, and an end also for law. The man who can make himself righteous by obedience to law will be permitted to live in what he can make ; but this is a house without a foundation, it is a castle in the air ; and what sane man would choose such a habitation for body or soul? The man of faith, righteous in Christ, does not trouble himself about impossibilities ; God's Word is his rest and refuge ; he believes, and he is made righteous ; and he confesses that belief and is saved. This is God's



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the King rides forth amongst the
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CHAPTERS XI., 13—36, XIII., 1—7
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and thus faith and humility are con
grace. This dealing of God reveals

loved for the Father's sake. God does not change; He remains faithful and true to all His promises; and thus those who have been disobedient and ungrateful have all been shut up in their wilfulness and rebellion, so that grace and mercy might be fully manifested to all men. (4) The wisdom and the knowledge of God in His kingdom of grace surpass the conceptions of men; and even His judgments upon the wicked, who would have none of His mercy, are unsearchable. Foolish, vain man's place before God here is low in the dust of self-abasement, so that he may become fit to become a scholar in God's school. Glory to man there cannot possibly be any; but to God be all the glory for ever. Amen. (5) Seeing that these things are so, what should be the inward state of man toward God and men? It ought to be like that of the Lord Jesus Christ whilst among men; that is, the life to be "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God," which is truly a most reasonable service. (6) Saintry experience will teach, through grace, that faith and humility are the most suitable graces to be worn by a redeemed child of God. All the gifts which the Holy Spirit is pleased to give a man are free gifts to be used for God's glory and the welfare of men; therefore whilst the soul's aspirations are ever toward perfect holiness, the seeing of God's face, let the method or the laws of life toward men be those of God's grace as manifested in the words, life, and death of Jesus Christ. (7) Subjection, not lordly rule, ought to be man's desire; for if a man is not subject to God, according to law, he is unfit to be a ruler. First let a man set the house of his own soul in perfect order, and then he may be useful, in subjection to God's laws, to help others. All power and authority are God's; He alone is the King Eternal, and all power possessed by kings and rulers is His. They are ordained and appointed by Him, and they ought to be faithful unto Him. It is not for a son of God, a Christian, as an individual to rebel against a civil government, but rather to be subject to God's servants giving willingly the lawful tribute, custom, and honour to all men. If this servant of God is unjust and unrighteous, a Christian, a son of God, may not do that which is unrighteous, or use means to take private vengeance, it is for him to be Christ-like, and in due time the King will call His rebel subject to account.

CHAPTERS XIII., 8—14, XV., 1—21, may contain the sixth cycle.

(1) The spirit of this cycle is love, for in this is the fulfilment of the law. Let a man but attain to this, and he is found basking in the light of the divine favour, seeing God's face, and he is so transfigured that from himself there streams forth God's light, that is, His law of truth in the spirit of love. (2) This is the grand ideal, but the season is the night-time, men are asleep, and they have lost sight of the goal that God has placed before them. Awake, awake, O soul; cast off the things of darkness, be clothed with truth, keep the eyes fixed on the great ideal, and make no provision whatever to satisfy sinful lusts and desires. (3) Put aside all quarrelling and foolish disputations; let there be no more strife about fasts or feasts, saints' days or holidays, but let the life of every man named after Christ be in His Spirit and for

sympathy, and gentle words. They can
eat and drink, but in the soul, in right
with joy in communion with the
realise these things and act up to them
well-pleasing in God's sight, but what
(5) The strong in faith, in knowledge
the mercy of God, to please themselves
please them for their edification. The
spirit should be in His followers, and
God may be glorified. Christ was made
circumcision, the cutting off or crucifixion
so that the spiritual promises given
and "that the Gentiles might glorify
spirit of this cycle is love; the aspect
that "the God of hope" should fill them
with that peace which comes through
that the filled soul might be full of
Holy Spirit. (7) A soul so filled and
must be, by its very nature, a minister
son of God. There cannot be any glory
in Christ Jesus in the things that pertain

CHAPTERS XV., 22—33, XVI., 1—11, may be
This cycle breathes the spirit of peace
are reconciled, and there is a mutual
is a coming referred to, and by it in
blessing of the gospel of Christ."
conciliation, and the spirit of peace, as
from the evil spirit of contention and
revelation of God by the gospel might

amongst men ; but for the future God grant that it may not be so ; rather the hope of the Church is that thou shalt be worthily received by the saints, and that every assistance will be given thee in thy blessed work. The Lord bless thee ; for whilst men have been wrangling in strife, thou hast been the succourer of many, and even of the spirit of the apostle of the Lord in his manifold labours. Come in, thou shining and pure one, our hearts welcome thee, so that by observing thee in thy manifold works of mercy and labours of love, we too might be enabled to radiate forth the love of God upon a perishing world, and to become more pure in heart. (4) The kingdom of God in the church is to be found in the salutations sent by Paul to his friends. The humble and loving, the practical and spiritual, Priscilla and Aquila, represent the spirit of the kingdom. How beautiful and touching are the words of Paul, "my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life laid down their own necks ; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles." They are not alone, for the church of God is in their house. Epænetus and Mary represent the first-fruits in Christ, and the labour of the meek and gentle soul. Andronicus, Junia, and Amplias represent the church under its afflictions, "beloved in the Lord." Then there follow Urbane and Stachys, as the fellow-workers in Christ, and the beloved in the work of mercy. Apelles is the separated one, the pure, and the approved in Christ. Then there follow friends and kinsmen in various relations, those who are good counsellors, and labourers in the kingdom of God's peace. (5) The gospel must ever be the testing power amongst men in their present sinful state ; thus offences and strife will come, but from those who strive the followers of Christ must turn away. The Church requires to be wise in that which is good, but in the things that are evil there ought to be simplicity or purity of thought. It will be when these spirits take these relative positions that the God of peace shall bruise Satan under foot, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ will be fully manifested. (6) The salutations from the companions of Paul are from men who honour and serve God, the pure, the peaceable, and the faithful in Jesus Christ. (7) Now to Him who is able to teach men the truth, and to reveal unto them His Own purpose of grace, so that all nations may be brought to the righteousness of faith and obedience to the gospel, to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ the Lord and Saviour of men, the King of kings, be glory for ever. Amen.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

THE word Corinth means satisfied, an ornament, or beauty ; the ornament which is truly beautiful in God's sight and satisfying to man is a meek and quiet spirit ; this in God's sight is of great value. The third Beatitude harmonises with this spirit ; thus it may be assumed that this epistle bears upon the kingdom of grace, and upon the means by which the saints shall be brought to their inheritance.

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division ; Paul, Apollos, Cephas, at
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all things. (2) The Corinthians were carnal, mere babes in Christ ; and through their jealousy and strife unable to apprehend the wisdom of God. Paul and Apollos, planting and watering the visible means, and not the spiritual issues, were almost everything to them, and so they forgot God, the great Worker and chief Builder, because He is to be spiritually apprehended, and not seen by means of the organs of sense. (3) By grace God gives unto men works to perform, and they ought to perform their duties in harmony with the will of God. Paul was appointed to be the wise master-builder for the Gentile Church in the Roman Empire, and he laid the foundation of the building, upon the Foundation of eternal wisdom and truth. Others followed him adding to the structure, but he is no way responsible for their work ; the day of trial will come, and then it will be seen that all that has been done in harmony with the will of God is good and precious ; but everything that has been of self is vile and must be destroyed. Men do require to study not merely what they ought to do, but specially the spirit with which they are animated ; if they are carnal their labours are vain ; but if spiritual, then there will be a reward. (4) Men must not get into a maze upon this question ; it is not so very large after all, for to the individual soul, it is summed up in the words, "ye are a temple of God." It is this thought that makes man so great ; and it is because he is so honoured that he should be so holy. (5) Beware of self-deception ; the wisdom of this world is foolishness, and the carnal man loves to be led astray in this direction ; it is so easy to follow after worldly power, wisdom, and greatness, that the wisdom of mercy seems to be foolishness ; but when men leave off glorying in men, and seek his divine path of life, then they are forgiven, they find mercy, and all things are theirs, because they are united to Christ. (6) The servants of Christ are His ministers ; and they are not to be judged by carnal men or measures ; but being faithful to God, in due time, the Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, that is the mystery of evil, and also the mystery of His grace amongst men. (7) Paul and Apollos are examples for men to study for their profit ; and their lives are to be taken as indicating what the faithful followers of Christ might expect in this world. In this respect many have erred from the truth ; having forgotten the first principles of grace they get self-conceited, glorify themselves, are rich in their own imaginations, and think that they should reign like kings of this earth. The visible kingdom will come in due time ; but he is already a true king, who in meekness can endure patiently all that a wicked world can do to the peaceful sons of God. The kingdom of God is not a thing of vain conceits and of mere words, it is the very power of God. One greater than Paul will come unto men right early ; may His coming to His Own be in love and in the spirit of meekness, and may they be ready to welcome Him in this spirit.

CHAPTERS V.—VII. may contain the third cycle. (1) Here it seems a great spiritual allegory may be discerned in the family relations referred to, as it is through lusting and fornication that the affections of men and women are perverted from their right aim, so in the great

because the infatuation is so great
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purity, and truth. (2) With this
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comes from the third heaven ; and
must be seen. The beggarly worl
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unnholy alliance of soul and body, and His method of divine life is a complete union with Christ so that the spiritual in Christ shall be the one great power in man, all other powers being the servants of this kingly power in the heaven of man's soul. Let men flee this awful sin of schism from God in Christ, and the vile service of the flesh and the devil; because this sin is one within the very soul causing separation from God, and thus a disintegration of the being. The visible things and God's laws are useful in their place, as His glorious temple; but the redeemed soul is the priest and king within the temple, a living soul in Christ engaged in God's glorious service. (5) As the state of marriage is not a spiritual and eternal condition, so the kingdom of mercy under which men live is not to be considered as the permanent state for men. It would be good for a man if he was never brought into subordination to this ordinance, that is to say, not made a servant of the *law* or the method of mercy; but this high spiritual position has been almost inconceivable to men in the past; and even now, how many Christians could lay hold of this thought, and act upon it, that men will be like Christ when they serve God in His kingdom of mercy, not in accordance with the laws in the Beatitudes, but in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The *law* of mercy, like the marriage relation betwixt man and wife, is not one that should be strained, there must be sufficient spiritual affinity to make the yoke pleasant, else there is fornication and not spiritual union in the alliance. Mercy and forgiveness, to be gracious in their nature, must be free, and the soul must love the *law* of mercy before there is union, and after the union is consummated there must be freedom within the bounds of the laws of mercy so that there may not be sin. This is written in the spirit of *permission*, and not of *law*; in other words, God speaks here in His grace and mercy, not by moral law; and thus though there may be a want of perfect conformity to law, He will not condemn so long as the affections are true to Him in Jesus Christ. The position of Paul is the right one, that is to say, within the kingdom of grace and mercy he serves no law, but without reserve he lives in the spirit of grace in Jesus Christ in seeking that the mercy of God might rest upon men. It would indeed be well if all men had such a spirit; but it is not so, it is well therefore to be patient, and let men and women use the gifts God has given unto them so that the time may come when such a spirit will be possible in the Church of Christ. (6) It is good for those who are not subject to the law of mercy that they remain free; but if the soul has its desires, and the affections cannot be so concentrated upon the Lord Jesus, that it will radiate forth His Spirit, then it is better to try to conform to the law of mercy than to possess gracious freedom and sin. Further, to those who are wedded to the law of mercy there must not be any divorce, because separation from mercy means death. But where there is a union which is not according to the law of mercy, and there is found so much love as prompts to affection, then divorce is not commended, because the sanctified by obeying the laws of mercy may be the means of grace to the unholy. Carrying this thought into the great world of facts in Jesus Christ, it may be said that He is wedded to His Church and people by the law of mercy, and divorce in this sphere is absolutely

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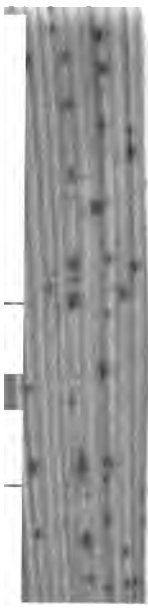
CHAPTERS VIII.—XI. may conta
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sacrificing, *burning* for the good of others, he is not free, but under law, or else, so utterly separate from Christ as to be selfish, and this is antichrist. (2) The Christian should be free; God loves freedom in truth and righteousness; but it is not wrong if there is service in spiritual things, and a reward in reaping of things that are carnal; for the priest ministering in the temple, he also has his portion with the altar. Still all this is service, and not perfect freedom; it is the work of the servant, not the service of a son. To stipulate that for so much work there shall be so much pay, is not sinful, but it is subjection to law, and not in the Spirit of Christ, who made no terms with men, but gave Himself freely, soul and body, for their salvation. How far can this marvellous spirit of freedom in Christ carry a man? Presumably even to death in self-sacrifice for the good of others, but not one step in the direction of conformity to sin, which is contrary to the laws of God. A Christian is free to do many things for the good of others, but not to wound Christ by seeking to please wilful, sinful men, and by doing so to give pain to those weak of faith in Him. This is a very delicate question, and the solution lies in its relations to the spirits of men; taking for example the spirits of the apostles and Christians at Jerusalem at Paul's last visit, it was not Christ-like for Paul to minister to such men who were the bondslaves of fear, self-conceit, envy, and jealousy. The mere taking of a vow and being purified by ceremonies may not be wrong, but when they are performed for the purpose of pleasing men whose spirits are opposed to Christ, then it does seem that this is going beyond the spirit of Christian freedom; it almost seems as if the freeman was becoming an accomplice with wicked men, instead of standing aside and in meekness suffering what wicked men might do. The gospel is free, and its mission is freedom to men; the man who partakes of its spirit is also free, but he has a race to run. The goal is to possess and manifest the merciful, holy, righteous Spirit of Christ; if a man can do this, then he shall be filled with righteousness, and he will obtain the incorruptible crown of God's grace and mercy; to this end visible things and laws must be kept down and used as servants, and they who by God's grace live and preach unto others such a gospel will not be rejected by God. (3) It is not right that Christian men should be ignorant of the dealings of God with His people in past times; or in other words, of God's method of salvation as found in history. Under the cloud and passing through the sea, a baptism into the spirit of Moses, the eating of spiritual food, and drinking spiritual drink, sum up their condition, position, spirit, and the invisible spirit of Christ not apprehended by them. The cloud has been very dense, for God's face and favour have not been felt by man; the sea has been very tempestuous, and men have not found rest for their souls; the spirit of law has prevailed, and yet under all the disadvantages Christ has been received by faith, and He has been the gracious nourishment for the spiritual life in man. This is God's mysterious way, and it is good; but men have rebelled against it, and they have been overthrown. From the past let men learn wisdom and righteousness, because these things are written that Christians may be warned against *lusting after* evil things. *Lusting* is the root

that God loves, and unto such there is a way of escape. (4) Men cannot flatter that is required here; but they may admit of no rival to reign in the soul of the soul. **Wise men will be able to understand the Holy Communion; it is not wine and bread, but Christ's Spirit and Christ's life.** **It is here that there is true union and fellowship with Christ, and not as with Israel after the flesh.** The Christian must offer up himself unto God through Jesus Christ; and not offer up himself to devils. Christians ought not to offer up themselves to any other idol, and at the same time to have fellowship with the spirit and life in Jesus Christ. This provokes the Lord to jealousy and to anger. (5) All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. The spirit is not free to serve self, but to spend itself for others. Therefore, whatsoever thing is done for selfish ends, or for gross sensual gratification, is not profitable. **Abstinence for the sake of those who are weak is the fulness of Christian freedom.** It is not for the sake of the conscience of the weak, whose conscience is not fully enlightened. **Sacrifice will help to remove a stumbling block from the Jew, or Christian, then the freeman is to be by His Spirit to live so that men may be imitators of Paul, but let their spirit be that of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

communion is not attained by the worshipper. The freeman has attained to the image and glory of God, in a measure, but he is not separated from the law of mercy, and this is the glory of man. Perfect Christ-like freedom is not of the law, but the law of mercy is for man; the perfect freedom of the Son was not created for the law, but the law of mercy is a means to this higher end. It is because the law of mercy is a law to man, and not the free, gracious outflow of his soul, that it possesses authority; not that of moral law, but as a ministering angel of God. There is a distinction betwixt a free son and a servant obeying the law of mercy; but this is a gracious and merciful union, and it is necessary, in the Lord, during the Christian era. The law of mercy is of the free and gracious Spirit, but it is by the law of mercy that men will reach the free Spirit; thus all things, law and spirit, are of God. Is this a matter to be contentious about, whether a woman should or should not worship and serve God in public? Contention and strife belong to the family of Hagar, and when these enter the Church of God the lightnings and thunder of Sinai may be heard. Nature does indeed teach this lesson, in a marvellous manner, that law, all laws, veil the face of God; therefore, if women or men have not got beyond the service of the law of mercy, they are still veiled, and thus unfit for spiritual service; but they are not excluded, by any means; it is by the law of mercy that they will reach the footstool of grace and mercy, and there the servant, male and female, as men speak, lose this relationship, and they become the free sons of God in Jesus Christ. (7) The object of the grace and mercy of God to this world is not contention and strife, but peace; not divisions in the Church, but unity; not factious heresies, but truth and righteousness. This being so why is it that men are found to be so selfish and self-asserting as to be openly known as carnal in spirit and sensual in their life? Such men are far from being Christ-like, and they are not guided by the law of mercy. Yet such men have been praised, and are still being praised by men in the Church of Christ. The spirit of free grace and mercy has no praise for what is so abominable in the sight of God; it can only hold up the Lord Jesus Christ, in His Spirit and life, as the best means of condemning all such lawlessness; and pointing to Him, it desires that there may be self-examination, so that the spirit and life of the professing Christian may be in harmony with the Lord's Spirit and life. Because men have been carnal, and not spiritual, they have been weak in faith, in spirit, and in life. It is time that such things were at an end in Christ's Church, so that when He comes He may be seen and received with joy.

CHAPTERS XII.—XIV. may contain the fifth cycle. (1) Spiritual gifts follow from the manifested mercy of God in Jesus Christ. Without this manifestation men would have been left to worship their dumb oracles and vain idols, being led astray from God. Jesus, the Saviour, is the Fountain of all that is spiritual; and it is when Mercy is Lord that men can receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. (2) Diversity of gifts in the unity of the Spirit; diversities of ministry for service, but only one Lord of mercy; diversity of works, but only one God, who worketh all things in all; but gifts, ministry, and works are all



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strange, so that they may be led to decide for or against God. (7) In the Church of Christ there should not be any such manifestations, but all should be done so that there may be conviction of sin in sinners and edification of the saints of God. The God of wisdom and mercy is not the God of the Babel of confusion, but of peace-loving and peace-making sons of God in all the churches of the saints. (8) Amongst those who possess the inheritance of mercy, in the grace of the spirit and life of Jesus Christ, no one subject to law should speak; they are still at school, and in subjection as servants; therefore they require private tuition to prepare them for their inheritance amongst the sons of God. It was not from this spirit that the Word of God went forth; and it is not come to them alone who are animated by such a spirit; thus humility and meekness, and not self-conceit or self-assertion, is most becoming in those who are subject to the law of mercy in Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XV. may contain the sixth cycle. (1) The gospel of the grace and mercy of God is the theme which Christ and Christians preached, which men receive, in which the redeemed stand by faith, and by which they are saved. It is based upon the fact of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, as proved by over 500 witnesses who saw Him alive after His death upon the Cross and burial in the grave. (2) The fact of the resurrection of Christ having been proved by external evidence, it is amply supported by internal experience, because a man who was a persecutor is found to have received a new life, risen by God in Christ, and Grace is the key to the mystery. (3) As the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the fundamental fact of a spiritual Christianity, how is it that men have been found saying "that there is no resurrection of the dead?" If this could be proved to be true, then there would not be any gospel, faith would be a vain thing, and the apostles of Christ would be found to be false witnesses. Further, forgiveness of sin would be a vain idea, and all those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If Christians are the victims of an unparalleled fraud, and they have been feasting their souls upon a mirage of the desert, then, of all men they are the most to be pitied. (4) But Christ is raised from the dead, and He is the First-fruits of all those who have fallen asleep during this long winter which has passed over this earth. By Adam came death; by Christ resurrection: in Adam all die, in Christ all may find life. But there is a divine order in resurrection, Christ the First-fruits, and then those who are Christ's at His Coming, or ingathering. After that there cometh an end of the kingdom of mercy, and Christ will resign the kingdom to God the Father, when there shall be no rule, authority, or power except His Own in the world. In other words, the grace and Spirit of Christ, and His life, will have permeated all men; spiritual darkness and subjection to law will be abolished; there shall not be any rebels, slaves, or servants upon the earth, but all men will be the sons of God in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. He must reign until this consummation is attained; the last enemy to be abolished by Him being death. Here, it would seem, a marvellous,

subtle thought is made known to men in the abolition of death, and the resignation of the kingdom of mercy by Christ, so that God may be all in all. It is the complete termination of the present order of things, and of subjection to laws; it is the cessation of schism in the universe and the return to that marvellous unity in which the will of God the Father is the desire, the choice, and the joy of His creatures, who will then be changed into the sons of God, bearing His image. It is also, strange to say, the end of the gospel, and of the teaching of Jesus Christ, because this is the Lord's Sceptre of authority, the sign of subjection, His laws of mercy to men; and all these vanish away when all the sons of God are filled with the Spirit of Jesus Christ. (5) If it is not so, "What shall they do who are baptized for the dead?" If there is no resurrection to a new life in Christ why is there a constant baptism for death? and why do Christians stand in constant jeopardy? This death is not a visible thing that men can see or handle; it is a daily dying, a constant fighting with the wild passions and lusts in the soul and amongst men, so that the body of death may be crucified, and the life of Christ manifested. If there is no resurrection to the divine ideal of holiness, truth, mercy, and righteousness, then men are no better than sensual beasts who live to eat, drink, and enjoy this present state of things. To think this would be an awful deception; even a sleep of death; therefore, awake to what is true, and right, and do not sin against God, for it is a shameful thing that Christians should lose the knowledge of the mercy, truth, righteousness, and holiness of the living God. (6) Blind unbelief will say, "How are the dead raised? and with what manner of body do they come?" These are foolish questions, and even the order in the visible kingdom of life might teach men that they ought not to push such questions to the extreme, seeing that the life is not the visible seed; but when the visible part dies or decays, then there is a quickening to a new life, a resurrection, after its kind, and to this risen life God gives to each seed its own body after its own kind. All life is the same in its essential being, but all flesh is not the same in its kind. There is a heavenly glory and an earthly, but these differ in their manifestations according to the will of the Creator. As with these so with the highest of all resurrections, the spiritual life in man; it also is sown in sin and death, but it rises to holiness and life; it is laid down in shame, but it is raised by Christ in glory; it is sown in the weakness of the flesh and carnal lustings; it is raised in the power of God; as a thing subject to, and a servant of, law, but it is raised a son of God; there is the natural body in its form and laws, but there is also a spiritual, not body, or subject to law, but which is radiant in grace and truth. To these things the Scriptures agree, as it is written, "The first Adam became a living soul. The last Adam a life-giving Spirit." In other words, Adam was a grain of humanity, a living microcosm perfect in himself; but Christ represents a higher order of being, even one who is life-giving, communicating grace, mercy, and truth to others. The first Adam could not possibly have possessed such a glory, but the Lord from heaven is life-giving, and all who shall bear His resurrection image will also possess this

iving Spirit. Forms and laws cannot possess God's kingdom of and truth; neither shall the seed of Adam inherit grace and glory. old, I tell you a mystery." It is that some shall be awake, not but all shall be suddenly changed by the resurrection power of

How? this is the mystery; because the method is not revealed an; but it will be at that time when the words uttered by Isaiah be fulfilled, and the victorious spiritual life of God will swallow eath so that it shall no more be found. Then the victory and the of death shall be abolished; because sin will be destroyed in man from amongst men; and the power of sin, of the law, will be ome through the grace and truth of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. g that Christians possess such a hope, and knowing that the First- are already risen and in heaven, it is their privilege to be stead- in the faith and active in the Lord's work, knowing that their r will not be a vain thing in the Lord.

AFTER XVI. may contain the seventh cycle. (1) The peacemaking of God in grace and truth must not be selfish, but self-sacrificing re good of others, and this can only be done by giving of what is eed according as God has given unto a man. God's gifts of every are to be used, and then there will not be an empty exchequer, oral or spiritual, when He comes. In the meantime every man to uty, keeping in remembrance the fact that there will be a settling when every one will have to give an account of the talents en- d to his care. (2) Love the brethren, and assist them in every work. (3) Stand upon the watch-tower; stand fast in this day of ire; be courageous and skilful soldiers of Jesus Christ; but let it the spirit of love, grace, and truth. (4) Be subject to the First-, and help onward the work of Christ by helping His ministering nts, and by doing this there will be joy, peace, and prosperity. The churches and their members in the Spirit of the Lord of grace mercy send salutations to each other. They are one Church in t, though they are separated from each other for a time. (6) The ation by his own hand of him who is the father of the Christian ch in the Roman Empire: his spirit is still amongst men. Love re Lord is the test for Christians; if there is no love for Christ, the curse remains. But, Maranatha, our Lord cometh. (7) Then and truth, love and light, the darkness will be gone, and the Sun ghteousness will be seen by men. Amen.

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

TERS I., II., may contain the first cycle of that which is the fourth cycle in this portion of God's Word. (1) The subject and object is cycle may be expressed in the words, "Grace to you and peace God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (2) The redeemed

soul enjoying grace and peace is here seen responding to the "Father of mercies and God of all comfort;" sufferings abound, but the grace and peace of God in the soul bring abundant comfort. In all the afflictions of life, even when men are weighed down by them, their wisdom is to trust in God, the Deliverer, who is able to deliver the redeemed out of all trouble. (3) Men may try to condemn the servants of Christ; but so long as conscience testifies that by the grace of God, in purity of motive, and in sincerity of life, they have acted toward men, there is peace in the soul. This is following after truth and righteousness, and not the fleshly conceits of ignorant men. Such men do not glory in themselves, but in the work of God as manifested in those who are the followers of Jesus Christ. (4) The Word of God is not yes and no, or anything that men may please to make it; but it is the revelation of Jesus Christ, and in Him all the promises of God are Yes, and through Him they are the consummation of all truth and righteousness, to the glory of God, through those who are His redeemed. Men have received the earnest, or the first-fruits of God's promises, and in due time there will come the manifestation of the sons of God. (5) In the sphere of mercy there is no lordship over faith; it is by grace through faith that men stand, and so Christians are only the helpers of those who are the followers of Jesus Christ. The method of help is through "affliction and anguish of heart," to the end that men may know and experience the love and mercy of God in Jesus Christ. (6) There are those who through pride and sin cause sorrow to the Church of Christ; but if such repent of their sin, and are humbled before God and the brethren, then to such forgiveness must be granted freely and fully, so that the enemy of God may not gain an advantage over the spirit of mercy. (7) The triumph of the gospel in Christ is a matter for great thankfulness, because by it the knowledge of God's mercy is made manifest. The gospel is the mighty power of God for salvation in them that are saved, and to them that perish it is as the savour of death. Christians are not sufficient for such things as these; but they can be faithful, as in the sight of God, to the charge given them by the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTERS III.—V., 1—19, may contain the second cycle. (1) Christians are not required to commend themselves, neither do they require to be praised by others; but every Christian should be a living epistle of Jesus Christ, animated by the Spirit of the living God. Not that there is any fitness or sufficiency in man for such an end, but the sufficiency is from God, and He has been pleased to make His redeemed the ministers of a spiritual covenant which is life-giving in its nature. The ministration of Sinai was glorious, and the manifestation of the gospel in its order and laws by Jesus Christ excelled in glory; but there is a glory that cannot fade or pass away, and the attainment of this is the great hope of man. (2) Possessing this hope the Christian can use great boldness in his manner of speech. The veil that has covered the face of Moses must pass away; and when this is accomplished, then there will be liberty, the unveiled face, God's face revealed in Jesus Christ, and thus a transformation scene, in which man, by the Lord the Spirit, is seen as conformed to the image of Christ. (3)

Seeing that Christians have obtained mercy, and the ministry of mercy to men, they ought not to be faint in their labours, nor deceitful in their behaviour; but by the faithful manifestation of God's Word they ought to cause the truth to commend itself to men's consciences in the sight of God. If the gospel is veiled, it is to them who are perishing, in whom a false god reigns, whose realm is darkness, and who tries to blind his votaries so that they may not see the light of the gospel in Christ. Christians must not preach their own vain conceits, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and themselves as the servants of the Church for His sake. They have no power to cause the Sun of righteousness to arise; but God can do so, and by piercing through the darkness of man's being He can make known "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (4) The vessel which contains the heavenly treasures of grace and mercy is earthly; thus there is no credit to the vessel, but to Him who gives the treasure and the power in its manifestation. The condition of the vessel may be compared to a ship labouring in a storm, everything seems to be against it, except the precious treasure within which cannot be destroyed. Sin, law, and death raise a great tumult in man's frail bark, but these by the grace of God are made the means of destruction to what is vile, so that the life and light given by Jesus Christ might increase and shine. There is a constant dying in the soul, a baptism unto death, but the issue is the risen life of God in Jesus Christ. In Him men possess all things; His grace is multiplied in men, and so there is abundant thanksgiving to His praise and glory of God. (5) Because Christians are vessels of grace they do not faint; even though the visible things are passing away, they are more than recompensed by the new life within the soul, which is increased day by day. The light afflictions which fall upon the soul are as nothing when compared with the revelation that is going on within; rather these things are made the means of blessing, being made the instruments for the working out of the glory that shall be eternal. But this end is attained only by the gaze being steadily fixed upon the things that are eternal, whilst those things which are transitory are allowed to pass by as of little importance. (6) Christians know that though there be a dissolution of soul and body this is not to them the end of all things, for they will receive a heavenly house that shall abide for ever. In the present temporary body there is much groaning because of burdens, and these are a cause of uneasiness. The desire, however, is not to be disrobed and to be found naked, but rather to be clothed with truth and righteousness, so that the mortal and the changeable may become subject to the spiritual and the eternal. God has prepared this better home for the soul, and He is preparing the soul for its home; and already men possess the earnest of the spirit by what they experience. To be at home, or content in the present condition, would be to be satisfied with faith, and absence, or separation from the Lord; but it is better when God so wills it that this separation should cease, for then truth and righteousness will be the garments of the soul, and grace in the Spirit of Christ will permeate and animate the whole being. This is the Christians' hope; but betwixt the fruition of that hope and now there stands the judgment-seat of Christ—*Anty*.

responsibility, and judgment. (7) The Christian persuades men to avoid by all means the judgments of God ; and so earnest are some of the followers of Christ in this direction that they are considered as beside themselves. They are constrained by the love of Christ so to act, because they know that through His life sinners also may rise from the dead and live in Him, and they who so love should no longer live for self-seeking ends, but unto Christ. Here the man becomes spiritual, the Spirit of Christ is manifested in him, and carnal things are no longer loved or desired. Beautiful and desirable in a sense as Jesus is after the flesh, as He was seen by men, and as found in the gospels, yet at this point His form and His laws vanish, and it is the spiritual Christ that is adored and worshipped. To be thus in Christ is to be a new creature indeed ; the old things of visible forms and laws are gone, and all things are new. But all things are of God through Christ, and it is by the ministry of reconciliation that such things are attained ; therefore the peaceful sons of God go forth into a wicked world making known the fact that God is to be found in Jesus Christ, the Reconciler, by whom there is forgiveness, and those who are endowed with His Spirit have had committed to their care the word of reconciliation.

CHAPTERS V., 20, 21, VIII., 1—15, may contain the third cycle. (1) The ambassadors of Christ, on His behalf, plead with men that they should be reconciled to God. Christ, the sinless, became the subject of sin, law, and death on man's behalf, so that sinners "might become the righteousness of God in Him." Substitution is the grand theme of the gospel ministry, and those who are ministers will do well to note this fact, so that they may not receive God's grace in vain. They are also required to become examples to the flock in all that is good and gracious. (2) There is no limitation or straitening in the gospel, but Christians are oftentimes so straitened in their own souls, that the grace of God cannot flow freely into the soul. Let the affections be expanded, and then the soul will be no longer a desert, but a fruitful garden. (3) Man is required to choose his yoke-fellow ; the Christian should have no choice but the will of God, and the meek spirit in following Christ ; if this choice is made, then there follow the indwelling spirit and communion with God. (4) Being in possession of the promises, the desire of the soul is to become perfect in holiness and in likeness to Christ. (5) The great marvel of grace is to be seen in a servant of Christ pleading that he might be received by those whom he loves, because they have become one in their affections through their union with Christ ; and in a man, surrounded with sorrow and trouble, saying that he is filled with comfort and overflowing with joy. (6) In the world there are afflictions on every side ; outside are many fightings, and inside the soul many fears. Yet in the midst of all these things God sends messages of comfort through the success of the work of God in His Church and people. Where sin abounded, there true repentance of soul is manifested, and then the work of salvation is successful ; this is not merely a matter of comfort, but also of joy and rejoicing in the mercy of God by his servants. (7) In the Christian Church as in the soul, afflictions should not dry up the well-springs of divine life, but rather,

through the grace of God, these should be the means of purifying the soul and the Church, so that they may give forth freely what God has so richly given to them. God causes His mercy and peace, gifts and graces to abound, and it is meet that with a ready will there should be given freely what is required for God's service. The example for the sons of God is *the* Son of God, who gave up all His riches and accepted poverty, so that men might be made rich in Him.

CHAPTERS VIII., 16—24, XII., 1—10, may contain the fourth cycle. (1) With the grace of giving money for the cause of Christ is linked the spirit of self-sacrifice; the giving up of self or money for God's service is the visible token of the direction in which the affections are turned. If a man is earnest, hungering and thirsting after that which is true and right, then he will not keep back money, time, or service, but he will give freely of the gifts possessed. (2) Let every man give freely, so that it may be clearly seen that the soul is right with God in Christ, because, after all, if a man will not give of his visible things for the cause of Christ it is to be concluded that he is not spiritual but carnal, and he is not imbued with the Spirit of Christ. (3) Sowing and reaping in the physical world find their analogy in the kingdom of God; if men give freely, they receive abundantly; but if sparingly then they have no capacity for spiritual things, and they remain poor indeed. The spirit of Christ is found in giving; the spirit of the Christian should be the same, and God's love to man is known by men as seen in His unspeakable gift, the grace of God in Jesus Christ. (4) Men are not to be compelled to become gracious, but rather entreated by the spirit of meekness and gentleness that is found in Jesus Christ. The strongholds of the enemy of God are not to be cast down by carnal weapons, but by the Word of God and His Holy Spirit. Men may despise Christ, His servants, and His Word, but they have all the same mission, and it is to overthrow evil, and to manifest truth, righteousness, and mercy amongst men. (5) The servant of Christ seeks no glory for himself; his mission is one of mercy, and it is with a godly jealousy that he watches over those who have found mercy, so that their affections may not be beguiled away from the simplicity of the gospel. This Spirit of Christ is not a burden to any man, but rather it gives freely unto the objects of its love even as Christ gave Himself for men. In this sphere there is often much opposition by what is false and deceitful, and it is a very common thing for the proud and carnal spirit, which is enmity against God and His ways, to shine for a time before men as an angel of light. (6) The heart or the affections of men are a strange study; what a wonderful amount of foolishness passes for wisdom, and what an accumulation of glorying in the flesh is considered to be for the glory of God. This is not after the Lord or the spirit of His grace, but it is carnal and foolish. Yet so-called wise men love this kind of thing, and they gladly become the bondservants of those who can boast and exalt themselves. Only feed them with this food, and they will accept anything that the idol of the hour will lay upon them. There is often a false heroism found in the kingdom of grace and mercy, as well as

amongst men of this world, who boast and brag of what they have endured and done. In either sphere this is a strange weakness, but it is one that pleases the accomplished story-teller, and it gratifies the itching ears of those who love to hear of wonderful things. This is not the Spirit of Christ; but the apostle Paul, coming down for a moment into the arena with such men, speaks in foolishness also, so that men may know that he could, if it were necessary, boast above all others. Are men proud of their original stock, nation, and family, a very common theme of boasting, which in no way depends upon themselves? then so could the apostle. Are men proud and boastful because they are the clergy, the sacerdotal few, the ministers of Christ? Paul can see the extreme folly of this boast, and turning aside he says, "I speak as one beside himself;" or this is downright madness to begin to boast about being a minister of Christ in the spirit of the devil; yet he had been more tried as a minister of Christ than those who opposed themselves to him, as may be discerned by the incidents in his life of which he boasts. But he gets wearied with this strain, the attempt to boast fails him, and like a father playing with his foolish children, the real spirit of the man is seen when, with a sad heart, he thinks upon the anxiety that he endures for all the churches; his weakness with the weak, and the pain he feels when Christians stumble. All this boasting of greatness and power is like a mere bubble that bursts and vanishes from view; but this weakness of flesh and spirit which lies underneath all experiences—if men would glory, let them glory in this—because it is through such felt weakness that God can give His grace to make them strong, and by His grace ways of escape are opened up for those who are in temptation or in danger. (7) The time for glorying, as men glory in themselves, is past with Paul, the carnal man must stand aside whilst the spiritual man thinks upon "the visions and revelations of the Lord." The spiritual man was taken up into the third heaven of the grace of God in Jesus Christ; and in this state the body, that is form or law, is of little importance. When in this paradise restored then the spirit saw what cannot be uttered by carnal lips, as it is without form, and what is beyond the order of law. Of the spiritual in Jesus Christ it is right to glory; but of self, as related to the world, the glory of a man is his weakness, and his fitness to become a recipient of grace. Of the spiritual, Paul might glory, and not be a foolish boaster, but even here it is wise to forbear, because men are unable to turn such glorying to their edification and growth in grace. If Paul was exalted above all men by the revelations given to him, yet he was also restrained from over-exaltation by another gift that was given to him, and which was to him as a thorn in his flesh, ever causing pain and trouble. This was a great annoyance, and thrice did he pray that it might be taken away. But it must not be, for pain is the means by which man is turned to God, and weakness is the necessary field within which the grace of God must find a soil for its growth. Remove the thorn, and with it the pain in the flesh, and also the weakness, then man would certainly be lost, because there would be nothing in him that could respond to the mercy and grace of God. It is this marvellous wisdom and grace of God which surrounds the foolish sinner and

ignorant saint, for even a Paul will pray that the thing may be taken away which is to be made the ministering means for his salvation. God's grace is sufficient for all things, and His power is seen in its very perfection in the weakness of man. Therefore, away with boasting and vain-glorying of what *man* can be, do, or suffer; it is not in man's strength that God's grace works, but in and through his weakness, and those who are truly wise and gracious will be taught even to take pleasure in weakness and in all the experiences which are contrary to the flesh and carnal spirit. To be weak in the flesh and carnal spirit is to be a vessel fit to receive the grace of God, and the spiritual man is made strong in Christ. Even for a man to speak thus is to be foolish, because self is brought so much into view, that it is a painful ordeal for the servant of Christ to endure. It is reversing the true order of things, which is that they who have received blessing should commend their benefactor, but men have been found guilty of such ingratitude, and in self-defence, sometimes it may be necessary to refer to the past. Oftentimes the ingratitude is the greatest where the greatest blessings have been given and no thanks returned; and Christ might also say to men, as well as Paul to the church at Corinth, "I myself was not a burden to you: forgive me this wrong." A strange wrong this, in which Grace is seen bestowing Himself with the richest blessings of heaven upon an ungrateful world, and requesting forgiveness for seeking to do so without any charge. Pride and self-conceit cannot endure grace; this is the false strength of man and his vainglorious boasting, which ends in death.

CHAPTERS XII., 14—21, XIII., may contain the fifth cycle. (1) The spirit of mercy is that it seeks not what man possesses, but that the sinner may be saved; it is not to receive what the children can give, but to spend and be spent in self-sacrifice in the Spirit of Christ. (2) Those who are the faithful followers of Christ do not speak such things as excusing themselves; but they speak in the Spirit of Christ, for the edifying of the church, and for the putting down of the evil spirit of lustings and strife, so that there may be a pure spirit and obedience to the gracious will of God in all things. (3) The order of the kingdom of mercy is Jesus Christ crucified through weakness, yet living through the mighty power of God; and it is fulfilled in His followers, who are weak in Him for the work of mercy, but who live with Him in spirit through the power of God for the salvation of men. (4) Christians are invited to prove themselves by these principles, to see whether they be in the faith or not, and also whether the Spirit of Christ be in them. If the faith of Christ in God, and the Spirit of Christ toward men, is not discernible, then they are not saved, but if they have faith in God and Christ-like works, then they are in Christ and new creatures. (5) The prayer of Christ's followers is that men should cease from evil, not indeed for their approval, but that they may become imitators of Christ in His kingdom of mercy. (6) Christians should seek perfection, the comfort of God's Spirit, and unity of thought in the bond of peace. Doing this they will be blessed, and the God of love and of peace will rest upon the Church of God. (7) "The grace of the Lord Jesus

Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

CHAPTERS I.—III., 1—14, may contain the sixth cycle. (1) The theme of Paul the apostle is Jesus Christ, who is raised from the dead, who gave Himself for our sins, so that He might give men deliverance from evil in harmony with the will of God. It is man dead in carnal things, Christ the sacrifice for sin, and through His death, resurrection, and life, a renewed life to man and to the world. (2) Man receives the gospel, but not with that faith and earnestness which it requires; and thus there is found ignorance, perversion of the truth, a false gospel which brings a curse and not a blessing to men. (3) The gospel of Christ is not after the conceptions of a carnal man; it is not received from a man, but it is God's revelation to men in Jesus Christ. Those who have been the enemies of Christ, who have been called by His grace, and have had the Son of God revealed in them, do not confer with carnal men about the truth; they take a draught of the river of life into the desert of their own souls, and find satisfaction only when they have found reconciliation and peace with God. (4) The wisdom and grace of God are manifested in such a man, because the persecutor becomes the persecuted, the wolf is changed into a gentle, self-sacrificing lamb, and God is glorified by such a miracle of grace. (5) The gospel of mercy preached by Paul to the Gentiles was the same as that preached by the apostles at Jerusalem; it is the same grace that shines forth upon Jew and Gentile, circumcised and uncircumcised, and it has no binding rite or ceremony except this, that those who have obtained mercy should in their turn become merciful in their spirit. (6) The simplicity and purity of the gospel was in danger of being lost through Peter and the Jews; separation into classes and dissembling prevailed, and this evil had to be withstood. Before the gospel of mercy was unveiled classes did exist, and so obedience to law was the chief thought with a Jew; but in the Spirit of Jesus Christ the bondage of law is set aside, all class feelings and subjection to law are things for crucifixion in the flesh, so that the Spirit of Christ might live in a man and be manifested by his self-sacrificing life. It is Christ that lives in the merciful spirit, and they who live in His Spirit do not make void, or of no effect, the grace of God, rather they are the channels in which it flows. This righteousness which is by faith harmonises all things, and it makes man perfect in Christ; but if righteousness can be obtained by man's obedience to law then Christ died in vain. (7) There are three ways of looking at this subject, and they may be stated briefly thus: First, men do not require to be saved, they are good enough; in other words, they are self-sufficient, and can get on without God. Second, men admit that they are sinners, and they strive by obeying the laws of God to make themselves fit for heaven. Third, followers of Christ renounce all self-righteousness by obeying the laws of God,

and their only hope is salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. The first is not for a moment even to be considered, it is the spirit of the devil, of Cain and others of the same stamp. The second has a wonderful fascination for man, it has a most bewitching influence, and even those who have received the gospel in all its fulness and freeness have been found to be captivated by this delusion. Can the free Spirit of God come into men and change them into sons of God, when they are the subjects of law, especially that of Judaism? By no means, for the attitude of the spirit tends to make a man self-righteous by conformity to law. Can a man live the spirit of Christ if his attention is altogether taken up with the question whether or not his actions are perfectly moral and gracious? By no means; his standard is law, he always falls short of the standard, and thus by law salvation is impossible. What then? Simply the old, old story of God's grace by faith, by which Abraham was reckoned righteous, and by which all men are counted as righteous in Christ by God. Christ redeems men from sin, that is, from the devil and evil men, who will have nothing to do with God; by becoming subject to sin, that is, by giving himself up to evil men, and this opens the way to heaven for the first class, the godless amongst men; but He also saves men from the curse that rests upon law by becoming subject to law, and so He completely emancipates those who by faith receive His Spirit and follow Him in a life of self-sacrifice. The promise of the Spirit can be received, but it is only through Jesus Christ, and men must not draw back from this position, else they draw upon themselves the curse of the law that is always claiming what is righteous, or the penalty of sin, and that is death or separation from God.

CHAPTERS III., 15—29, V., 1, may contain the seventh cycle (1) The method of God's dealing with men by His grace is a thing not comprehended by men; it is a theme of the third heaven, and not even a matter for those who are subject to the laws of grace. But it was necessary that God should make a revelation of His grace by promises, and He condescends, so that men might understand Him, to speak as if He acted by covenant engagements. The fact is simply this, that by God's free grace, without any condition on His part, He gave the promises to Abraham which relate to the Seed. Men were so debased, unrighteous, that they would not believe the truth, and thus to satisfy men, to give them a guarantee of good faith, God was so wonderfully gracious as to pledge Himself, take an oath, that He would be faithful and true to His covenant engagements. The free grace of God to Abraham and to all the faithful, by promise through the Seed, was confirmed about 430 years before the moral law was given to Moses on Mount Sinai. The giving of the promises is the bestowal of the living germ, the unseen power, which would make a spiritual nation unto God in the earth; the law with the deliverance from Egypt is the birth of the nation when it receives a body, an outward form, as in the moral and civil laws given at Sinai. As a body without the spirit is dead, so the whole Mosaic body, without the gracious promises of God, would have been a dead thing, of no real worth for the salvation of men.

to a prison, a body, a child under a tutor; subjection to law he is no better than a grace of God in Jesus Christ is accepted, and the man becomes a son of God. To change the position of the soul completely; prison of law, for the spirit to become master, and for the servant to throw off to be admitted as one of God's family. It is to be the palace of the great King, clothed in will with His will, unfettered by the restraint. The heir of God is a mere child, he is treated as if he is tutored into obedience to law; but when he comes, and the child grown to be a man under the conditions of the law and the gospel, God's grace by faith in Christ, and not by personal obedience, redemption, then the yoke is removed, the soul, and the cry is, Abba, Father; he is the heir of heaven through Jesus Christ. (4) This is, that men who had been in bondage to the law to know the free grace of God in all its fullness, so foolish as to turn back again to their prison, their sonship, become servants, and strain at the yoke of the law which in their own strength they could not bear, but infatuation, but Christianity, and not mere legalism, so foolish as to do this very thing. (5) and if Christians would set themselves to receive the Spirit of mercy in Jesus Christ, to attain absolute perfection under the present state, the will will become master over the body, and though like a thorn in the flesh, will be

re still persecuted by the carnal spirit ; but it shall not be always the same, for the day is at hand when the spirit of Ishmael will be cast out, and the Spirit of Christ shall reign amongst men. It is Christ that gives freedom, and sets men free ; when this gift is obtained, then stand fast in the liberty of God's grace in the spirit of mercy, and let there be no longer any fleshly entanglements which tend to bondage under law.

CHAPTERS V., 2—26, VI., may contain the eighth cycle. (1) If men subject themselves to rites or ceremonies, laws or ordinances, then free grace is set aside and Christ is despised ; they place upon their own necks a yoke that is intolerable, and they attempt to do that which is impossible. When men through the Spirit of grace, by the faith which works by love, accept God's mercy, then they get the earnest of righteousness, and they are willing to wait for the perfect manifestation. The persuasion of subjection to law is not of God's grace, but a carnal conception of man's, an unholy leaven which has leavened humanity. (2) Men are not called by the God of grace to such a bondage but to liberty, only the liberty possessed must not have any tendency to subjection to law, or to sinful, carnal licentiousness. The whole law is fulfilled in one word, love ; and this means that God's love, grace and mercy, has filled the soul, and it is radiating forth upon men the same spirit as manifested in Jesus Christ. But there is another spirit in man which bites and devours, a wild beast spirit, beware of it, for the end of this way is death. (3) The order of the Christian life is that of the Spirit of life in Jesus Christ ; the continual manifestation of the grace and mercy of God toward other men. The order of the flesh, sin, and even of subjection to Judaism in its struggles with sin is all that is evil and vile, and they who practise such things, willingly or unwillingly, cannot inherit the kingdom of grace. Those who follow Jesus Christ in His Spirit bring forth the fruits of the spirit of grace in love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, meekness, and temperance ; and against such manifestations there is no law, because they run in the way of God's commandments, and they are in perfect harmony with His will. This spirit is more powerful than the spirit of evil, it crucifies what is vile, and thus kills the lusts and passions of the carnal man. (4) To live and walk effectly in the Spirit of grace is perfection ; to be vainglorious and envious is to be imperfect and sinful. (5) The Spirit of grace in a man will be gentle and meek toward those who are overtaken by sin, and it will grant forgiveness and restoration freely to those who err ; or there is the same danger to every soul in this world where temptation abounds. There must be fellowship in bearing burdens, for it was thus that Christ helped man. Unless men realise this truth they are apt to over-estimate their own strength, and being deceived they will fall into sin. Christ is the Standard ; let every Christian measure by Him, so that there may not be any glorying in the flesh ; because it is also true that "each man shall bear his own burden." (6) "Be not deceived ; God is not mocked : for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." All men are sowing, either to the flesh or to the

a new creature in Jesus Christ, a son of God
to the highest order of the manifestation
who live in this spirit God's peace and
the persecuted for righteousness' sake ; "
the marks of Jesus." (9) The grace of God
your spirit, brethren. Amen.


THE EPISTLE TO THE

WITH this epistle begins the fifth great work
of God in Jesus Christ ; the word Epistle
it may fitly express the spirit of mercy
in the sight of the God of mercy, and also
blessings in Christ.

CHAPTERS I.—III. may contain the first
of grace and peace ; and it contains
heavens in Jesus Christ, to those who
called to be perfectly holy before Him in
adoption as sons, "according to the good
praise of the glory of His grace" in Christ
found. In Him all things are summed
the redeemed are made His heritage to
They have believed the gospel, and are
the Holy Spirit of promise, this is an earnest
shall be completely redeemed to God for
The saints require the spirit of wisdom and

faith, and the new creation, the work of God, not of man, is works. (4) Jew and Christian; those afar off among the as well as those brought nigh to God by His gracious purpose all alike brought nigh to God by Jesus Christ. He is our ringing reconciliation to men by His subjection to sin and id by the atonement, all who receive His Holy Spirit and do are made sons of God and citizens of heaven. (5) Paul a man, and the mission given to him is to make known a God's revelation of His grace in Jesus Christ. It begins in extends to "unsearchable riches;" but as yet there is a veil r the glory that is to be revealed, so men must not be faint or when they realise that in the mysterious providence of God in the world tribulation instead of peace, and a crown of stead of a crown of glory. (6) Those who are the recipients bow their knees to the Father, praying that He would grant Spirit to them in the inward man; then with Christ dwelling ul, there will be rooting in faith and love and growth in grace re is power to apprehend something of the knowledge of the Christ, and to be filled with the fulness that is in God. (7) men be the praise or glory, but unto God in Christ Jesus be ur, dominion, glory, praise, and power ascribed for ever and men.

ERS IV.—VI. may contain the second cycle. (1) God's method in the Spirit of Christ is to be found in lowliness, meekness, forbearance, in love; and in the unity of the Spirit of Christ erty bound up with the spirit of peace. There is only one one spirit in this mystical union, and it is the spiritual body as found in those who are subject to His laws, and the Holy Christ which animates the body, bringing it into subjection to of God, which is the one hope to be realised. The Lord Jesus the Lord, or Head of this body; it has one faith or trust in y of God; one baptism, into the spirit of mercy, that is, in the id there is one God and Father over, through, and in all the . The members are not all the same, but grace is given to l gifts as it pleaseth the Head, so that the body of Christ may perfect in the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son (2) The redeemed are not to walk in the midst of vain things lusts, but to be made new men in truth, righteousness, and (3) The order of their life is to love the truth and put that is false; to be angry against sin, without sin to be nd industrious, and pure in thought, word, and behaviour; ve all to be kind, tender-hearted and forgiving, like God in rist. (4) The disciples of the Master of truth and righteous- uld imitate Him as God's beloved children, walking in love e spirit of self-sacrifice for this is as a sweet-smelling sacrifice The wicked and the impure have no inheritance in the kingdom therefore Christians must beware of deceptions and of the darkness. They are called to reprove these by the light of id by the truth, those who are asleep and dead shall be



is a figure of the order of mercy or the law promulgated by Jesus Christ in the flesh, the Head, the spirit in Christ which is in perfect God. The laws of grace are not above the law in everything; Christ as the Head of the Law-giver, loves what He has redeemed by His own subjection to sin and law; and His object is to make the Church, in its members, holy and pure. As a husband will love his wife as his own self, Christ loves His Church in its members and in its organisations, as His Own body; and He loves His members. As the love of a husband for his wife, so is the love of the Lord for His Church that he gave up his Father and Mother for it. The analogy of husband and wife, Christ as the Head by side; the spiritual reality is the Spirit of Christ in the Church, in its spiritual ordinances or laws and in its body. The husband and wife represent the laws which are in subjection to His Spirit. The Church may fairly represent those who are brought under the influences of the gospel and the moral law, who are chastened, admonished, and instructed in the authority on the side of the parent and the law, and to be used in a wrong spirit, but in view of the law and children and servants are to be obedient and cheerful in every duty; and it will be the object of life that they will be fitting themselves in the Spirit of Christ. (7) Here the soldier of Jesus Christ, pure and without spot, the Son of God, is seen putting on his armor.

struggle, hand to hand, foot to foot, as for life, is portrayed in this picture. This is a terrible conflict requiring that every power should be used to the very utmost so that there may not be defeat before the enemy. The command for Christ's soldiers during the latter part of the Christian era has not been to rout the enemy, but to stand ; to hold what they possess, strong in Christ, and being girt about with His truth, covered with His breastplate of righteousness, and their feet shod with the gospel of peace. The shield of faith must be ever ready to quench the fiery, lying darts of the enemy ; because should they reach the soul, and unbelief begin to poison the spirit, then the brain will reel, the hand become palsied, the knees will tremble, and there will not be any power to stand against the enemy. The head must be covered with God's salvation, and in the hand the Word of God, which is the sword of God's Spirit. Above all these the soldier is required to take all-prayer in the spirit, watchfulness, perseverance, and intercession for others, so that there may be freedom in preaching the gospel by those who, as Christ's servants, are still in chains. (8) The state of the Church is critical, but not desperate. The King will come who knows all things, and He will by His presence put the enemy to flight ; then shall reign peace, grace, and love in all who love the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

CHAPTERS I.—III. may contain the third cycle. (1) It is a message from the servants of Christ Jesus to the saints, elders, and deacons of the Church at Philippi—the war-like—or those who are fitted to become the soldiers of Christ in His army. The soldier of Christ in prison at Rome cannot join his companions in arms at Philippi, but he can thank God for such men, and pray for them and their work in the gospel. There is one spirit in the soldiers at Philippi and in the old soldier at Rome ; and their affections are so knit together that the bond and the free are imbued with one thought, and that is the gospel of God's grace which requires strong and wise defenders, so that it might be confirmed amongst men. The affections of the old soldier are strongly drawn out toward his brethren in arms in the tender mercies of Jesus Christ ; and his prayer is that their love, knowledge, discernment, and sincerity might be increased, so that they may be filled with the fruits of righteousness through Christ to the glory of God. (2) It is a sad thing to see a soldier a prisoner ; yet a good soldier may be brought into this position through the providence of God, and it is not for him to fret about what could not well be avoided. The soldier's supreme thought is his duty, and thus whether bond or free the soldiers of the King of mercy and the Captain of salvation have always a duty to their hand in seeking the salvation of those around them. The soldier of the gospel when bound finds that the Word of God is not bound, but rather that chains are a means for awakening sympathy in others,

compelled to come into contact with Him is not ashamed of Christ, his soul burns; the Captain shall be magnified by the life; the apostle to live amongst men is to depart might be more pleasant, because Christ; but to choose in such a strait is best to wait the King's orders, doing duty. The soldier in bonds is anxious about their commander, and he encourages them of the enemy, and to endure the same. This is the spirit of a good soldier of Jesus; have the soul fully animated by it in which must be endured. (3) The soldier he can boast; the comfort, mercy, and fellowship of the Spirit are all to be obtained by him in vainglory. His desire is to follow Him, who, although He was so great, put Himself unto death. Because of this matchless love, He is the Highest, so that at His Name all intelligences shall bow the knee in love, emptied and who serve under His banner to reign with Him when He comes in His Kingdom to Christ, whether present or absent, in duty; he must work out in his life in those things which God is working into him, by His graces according to His pleasure; and the soldier who stands by his post, doing his duty in the will of Christ. To alter the figure, when a sacrifice is led willingly to the altar, or a



ality it reflects the likeness of the King and of His Spirit. In sending Timothy, Paul had sent Epaphroditus—pleasant, one—a man rarely gifted, as a worker and fellow-soldier, and of gracious sympathies. His is the gracious spirit which brings joy and gladness wherever he comes, one to be honoured as well as loved because of his self-denying and self-sacrificing service for the King and his fellow-soldiers. (6) Rejoice not in self, but in the King. Great as this injunction is not irksome in a soldier of Christ to his King, but for them it is a safe and profitable thing. Young soldiers hurried to the struggle are apt to be cast down in spirit, and they often seek for rest where no permanent rest can be found, and here that the advice of the experienced soldier is of so much value.

The spirit of joy, hope, and assurance of victory must be maintained, so that the *esprit de corps* may be kept up in a united army against the common foe. The flesh is the great enemy in whom no confidence can be placed, and no soldier of Christ can afford to begin to rest about what he has been, or what he has done. All that is to be done is without value; obedience to law cannot bring righteousness; mere faith in Christ, knowledge of the spiritual, or resurrection of Christ, spiritual fellowship with Him in His work of mercy, are things to be desired, so that there may come in due time the great resurrection. The battles are not all won, neither is the campaign at an end; therefore the past must be forgotten, the future, and victory, the goal and the prize are yet to be obtained, and the King of Christ must press forward so that perfection may be attained. Perfect, those who are apprehended by Jesus Christ, move forward in the Spirit; those who are imperfect, who walk by laws and rules of men, these are to be despised, for His gracious laws will be the means by which the perfect spirit shall be attained. (7) The soldiers in the field whilst in the field must be followers of the King, and imitators of His chiefs. There are others whose works may be imitated, but not those who are proud men who despise the cross, fleshly men whose carnal passions rule their life, and whose glory is a thing of shame. The soldier of Christ is called to holiness, and to abhor the garment spotted with the lusts, because he will soon be called from the field of battle to the holy City, there to become a citizen of the new Jerusalem. In the Kingdom of Christ's followers wear the body, or order of humiliation, for the sake of mercy. Transferred to the City of God, they will be transformed and conformed to His glory according to His Spirit, which will transform the present order of law, and then will be brought about the restoration of the sons of God.

CHAPTER IV. may contain the fourth cycle. (1) The picture is Paul, the Soldier of Christ, encouraging those whom God has given him to be brethren in arms, his beloved and longed for, his joy and his crown, and fast in the Lord. They are one in the great cause of truth, righteousness, and mercy, and their duty is faith, firmness, and obedience in the Lord. (2) Let there not be strife or contention about the Kingdom, but rather the spirit of mercy in helping and working with those who are enrolled in the army of the King. (3) The spirit of the army is

“God shall fulfil every need of yours according to His riches in Christ Jesus.” (6) Salutations to all the brethren, especially from those who are the soldiers of Christ. **And may He grant His Own Spirit of grace to all, that there may be only the one spirit of grace**

THE EPISTLE TO THE

CHAPTERS I., II., may contain the fifth part of the Epistle, good wishes, thanks, and prayers for all the brethren in Christ Jesus; this is because the same is true of all men, and it is the only means of salvation for all the followers of Christ do not meet face to face, but are made one in Christ. (2) Those who are obedient to the will of the Lord, they may be able to have communion with Him in every good work, even to the peace and joy, having also a thankful spirit, that they may be able by the Father to become inheritors of His righteousness, being delivered from the bondage of sin, in whom redemption is found. The eye of the Lord is on the Christ, “the Image of the invisible God, to whom all things are held together. He is the First-born from the dead, by the new birth, the eminent One in whom all fulness dwell, in whom is reconciliation and peace with God by the blood of Christ, and called to

object in suffering, and it is the fulfilment of the Word of God, of that mystery of grace which has been hidden from men during the past ages. It has been manifested in, and by, His saints amongst the Gentiles, or during the Christian age; and it is found to be Christ in man, and in His Church, as the Hope of glory. Christ and the cross of shame, mercy, faith, and suffering, these change man from grace to glory, and this is the wisdom of God proclaimed by His servants, wherein the saints labour according to Christ's work in them. (4) The invisible spirit of the gospel works to benefit men, so that those who are just, true, and righteous may receive comfort, be united in love, and come to know the mystery of God, that is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (5) As the Lord Jesus has been received by the saints in the spirit of grace, mercy, and truth, so in the same spirit there must be obedience to His will, the building up of the soul in Him, establishment in the faith, and thanksgiving unto God through Christ. (6) Care must be taken that neither the vain conceits of philosophy nor the traditions of men shall spoil the soul of its treasure. Christ is the Wisdom of God, the Divine Philosophy; and by Him the saints of God shall be filled with wisdom and truth. In Him there is the true circumcision that makes the heart pure, and that crucifies the flesh with its lusts; and there is also in Him the baptism by which there is the emergence from death and the power of the new spiritual life. It is the Lord of life who quickens the dead by forgiving sin, by blotting out the handwriting of the law and its claims in nailing them to His Own cross; and by doing so, then it is through His resurrection from the dead that He openly triumphs over sin, death, and the law. (7) Ritual and law, feasts and fasts, are mere shadows that vanish away: the reality is Christ, and His body; that is the Spirit in Christ, and the gospel, or the kingdom instituted by Him. The prize is Christ-likeness; living in His Spirit, and cheerful obedience to His will who is the Head; and it will not do for the sons of God to permit themselves to be robbed of such a glorious gift by the vain conceits of men or their carnal works.

CHAPTERS III., IV., may contain the sixth cycle. (1) If there has been death with Christ to all carnal things, and to law, then is the Christian not subject unto such ordinances: but if he is subject to these then he is following the doctrines of men, and not the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The Christian that is raised with Christ is in possession of a new life, and thus the affections must be set upon spiritual realities, and not carnal vanities. This life in the redeemed is for a time, a hidden, mysterious thing; it is hid with Christ in God; but the day is coming when the Life shall be made manifest, and then shall those who live in Him "be manifested in glory." (2) To this end, and to be ready for this manifestation, there must be the crucifixion of all that is carnal; the old man with his lusts must be put off, and there must be the renewal of the soul into the image of God in Christ. (3) The Christian puts off the old man and his vile actions, so that he may be clothed with the sweet graces of God's Spirit; and above all these graces which make up the Christian character, there must be placed

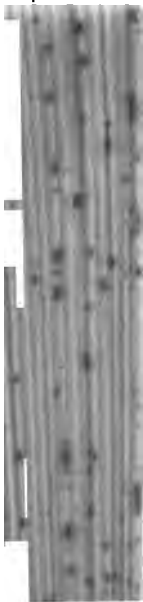
to the Spirit of Christ in man; the lawlessness; there is the knowledge whose righteous and gracious spirit God. (5) Free in the spirit of prayer so that the grace and mercy of God unto men in His Spirit. (6) Commu are implied in the visit of Paul's friend face about the things of the kingdom tions of the friends of Paul may be greetings; there may be traced also along with the remarks of the apostle ing of Paul with his own hand; the be remembered by his brethren in Cl cution and chains are the portion of 1

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO

CHAPTERS I., IV., 1—8, may contain is to those who as the followers of faith and gaining the victory over there rest grace and peace. The ke their "work of faith and labour of 1 Lord Jesus Christ;" and because th word only, but power in the fulnes been his followers and Christ's in affi and so they were examples to others waiting for the coming of the Lo

The Church in Thessalonica had proved itself to be faithful by receiving the Word of God in faith and accepting it as His Word in truth; and they had shown themselves to be the sons of God by imitating Christ, the prophets, and the apostles, who had been persecuted and put to death for the gospel. By grace the sons of God overcome their enemies, whilst they fill up the cup of their sins, and prepare themselves for the wrath to come. (4) Separation is bereavement, but there is spiritual communion through the Living One; the desire of the sons of God is unity and love in the bond of peace, but the Satan within and without, even God's enemy, has prevented such a manifestation of the saints. The hope, joy, and crown of a son of God are those who, by God's grace, have been brought to the Saviour, and the King, by him. At the Lord's coming Satan will no longer hinder this union, this glory and joy of the sons of God. (5) In the meantime it is the gospel of grace and the suffering of affliction that meets the sons of God; and they must be careful that the tempter does not lead them astray, so that the gospel be not hindered; but rather, they ought to cherish kindly thoughts of all engaged in the same work, so that in the same spirit they may live and stand fast in the Lord. (6) The Christian must not seek his own way, but wait upon the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ for guidance; in doing this the Lord will increase His Own Spirit of grace and love in the Christian's soul, and there will be increasing holiness and preparation for the coming of the Lord. (7) The sons of God are required to walk as becomes their sacred position, even as the peaceful, gracious, and holy sons of God. The will of God for all His children, is their sanctification; therefore the soul must be kept pure, fervent, loyal, and true to God, the King and Father, and just toward all men. For a son of God to sin against the Father is to reject the Father and His love; the fatherless, cut off from the mercy of God, meets an avenger in his own wicked deeds.

CHAPTERS IV., 9—18, V., may contain the first cycle as found in this portion of the Scriptures. (1) Those who are pure in heart, and see by faith the face of God in Jesus Christ, should not require to be taught how to love one another, for this is the peculiar mark of the children of God that they love; if they do not love their brethren in the Lord whom they see, how can they love the Brother who is unseen. There is love amongst Christians, but it requires to break the narrow bounds in which it is so often confined so that there may be more, and still more love in the Christian Church. Love is the halo, the spirit of the life, but there must also be quietness, gentleness, diligence, and honesty, so that those who are not in the Church may be influenced for good by this manifestation of the will of God. (2) These grave questions referring to the dissolution of soul and body and the hereafter have troubled many. These questions need not annoy Christians, for to them it is not death, but falling asleep, going to rest, with the cheerful hope of a coming morning, when the Sun of righteousness shall arise upon this world, bringing with Him the light of truth that shall govern the world. To believe in the fact of the



those who are living shall be brought
the past ; and the past and present
and service of the Lord ; and from t
the dominion in this world, for men
living in His Spirit, and not under t
(3) But concerning these times and t
this is not a subject within the sphere
have faith in Jesus Christ as risen fr
invisible heavens, the spiritual world
the physical, carnal vision, have t
the dead at the appointed time, the C
so at the appointed time His body, th
power, and reign with Him. When t
known, but Christians know that it dr
all men, but silently and surely. The
to spiritual realities, say that there is
in peace and it is safe ; but even the
ment, and escape shall be impossible.
in this condition, for they are the son
asleep in carnal pleasures, but watch
the breastplate of faith and love, whi
arrows of the evil one from the heart,
hope of a perfect salvation, which wi
the day of battle. God has not appoi
but to a complete salvation in Christ ;
fear, because, whether sleeping or wa
(4) The hidden things belong to God
to man ; therefore let them be obedien
desire, thirst after the grace, truth, and
They should love and esteem the m

ace, and peace to all His faithful followers. (6) Let there be unity amongst brethren in prayer and work ; one Spirit, one Saviour, one God and Father, above all and in all. (7) There should be unity of the affections in grace, love, and holiness, these are the manifestations of the sons of God ; and if Christians are gracious, loving, and holy, then the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ will be with them.

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

this epistle may be found the second cycle. (1) There is the expression of thanks unto God for the growth of faith and the abundance of love manifested by this church under the persecutions and afflictions which they had to endure ; to them such a spirit is a proof of their salvation, whilst unto their enemies it is a sign that the judgments of God are coming upon them. The end of such trials is the glory of God in Jesus Christ and the good of those who are called by His grace to His service. (2) Touching the coming of Christ in the Church and the world in His glorious power as King of peace, as well as King of grace and mercy, there is no necessity to be troubled upon such a question, or to suppose that this day of the Lord's manifestation has been placed in the past. Before such an event could take place there would first be seen a falling away from the truth of the gospel and from Christ ; out of this darkness which would surround men there would emerge a spirit in complete opposition to the spirit of grace and mercy in Jesus Christ, exalting itself against what is known of God by Christ ; and becoming so presumptuous as to sit down in God's temple, His church, and in God's Name giving forth ordinances which would bind men, these being in their principles contrary to the gospel and the spirit of Jesus Christ. This truth is not a new revelation to men ; it is embodied in the Holy Scriptures throughout, and it may be known to be the method of grace and the mystery of evil. God does not taken unawares by such things ; the seeds of grace and of evil grow up side by side, and in their due order there is revelation and manifestation. Even at the time that the apostle lived the germ-seeds of evil had been sown, but the growth was kept back by another power, which in due time would be taken out of the way. By the removal of that power there would then come the manifestation of the wicked or lawless one, whose coming would be known by its enmity to the gracious gospel of Christ in visible signs, by lying wonders, and by deceit and unrighteousness. This evil spirit would not receive the grace of God in truth and in love for salvation, and thus it would be deluded to awful errors, believe lies, and be judged because of its rejection of the truth, and taking pleasure in unrighteousness. Putting these thoughts into plain words they seem to amount to this, that during the course of Christianity there would be the revelation of the gospel by the Holy Spirit ; the gradual falling away of the Church from the truth and grace of God in Christ ; a power restraining for a time the lawless,

stand fast in God's Word. (4) In the
Father who loved sinful man, and in the
grace, truth, and righteousness of God
Christians ought to pray for the success
servants may be delivered from evil
ever may happen in the kingdom of God
and He will be a safeguard from evil
obedient to His Word, are directed by
of Christ, and are patient in His will
be separation from evil, and even find
to be wrong. The Christian is called
to diligence in business. Companion
busybodies could not be favourable
grace; therefore, whilst separation find
should be to make men ashamed of
separate themselves from sin and seek
(7) "Now the Lord of peace Himself
and in all ways." (8) Enjoying the
Lord, and the loving fellowship of
grace of the Lord will be upon the s

THE FIRST EPISTLE

CHAPTERS I.—III. may contain the
from one under the commandment
Jesus our hope, to a true child in the
merciful and peace. The object of the

rit of Christ ; but they can be lawfully used as subject to the spirit, in harmony with the will of God. The laws of God are given to man and condemn all that is contrary to the will of God and not in conformity with the gospel. (2) Those who are the servants of Christ and the sons of God can give thanks to Christ for the mercy that has been obtained, and the confidence placed in men so unworthy of favour. They have sinned in ignorance, if not blasphemers and persecutors in the world, the germs of even such diabolical fruits were in the soul, and only through the mercy of God and the abundance of His grace, have they not been prevented from becoming even worse than the apostle Paul. Every sinner saved by grace who knows the mystery of evil in his own soul will be ready to confess with Paul—"Faithful is the word saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ; of whom I am the chief." And the chief of sinners in actual fact, as well as in the hidden germs of sin, obtains mercy ; the former that all men may know the long-expected mercy of God ; and all men, that they may render "unto the Lord God eternal, incorruptible, invisible, the only God, honour and glory ever and ever." (3) The children of God, in Jesus Christ, have a charge committed unto them, and it is that they may be true and faithful soldiers to their King ; holding on the one hand to faith in Christ unseen, and on the other to a holy life and a pure conscience. Let faith go is to lose the gospel of God's grace, and to sin against the conscience is to transgress moral law ; therefore, to do either of these is to make shipwreck of the soul, and to permit it to be delivered up to the enemy of God. (4) The Christian who hungers and thirsts after holiness and righteousness in the kingdom of grace will pray and give thanks for all men, especially for kings and those in authority, so that the kingdom of grace and peace may come in the earth. To do this is well-pleasing in the sight of the merciful and gracious God, whose desire is that all men might know the truth and be saved. To this end Christ has revealed Himself to men in Christ Jesus, the Man and the Son for men, and the gospel preached to men in truth and faithfulness, by His servants is the glad tidings of salvation. (5) Those who are animated by the Spirit of Christ ought to pray without ceasing this great object, whilst those who are under law must not be led out of the gospel way of Christ by rites and ceremonies, forms and raiment. Those who are under law are in subjection ; therefore let them be quiet and teachable, not seeking to teach others nor desirous of having dominion over their faith. Adam, the perfect man who lived according to the law, not subject to it, was first formed, and then Eve ; in other words, was not the moral perfect man that was beguiled, but the spirit, subject to moral law, that fell into sin ; but this spirit shall be saved, as in a new birth, if there is continuance in faith, love, and holiness. The law of the gospel is brought under law and wedded to the Spirit in the act of salvation, but it requires the union of faith and love or grace, as in the conception, and the pangs of a new birth to bring about such a result. (6) If a man seek to be an overseer in the House of God, holiness, grace, and mercy, this desire is good ; but it ought to be remembered that such an one should be fully animated by the Spirit of Christ, else

he a fall into self-conceit, and into the
Deacons—those who look after temporal
and truthful, faithful and just, and be
proved, found to be without blame a
Women, perhaps deaconesses, are also ca
and faithful in all that they do. The c
and rulers in their own houses, and by
place and become bold in the faith that is
that the teaching which refers to the c
the visible order of things of the Chr
which the spiritual overseer has the con
of the Church, even as the body is th
body has its laws, which work in har
by constraint or in subjection, but as the
body. This being so, it follows that t
deacon, he should not be subject to his
subject to him ; if he is constrained o
then he is a bondman, or a mere child,
the House of God. (7) These things
with a purpose ; the hope being His
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which is the visible pillar of all that
spiritual stay or support of all that is g
these men, set in the forefront of Chris
in similar positions since their day ; the
hope, and the right behaviour in the
purpose. Without controversy it is in
mystery of godliness is known, and th
pressed into six thoughts, these being t
in the flesh. as under forms and laws ;

mystery in Him there is also the mystery of evil working in mankind, and of this God's Spirit teaches plainly that in later times this spirit shall have great power upon those who fall away from Christ's spirit in the gospel; they will be found to believe and utter lies, having their consciences branded, or seared as with a hot iron, the spirit of grace will be gone, and the moral nature so warped that truth and justice will have no influence upon them. Instead of being the children of God in Christ they will become self-asserting and carnal, forbidding men to unite themselves to the laws of grace, and commanding men to abstain from food, such spiritual nourishment, for example, as the Word of God and the Lord's Supper, which have been given and instituted by God for the use of men. This spirit must be wrong, because all the creatures which minister to the growth in grace of the people of God are good, they ought not to be rejected, but rather received with thanks, because they are sanctified through the Word and by prayer. (2) The faithful ministers of Jesus Christ will keep before their brethren such thoughts as these for their nourishment and growth in grace, taking care to refuse and to avoid foolish fables. The exercise of this spirit ought to be in God-likeness, for this is profitable both for this life and that which is to come. The pastors of flocks ought to labour and strive to get men and women to set their hope upon the living God, the Saviour of men, both commanding and teaching in the way of grace, truth, and righteousness. Pastors have their gifts, and they should be cultivated so that their growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ may be made manifest to their flocks. By continuance in the Spirit of Christ, and in teaching the truths or laws of the kingdom of grace, pastors are saved, and they who hear them are also saved by God's grace through the preaching of the Word. (3) Pastors, or overseers, are not to be lords in the Church of Christ, but the messengers of Christ to all, and their servants for their profit; thus the spirit of the pastors should be meek and lowly in love, and not in lordly dominion or condescension. A father is not to be rudely rebuked but gently entreated; the younger men to be treated as brethren; elderly women with the respect shown to a mother; and younger women as sisters in all purity. Widows are to be honoured who are indeed widows, that is, bereft of their stay and their hope. Widows who have their hopes in their children are to train them up in pious ways, for this is acceptable in God's sight. Widows who have lost their stay and earthly hope for the future, will find hope in God and in His service; but if a woman makes pleasure her trust and hope, then she is dead, even while she seems to live. Members of the Church of Christ are to provide for their own households, and failing to attend to this duty they are graceless. In the roll of widows to be supported by the Church none were to be under sixty years of age, women found true to one husband and well-known for their good works, hospitality, and purity of life. But those who had not learnt to be subject to law, to one husband, and had not proved themselves to be Christ's ministering servants, were to be rejected, lest they should bring shame upon Christ and themselves through their foolish behaviour. The Church is not to be burdened by supporting widows if those who have the means, and are willing to

ulers in the Church, but patient and long-suffering, even subject to evil men for their good, even as the Lord Jesus, according to the will of God, resigned Himself into the hands of sinful men, and was crucified by them. The kingdom is a spiritual one, but it is the body, the laws of grace and subjection that is specially referred to in this realm of thought. (6) If men teach any other doctrine than the words of Christ, His laws of grace and mercy, and His Spirit, then they are wrong, and departing from the truth in Christ, they will land themselves in all kinds of disputes, strife and wranglings, and even come to think that godliness means the making of gain. In other words, this is ministering to self-gratification and self-glorying, instead of self-denial and self-sacrifice for the good of others. It is the spirit of selfishness in self-seeking that is the root of all evil; because, when this spirit is cherished it is in complete antagonism to the spirit of grace in Jesus Christ, and thus faith is stricken as with many arrows, and it is unable to lay hold upon Him who sacrificed Himself for the salvation of men. Faith being wounded, weak and helpless to rest upon Christ, the clouds of doubts surround the soul, God's face is hid from view, and the wrath of God is awakened against the self-seeking soul. (7) Flee such a spirit, son of God, and follow Christ; fight not with carnal weapons, but by faith, and thus lay hold of life eternal, the gift of God, to which the redeemed are called. A charge is laid upon each Christian, and it is to keep the Saviour's laws pure and without reproach; His crusaders against the world, the flesh and the devil, until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then men will know that He is King over them that reign as kings, and Lord over all who rule as lords amongst men; the Immortal, dwelling in perfect truth, unto whom be eternal power and honour. (8) The present visible order of things is not what men should rest upon for their eternal welfare; but rather on God, His Word, and the Spirit in Christ, because these alone are spiritual, and have a foundation that cannot be moved. This is the charge committed to the Church of Christ, of which the members are the guards and protectors; therefore let them beware that they be not turned aside from their charge and led to be so foolish as to contend with *knowing* men, who come to them with babblings and false theories based upon scientific facts. They are not set up for the purpose of wrangling with proud, conceited, self-seeking men, and by doing so to lose the Spirit of Christ and forget their charge; but to be true and faithful to the King, and to stand by Him in His Spirit and to do His will. Such men miss the mark, and are carried forward at an accelerating rate to their own destruction. Why should Christians be found hastening the awful consummation that awaits the proud and the rebellious? or placing themselves in jeopardy by wrestling with them upon the brink of the pit? This is not following the Spirit in Christ, and therefore God's grace cannot rest upon such works. Obedience to the King in His Spirit, and faithfulness to the charge intrusted and duly enjoined, will bring down His gracious blessing upon His Church.

The gospel is a thing of which can when it is understood, in its blessed of shame, but rather that which men. Christ Jesus has abolished darkness to light by the gospel, and those who to their fellow-creatures have no cause their own sufferings on its behalf have placed their confidence, and to guard and keep their souls in the necessary that those who are His by His Own words, the laws of His same time, whilst careful to keep His Word, which is the body of Christ Spirit of Christ which animates the Spirit within their own souls. (2) as did their Master, often find that turning away and forsaking of the the storm that they dare not face, and wisdom more than the gospel way of mercy, and the cross of Christ Still it is not all darkness, the Lord lonely souls; and these are not as they can only serve their Lord by This work of Christ and the w strengthening grace, wisdom, and endured, and the true and faithful duties that fall to his lot. He is country, and thus he cannot afford that would prevent his forward march by enrolling his name amongst the

soldier must identify himself with his King and Captain, and by doing this he may rest assured that the issue must be eternal glory. (4) The servants of Jesus Christ in the gospel must keep these things in continual remembrance. It is not for them to strive about mere words, but rather to become like skilful workmen, able to handle the Word of truth aright; it matters not what foolish theories may be propounded amongst men, they must fall back upon and stand by the Word, and see it as the wisdom, truth, and righteousness of God. In purity of life, and in the Spirit of Christ true Christians will be gentle and forbearing toward sinful men, with the hope that they may be recovered from their evil ways, and brought to love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. (5) In the gospel days grievous times would come upon the Church of Christ, when men holding godliness in its forms, yet denying its power by their actions, would become all that is vile and sinful; from such men Christians must turn away. Persecution and suffering are their portion who follow Jesus Christ; but this ought not to be a mystery to those who possess the inspired Scriptures, which teach very plainly this great truth of the kingdom of mercy in Jesus Christ. The Holy Scriptures are a portion of this visible kingdom, because they also, in their letter, have been subject to persecution and calumny by evil men. The King of mercy, His Word, and His servants are all united in this same work; and it ought to be remembered that as the Captain of Salvation was made perfect through the things that He suffered, so His Word will shine forth in due time, and His servants will be made perfect in their Head by the same means. (6) The charge placed upon the servants of Christ in the sight of God and Christ the Judge of men is the preaching of the gospel. It is true that men would become so self-willed and foolish as to turn away from the truth and listen to fables, but they cannot throw off God's authority as Law-giver, or put the judgment-seat of Christ on one side; these remain, and the evangelist must warn, teach, and exhort men to do that which is right in the sight of God. It is as the leader of the evangel that the apostle Paul stands in the forefront of Christendom; and looking beyond the empire of Rome, and the chains that fetter his body, he sees that the end is at hand, and away beyond there is seen the crown of righteousness to be bestowed by the righteous Judge upon all those who have loved His appearing. (7) The sons of God who seek the glory of God and peace on earth find this world a strange place to live in, and their companions are not always faithful to the gospel; the world and its favours, honours, and the applause of men have their power, and sometimes they are stronger than obedience to duty in the work of mercy. The healing influence and the light-giving power of the gospel are necessary for the sons of God; and it is well that they should study God's Book of grace as well as His Book of nature. Enemies will cross their path, they should not strive with such men, but leave them to the Lord who will render upon their own heads their evil ways. Men may forsake each other, but the Lord will stand by and give deliverance out of every evil, saving the soul unto His heavenly kingdom. (8) Salutations to the brethren in Jesus Christ with the Lord's spiritual presence and grace.

upon the great mystery of the ages, its
and its application to Titus, the true el
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the destruction of evil, and thus good works will be the necessary result from the regenerate soul, the fruits of the grace of God in the soul. (7) Salutations to the brethren, and to all that live in the faith, in other words, the sons of God; upon all such there rests the grace of God.

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO PHILEMON.

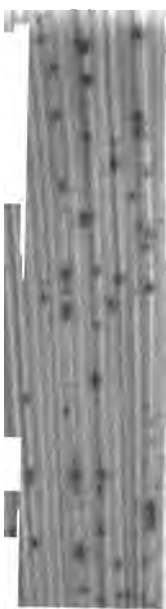
THIS Epistle may contain the seventh cycle. (1) The spirit of the letter is grace and peace as seen in the family relationship of brothers and sisters, and fellow-workers, and fellow-soldiers in the House of God. (2) It is a subject of grateful thanks when there is to be seen in a soul love and faith toward Christ and the saints; and it is a prayer and desire to be longed after that faith may become effectual in the knowledge of all that is good in the saints unto Christ. (3) This is Christian fellowship, to have joy and comfort in the love of others, because, by their Christ-like spirit and actions they refresh the saints of God. (4) The true, gracious, and righteous spirit of the kingdom of heaven may be seen in Paul's pleading for Onesimus; it is the wisdom of the Gospel in miniature. There is seen Philemon—affectionate—the master whose unprofitable, rebellious servant, or slave, had run away from him, and under Paul, the worker for Christ, Onesimus—profitable and useful—is changed to be a Christian. He is to be restored again, no longer as a servant, but as a brother beloved. The spirit of Paul, the ambassador of Christ, the aged, and a prisoner of Christ Jesus, is very beautiful, He will not enjoin what is befitting in such a case, but for love's sake, he beseeches the master for this slave, now his own child, begotten in his bonds, sent back in his own person, but as the very heart of Paul, who would fain have kept him as a minister in the bonds of the Gospel. The slave and master had been separated for a season, through the evil-doing of the slave, but he returns, no longer a slave, but a brother beloved in the Lord. (5) The concluding part of the letter refers to Paul and Philemon, but specially to the spirit of the gospel of mercy, as may be summed up in the words "forgive freely, as thou hast been freely forgiven;" but the pleading of Paul is that of a son of God, in the spirit of grace, mercy and peace, and he has full confidence that his brother will act in the same spirit toward this new brother brought into the family of God. There is an inexpressible longing expressed in the few words at the end, in the desire that a lodging should be prepared for the aged minister of Christ; he needs rest, and where is he so likely to find it as in the bosom of the family of Philemon? The thought requires to be extended, and beyond Philemon and his home there may be discerned the God of all Grace and the Father of Mercy, with His Beloved Son, waiting to welcome the aged prisoner released from his bonds. (6) The salutations are from fellow-prisoners and fellow-workers in the gospel. (7) May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, which brings peace to every son of God, be upon all who are like Philemon, full of affection toward the children of God.

they are His ministering spirits, sent
sake of those who shall inherit salvation.
Christ has been manifested, that the
so great, and they ought to be earnest,
marvellous gospel proclaimed to them
Old Testament proved itself to be true
of God, and those who disobeyed it
escape if they neglect the gracious sal-
(3) It was not unto angels, or servants,
was made subject, but unto the Son of
authority, and all things are subject to
a special object, He is seen as a Subject
live in the spirit of love in heaven, and
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sin, suffering, and death. By this man-
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humanity, and they who are sanctified
is the mystery of the Incarnation, be-
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is the Apostle of Mercy and the High Priest over the House of God ; and He has been found faithful in His work, even as Moses was faithful as a servant in his place. Christ has built up and established the House of God ; Moses has served therein as God's servant ; thus the Son over the House, the Church of God, and the soul, must have a glory surpassing that of Moses, and unique in its nature. (5) Jesus Christ is the Gospel, and in Him are all the Promises of God ; let men take heed, therefore, of unbelief and of falling away from Him ; rather let them accept the truth willingly and proclaim it freely, lest there be an inability to enter into that rest and peace which He has provided. (6) Christians should be humble and afraid, lest they come short of the promised rest ; for in very deed the gospel has been preached unto them in a fuller measure than unto the Jews ; but as the Word to the Jews did not profit them for want of faith, so even men may sit in the full blaze of the gospel light and yet be lost in the darkness of sin. Those who believe enter into rest : unbelievers are in the desert of sin and of death ; to-day is the day of salvation, and if men will only trust in and obey Jesus Christ, they enter into rest. (7) Joshua did not give spiritual rest and peace to Israel ; he only led them into a visible kingdom which typified the promised spiritual rest in Jesus Christ ; and thus in Him alone can rest and peace be found for the soul. Christ is the rest for the soul ; he that finds Christ finds rest and rests from his own work, in subjection to law ; and he lives in Christ in harmony with the will of God. There is no safety outside of this eternal Rest, therefore there should not be any delay in this matter, lest the warning example found in the Scriptures be found ineffectual. Men may deceive themselves by their wilfulness and sinfulness ; but God's Word, if rightly used, will prevent self-destruction by its revealing power ; and beyond the Word there is God, in whose sight all things are naked, and it is with Him as High Priest, or as Judge, that men have to do.

CHAPTERS IV., 14—16 —VII., 1—3, may contain the second cycle.

(1) When Christians have such a High Priest, sinless, and yet through trial and suffering able to sympathise with the tempted, they have an open way of access to the throne of grace, to receive mercy and to find the grace and help required in time of need. (2) As in the Aaronic priesthood, the man chosen to be high priest was one taken from amongst his brethren to offer gifts and sacrifices, and to deal gently with the ignorant and the erring, seeing that he was personally infirm, so Christ did not glorify Himself to be made the High Priest of the redeemed ; but He became first the Servant, so that the Priest might be qualified for His office ; and it was in these days of service that He prayed with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and He was heard in His prayers because He feared God. Though the very Son of God, yet He had to learn obedience by suffering ; and it was when He was perfect that He became the Author of eternal salvation to them that obey the gospel. He is a High Priest after another order than that of Aaron ; even that of Melchizedek—king of righteousness. (3) Of this order of priesthood



spirit that is in Christ. As bearing the gospel, have been influenced by the judgment and eternity, and yet renewed so as to become repentant, crucifying the Son of God in a spirit open shame in the small world of the same lesson to men, as seen in the field and brings forth herbs for those who God's blessing; but if it bear thorns and the end is that it shall be burned the will of God, they are blessed; but then they are cursed, and there is no possibility; and it is considered in that they may flee from such a danger, and be the work of mercy amongst those men who tion by Jesus Christ is not a doubtful the mutable thoughts of men: it is thus misss confirmed by His oath; and the is in a very sad condition indeed. In Jesus Christ, and the Righteous High veil of visible things as the Forerunner in Him. (7) Jesus Christ is the King peace; spiritually without father, or beginning of days or end of life, the than Abraham, the visible father of the

CHAPTERS VII., 4—28—IX., may compare the greatness of the High Priest of right comparison the order of priests in Aaron. He is spiritual, they are

Moses spake nothing concerning priests ; but he does speak of the One his brethren shall praise, the victorious King, the Sceptre, and of One to whom all the people shall be gathered. It is through Judah, or by the visible ruler being made subject to the spiritual, that the Christian order is set up. The order of Aaron is carnal, weak, and unprofitable, therefore imperfect in its order and in its ends ; but the order of grace, truth, and righteousness in Jesus Christ is perfect and unchangeable, and it is on this account that "He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God, through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (3) Such a holy and guiltless High Priest—One separated from sin, made higher than the heavens of Judaism and of Christianity—is the fitting High Priest for men in spiritual things ; He has once for all offered up a perfect spiritual sacrifice, according to the oath and under law, and from henceforth He is above ritual and law—the Son made perfect for ever. (4) The sum of all these things amounts to this, that Jesus Christ, the High Priest of righteousness, has ascended to reign at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, the Minister of God in spiritual things. If He were on earth, He would not be a priest, because all priests in the order and spirit of Aaron offer gifts and sacrifices in subjection to law, and according to the copy or shadow of spiritual realities. His ministry is more excellent, because it is built upon spiritual promises ; but if the first covenant in Mosaism had been perfect, there would not have been any place or necessity for the spiritual Testament in Jesus Christ. Yet even in the Old Testament, fault is found with the first covenant and the promise given of a spiritual covenant which would be all that could be desired ; seeing that it would bring man into the condition of having the laws of God engraven upon the soul, and through such a change he would live in harmony with the will of God—that is, in the Spirit of Christ. (5) The Levitical ordinances, in their order, were all types and shadows of God's merciful, heavenly realities ; but in these there was specially to be found an important prophecy of an unrevealed truth, as related to the holy of holies into which the high priest entered once a year with the blood of a sacrifice. The Holy Spirit, by this sign, desired to teach men that the way into heaven was not made fully manifest whilst this order remained ; but when the things visible, ritual, ceremonial, and law vanished away, then there should be openly manifested the heaven of God's grace and mercy in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. (6) Christ came, the High Priest of these good things so long promised to men ; and by His coming, death and resurrection, the Levitical ordinances and ritualism were abolished, righteousness was manifested, and the door to the eternal inheritance thrown open for the sons of men. (7) Christ has entered into heaven, the perfect state of harmony with the will of God ; and as the perfect High Priest, pure and holy, He sees the face of God for those redeemed by Him. What then ? Even as under the Levitical order of things the high priest returned to bless the people after going into the holy of holies, so men are waiting for His reappearance for judgment upon the ungodly, and for salvation, apart from sin, to them that wait for Him.

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of grace and patience. that they may

development from the invisible powers beyond form or law. Faith discerns a difference betwixt sacrifices, or offerings made unto God, by the motives that prompt the gifts; and faith so transcends death and translates a faithful son of God that he will not taste of this bitter cup. Faith makes provision for the future, by taking shelter for safety in the God-appointed Ark; and it leads man forth out of this world, with all its ambitious projects, to seek a land, a home promised to the faithful by God. Faith has nothing to do with apparent impossibilities and the order of nature; it believes in God, who is above the laws of nature, and who by His grace and mercy can cause what seems to be a barren and sterile desert, to be changed into a garden of delights, and a sin-cursed world to be changed into the blessed inheritance of the saints in light. Grace in God, faith in man, and mercy bring about these marvellous results; and these are not subject to the law, but they operate in the Spirit of Christ for gracious purposes. (6) The kingdom of God upon the earth and in the soul, in its development, is a thing of promise and of hope; the desire manifested is always toward something better, the heavenly; and it is on this account that God is represented as not being ashamed of those who possess such a spirit; "for He hath prepared for them a city." (7) The *victory* of faith is represented by Abraham offering up his son Isaac; by Isaac blessing Jacob and Esau, concerning the kingdom of God; by Jacob blessing the sons of Joseph; by Joseph prophesying the departure of Israel from Egypt; by Moses, in his birth and choice to serve God, the Exodus, the Passover, and the Red Sea; by the fall of Jericho; by the judges who delivered Israel from their enemies, and by prophets and martyrs who have suffered for the truth. These all fought the good fight of faith, not having received the promise; and being faithful, they overcame their foes within and around them; but God has provided a still fuller manifestation of faith in the Christian era, so that in Christ and His Church this kingdom might be made perfect.

CHAPTERS XII., XIII., may contain the fifth cycle. (1) Christians are found in the arena of the world during the great cycle of mercy in Jesus Christ, and around them on all sides there is a great cloud of witnesses watching the great race in this new development of the kingdom of God. They are called to put aside every hindrance, to fix their gaze upon Jesus, His cross, shame, and glory, and to run with patience the same race that He ran so well. The struggle to win the prize requires both patience and endurance, and His example must be steadily considered, so that there may not be weariness or fainting in the race. The figure is changed, and wrestlers are seen resisting with each other, and striving for the supremacy; and again there is over all the visible aspiration and spiritual struggles the hand of the Lord, chastening a beloved son for his good. (2) The Christian's hope, his wrestling with enemies fleshly and spiritual, and the chastening effects of all such experiences, have one object in view; it is to make us sons worthy of such a Father, loving and obedient; and it is all for profit, so that the redeemed may become partakers of God's holiness. Chastening is far from pleasant, yet it yields righteous and peaceable

fruits to those who are exercised in such a school. It is not meant to weaken, but rather to brace up the feeble hands, and to strengthen the palsied limbs, so that there may follow a firm walking in the path of righteousness, and healing for the sin-sick soul. (3) The path of righteousness, so far as the Christian is concerned, is one of peace and holiness; these are his guides upon the right hand and upon the left, that he may be led onward to see the face of God. But whilst the eyes are to be steadily fixed on these as the means, the lights in the way, he must not forget to look within and around, lest there be a falling "short of the grace of God," or a springing up of some bitter root which would bring trouble or defilement. The profane Esau got as far on in the pilgrim's path as to desire the blessing of God, but he had despised the birthright, and thus he could not inherit what was spiritual; being rejected because of his carnality, "he found no place of repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears." (4) Christians are not come to Moses and Mount Sinai, but to Jesus and Mount Zion, the eternal city of the living God, and they must take heed that they do not refuse Him who is now the Speaker to men. If there was no escape for the rebels who refused subjection to Moses, then how can men escape if they turn away from Jesus Christ? At Sinai God's voice shook the earth, but in Jesus Christ there is found the power that shakes earth and heaven; and this signifies not merely that Judaism will be removed, but also that even the forms of the Christian era, the laws of the gospel, shall pass away. Those who receive the spiritual kingdom that cannot be shaken, should be the thankful recipients of grace, so that in the Spirit of Christ they may offer a service that is well pleasing to Him. "God is a consuming fire." (5) The spirit of mercy is one of love, hospitality, compassion toward those in bonds or in affliction, of purity and loyalty toward God, and it is content to wait upon God for every blessing. (6) Keep in remembrance spiritual truths, which should be the rulers in the soul; and be imitators of those men whose lives reflect great and holy principles. The Example in spiritual thoughts, words, and actions is Jesus Christ, the unchangeable Truth of God. Grace and not meats, mercy and not ceremonies, profit the soul; for sanctification of the soul is not through washings of the body, but through the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As the Jew left his city to be cleansed by washing, so the Christian seeks sanctification by following Jesus, bearing the cross, and sharing in His reproaches. The city of typical things is left behind, and even the gospel in its forms and laws is not permanent. In Christ, and in His Spirit, is found the perfect sacrifice that is well-pleasing to God, that is, in thanks and praise, good works and obedience to the will of God. Prayer for the brethren, a conscience void of offence toward God and man, and an honest or righteous life, these are the means which tend to purify the soul, so that God may be seen and His will known. (7) The God of peace overcame sin and death when the Chief Shepherd arose from the dead; by this resurrection power men are made perfect to do God's will, and to do all that "is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen." (8) There had been persecution, and Timothy, the honour of God, had

been set at liberty. Salutations to rulers and to the saints. "Grace be with you all. Amen."

THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES.

CHAPTERS I., II., may contain the sixth cycle. (1) The object of the Epistle is to help Christians when they are tried, so that they may have joy even when they fall into temptations, by the knowledge that their faith is being proved, patience exercised, and their souls made perfect in Christ. (2) This is a great thought encompassing the whole work of mercy, and so it staggers those who are weak; but those who lack wisdom or strength are taught to seek it from God in faith and it shall be given to them, as they can use it, for this purpose. (3) The order of glorying is here seen to be reversed, because usually men glory in their riches, strength, or wisdom; but it shall not be so with Christians, for the lowly will glory in their high estate, or their inheritance in Jesus Christ; whilst the rich will be brought low. (4) The man who endures temptation is blessed; that is to say, when such trials and persecutions as come upon a child of God's grace in Jesus Christ are made the means by which he shall gain the crown of life. It is not God that tempts man, but evil; lusts are the great tempters, and it is when these are permitted to conceive that they bear sin and bring forth death. God cannot in any way help these vile passions, but He gives grace to the lowly, so that lustings may be overcome, and souls regenerated to Himself in Christ. (5) Christians ought to know such things as these, so that they may be quick to respond to the grace of God, and very slow to speak or do anything contrary to His will. It is action that makes a Christian soldier, not idle theorising; the man that acts works bravely on toward perfect liberty, but the self-satisfied remain ignorant and self-conceited, not even attaining to repentance toward God and faith in Christ. Pure religion before God is found in two words, mercy and holiness; to be a Christian is to be merciful toward afflicted neighbours, and to keep the soul clean in God's sight. (6) The spirit of partiality and of preference should be unknown to a Christian; men of this world, who are carnal in their conceptions, look upon mere visible appearances, judge and act accordingly. God chooses the poor in spirit and lowly in soul to make them rich in faith, and to be heirs of His kingdom; they are spiritually great, and such deserve honour because God has honoured them. But to give spiritual honour to a man because he is wealthy or powerful is a great mistake, it is to set like a sinful man of this world, and not like God. There is one law which should govern all actions towards neighbours, and it is that of love, which lays hold upon the spiritual state of man, thus reducing all grades of society to one holy and lowly level. To transgress this law by any preference is to commit sin, and to become immoral in God's sight. Within the moral sphere the spirit of the moral law is summed up in this one word, "love." This is the radiant light of God shining

be compared to the body that it manifest without good works, this is a mere and fruitless thing, no better than the bell to own, whilst they shudder at the truth that there is justification of the soul it is equally true that the man is justified by His victory over His enemies. His power in the soul which prompts to go the perfect man in Christ Jesus is made the Spirit that is in Christ, and then with the will of God ; works are the and therefore subject to the spirit of the victory, but faith which links the and then in harmony with law there is character and conformity to the will of

CHAPTERS III.—V. may contain the man that is able to be a perfect There is the Teacher, the Lord Jesus none. He is the Son of God, teaches perfect way ; but all others are weak a That which is imperfect is dangerous, the strain comes upon it then it gives tongue is the visible member which invisible spirit ; it is very little, but its effects flow from its motions. It is a tamable thing, full of restless evil and imperfection in man that renders him implicitly trusted. The fountain of truth and there come out of it that which

hatred, jealousy, and strife. There is spiritual adultery with the spirit of this world, the great enemy of God, and the good and gracious gifts of God are desired, so that they may be given to this abominable harlot. There must be subjection to God and resistance of the devil in every form, clean hands and pure souls, and then through humility before God He will give the grace necessary to renew the soul. (4) Do not sit in the judgment-seat upon thy brother. It is true thou art by grace a son of God, but sons are subject to the Father, and also, during their minority, to law, therefore be obedient to the law, and do not exalt thyself above thy brother. At present, during the Christian era, the sons of God are not judges and destroyers, but rather saviours seeking the peace of the world; therefore do not judge the law, but obey the Law-giver, else He shall become thy Judge to destroy thee instead of thy Father to save. (5) What ought the order of a man's life to be? Self-seeking and self-glorying? No; but humble obedience to His will in all things, doing the good that is known, so that the soul may be free from sin. (6) To be rich in self is to invoke the curse of God upon the soul, because the self-sufficient is impelled forward in the way of destruction, and the end is to deify self and to kill the righteous. This is an awful blunder. God permits this wickedness for a time, so that the works of the devil may be made manifest; but there is coming the great day of God when the patient, suffering sons of God will reign upon the earth, and the wicked will be cast down from their places of power. Patience is required to wait from the sowing in the spring-time until the harvest in autumn; but if the husbandman can wait patiently for the crops of the earth, then surely the Christian may also wait for those spiritual fruits which are of so much importance for the spiritual welfare of man. The blessed are they who endure and are patient, and Job and the Lord are examples for men in this sphere of duty. (7) Above everything else men are to be sincere and truthful in their every thought, word, and action. They are to pray with and for those who suffer; sing God's praise with those who are cheerful; pray with, anoint, and heal the sick through and by the confession and remission of sin. God has given power to men, and they can do great things if they use that power in harmony with His will; they may even convert those who err from the truth, and by doing this a soul will be saved and God's Name glorified.

THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

CHAPTERS I.—III., 1—12, may contain the first cycle of the eighth cycle in this portion of God's Word. (1) The Epistle is from Peter, the representative of the visible Church, to the faithful who are dispersed abroad, the persecuted, sanctified by God's Spirit into obedience to Jesus Christ. Through the mercy of God Christians are born again to a new life by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they hope to obtain an inheritance that is incorruptible and eternal. But in the

meantime they are in the midst of trials which have for their end the purification of the soul, joy, glory, and eternal salvation. It is this salvation that has been the great mystery to, and the chief desire of, God's people in all ages; and the Holy Spirit, by the prophets, has testified to the sufferings of Christ and His Church, and the coming glory that follows upon this age of suffering. (2) Angels have desired to look into these things and to understand them; but it has been given to sinful men to gird themselves up to face this problem, and to be brought to understand it by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Man is not redeemed by carnal things, or by obedience to law, but through the Word of God, the glad tidings of salvation. (3) It is for souls saved by grace to put away all that is sinful in their behaviour, and to renounce self; they require to become as babes again, and in that state to take the spiritual milk that will nourish their souls, and they will grow into a spiritual temple of God, within which spiritual sacrifices will be offered unto God in Jesus Christ. To the proud and the disobedient Christ is an offence by the cross of shame; but to those who believe in Him He is precious, because they understand that His cross is in reality their own shame taken away by Him. Because of this great change in Christ they become a royal priesthood, and a holy nation in the earth, the means of light to the world, through and by the mercy of God. (4) Christians are like pilgrims in this world; they seek the inheritance that is undefiled, spiritual, and eternal. It is for them a necessary thing to abstain from the lusts of the flesh, so that by their example evil-doers may see and know what is right, and glorify God in the day of His gracious visitation to them. (5) The order of mercy is subjection to authority, and by well-doing to put foolish men to shame. (6) Servants are to be like the Servant of God, the Example for all men; wives are to be subject to their husbands, or the laws of grace subject to the Spirit of Christ; and husbands are called to be "joint-heirs of the grace of life" with their wives, so that the Spirit of Christ be not hindered. (7) But all are called to become like Christ, because it is only in His Spirit that evil can be overthrown, and men made blessed.

CHAPTERS III., 13—22, V., may contain the second cycle. (1) Who can harm the Christian if he is a follower of God? Suffering may come for righteousness' sake, but this will work for good, and not evil, for blessing, and not to the harm of the soul. Christ, the Lord, must be sanctified in the saved soul, and then suffering for well-doing will produce good results. Christ suffered for sins, the Righteous for sinners, so that He might bring them to God. In the flesh He was put to death, but by the Spirit He was quickened to a new spiritual life. In the Spirit He preached to spirits in prison, even to the disobedient during the days of Noah when God was so long-suffering toward the wicked; and the means of salvation in that day was by the ark and a baptism as of water. This is a figure, a type of a greater salvation (a baptism, not of cleansing by water, but through the purification of the soul), resurrection from death by the spiritual life that is in Jesus Christ. His mission cannot fail, because He is in heaven, and He possesses all

power to carry on His work of grace. (2) As Christ suffered, died in the flesh, so those who suffer as He suffered, righteously, die unto sin. If dead to sin and alive to God in Christ, then how is it possible that there could be delight in things abhorrent to the living soul, and contrary to the will of God? There is responsibility to the Judge who will judge the quickened in Christ and the dead in sin; and it was because of this accountability that the gospel was preached to dead souls, so that judgment might fall upon the flesh and its works, and men, spiritual men, might be set free to live in accordance with the Spirit of life in Christ. (3) The order of life for the living in Christ is soberness and prayerfulness, love and hospitality, and ministering the gifts and graces of God by His Spirit in harmony with His will. (4) It is not to be considered as a strange thing when fiery trials and sufferings come upon the people of God; this proves communion with Christ in His sufferings, the end being that at His revealing in glory, then those who have suffered will also have fellowship with Him, and rejoice in His joy. (5) The elders are to be like gentle shepherds, watchful and careful over the spiritual interests of their flock, taking the oversight over them, not by constraint, but willingly; not as lords, but as examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, the crown of glory that cannot fade shall be given to them as a reward for their labours. (6) Subjection and humility in service are becoming in Christians, for God gives grace to those who are animated by such a spirit. Anxiety and carefulness are to be avoided, because God cares for His children. Sobriety and watchfulness are necessary, because the enemy of the soul is very strong; and courage with resistance must be cultivated, so that there may be progress in the divine life. And the God of all grace will in due time, after a little suffering, make the soul perfect, establish it in grace, and give it strength for the eternal glory. "To Him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (7) This is the true grace of God, first suffering so that the body of sin and death may be crucified, and then glory. "She that is in Babylon," that is, the soul once subject to confusion is become a child of God in Jesus Christ. The light shines within the soul, and there is manifested friendship, love, and peace to all that are in Christ.

THE SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

THIS Epistle may contain the third cycle. (1) The Epistle is from a servant and an apostle of Christ to those who have obtained the like precious faith in the righteousness of Jesus Christ with the greeting of grace, and the multiplication of peace in the knowledge of God and of Jesus the Lord. It is through the knowledge of Christ and for His Own glory that the Divine Power has granted all good things that pertain to life and likeness to God. The way of escape from lust and sin has been opened up by the precious promises granted to men, and through the resurrection change to a new and divine life men have become

partakers of the divine nature. Because so highly privileged the soul aspires to be like God, and thus virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, purity, and love are added to the new life given to men by God. (2) The soul requires stimulation in the divine life, because there is not only much danger of forgetting the truths that are known, but also the time for working is so short that it is well to embrace every opportunity that can be found. The gospel is not a fable, but a truth of which this apostle was an eye-witness; the glory of Christ upon the Mount and the testimony of the Father were things well known to the apostle, but beyond these exceptional revelations there is the sure Word of God, which will shine on in this dark world until the dawn breaks and the Day-Star arises upon the world. It is to be remembered that the prophetic Word of God is not a matter of private or of special interpretation; it is not a revelation by the will of man, but prophets spoke from God as the Holy Spirit taught them. The thought specially held up in this paragraph seems to be the means whereby the soul shall receive the light of truth, be assured of its genuineness, and possess an unfailling guide throughout life. A reliable witness is good; the voice from heaven may also be helpful to some, but the Word of God is free to all, and no man has a right to say that he alone apprehends, understands, and comprehends the thoughts of God. Faith in receiving the testimony of men, communion with God in Christ in the Mount, in the heaven of the soul, and the Word of God, are the means of salvation during the dark night that has fallen upon the world. (3) There have arisen false prophets and teachers, heretics, lascivious and covetous men, who have been the enemies of the gospel and of Christ. But if God did not spare the angels who sinned, the antediluvians, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the followers of Balaam, neither will He pass by those who during the Christian era have gone so far astray from the way of righteousness. (4) Christians ought not to be led astray by the remarks of foolish, rebellious men who, whilst walking after their lusts and being spiritually blinded by unbelief, say, "Where is the promise of His coming?" They can see no signs of any change, for to their eyes everything continues as manifested by the power of evolution that is inherent in creation. They wilfully forget that the history of the past contains the record of a world judged by God and punished by water; that is the purging and the cleansing symbol of past times. As water saved Noah and his family by the ark, and it was also the means of destruction to those who were disobedient, so the present order of things, from Noah to the end of the Christian era, will be tried by fire, that is, to Jews and Christians regeneration by the Holy Spirit and life in Christ, but to the wicked a judgment by fire, a spiritual condemnation so awful that men have no conception what it means. (5) The forbearance and mercy of the Lord should be remembered; He is not willing that men should perish, but that they should repent and be saved. (6) Yet, as with the antediluvians so with the ages of Jewish and Christian privilege, the patience of God and the purpose of grace will come to an end, and then there will follow the judgments so long kept back from destroying wicked men. Christians, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth

righteousness. (7) Christians expect such things if they believe the Word of God, therefore it is for them to be diligent, so that they may be found in peace and holy in His sight at His coming; they are not called to be destroyed, but to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF JOHN.

CHAPTERS I., II., may contain the fourth cycle. (1) The object of this Epistle is to make known unto men "the Word of Life," "the Life," and "the Eternal Life," which was with the Father and was manifested to men. The apostle was privileged to enter into intimate communion with this Life, and he declares the same to others, so that they also might know the Father is found in His mercy toward sinful men. He forgives those who were rebels against His will, and through Jesus Christ they become the children of God. As the spirit that is in the world knew not Christ, so it will not know those who are His faithful followers. The Spirit of Christ is in a measure realised, but what the full manifestation of the mercy of God will be man cannot tell. The hope held forth that we shall be like Him and see Him as He is in glory is one that will purify the soul and change it into His likeness. "Sin is lawlessness," and every one that sins is lawless. It was to take away sin that He was manifested, and in Him is no sin. They who abide in Him do not sin; those who sin do not know Him. There is no alliance whatever betwixt good and evil, God and the devil; righteousness is God's kingdom in all its branches; sin is the domain of the devil; and it was to destroy the works of the devil that the Son of God came into the world. As with God so with His seed in man, it is sinless; but the devil's seed is sinful and incapable of love. This is the history of man, and it is the message of mercy from God to man since the beginning. His will is the moral law in its perfection in the affection of love, the work of the devil was seen in Cain, the hater and murderer of his brother. (2) It ought not to be a strange thing for Christians to find that they are hated by the seed of the devil; the spirit of antagonism is complete, and the old serpent cannot tolerate a rival in the kingdom over which he has had supremacy. The proof of moral life is love in the soul; the manifestations of the devil, lusting, covetousness, hatred, and murder. The grace and mercy of God are known by the gift of His gracious love in the life and death of Jesus Christ; those who follow Him should be animated by the same spirit of mercy toward the fallen and the sinful. It is by following Him in deed that the truth is made known to the spirit by the Holy Spirit given to man. (3) Every spirit is not holy; there are also carnal, proud, covetous, lying, selfish, and vile spirits to be found amongst men which would deceive them. All spirits must be proved, and the testing of them lies in the humiliation, self-denial, and self-sacrifice of the Lord Jesus; if they harmonise with the spirit of mercy in Him they are true, but if they are self-seeking or self-glorifying, then they are of the devil, even though they be found in the temple of

God. The sure test for every form of error in man or amongst men is the gospel of mercy ; this is the fire of heaven that will scorch up all that is false or impure, making manifest the hidden thoughts of the soul. (4) Love—the love of God in Jesus Christ—is the all-important thought for man, if he would be wise, true, good, gracious, and righteous in God's sight. But it is evident that the word "love" as it is used by this apostle embodies another sphere of thought than the words light and life ; they are all heaven-born thoughts, although they are evidently earthly words covering the higher spiritual manifestations. Light is the self-manifesting truth of God, and in man it is the knowledge of the intellect ; life is the hidden power of the moral life in man which is manifested by beneficence, goodness, the love of the pure and holy soul ; love in the sphere of man's being is higher than light or life, it expresses the warm affections in their active operation, and it is a fitting figure for the grace of God, the highest manifestation of His affections toward sinful, rebellious creatures. It may be necessary to remember these distinctions, as they are of importance in laying hold of the spiritual thoughts of John. Grace, life, light, bring fellowship with the Father and the Son ; and further, it is by these things that men receive and are filled with joy. Passing beyond the figure, the conception that seems to arise is this, it is by grace through the apostle of love that the "Word of life," the expression of the Divine moral perfection or love, is made known to men. The sphere of thought is the heaven of divine wisdom and holiness, and the moral life in Christ is the great reality presented to view. (2) This Divine Life—the Immaculate—gave a message to His beloved apostle for sinful men, and it is to announce that God is Truth, and that in Him there is no error or sin. If men say that they are in fellowship with Truth and serve sin, they are liars ; but if they love and obey the Truth, and have fellowship with His followers, then through Jesus Christ there is salvation from sin. If men say that they are sinless, they are self-deceived and subject to sin ; if they confess sin He will cleanse their souls from unrighteousness ; but if they say they have not sinned, then they call Truth a liar, and the Word of God is not in them. (3) The meek children of God should not sin ; but if they do so, then Jesus Christ is the Advocate with the Father and the Propitiation for sin. The way to know Christ is by obedience to His will, and it is by keeping His Word that the soul is perfected in love or the gracious divine life. (4) It is not a new thing to teach men to obey the truth and to be perfect in love ; but the words "truth" and "life," or light and moral life, do in reality speak of a perfect moral nature and knowledge of God's will, whilst error and hatred, or darkness and death, speak of all that is wicked and contrary to the will of God. (5) The apostle writes unto those who are as children in the divine life, because they know the privilege of having their sins forgiven through His Name of Mercy ; to those who are as fathers, because they can enter into the Spirit of Christ without limitation or law ; and to those who are as young men, because they have been in the fight and have overcome the enemy. The children know the merciful Father, the fathers know Christ, and the young men are obedient to the Word of God, the laws of grace.

love of the world and the love of the Father are deadly enemies ; former being all that is sinful and tending to death, whilst the latter moral life in its perfection. Lusting, sin, and death, pass away, but abides for ever. (6) Little children do not know much ; if com- pletely innocent they are ignorant, and so they are in great danger. It and the antichrists are to meet in conflict in the last time, and the coming of such spirits as are opposed to the Spirit in Christ are to be studied. The children of God do not need to be deceived but only follow truth, righteousness, and love ; by these they are tested, and by these they may know all things. They know the truth of Jesus Christ, and they must test every spirit by the Holy Spirit that is in Him. (7) Those who love and obey Christ possess "the life eternal," or His promise unto men ; in other words, that love and grace of God which is eternal in its nature is in them, and they are being changed into the moral image of God in truth and righteousness. To abide in His love and truth until His coming is the right thing to do, and those who work righteousness have overcome sin and death, and they live in Him.

CHAPTERS III., IV., may contain the fifth cycle. (1) The amazing power of God, "grace" as it is used by the apostle Paul, is the same as the word "love" with the apostle John ; only Paul usually uses the objective principle, whilst the beloved apostle is in reality figured in spirit, and what is grace in the objective contemplation changed into love, the love of God in its realisation in the soul. It lives in heaven. Thus truth is not many, as for example the lines of the spectrum, but one, as when all these lines have changed into a single light. The moral life is not manifold in its laws as in speaking truth, doing justly, and loving God, it is the life living in perfect harmony with the laws of the universe, so that the soul is in health, and man lives God's holy moral will ; and love is grace fused into per- fect love, the emanation of the Father's affections toward His sinful children. There may not be much difficulty in apprehending how John is in the heaven of his own soul, but it is very difficult to express in the language of the second heaven, the order of law, what is the experience of the man who is in heaven, and actually utters its blessed truths in language which harmonises with the divine will. To understand this apostle it is necessary to comprehend his position, and to be found to be inside the heaven of God's will contemplating the effulgence in the truth in a holy life, and in love. It must also be conceded that the word "love" as used by John sometimes trans- lates the word "grace" as used by Paul ; in the former it is the third degree of perfect harmony with the gracious will of God, which has fully subjected all things to itself ; in the latter generally it is a methodical order, the work of God for the purpose of attaining the position in which John stands. Thus the words, "Beloved, let us love one another ; love is of God ; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and hath God," are not an invitation to mere earthly communion, or to outward service, but to the divine communion of love which is an idea almost incomprehensible to men. The transfigured face of the ~~seer~~

of Patmos is a grand study, and to listen to his marvellous words, so simple and yet so heavenly, is a great pleasure; men begin to understand him when there is, so to speak, a cloud of sorrow passing over his face, and he says, "He that loveth not knoweth not God." This is a fact of experience only too well known to men. It was because men did not love God, themselves, or their fellow-creatures, that God manifested His love, grace, and mercy by His beloved Son, so that men might live in Him. Men did not love, but they hated God, and thus He had to find the means of reconciliation. Men cannot see God; but if they love He is in them, and by them His gracious love is made perfect. It is a great mystery that God should abide in man, but surely it far transcends knowledge to raise the conception, and to say that the redeemed abide in God; and yet this is true, it is John's stand-point, and it is the Spirit of Christ. (5) To believe that Jesus, the Saviour, is the Christ, the King risen from the grave, the Conqueror over death, is to possess the life of God; and those who love the Saviour and the Life ought to love all who possess the same spiritual life. The order of life is love to the Father, obedience to His will, and love to the brethren. Grace overcomes sin by a living faith in the King of life, the Son of God. Jesus Christ came by water and blood, by a visible order and by spiritual life, by what is equivalent to Judaism or the body, and by a holy moral life and self-sacrifice which are in harmony with the spirit of Christianity. God's Spirit bears witness to Jesus Christ in the flesh as man, and in the Spirit; He is truth and He manifests the harmony of what is true. There are three witnesses to God's truth; these being God's Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these agree and are in perfect harmony as to their united testimony. Here it is necessary to pause, and in humble adoration to praise God for His witness that is so marvellous, and which so far transcends the thoughts of men. It is possible, nay, it is almost conclusive, that these three voices are actually speaking to men at this time, and in the face of the world they are about to make known unto them the perfect harmony of His holy will as it has been revealed in Jesus Christ. There are three witnesses to the truth of God; the Holy Spirit, revealing the truth, and His voice is heard in the Word of God; the water, that is, the visible external order of things in creation, the macrocosm, and this voice is speaking to men by all the sciences and by history; the blood, that is, the physical, carnal, and spiritual life in man, the microcosm in man's soul, and this voice is also speaking to men in a manner that it has never done before. The fact that cannot be gainsaid is this, that the Word of God, the order of nature, and man as redeemed by God, actually testify to, and bear witness of, the same eternal truths. Is there any chance or haphazard work here? No; because the witness of God is this, "that He hath borne witness concerning His Son." It is not an open question, or a debatable question for belief and unbelief; but God steps into the arena of controversy, and causes men to understand that believers have the witness in themselves; that those who do not believe His Word are incapable of knowing truth, since they have become so audacious as to call Him a liar; and that they have done so by denying His witness concerning His

Son. His witness is the gospel of mercy which makes known the fact that He has given graciously eternal life to those who were sinful, and that this life is in His Son. Men treat the gospel in two ways, some accept it and find life; others despise and reject it, and they are dead to God and good. (6) The object of the gospel of mercy, God's witness, is that men may know how to get eternal life; the chief desire of man is found in Jesus Christ. If the redeemed, the sons of mercy, pray for that which is in harmony with the laws of mercy, and the Spirit of grace, they will be heard and answered, not, it may be, in the form of their petitions, but in harmony with the will of Christ. Men may have many things to pray for, but the object which appears constantly before them is sin in their souls and in sinful brethren, and thus the chief desire of the merciful is that sin should be removed, so that a pure holy life might be manifested. There is an awful sin which may not be forgiven, but this is not placed in the forefront, and men are not called to judge their own souls or their brethren; sin can be forgiven, and so it is well to bring every thought in prayer to the merciful and holy Saviour. (7) The seed of God is sinless, and Christ preserves that which is His so that evil may not touch it. Christians know that they are of God, and they are also assured of the fact that the world is covered with error and sin, and that the devil reigns in those who reject His Word. Believers know that Christ lives; some have known that He is come, because it is by His coming that they know the truth of their union with Him. To know Jesus Christ as come in peace, as King and Conqueror over sin and death, is to know the true God, and the life that is eternal. Where God reigns all idols must fall to the ground; there is no room for a rival in the soul or in the universe to Him who is the true God.

THE SECOND AND THIRD EPISTLES OF JOHN.

THESE two Epistles may contain the sixth cycle. (1) This letter is to "the elect lady and her children," beloved in the truth, not only by the apostle of love, but by all who know the truth; and for the sake of the truth which abides in man and shall be with him for ever. Transfer the thought from a lady to the Church and to the human soul, and then love of truth, knowledge of truth, the indwelling truth, and eternal truth with its accompanying blessings of grace, mercy, and peace, may be discerned as coming from the Father and from Christ, "the Son of the Father in truth and love." (2) It is a joyful thing to see the children of God walking in truth according to the Father's will; and the apostle gives no counsel beyond the old commandment, familiar to all, that there should be a gracious love amongst those who love God. Love is conformity to, and harmony with, the whole will of God; and if the children of God live in this Spirit of Christ they will do well. The evil spirit of antichrist is within the soul, and in the Church, therefore it must not be received or entertained, because to do this

would be to become a partaker in what is sinful, and thus an enemy to Christ. (3) The order of the heavenly kingdom is not written with pen upon paper; when it comes it is to be face to face with the King, even as Moses was face to face with the Lord at the end of the second period of forty days at Sinai; and it will be then that the joy of the soul and of the Church will be fulfilled. (4) The measure of prosperity in the divine life is to be taken from the health of the soul in its moral purity and gracious actions. The greatest joy that can be realised by a true man is to see God's truth honoured and men obedient to its behests. This is to see the kingdom of truth and righteousness prospering on the earth; and those who hunger and thirst after righteousness eat and drink, enjoying a continual feast of the goodness and grace of God. (5) It is a good thing to be hospitable toward those who love His Name, and are found to be His servants in the kingdom of mercy, this is to be fellow-workers with those who serve truth. (6) Servants of the Truth are meek and lowly in spirit in their service; they love to serve Him in His Own humble Spirit; but the spirit of Diotrophes—nourished by Jupiter—seeks after the pre-eminence, in the spirit of Jupiter, and of proud, self-asserting man; he does not receive the Spirit of Christ, and thus he is more like a wolf than a lamb, a lord over the inheritance than a shepherd having the care over the flock. Christians ought not to follow that which is evil, but that which is good, so that they may bring forth fruit to the glory of Christ's Name. (7) There are many things of which this apostle might write, but it will be better to see him face to face, and to learn the truth from his own lips. In the meantime he gives the benediction of peace, with salutations to all the friends who love the truth.

THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JUDE.

In this epistle may be found the seventh cycle. (1) The message is from Jude, Christ's servant and James's brother, to them that are called beloved in God, and kept for Christ, with the wish that mercy, peace, and love should be multiplied upon them. (2) When the apostle was diligent in writing about the common salvation, then he was constrained to write and exhort that the saints should be earnest contenders for the faith they had received. Enemies had arisen, creeping into the Church, who were not merely ungodly, but who were turning the grace of God into a means of sin, and so in a most remarkable manner denying the only Master and the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a phase of wickedness which is to be detested, it is a perversion of truth that is diabolical in its kind, and thus it was necessary that the Lord Jesus Christ should by His servant warn men against such an awful sin. (3) The answer to Antinomianism is God's method of dealing with Israel after the deliverance from Egypt; for they sinned after their deliverance, and they were destroyed. Angels who sinned against the Creator and Law-giver are placed in bonds in darkness awaiting the judgment; and

Sodom and Gomorrah perished as an example of the justice of God upon the godless. (4) God is the Judge, and vengeance is His strange work ; therefore, although during the day of grace the lightning flashes of judgment have been seen at intervals for a warning to men, the Spirit of the age of mercy has not been judgment, but mercy. There has been One, like unto God, contending with the devil, about "the body of Moses," that is, about ritual, ceremony, forms, visible things, about which men have striven, and during this warfare the Spirit of grace has been saying, "The Lord rebuke thee." These perverse spirits have become corrupt in their ways and thoughts, becoming followers of Cain in hatred and murder ; running after Balaam in seeking wealth and honour, and perishing in the proud and rebellious works of Korah and his companions. The mystery of evil is found in them ; they are like shepherds who feed themselves and destroy their flocks ; like clouds without rain, carried onward by the fierce current in which they find themselves ; trees without any fruit, doubly dead, being not merely dead to God through a sinful inheritance, but corrupt in spirit, soul, and body by actual transgressions ; like waves of the sea, ever restless, but able only to throw up what is shameful to themselves and humanity ; and like unto fiery comets which appear for a very short time to pass away into the awful darkness reserved for them. These traits of character are not something new in the Christian era, in each of the dispensations of grace such men have been found, and Enoch, Elijah, John the Baptist, Jude, and many others animated by the same spirit have testified against such wickedness, and they have made known to such men that the day of mercy would come to an end, and then the Lord will come to execute judgment upon the ungodly. (5) In this day of mercy and of the patience of God with sinners, the beloved of God are called to remember the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Work of God, and its testimony. (6) These men are known by two things, they are separatists and sensualists ; and they do not know, love, or obey the Word of God. Christians are called to be separate from such spirits of evil, and to eschew sensualism ; they are to build themselves up in faith, prayer, and love, looking and waiting for the mercy of Christ unto eternal life : and whilst in the kingdom of mercy seeking the salvation of men, and the sanctification of their own souls. (7) To Him that is able to keep His saints during this awful struggle, to purify and present them in heaven, be glory, majesty, dominion, and power. Amen.

THE REVELATION.

CHAPTER I. may contain the first cycle in this book. (1) This is God's revelation to men through Jesus Christ, given unto men that they may know the things that must come to pass. They are blessed who read, hear, and obey what is contained in it ; because the time of probation

is short and the end is at hand. (2) Grace and peace from God, the Eternal, from the Holy Spirit in His seven-fold perfection, and from Jesus Christ, the Witness, the First-born from the dead, the King of kings, unto the perfect Church. To which the Church responds by ascribing all glory and dominion to Him who loved, delivered from sin and death, and made them to be kings and priests unto His God and Father. (3) Behold He comes, but it is as King and Judge of all men; and who may abide His coming, when they see His pierced hands, feet, and side? To the wicked it shall be mourning and woe, because this is their work upon His physical and mystical body; but to those who have suffered they welcome His appearing. "Even so. Amen." (4) Who is He? The Eternal, I Am, the Lord, God, the Almighty. (5) The scene is Patmos—mortal, or being squeezed to pieces; and there it is that John, the gracious brother, the partaker of the tribulation, a citizen of God's kingdom of grace and patience, is found, because he is a lover of the Word of God and of the testimony of God's grace to men in Jesus Christ. John is a figure of all these gracious souls who during the history of this kingdom have been persecuted and troubled by wicked, rebellious men. (6) But to them such afflictions have proved to be the chief blessing of life; because when cut off from the world, they have been "in the Spirit on the Lord's day," His Own time of mercy and suffering, and they have heard His voice, a great voice to those who hear it, calling, teaching, and instructing them in their duties. When turned to see the calling voice, then they perceive the High Priest of Eternal Truth, bright and glorious beyond comparison, with one voice, and yet a voice like the many waters in their concert and harmony. The Sun of truth holds in His hand seven stars, radiant and beautiful, and these are His servants in the Church, the universe, and in man. They are emanations from His Own glorious being, and men may know them by such words as force, or physical power, life, spirit, thought, reason, moral life in its purity and grace, in fact all the possible manifestations in the universe; but they live not by themselves, they obey the words which proceed out of His mouth, in other words, His laws, which are in reality to all men like sharp two-edged swords. His face is all-glorious; no man can look upon essential Truth and live; the spirit of man cannot gaze upon this Sun in His Majesty unveiled. (7) He who speaks is *the Living*; and in Him is life, yet He became dead, that He might destroy death, and have power over hell. To the servant it is given to write the utterances of Truth as they come from the seven-fold light in which He walks; the seven stars are the powers which obey His will; and the seven candlesticks are the forms into which the truth is placed for man's use. The lights may shine, and yet the ministers be invisible to men; in other words, the forms of things in nature show forth the glory of God even though men are not instructed in the laws, but beyond the visible universe and laws there is the Eternal Truth from whence laws and manifestations proceed. His existence does not depend upon them, but they have their being from Him, because He is their Creator, Law-giver, Sustainer, King, Judge, Saviour, and their **Eternal Life.**

CHAPTERS II., III., may contain the second cycle. (1) Ephesus—the desirable—is the object of God's desire, in other words, the souls of men, fallen, sinful men are His delight; because it is His great object of desire to redeem and restore to Paradise those who have chosen to forsake the knowledge of good and evil. The soul is seen as surrounded by works, toil, evil men, false teachers, and yet seeking Truth. The charge against this Church is that there has been a departure from the first love, as of Eden; this sin is not to be forgotten, there must be repentance and good works, else the light of grace and truth will be removed. There is so far seen harmony with the will of God, for self-sufficiency is renounced, and if there be obedience and the overcoming of evil, then the perfect life will be restored to the garden of God.

(2) The message to Smyrna—myrrh, bitter—is from Him who tasted the bitterness of death and lives. The condition is trouble and poverty, and the reviling of those who think they are the chosen of God, whilst in reality they are the agents of the devil. Fear not trouble, suffering, persecution; it can only be for a few days. Be faithful in the bitterness of death, and the reward is the crown of life, and no second death.

(3) The message to Pergamos—height, elevation—is from Him who possesses the two-edged sword of divine law. This church is placed in the very centre of Satan's kingdom; it is the spiritual aim of pride on the one side, and of the meek spirit on the other. In the centre of this kingdom there are found those who stand by His name, are faithful even when the gospel of grace is put to death by the lawless and rebellious slaves of the devil. Thus far there is conformity to law, the will of the King, but the condition is not purity of the soul, there are those who have the covetous, fornicating spirit of Baalam, who for gain would serve God and man; and there are also teachers who believe in the power, strength, and glory of the people, but is self-sufficiency and self-conceit, the spirit of Esau, for example, who is the representative of this kind of perversion. Of these sins there must be repentance, else the Word of God, His laws, will fight against such evil-doers. To those who fight against covetousness, contentiousness, and pride will be given the Bread of Life to sustain the soul, and the holy, regenerate nature which is in harmony with all law; and upon this nature there will be found the Name known to those who receive His nature.

(4) The message to Thyatira—sweet savour, as of sacrifice—is from Him who is Omniscient and Almighty; the figure of the eyes like a flame of fire, and feet like burnished brass, is very striking; and the words, truth and righteousness, in their intense spiritual power, express the searching power of the eyes that see all things, and the mighty power of the feet that support the universe. This church does works, love, faith, service, and patience, but the works exceed the spirit of love, and so there is a want of healthy balance. Love should rule the soul and not works, and thus the earthly dross is perceived by the All-seeing eyes. Where the wisdom of God, in His gracious truth and righteousness, is desired in a soul or amongst men, there also will be found the Jezebel spirit opposed to the Spirit of Christ, and it is to be found in that self-asserting wisdom which is of this world, and which has proved itself to be most seductive to many. To depart from

the gospel of grace, truth, and righteousness is great folly, it can only bring trouble and death to all who put human wisdom above the truth and righteousness of God. There are, as they say, deep things in Satan's devices and his vain conceits; but it is only to those who are ill-informed as to the divine wisdom. God's truth discerns the folly of all that is sinful, and perceives that the end of this way is death. To those who seek truth and righteousness, and overcome, they shall receive authority over the nations. He, the King of Truth, shall reign with the power of truth that cannot be broken, and all who love the truth shall possess the Morning Star, the promise and earnest of the day that is at hand. (5) The message to Sardis—prince, or song of joy, or crucible—is from Him who possesses the perfect gifts and graces of God with perfect service. This church has a name, a profession of being like Christ, but in reality it is almost dead, because it is not animated by His Spirit of mercy. This spirit of self-conceit destroys the living power of grace, and so the only remedy is to remember the past, the means of salvation, and to act toward others in the same spirit. If this is not done, then the day of mercy will pass away, and the day of judgment will come. The faithful and merciful who have maintained a holy life shall be sanctified and clothed in robes of righteousness, their names shall be written in the book of life, and even as citizens of the city of the living God, the King of mercy will openly avow the redeemed as His before the assembled universe. (6) The message to Philadelphia—brotherly love—is to His brethren from the Holy and True One, who as the risen King possesses all authority throughout the universe. To this church there is given an open door which man cannot shut; and it has had a little power to keep the Word of God and to be faithful to His Name. The enemies of God are very boastful and strong; but they are to be humbled and to be made subject to those who serve the Lord in His Spirit. If they keep His Word then He will keep those who are faithful to Him when the whole world is tried by the evil one. Let them hold fast that which is possessed, lest the crown be lost; the King comes soon; be faithful, therefore, to His cause of holiness, truth, grace, and righteousness until He arrives. To those who overcome there will be admittance into, and a permanent abiding-place in, God's temple; the perfect moral nature; the gracious promised inheritance of the saints; and to the Spirit that is in Jesus Christ. (7) The message to Laodicea—just people—is from the Amen, the Truth in its consummation, the faithful and true Witness, or the Truth in its manifestation, and as the Creator, or the beginning of Creation, the Truth in its origination. This Truth speaks to a church neither hot nor cold, full of formalism and mere profession, and rich in pride and self-conceit; but as related to God and His kingdom of mercy, a wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked thing, so emasculated and destitute of spiritual life as to be hardly alive to God, truth, grace, and righteousness. The Lord of mercy and of peace will not cut off this worthless member, but He counsels that grace, mercy, and purity should be obtained from Himself so that a new life of service might begin. The Lord loves, therefore, He reproves and chastens, so that there may be zeal and repentance. But

listen, the Lord stands at the door, knocking for admission. He comes to find a communion in truth with those who love Him; and to those who are overcome by the truth He will give communion with Himself in His kingdom of glory.

CHAPTERS IV.—VI. may contain the third cycle. (1) There has been a door opened in heaven, and through it men may hear and see what shall come to pass. The man who responds to the gracious invitation, "Come up hither," is in the Spirit, and there is a spiritual revelation given of the throne, the King, and those who surround it. This is a holy and terrible place; a Sinai and a Zion; a visible sanctuary with its lamps, and an invisible, spiritual, holy place where the Spirit of God and the spirit of man meet, and there is revelation by face to face communion. This is the presence-chamber of God, because of the Holy Spirit's presence. Life reigns here, and the vision is perfect. Spiritual forms are discerned, but they are likenesses, earthly names for spiritual realities. There is the power of God, the patience, gentleness, and self-sacrifice of the loving Saviour; the wisdom and understanding of the Holy Spirit in man; and the transcendent, heavenly vision that can gaze upon the truth of God. Power, grace, and mercy, wisdom and the spiritual vision seem to be revealed in these thoughts, and they harmonise with the Spirit of God as found in the Holy Scriptures, as operating in man for salvation, and in the world for its regeneration and restoration to the favour of God. The theme is the spiritual kingdom of God and the means of its manifestation; and therefore beyond the figures there exist the spiritual realities which are working for the manifestation of the kingdom in the Bible, in man, and in the world. The awful throne of God is in His Holy Scriptures from whence His laws emanate to men; it is also in the sinner saved by grace whose experience harmonises with the Bible record; and it is in the Church and world where the King reigns. Passing by this concrete conception of this magnificent vision, there follows the object which the Holy Spirit has in view, and it is seen to be to restore to holiness the unholy, so that creation may be subject to the King, and that all glory, honour, and dominion may be given to the Lord and our God the Creator of the universe. (2) God has a book, but it is not open for men to read therein, it is full of writing within and without, and it is sealed with seven seals. Who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof? There is silence in heaven, earth, and hell, because there is no man able to unseal and reveal the thoughts of God or to make known the mystery that is enshrined in the Word of God, in man, and in the universe. Here man's insufficiency is made to appear; he can do nothing but weep, because he can find no one who can explain the order of creation, providence, and redemption. To unveil before men the hidden or sealed thoughts of God requires a revealing God; and to evolve what God has involved requires an evolving Holy Spirit; and so only the Lamb who possesses universal power and omniscient wisdom could undertake this great work. It is as the Saviour of men that Jesus Christ becomes the Mediator and Revealer of the will of God; and it is when He is seen in that capacity that the song of praise and the prayers of saints

arise in heaven to the glory of His Name. Creation, rational and irrational, join in praising and adoring the King of grace and mercy, the Holy Spirit ratifies the praise as true and righteous, and fallen humanity, redeemed, is seen falling down and worshipping the King of grace and glory. This is a marvellous vision, worthy of much study, especially as bearing upon the human soul in its relations to the Saviour of men. Without Him all is inscrutable mystery in the soul, the world, and in the Bible; but when He becomes Mediator and Revealer of the will of God then men may breathe freely and in safety, knowing in whom they have placed their confidence, and being assured that He will fulfil all that He has promised. These things, it must be remembered, are "in the Spirit," therefore they are spiritual, and not to be interpreted in any lower sphere. (3) The Lamb is seen opening one of the seven seals; there is heard a voice like that of thunder saying, "Come," and there is seen a white horse, a rider with a bow, to whom there was given a crown, and he went forth conquering and to conquer. This is the kingdom of God, the gospel of God's grace with the crown gained through the salvation of those who receive His grace and mercy. It is conquering, and it will conquer. (4) The second seal being opened there was seen a red horse; to the rider was given power to make war; and unto him was given a great sword. This spirit speaks of hatred, war, and bloodshed; it is a power permitted by God to work His will, this being judgment, and not mercy and peace. The Sovereign of the universe directs the red horse and its rider, and this is His minister of judgment upon wicked men and nations. (5) The third seal being opened there was seen a black horse, and the rider had a balance or yoke in his hand. At the same time a voice was heard in the midst of the living creatures giving the measures for grain and the price, with the command not to hurt the oil or the wine. The black horse is the opposite colour of the one that is white; thus if white is truth and holiness, the black represents error and unholiness, or sin; the white brings freedom by the Word of God; the black bondage by the traditions and thoughts of men. Wheat is bread, the Word of God is the food for the soul, therefore the Word is seen to be at a famine price amongst men; yet this prohibition is laid down that the oil, the spirit of grace, must not be touched; and the wine that gives joy and gladness to the soul, must not be hurt. Here again, God permits ignorance and error, a spiritual darkness that might be felt, and a famine that might make men cry unto God to come for their help and safety, but He will not permit men to destroy the Spirit of grace that is in the Word, nor allow them to adulterate His Word to meet their corrupt views. Through the awful darkness God is merciful; the vision is like that of the horror of great darkness seen by Abraham; and yet betwixt the divided sacrifice, there is seen as it were, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp. (6) The fourth seal being opened there was seen a pale horse, his rider was Death, and Hades followed with him, and unto these were given power and authority to kill men by the sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts. This is an awful power to possess supremacy in the world or in a human soul, infidelity, guided by the negation of spiritual life, and in league with hell given up to

hatred, a craving that cannot be satisfied, a living death and the wildest passions of the human soul let loose, is a terrible picture of human depravity, and yet such is infidelity regnant, whether in man or amongst men. It is utterly lawless, with no law but desire and passion; and these are like wild beasts, but the King permits such a manifestation of the human soul and amongst men so that they might get a glimpse of this awful hell that is within and around, and in horror shrink back from such a spirit and its works. (7) The fifth seal being opened, then there was seen the great altar of sacrifice upon which the peaceful sons of God have been offered as an acceptable offering unto God; but also slain, murdered, martyred, for God's Word and the Testimony committed to their care, by wicked men. Their voices are united in one cry to the Master, holy and true, that judgment and vengeance should fall upon their murderers. To them was given the white robe of truth and righteousness, and the instructions to rest a little longer until the work of mercy would be complete, and the horrible work of men brought to an end. There is life, resurrection, heaven, and rest, but as yet evil is permitted for a season. (8) The sixth seal being opened there is seen a coming day of judgment upon the world; the earthquake is the revelation of God's power in the very centre of all things political, religious, and social; and as He unveils heaven, and banishes from His presence all that is in spirit exalted above Him there is an awful cry of consternation amongst the wicked, and they dare not look in the face of the Lamb, once so gentle, now awakened as an awful Judge to condemn and punish those who have been rebels against the divine will.

CHAPTERS VII.—IX. may contain the fourth cycle. (1) There is seen the watchful care of God over His people who are upon the earth, and the restraining of the judgments that were about to come, until the angel of truth, by the truth of God, had sealed those who were the servants of God. (2) God's intention of salvation having been made known, there is a new vision which reveals its spiritual extension amongst all nations; and there is also seen the great mass of the redeemed, holy and triumphant, ascribing the glory of their salvation unto God and the Lamb. They are God's people brought through the grace and mercy of God out of great tribulation, and they are made holy through the new life they have received in Jesus Christ. Because they are redeemed they are in His holy temple as His worshippers; trouble and suffering are at an end, and they enjoy the restored garden of God where there is no more sorrow. This is a glimpse of the divine ideal of the method of redemption to a human soul and to the world; the sorrow and suffering are not hid from view, but the joy of the hereafter, and the glory to be revealed are so great that this present life is as nothing when compared with the bliss that shall follow. (3) God reigns in the unseen heaven of heavens where His angels obey His will perfectly; He reigns also in the heaven of man's soul and amongst men in His Church for their redemption; but He also reigns King over wicked men, to bring upon them the judgments which they deserve because of their wilful rebellion against the King of kings. The seventh seal was opened, and in heaven

there was silence for the brief space of half-an-hour; whilst at the same time preparations were being made for the sounding of the trumpets by the seven angels. But the attention is fixed upon the altar of incense where an angel is seen lifting up the prayers of the faithful to God in great abundance, whilst on the other hand there is thrown down upon the earth fire from off the altar, producing upon it confusion and a revolution. So it must be; if there is true prayer and holy service, it is well; but if strife, covetousness, ambition, and rivalries, then the fire of God descends, not to bless, but to chastise, punish, and destroy wicked men. This is God's method of dealing with the redeemed and with the rebellious; to Israel gracious promises, peace, and deliverance; but to Egypt the plagues and destruction by His judgments. (4) The judgments of God as they are recorded seem to run in a cycle; and apparently placed in opposition to the blessings that come through the gospel. The first trumpet reveals calamities upon the earth, hail, fire, and blood; judgments upon the things that are visible, as upon the body or civil and religious institutions, the kingdom of man totters, so that the kingdom of heaven might come. The second trumpet reveals a mountain of fire cast into the sea, the sphere of the invisible, as for example, the human soul in its fierce, passionate thoughts and amongst the mass of men who are moved by surging passions, these know not God, therefore they cannot find comfort. The third trumpet reveals a star falling upon the fountains of waters, the inmost spiritual thoughts being poisoned they turn everything into bitterness; it is only to the meek spirit that God grants the sweet waters of forgiveness and of peace. The fourth trumpet reveals the third part of the light of sun, moon, and stars cut off from men; ignorance and error prevail, and God's wisdom, truth, and righteousness are in a state of eclipse. The fifth trumpet reveals what is in the pit or the abyss of the human soul; in the kingdom of heaven the Saviour reigns, but here it is Apollyon, the destroyer. The sixth trumpet reveals the armies of strife and war let loose upon the world; and the curse of contention, covetousness, theft, war, and all that is malevolent is seen in operation amongst men; instead of purity of the soul by which all these devils are exorcised, so that men may see God and find peace. This interpretation of the plagues does not invalidate a historical explanation in any way; but rather they may be found to support each other, as pointing out what exists in and comes out of the human soul and from amongst men; and also recognising the fact of historical connection by the law of development in a man and amongst men. (5) The King of grace and glory appears amongst men, the Bow of the faithful promises is His crown of glory, truth and righteousness flash forth from His face, and justice and judgments support His throne. In His hand He holds the little Book of mercy, the gospel of salvation, and He sets His feet upon the visible and invisible things of men. He has come for mercy, not for judgment, and thus the thunders of His voice are sealed up. He makes known the fact that the great crisis of the world has come and that delay is at an end. In the days of the seventh trumpet then shall the mystery of God be unveiled through the Word of God. In the meantime, the little Book, the

Bible, is to be the messenger of mercy to many nations. (6) The seer is instructed to measure the temple of God, the altar, and the worshippers, with a rod given to him for that purpose, but the outer court was to be omitted, as it was given up to the desecration of the nations for a period of time. The Rod of God is His Word, the temple is the soul, the altar the spirit of self-sacrifice; it is not said that the seer measured the temple, but it may be inferred that all those who serve God in His temple of mercy, offering unto Him spiritual sacrifices, ought to do this for themselves by His Word and Spirit. The Old and New Testaments are His witnesses amongst men, and they have actually been despised for a long time by them. But though men are blind, they do not destroy the light of God's truth; it shines on steadily in the darkness for guidance and for warning to men. To touch the Bible with unhallowed hands, seeking to do it hurt, is a fatal deed, bringing instant and awful punishment by a seared conscience and the second death. The Word of God is full of power for blessing or cursing upon men. Powerful as the Bible is, yet in the marvellous wisdom of God, the beast that comes out of the abyss of the human soul shall make war with, overcome, and kill it! The dead body, that is, a Bible without spiritual power, God's Rod of Power and Authority amongst men, will be seen dishonoured, despised, and trodden under foot by proud, conceited, lawless, sensual infidels. This spectacle will be seen by many nations for a limited time; and the men who have done this deed—no, not men, but devils—will be seen actually rejoicing and making merry over what is the most awful calamity that men could draw down upon their own heads. But as with the Jews and the Crucified Saviour of men, so with His Word, for God's Spirit will breathe upon it, a resurrection life will enter into it, and then the judgment being come upon godless men, they will tremble and be afraid because of the Word of God. The Bible will live in the heaven of heavens; but in that hour there shall fall the judgment of God upon the world, men will be afraid and be taught to give glory to the God of heaven. (7) The seventh trumpet reveals great voices in heaven; a new birth seeking deliverance; and it is the manifestation of the kingdom of Christ amongst men. Humanity falls down in its representatives before the King of kings, and renders unto Him thanks and praise because He has been pleased to take His power and reign amongst men in justice and for judgment. At that time the temple of God, His Word, in the Bible, in the world, and in man, is seen to be open; and the Holy of holies, the most sacred mysteries of the Ark of God, are revealed unto men. In other words, the grace, mercy, truth, and righteousness of God are manifested; and the mystery of grace and the mystery of evil openly revealed to all men.

CHAPTERS XII.—XIV. may contain the fifth cycle. (1) The first sign is that of the Church in travail, bringing forth Him who is King of kings. The second sign is the great enemy of the Church of Christ represented as a fearful dragon waiting ready to destroy the promised Seed whose heel would one day crush the serpent's head. As yet it is not

his victory ; for in the spiritual
to be supreme, and His kingdom
The redeemed have also to fight ;
Lord and King, by self-denial &
spirit of mercy. Rejoice, O spi
mercy and grace ; but woe upon
the enemy, for he will not spare
time to reign is so very short. (3
and Edom is persecution to the c
inheritance and has received the
wings have been given—faith and
and flight from the cruel enemy.
yet the Seed has not been destroy
persecuted have fallen asleep ; as
live, and the spirit of the Seed l
which emerges out of the sea of h
antichrist, in as far as its moral
not in the Spirit of Christ. It is a b
and it gives to itself great names, v
to the spirit of the gospel and cont
skin of the leopard, the feet of the
that is, the conceit of the Grecian i
Persian in war, and the proud, def
head of Babylonia ; and from Rom
seized power and authority. Pag
Rome, in its social life and govern
unto this power that there was give
given to him to make war with th
them ; yea, all nations, at least v
have been subject to this power.

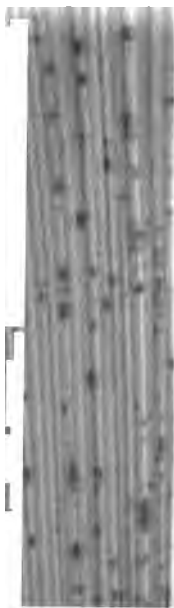
so complete, that they have actually believed that they have been serving God when they have been serving the devil. Christians have been ing contrary to this current ; when persecuted, they have been found fient, and when everything visible seemed to be against them, their th has remained firm and true to Christ. The spirit of the beast has been owed principally in the light of history ; but it is well to remember at there is such a Saul, an evil spirit, a ruler in every man, and that is only by patience and faith that the devil is overcome, and Christ's me glorified in the soul. (5) The beast that reigns in the moral vernment or wields the civil power is, in a sense, all inclusive as a nifestation of the mystery of evil ; because, throughout history, as matter of fact, the religious power has been subject to the civil one, subservient to it, by the head of the religion being also the head of e State. The mystery of grace is found in this, that the kingdom of roy in Jesus Christ has been subject to this perverted power, and cause Christians and others have maintained the right of the King ainst rebels, and they have been persecuted because they have dared make known such thoughts. The second beast that comes out of e earth—a carnal, sensual creature—differs in some points from the mer. It has two horns like a lamb, and yet it speaks with the voice the dragon, and exercises his moral or civil power. The creature ould be self-sacrificing for the good of mankind ; but instead of that has the spirit of the devil, and it follows not Christ in His grace and roy, but Cesar in his pride of empire. This beast should have followed e Lamb, whose authority or horns it possessed ; but instead of doing so, made all men worship the civil or moral power in its perverted actions, as driving them away from their King. The pretensions of this est are great, and the most blasphemous was that through such a est men would receive the sacred fire from heaven, even the Holy irit. In league with the civil power, it was a deceiver, a liar, and idolater, because it led men to believe what was erroneous by se signs, told lies as to the first beast, and caused men to rship what was an abomination before God. This beast would rmit no rival in heaven, earth, or hell ; all must acknowledge its remacy and wear its brand ; and none were permitted to buy or l any spiritual wares except those sent forth with its sanction, mark, name. It is said that the words Romith and Lateinos agree to this mber 666 ; and if the Latin Church at Rome is meant, there is cer- nly, as history amply proves, a very great likeness betwixt the ion of this beast and that awful power which has been the terror of ristendom. Men may know, if they will study the gospels, what d's kingdom of grace and mercy is in Jesus Christ ; it is truly God- e, admirable, and adorable ; but if they would know man's kingdom not of mercy, but of its perversion—then they will find the picture it in this beast ; the reality in the Papacy as a civil and ecclesiastical wer in league with the nations ; and then, if they will look within ir own souls, they may learn that, but for the grace of God, st such a beast—in cruelty, deception, lying, murder, and every evil rk—every man would become, even though the Lord Jesus Christ s lived and His spiritual kingdom has been manifested amongst men.

and His service, truthfulness, and
see God. (7) Following the
there follows in the usual order
of peace by God's sons of peace
that they may fear God and
time of judgment has come upon
fountains of waters, for all are
works of all powers, visible and
carnal, were all to be judged
system of confusion that has
spiritual Babylon of the Christ
it shall drink of the wine of God
must drink the curse that it
There must not be in the future
spiritual fornication with its
without mercy shall fall upon
follow this devil instead of serving
of Christ. The patience of the
to the laws of God and faith in
the character of the peaceful
Prince of peace, to bring men to
gospel, and by their own patient
trying circumstances. (8) As
upon the departed in Christ, the
persecuted for righteousness' sake
yea, the Spirit testifies, they receive
the kingdom of heaven, for they
do follow them. The harvest,
come; the seed of mercy sown
the King of the

awful folly? This is an awful subject for men to study, and it reveals the fact that only through the grace of God can any man be saved, whilst upon every man is thrown the responsibility of accepting or rejecting this grace and mercy which ends in heaven or hell, happiness or woe.

CHAPTERS XV.—XVIII. may contain the sixth cycle. (1) This is said to be a great and marvellous sign, seven angels with the seven plagues in which the wrath of God upon men is brought to an end. At the same time the seer observes in heaven a sea as it were of glass mingled with fire, in other words, this may mean the water, or visible order of service as animated by the Holy Spirit who has been the Power for redemption and holiness in all ages. The redeemed are those who have been victorious over Babel in its onward development from Nimrod to the spiritual Babylon; the beastly powers of self-seeking; of self-assertion as in the image; and of self-glorification as in the number or mark. These sing the great song of victory, which includes the work of Moses, the servant, and of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and to the Lord God Almighty, true and righteous, is ascribed all glory and worship, because His righteous actions have been made manifest amongst men. (2) The temple of God is seen open, so that the seven angels with the seven plagues might come forth; they are pure and holy, God's righteous servants of justice, and they receive from the Holy and Righteous Spirit the golden vials which contain His judgments upon the ungodly. The glory of the Lord and His power rest upon the temple, and from that time until the plagues were finished no one would be able to enter the temple to communicate with God. (3) The first plague is poured out upon the earth, upon visible things in the civil or ecclesiastical worlds, especially upon those who were given up to the idolatry of the Papacy and the worship of the proud spirit of empire, and dominion, in the spirit of Nimrod, Nebuchadnezzar, and Cesar. The second plague was poured out upon the sea of humanity, and it was seen as animated by covetousness, hatred, strife, war, and murder. The third plague touched the spirits of men; they had poured out the blood of the saints and martyrs, but now the curse of blood rested upon themselves; and they were found drinking the fruits of their own sins in rejecting the gospel and in persecuting the Church of Christ. The voice from the altar said, "Yea, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments." The fourth plague in this instance intensifies the burning power of the sun: thus the dominant power was one that burned men, scorched them without pity, until they became blasphemous in their words, and it may be also in their prayers unto God; but there was not true repentance to a holy spiritual life. The fifth vial was poured out upon the throne of the beast, the civil and ecclesiastical powers, and there came upon men such a darkness that they could not devise means to meet the difficulties by which they were surrounded; they did not seek mercy from God, and by their works show themselves merciful, but they blasphemed the God of heaven in their pains, who had sent upon them those very pains and sores; yet they do not repent. The sixth vial touches the east, so that the great empire there might be broken

croaking spirit, as ever they did. They do, and they will perform it in God's spirits of men onward unto the war c
When shall that day come, and how sl
down? Hush; be not so anxious about
He knows to a moment the when a
very important secret, and it is that
as a thief comes in the night. V
appearing upon the field, at the mor
be readiness to stand by His side in th
—the mountain of the gospel—for it
and bring them to an end. The seven
upon the air; upon all His spiritual
God from His Holy Temple will spea
that the great work of God is at an end
the devil cast down, and God's servan
their King who has given them suc
succeed this victory over the world, th
beginning of a new era in the history
by one of God's angels, the mystery
the kings of this earth have been in
The concrete figure of the woman, th
the seven heads, and the horns, t
stones, the golden cup, even God's cr
abominations, the name upon the for
blood of saints and martyrs, is a full
has been, and history confirms the t
picture, this wonderful vision, whic
greatly, was the consummation, the
"that had come before. The w



dy, because through such a study what may be called the organic development could be traced. The eighth, which is also one of the seven; that is the persecuting Papacy, as distinct in its ecclesiastical supremacy, and yet one of the seven in its civil government, has its doom written "He goeth into perdition." The number of the kingdoms of Europe as they existed after the fall of the Roman Empire are given: for a time gave their power to the beast, and to the Papacy. But they made war against the Lamb of God; and the result must be disastrous to them because He alone is the King of kings. In due time the kings turn against their ancient mistress, as it is at this day; and her weakness will be made fully bare in the face of all the nations according to the just and righteous will of God, in judgment, upon which a perverse, persecuting power. (5) Of only One Man can it be said that He has come down out of heaven, possessing great authority, and lightening the earth with His glory; He is the Angel of mercy and the King of grace. His voice re-echoes through the world in the doom decreed upon Babylon; for when He rose from the dead Babylon fell and judgment was pronounced against her. (6) Another voice from heaven is heard speaking to the people of God after the doom has been pronounced upon Babylon; it is that of the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, who speaks for separation of the soul from sin, and of the Church from what is iniquitous. Retribution is in the cup of wrath; and not merely according to the sin is the punishment, but at least the double is put into the cup. The proud, conceited, self-asserting, self-glorifying soul, or Church would fain say, "I am not a widow bereft of my Lord, but a queen regnant, self-sufficient, and all-glorious; therefore I will not mourn but rejoice and reign." This spirit is contrary to the spirit of Christ and the gospel, therefore judgment and not mercy falls upon the proud defiant rebel. The earth laments the downfall of such a false spirit, and carnal souls mourn because of the tinsel glory that fades away; but in the heaven of the soul, and of the pure Church, there is no mourning because judgment has fallen upon the accursed enemy of God. (7) In the strong angel, and in the casting of the millstone into the sea, is given a picture of the overthrow of evil in its varied manifestations; and the judgments of God are terrible in their strength, and when they cast down, into a hell of despair, a soul, a church, or a nation, then who can exert the power to raise them up again? The glory of Babylon, the world of carnal men, has been music, art, science, social pleasures, and commerce; but these must all be taken from Babel, this world of confusion, and utilised righteously, subject to God's will, in His cause and His glory and for the good of man. The beast and the woman, Babel and Babylon, will be remembered, not for any good that they have done, but as the cruel persecutors and murderers of God's saints and prophets, upon whose skirts the blood of the righteous and the holy have remained, crying for vengeance against the oppressor over the people of God.

CHAPTERS XIX., XX., may contain the seventh cycle. (1) The glory of rejoicing after victory is manifested, and multitudes of tongues, with one voice, praise God and ascribe unto Him, salvation, glory, and

in the Spirit of Christ, and fitness to God. Blessed are they who are bidden all words, these surely are "true revelation most glorious; and yet true men have hoped for in the past; only rather a longing desire than a definite." "We know that if He shall be manifested we shall see Him, even as He is," except a few could stand beside John in heaven. This revelation to the soul: all former imperfect conceptions; that of such a revelation should be so apparent that all means are subjects, worshipped. The thought here seen when he writes that "even though in flesh, yet now we know Him so no means may be used for revealing the Bible, or even Jesus, in the flesh, though but God; in this higher sphere of all instruments, a son of God, in the Son of God rides forth, the Faithfulness; and a just Judge in making upon His head are many crowns; as to Himself. Amongst men He wears He is known by them as "The Witnesses, the holy ones following Him also are sons of God; but upon no dipped vesture except upon Himse press alone, and of the people at that is saturated with the blood and t

forth light and fire? They are like stubble ready to be consumed, or like the carcasses of the slain on the field of battle. He has only to speak the word, and then those who boast of being so great become food for the ravens, vultures, and eagles, the messengers of the King in His day of glory and of judgment upon His enemies. (4) To summarise the enemies of God and of His Christ is not necessary; the beast, the perverted moral or civil power, kings and their armies, the false prophet, a religion out of harmony with the Spirit of Christ, and all who oppose His will, are taken and cast into the lake of fire, the awful judgments of God fell upon them; and the Word of God is the power that He uses to destroy all the evil lusts and desires that harass and destroy men. (5) Again the King is seen coming down out of heaven, possessing power and authority, for in His hand there is seen the key of the abyss, and a great chain. At last the old serpent finds that his power is gone, even upon the earth, for the King of the earth, the Meek and Merciful, seizes the enemy of man, puts him in chains, and casts him down as a vile thing into the abyss from whence he came. The awful truth taught here, specially to the individual soul, seems to be the majestic supremacy of the Spirit of the Son of God over the devil of a depraved nature, but particularly of the subtle, lawless intellect that will not be subject to the laws of God. This is the power that would know good and evil, and at last it is found bereft of all good, and cast into the place of torment. The figures in this cycle are very grand; and if a faint glimpse of the light of heaven flashes forth from them, in those brief thoughts they will be of great value to the sons of God who see the Kings face and follow Him in His work. (6) At last there is the supremacy of good over evil, and the pure, true, and righteous sons of God are set as rulers and judges in the earth. The true Theocracy is upon the earth, and in spiritual service, in works of truth and righteousness, men are seen serving and glorifying God. What is meant by the resurrection of those who have been faithful to Christ as His martyrs, seems to be inexplicable; it is a glorious privilege, comparable to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, but the manner is a mystery, even as His Own resurrection is to men in their present state. They are blessed and holy who have a part in this first resurrection; upon them the power of sin and death shall have no power. They will be different from men whose natures are depraved, but whose lusts and passions are kept as it were in chains, for they will reign in His Spirit with Him for a thousand years. (7) A thousand years of peace and prosperity will be the portion of this world: but when this term is about finished then there will be another manifestation of the spirit of evil; a great spiritual deception and apostacy, a rebellion against the will of God. The rebels will attempt what is impossible, and their portion will be spiritual destruction. In this last manifestation of evil the sin will be some kind of spiritual presumption, probably something unknown to men at the present time, because it will be the devil, the spiritual power, that will be let loose, that deepest rooted of all the devils that possess man. But this rebellion will not last long, even this, the last and worst, because the most presumptuous form of evil will be cast into the

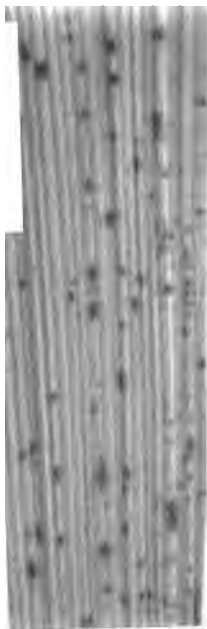
forms and heaven with its laws meet
sits upon the throne of the universe
heavens, and no place can be found
presence. This is the second resurrection
judged before His throne. The books
will see and be seen in the light
righteousness, and justice ; but in the
there will be found the names of the
preference to sin and death. The
with the books ; the living in Christ
dead, death, and Hades being cast into
second death, even the lake of fire."

CHAPTERS XXI., XXII., may contain
order of things visible, and of law, in
the former order is abolished ; the evil
persecuted for righteousness' sake in
kingdom of heaven. It is a holy ci-
tiful and chaste virgin about to be married
to the husband, so the people of God
true, righteous and just in all things
these marvellous deliverances from
the flesh, and spiritual presumption
will be in the midst of men, He will
shall be the people of God, enjoy
from sorrow and pain. God protects
people, and their joy in Himself, and
alone is the Re-creator. This word
experience of many souls, and it is
experience. God is the All in all ;

prehend the thought of the resurrection ; it is here that the reason may be in a measure understood, because this is in reality the nod of the marvellous change in glowing figures. The thought is in this form : see man sinful and depraved, living in a grave, a nether-house of death, and he is told to conceive of the resurrection here, and of the life of glory. Is it any wonder if he should shake his head, and say the thing is impossible ? Sin, disease, pain, death, and the grave are supreme, and how these can be overcome is simply un-
knowable. It was so to the Apostle John, for he did not find that the resurrection power of eternal life and glory was in the heaven upon which, or in his own soul ; for this vision far transcends the position of the beloved apostle, and he had to resign himself into the hands of a mighty angel, to be carried away in the spirit to an altitude so great that he had never seen anything of the kind before, and it was when he was lifted up so high that he saw, not perfection, or God in His essential nature, but the descending city of God coming out of a heaven away above his highest conceptions. This vision should be very humbling, yet inspiring : what although Christians know not the method of the glorious resurrection, in due time the strong angel will come and lift them up, far up, above their present conceptions, and when so lifted up to meet the descending city of God from heaven, then they will be clothed with immortality, and the body of death will be swallowed up in the Spirit of eternal life. Can this city be described as it shall be in the soul and amongst men ? The inspired apostle gives in descriptive words a description of what he saw ; but the only thing that he can say is, that this transfiguration surpasses conception, and all carnal forms and analogies, but they will not express spiritual realities. It is enough, the soul shall be like pure gold and transparent glass, perfect in purity and in holiness in God's sight, and thus fit to dwell in His temple ; and yet not His temple, because in that state the Lord and the Lamb are the Temple of worship. Then all ignorance shall be gone, and truth will be manifested in the glory of God. All nations shall walk in the light of truth and righteousness, and into the blessed and holy community there shall not enter anything that is unclean ; only the redeemed whose names are written in the book of life. The strong angel showed unto the apostle the river of life, which flows forth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. This is the garden of Eden, as the river is related to God, and of paradise restored and related to the Lamb, by whom men are permitted to drink of this sweet holy stream of eternal life and holiness. Here also the apostle saw the tree of life, bearing new fruits every month, all these being necessary for the well-being of man, whilst the leaves of the tree were the means of healing to the nations. This seems to point to the means by which man has been redeemed ; and it is when these have worked their blessed results that the curse is removed, God's throne of glory is supreme, His people serve Him, see His face, and have His very Name written upon their foreheads. The night shall then be as day, and even the lamp of truth, the Word of God, will not be required of men ; God the truth in them will be their light of truth, and they will no longer be subject to law, but reign as sons of God in His presence.

Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer.

(6) These writings are not to be to men of the will of God for the men ; to the unrighteous man the unholy man the means of his increase means of increasing righteousness sanctification. He comes as Judge the reward which his works deserve. They are the blessed who have seen the only way opened up for the Him they have received the right takers of God's perfect moral na holy city. Outside of the redeemer God, there are the rebels and se bondage to their own lusts and p and believe in his lies. (7) It is Son of God, who has sent His a His people. He is the Root from in Israel received its life and p kingdom of mercy the spiritual of spiritual Israel revealed in Christ men, the bright Morning-Star, givi coming day of glory. (8) Link Holy Spirit and the Church, and tl find salvation, peace, and rest. T they will only come for any reason and joy in Jesus Christ. (9) This of God to men, but let them bew upon them shall fall the plagues o stand the Word or not let them -



The Three Witnesses.

“FOR there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood : and the three agree in one.” It may be assumed that the Spirit is found in the Word of God ; the water represents the visible creation or the macrocosm ; the flesh, that is man, who is the microcosm of all that exists ; and it may be said that these three agree in one testimony upon the great questions of Creation, Providence, and Redemption.

To whom will these witnesses render up their testimony ? to the perverted scientific intellect, or to the self-conceited philosopher ? No ; for these are in league with the enemy of God, and therefore such spirits cannot discern the thoughts of God. It is faith in man that overcomes the devil in self, by belief in Jesus Christ, the Son of God ; and faith does so because it trusts Him who, as the Word of God, came by water, that is, by the manifestation of the universe, or the macrocosm ; and also by the blood, or in the flesh as Jesus Christ, the microcosm of a perfect humanity. It is the Spirit in the written Word that bears such witness as will lead to a knowledge of truth, “because the Spirit is Truth ;” and by the light of the Word of God the harmony and unity of the witnesses are fully manifested. If a man speak the truth he ought to be believed ; but when God speaks, then let men be silent and listen to the testimony of His Spirit, because even to doubt His Word is not only folly, it is madness ; it is to become willing to believe a lie, and call God a liar, and surely this must be truly diabolical. The believer in the Word of God, by His Spirit, possesses the witness to the truth in his own soul ; and by this harmony there is the knowledge of truth and righteousness ; but the man who doubts and denies, calls God a liar, and therefore it is impossible that he can know the truth, or the harmony of God’s Word in Scripture, in the universe, and in man. What is the consummation of God’s witnesses ? It is that God has given to sinful man eternal life, vital spiritual union with Himself, and the point of union and communion is in Jesus Christ, His Son. Those who are one with Christ have life, and it is their privilege to know, understand, and also to live in harmony with this marvellous heavenly baptism by which they are become sons of God ; but without such faith, union, and communion, the soul of man is dead, separate from God, truth, and righteousness.

The study of the Bible reveals specially two great divisions, two men, and two spirits ; these being the Old and New Testaments, Moses and Jesus Christ, moral law and grace. In the Old Testament Moses reigns, and Jesus Christ is hidden away from view under sacrifices,

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s spiritual, not physical ; still the analogies in the kingdoms that are visible are in harmony with, and throw a light upon, what is spiritual. In other words, the physical cannot interpret the spiritual ; but when here is transfiguration, then in the light of the spiritual all that is in man and in the universe may be known. This is a rule that ought to be constantly kept in view in the study of the Bible, viz., that the Bible is not meant to be, neither can it be, interpreted by the laws of any kingdom below that of the kingdom of grace. Natural analogies are introduced on almost every page of the Bible, and they are to be studied in the light of the laws of grace and mercy, and not interpreted by the laws of physical science. The Bible is the Book which contains the knowledge, that is the science, of regeneration, recreation, and the restoration of man to God ; it is the highest, greatest, and most glorious of God's works ; it is the consummation of the divine will, and therefore it is meet that all creation should be subject to the Redeemer for the work of re-creation. It is true that this queen of sciences is made the means for the restoration to their true position of all the other sciences in man's being ; but let men be careful that they do not try to force the queen to work after their perverted ways, else they will find that she has departed and has left the self-willed to follow their own foolish ideas. Grace works graciously for merciful ends, willingly and not by constraint ; therefore men will do well to honour, trust, love, and obey this heavenly visitor who comes to men with both her hands filled with blessings. The thoughts upon "the Kingdom of God" in the Bible in the cycles that have been sketched out is a first attempt to understand this divine science. The light of the laws of grace and mercy shine upon this pathway, inviting the spiritual in Jesus Christ to walk therein, so that they may receive the divine blessing as well as the birthright.

There is harmony betwixt Moses and Jesus Christ when the servant takes his position in submission to the Son of God, and it is seen that son and servant have been working for one purpose, the regeneration and restoration of man to God. There is a new light thrown upon the Bible as a whole when it is studied in the light of the laws of grace and mercy, because then divine order is manifested, and the method of the kingdom of grace, from germ-seed to spiritual fruits bearing seed, is known. Science takes cognisance of law and order, and of the harmonious relations of parts to each other ; and it is also the means by which there can be discovered anything that is superfluous or wanting in the manifestations. Scientific men are familiar with this thought within their own sphere of the physical order ; and it may be said that in the science of organic life this has been specially observed in various ways. If it has been so difficult to gather together the facts which form the science of physical life, and there are still links wanting, or even what may seem superfluous, they must wait, watch, and work until they find out the complete science. As with the science of organic life, so it is with the science of grace and mercy that regenerates a spiritual life ; although the great outlines of the kingdom may be discernible, yet there must be much to discover before the light of law will shine as does the sun at noon. In the meantime there seems to

God may be questioned, so that
Word, that is, expressing His truth
and unity of thought.

THE FIRST

**"THE Spirit searcheth all things
who among men knoweth the
man which is in him? Even so
the Spirit of God. But we receive
the Spirit which is of God; that we
may give thanks to God."**

THE CREATION

The Spirit of God in the Bible
and the earth." These words signify
they embrace the universe and
creation is Adam, the perfect man.
Adam is the microcosm of creation
and life up to and including moral
or intellectual power, therefore God
and Judge. Man and creation are
capable of knowing the thoughts
of God upon God for all things.

THE PROPHETIC CREATION

Creation up to the moral order
of God; it is perfect in its order,
good, and righteous. But the Bible

conception, a historical fact, or in personal experience, the facts are that sin has left the nature of man like a desert. God has revealed Himself in that desert, bringing new life and a river of grace; man has been brought into gracious and moral relations with God; there is a means of redemption and regeneration by the Help-meet; the Help-meet is Jesus Christ the Saviour; man has been tempted by his lusts, desires, and by the intellect, and he has fallen repeatedly under the wiles of the devil, the flesh, and the world; and by the coming of God's Spirit there is illumination, judgment, and mercy. As already pointed out, this vision of God is interpreted by the Beatitudes, but it is the primal creative concept, the seed of grace and of revelation to all men in all ages. Re-creation transcends creation; the former is the subject of the Bible, whilst the latter links the new creation with the Creator, leaving the sciences up to the moral nature and moral law for the study of man, things which he can discover being already manifested, whilst the science of grace and mercy being beyond man's highest conceptions, it is revealed in the Bible, manifested in Jesus Christ, and re-manifested in those who become spiritual images, or imitators of Christ.

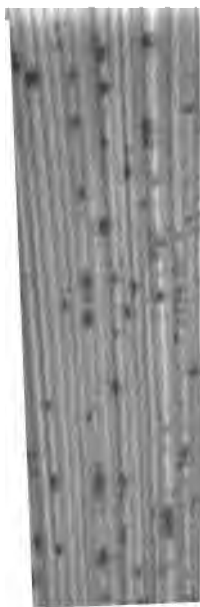
FIRST CYCLE, OR HISTORY IN GERM, INCLUDING ALL NATIONS.

(1) The creation up to and including the Sabbath is the objective presentation set before man for his conception. (2) The cycle of regeneration, re-creation, is specially subjective as related to the individual soul, although it is also objective in its transfigurative purpose upon humanity. (3) Adam, Cain, Abel, and Seth, and their descendants, speak of the birthright and the kingdom. (4) Adam to Noah and his three sons represent humanity in all its phases of thought throughout the whole of history. (5) Noah and the ark speak of mercy and judgment. (6) The flood, the ark, the raven, and the dove are signs for the great flood of evil that has covered the earth, the means of grace, and the conflicting spirits of the ages. (7) A new world, sacrifice, the rainbow, and God's covenant point forward to the days of peace and rest in the earth. (8) Whilst Nimrod and Babel, Asshur and Nineveh, Terah, Abram, Nahor, and Haran embody history, profane and sacred, in their names, and the principles that they represent. In chapters i.—xi. the germ-thoughts of creation, regeneration, the strife about the birthright, humanity, mercy and judgment, salvation and condemnation, good and evil, a world recreated, and history, are all to be found as in one womb. These thoughts are conceived in germ, involved with all that is hidden in them, so that in due time they may be born again, and from the seeds here sown there may be evolved all that God has involved in them.

SECOND CYCLE, OR FAITH, GRACE, AND LAW IN HUMANITY.

Abram was included in the womb of time with humanity; but he had been called to leave Chaldea, and to be separate, delivered from, born out of the evil in the world, so that through him, by the Seed, the world might be blessed. If the cycles in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are studied, then it may be discerned that God's purpose of grace by faith is again involved, as if into a womb, so that there might be in due

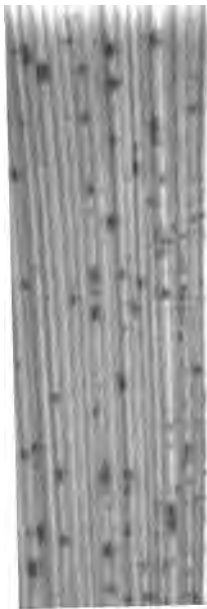
...when it is not faith but
found in the Church and amongst
be seen are those of Isaac and Esau
condition of the Church is that
strife about visible things, to be
Isaac and Esau, Rebekah and Jacob
express the manner in which the
Jacob leaving home, Bethel, Peniel
Rachel, express the position of the
and self-seeking. (5) Leah, Rachel
the kingdom of God's mercy and
God's intervention, the covenant,
from the powers of the world and
Peniel, Esau, the altar El-elohe-l
God to His people. (8) And Dinah
and Benjamin, the return to Hebrew
the cycle, and God's grace in His
these things found here in the gene
be matters of experience also to th
have passed through this cycle.
then a new theme of study is open
providence of God. In other words
order of the kingdom of grace and
by the spirit of Esau and Seir; how
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dom, or vineyard, in His absence
men by God, and interpreted, that
state of bondage; Christ exalted
meeting with His brethren, in which
their Brother, and dread the voice



Every man may consider this great work of God, and by doing so translate it into his own being, and by faith in the state of grace, through obedience to the will of God, there will be developed in the soul the image of the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God.

THIRD CYCLE, OR GOD'S REDEEMED NATION AND ITS LAWS.

I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." God is the object of faith; Christ is the Word of grace; and the Holy Spirit teaches the gracious laws uttered by Jesus, and by divine illumination there is resurrection to a new life; these are the facts whether they be applied to a single soul or to a nation. Abraham was only a unit among the Chaldeans when by the command of God he had an exodus, and left his home "to seek a city with foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Israel, as a nation, was hardly a unit amongst nations, it was almost dead, swallowed up in Egypt, when it pleased God to animate this nation, to animate it by faith, grace, and spiritual power, so that it might live, develop to the birth, and be delivered from under the heel of the tyrant in Egypt. When a soul is influenced to choose for God and righteousness, this is done by gracious influences, to change the actions of the will, so that God's will may be known and obeyed; when the soul is kept down under the powerful lusts and desires, then God is required to step in for deliverance, so that His first-born may be set free from the thralldom in which it is found; and that lusts, passions, and carnal desires may be known to be vile, the Redeemer gives by His servant Moses laws and statutes, which regulate conduct, so that there may be a standard of comparison for the righteousness that is required from man as compared with what he is able to do. There is development in the method or order of God's dealings; the seed of Abraham has become a nation, and as God's nation it must be delivered from bondage, led into strange experiences, placed under oral and gracious laws, and tutored so that it may be prepared for the inheritance of promise. The seed of Abraham, about 70 souls, form the germ of the nation in the womb of Egypt; it is delivered under Moses so that it may evolve in its history all that was involved in the seed in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The development is to a noble order, and not until this necessary evolution has taken place can men be brought to understand the spiritual things in the kingdom of grace and mercy. From Abraham to Moses there is conception and involution in the nation; from Moses to Solomon there is evolution; and from the completion of the temple in Jerusalem until the captivity there is decay and disintegration; all these being necessary in the order of events for the manifestation of the things that are spiritual. Moses is the visible ruler from Egypt to Jordan; and after that period there is still the spirit of Moses ruling the people; but, at the same time, there is another spirit working in their midst for higher and more spiritual ends. In other words, there is first the manifestation of the visible order and forms, and then begins the manifestation of the Spirit of Christ that is hidden away under the forms. (1) Israel in Egypt under taskmasters, the tyrant Pharaoh, Moses, Reuel, the shepherd-priest, and



known to men the method of destruction by the unseen and deliverance, and at the same time for a guide. (8) The end is a to His enemies the overwhelming necessary to point out that the to the individual soul in its spiritual exodus is not a matter only, it is experience and historical state of grace through obedience Marah, Elim, the desert of Sin, Jethro; these names contain nation under Moses after redemption the nation, and in the world, and the kingdom of grace and mercy.

Further, the events at Sinai in the judgment and feasts; the the Mount with God; the pattern as found in Judaism; the priest the two tables of stone, written specially of Mosaism, as in the of law and judgments, but they all who are under the same spirit.

The first great cycle of Mosaism from the world; the second of of law, ritual, sacrifices, and of Christ; and the fourth seems righteousness. (1) The condition calf, sensual and devilish, is the (2) There is to be seen the table

God to the manifestation of the sons of God is something like the idea embodied in these signs. (4) Consecration, free-will offerings unto God; the tabernacle of God on the earth; and men wise and skilful in carrying on the work of God, express the kingdom of heaven in the soul and amongst men. (5) The ark, the mercy-seat, the altar of incense, the anointing oil, the altar for the burnt offerings, the laver, and the court, these make known to men the method of God's mercy amongst His people. (6) The sum of the tabernacle is the regenerate soul, and the temple of humanity restored for God's service. (7) The setting up of the tabernacle, the Shekinah, and the shutting out of the spirit of Moses, bring in the spiritual era, in which men are guided by the light from within, even by the Spirit of God.

The book of Leviticus finds its place in the fifth great cycle of *Mosaism*; and as may easily be discerned, it deals with the questions of sin and sacrifices, the means of atonement and reconciliation, in plain words, the great work of mercy and how man may be restored to God's favour. The thoughts embodied in this book may be briefly stated as follows:—(1) Sin is a fact not to be questioned or palliated, but removed by means of sacrifices. (2) Those who offer sacrifices to God should do so in a right spirit, and in harmony with His revealed will. (3) Special consecration is required for this work. (4) Let men beware of the proud, unholy spirit, for in this men find death; yet let them also remember that mercy rejoices over judgment. (5) Mercy separates betwixt the clean and the unclean. (6) The Pure One cleanses the leprous soul and heals all unholy issues. (7) He is the High Priest by whom there is atonement. (8) Men must not be blood-guilty or permit unlawful lusts, desires, or passions to reign in their souls; but rather let them live in harmony with God's will, so that life may be a continual round of sacred feasts. (9) Consecration for heaven, perfect obedience, and the jubilee of redemption and restoration to God's favour close this vision of the order of the mercy of God in signs and symbols.

The book of Numbers finds its place in the sixth great cycle of *Mosaism*; or in other words, it is the history of God's nation in the wilderness of this world. (1) The holy nation is numbered; it has been set in order around the symbol of the King's presence; and unto all men duties have been assigned according to the King's will. Where the King is present, the place is holy; He is God and King, and all His followers should be consecrated to His service. They are blessed; all that they possess is dedicated to God's service; and He communes with His faithful people from the mercy-seat. (2) This people so holy are God's consecrated lights in a dark world; they are in covenant with Him through the Passover; the holy Spirit of Truth rests upon them; and they are obedient to His Word in all things. (3) These are the glorious ideal in the nation and soul, but history speaks of a *Taberah*, of complaining, lusting, and despising the Word of God; of the abundant mercy of God in Jesus Christ, of the Holy Spirit given to men, of a *Kibroth-hattaavah*, and of sedition and rebellion in the nation by those who ought to have known better. (4) History is pregnant with one thought, and it is that of men spying out the good land of promise

in Canaan, and in Jesus Christ ; of having brought back rich clusters of the good things laid up for those who are faithful and true to God ; and of a revolt, a determination to return to the world, a plague, conflict with the enemy, defeat, and wandering in the wilderness. (5) The day of mercy in Jesus Christ brings increased blessings with increased knowledge and responsibilities ; the necessity for a more perfect consecration of the soul ; but also there is seen the great rebellion of those who claim the birthright and presume that they are the holy who possess the blessing of God. The plague, with the Intercessor standing betwixt the living and the dead, reveals the method of mercy ; and the Rod which possesses life in itself, the Word of God, terminates all disputes as to supremacy in Church and State. (6) The redeemed become priests of God, His servants for the salvation of men. But all require to be separated from sin and made pure in the sight of God, and this end can be attained only through Him who is the reality typified in the red heifer without spot killed outside the camp. Men in this stage of experience are in a state of conflict about visible things, such as church and ritual, but these pass away, so that men may be brought to place their trust in the invisible God. (7) When there is the spirit of consecration to God and the determination to destroy the enemy, then God grants the victory to His people over their enemies. Still a first battle won is only the beginning of the campaign, and so there follows the experience of the compassing of the laud of Edom, the despising of God's Word, the fiery serpents of infidelity, the lifting up of Christ, the wells of revival, the victories over the rebellious spirits amongst men, the frustration of false teachers, and the putting to death of the spirit of strife and idolatry with spiritual fornication. (8) Phinehas brings the covenant of peace ; the termination of the wilderness experience ; a new numbering ; the enfranchisement of women to social privileges ; the time of feasting and joy ; and the overthrow of the spirit of strife amongst men and of false teaching. (9) The first fruits are seen to be possessed, and men speak of the wilderness and its journeyings during the past ; and there is preparation for going forward, so that the whole land may be possessed by the Israel of God.

The book of Deuteronomy finds its place in the seventh great cycle of Mosaism ; or in other words, there may be discerned in Moses, the great servant of God, ready to be changed into a son, by his departure to Pisgah and heaven ; and in Israel who in figure are preparing to enter Canaan, the land promised to the fathers. (1) In chapters i.—iii. there is an all-inclusive cycle, from Horeb to Beth-peor, which touches the prominent facts of history, giving the will of God for His people's guidance in their relations with the spirits of Edom, Moab, and Ammon, and how they had overcome the rebellious spirit of the Amorite and Canaanite. (2) Baal-peor is the word that expresses a divided soul ; it means God and Mammon, Christ and self, spiritual worship and idolatry with the spirit of strife ; thus it is found to be at the root of sin in the soul and amongst men. The wilderness journey begins with the golden calf at Horeb, and ends with Baal-peor. The divided worship at Horeb begins with separation from God, it ends with the

it or chasm so great, that men are found worshipping the creature head of the Creator. During this period men have heard the voice of God in the ten commandments, and they have seen His merciful vision for the blood-guilty in the cities of Refuge. The people of Israel are united to Him by covenant, and they have talked with Him His Word face to face. His laws should have been their delight, they ought to have given a willing obedience to His command-

ments. (3) Massah and Meribah have their testimony against Israel; if they will be meek and obedient, they will go on and prosper; down all their enemies, and receive God's richest blessings according to His Own promises. History is a record of the wickedness of Israel, and of the judgments and mercies of God. (4) The object of the kingdom of mercy in truth and righteousness is, that unbelief may be cast out of the soul and men brought back to God. Men could not overcome the devil that had taken possession; but when delivered from bondage, they have not been true or faithful unto God; idolatry, lying, and complaining is the ample record of history against man; but it speaks abundantly of the mercy, grace, and abundant goodness of God. (5) Pharaoh and Egypt; Korah, Dathan, and Abiram in the wilderness, these speak of the power, pride, and rebellion of men against God. Men are still free to choose Christ or self, the blessing or the curse, according to the ordinances appointed by God on their behalf.

The statutes and judgments of Moses are things which pass away; they are the visible forms and the ill-defined conceptions of men, which are to be viewed in the light of divine truth and righteousness, so that by the One Sacrifice for sin they may be abolished for ever.

Upon Ebal and Gerizim there rest the blessing and the curse; in the former, by Christ's sacrifice for sin, the curse is removed from Israel, if they will only choose to be obedient unto God. (8) The work of Moses is at an end, but his testimony in the song remains, and his words are prized by the sons of men as pointing toward a better future.

The seven-fold cycles of Mosaism referred to may be seen to be specially objective in their order, external, regulative, signs, symbols, prophecy, and also philosophy as it is found in the last poem of the great singer. The period from Joshua to Solomon presents a different aspect of thought; it is a form of Mosaism in the great Abrahamic temple, but it is more like the spirit in the great body working toward a higher end than the life in the wilderness, or the tabernacle in the desert.

stand-points are different from whence the thoughts arise; with Moses as present with the people it is Egypt, the desert, Horeb, and the awful wilderness; with Moses absent in body there is possession of the promised land, victory over the enemy, a time of strange perversions, idolatry, and rebellion against the King, to be followed by the development of the nation into a high state of civilisation. The spirit of Moses is present as the moral power in the soul, in the nation, or in the world; but another spirit, even that of Jesus, the Saviour, is now manifested in the history of Israel. The idea presents itself in this form, the point of development in the Abrahamic cycle beginning with Joshua is in harmony with the point of evolution in

man, and in nations in all their change of method can be seen development in man and in nations embodied in this portion of the visible presentation, to be used has arrived for this same kind the Christian era. To change Moses works out in this portion which cannot be applied in the judge ; the law-giver, king, and and entering the university as men to sit at his feet, as his education and prepare them for grace and Prince of peace. This has been already referred to as his inward operating Spirit of Jesus contrast with Moses as law-giver are subject to law, ritual, and ceremony understood then it will be necessary portion of the Word.

The work of passing through Canaan is represented to be the work on His part, by special instruction His servants. From the plain Lord of Hosts, is in the midst of them into their possession. (1) of God, and to find out the conditions who hold the fort of unbelief and the eye fixed upon Jesus ; and is the scarlet line or the cross

ignorant of such an experience, or conception, that he could not realise it. Was the Rabbi unsaved? Was there no spark of grace in his soul, and he a master in Israel? He was saved; and the seed of grace was in his soul, but he was so enswathed by Judaism, external Mosaicism, that he had no spiritual experience of the new life that existed in his soul. It is this spiritual experience that is expressed by this passage through the Jordan; and it is this conscious change that constitutes conversion in the common acceptation of that word. (3) When a man is conscious of this great change in the aspect of the soul toward God then Christ is revealed as man's Hope; he seeks after purity of thought, and knowledge of God's Word; the old carnal things of the desert life have passed away, and it is no longer the Manna, or the unknown dew from heaven, that nourishes the soul, but the seed which contains spiritual life in itself. The Captain of salvation is present, and the fall of the citadel of unbelief is brought about. (4) Accursed Jericho, it has been the cause of spiritual death throughout the ages, even the Israel of God have trespassed in the things that are cursed, and because unbelief has been found in them they have been bereft of strength, and have fled before their enemies. There must not be any sympathy with unbelief and scepticism; no matter where it is found let the judgment of God rest upon it, and let every man destroy what would encompass his own spiritual life. (5) The spirit of infidelity is the hidden seed of unbelief and sin; presumption and self-conceit are the manifestations amongst men. But these things will be destroyed also, through the wisdom of God; and when these enemies of God are destroyed, then follow the sacrifice upon Ebal and the study of God's Word. (6) When the citadel of the soul is won for Christ and the vile spirit of unbelief is cast out, even then the campaign is not over, neither are the enemies of man and God fully subdued. The trafficking spirit of expediency, deceit, and duplicity, finds its realms attacked, and there must be a contest with the lusts of the flesh so that it may be put down. This is a great campaign; it is the great day in which the Lord hearkens to the voice of man, and all the powers in man's heaven are brought into subjection to the grace of God. (7) The next campaign is against the mighty power of the visible world and all that it contains; and in this there are included all the enemies of God and man as found under the kingdoms of the world, the flesh, and the devil. (8) After conquest then the division of the spoils amongst the victors; the promises are possessed, and God has been found to be gracious, true, and faithful. (9) The days are those of peace and blessing upon men; a prophetic picture of what men desire to see upon this earth and to realise in their own souls.

The Book of Judges manifests a different aspect of the spiritual state of men and nations. The great work carried on by God and Joshua is at an end, and men are left to choose what they please, and act according to their own wishes. The study is subjective as related to the soul, and analytic as related to Israel and other nations; the special season of blessing is past, and the question is this, How will men act under the normal conditions under which they find themselves?

...them, but they forsake CHRIST, and their
own fallen moral natures and perverted
and not the Word of God. (2) Science
gain the supremacy, and the grace of God
of this world in its pride and wisdom
iron for the destruction of men, a horror
and men are crushed under the wheel
Strife and the vile spirit of rebellion
become the slaves of their own passions
are manifested; and the man with the
cessor of power for his own glory. (3)
brutal, ambitious spirit that lusts after
are scourged by their own pride, vanity,
seed of the Philistines, sensualists, and
they reign over men, with a despicable
is about the lowest form of government
being disintegrated; bands of marauders
tions godless, yet superstitious, ruffian
robbery without a moment's hesitation,
and judgment that they make unto them
to their own vile passions. (4) The de
prostitution, Sodomy, spiritual blindness
society so depraved that in the thought
ready to vomit up and cast out the offering
is hellish, it could not well sink further
whence man cannot escape, except the
and deliver him by His Own right hand
grace of God in sending deliverers has
words this may be done by showing them
is Joshua or Jesus. In opposition to s

there is the gracious Spirit of God, consecration to God's service, and the giving up in sacrifice to God of that which has been supremely loved in the past. In opposition to the uncircumcised lusts and passions let men place the Sun of righteousness, the spirit of the Nazarite, and a gracious ministry toward those who are depraved. In opposition to lawless worship of every kind there is the tabernacle at Shiloh, in other words, God's true, pure, and gracious service as found in His Word, guided by His Spirit. And in opposition to sensuality, prostitution, murder, spiritual blindness, and the depravities which sink the nation below the brute creation, there is no remedy but the Word and Spirit of God, in every man, woman, and child armed in God's strength against the devil. This is a terrible conflict, it is spirit against flesh, and brother against brother, but though there may be many defeats against an enemy so powerful there must not be any drawing back until the enemy is smitten, and the soul, nation, and world purified from such debasing lusts, passions, and desires.

"In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes." This verse points to the necessity of a king, a supreme authority, law and justice in the soul, state, and world, and failing these the result must be the experience as related in the Book of the Judges. It points backward to experience, but there can be discerned also a hope, a desire that a king shall come who will give through laws and justice stability to the nation. The Book of Ruth is the link which fits in between the Judges and the kingdom, and it points out from whence the king and law are derived. The Book of Ruth is a marvellous story, full of beauty, but away beyond the visible structure there may be discerned a wonderful allegory in the kingdom of heaven. (1) The thoughts may be expressed in this form: Elimelech—my God is King; Naomi—beautiful; Mahlon—song; Chilion—complete or perfect, these are the family and the nation in the House of Bread, in Judah, where God reigns as King. There comes a time of famine through want of spiritual blessing, and this family is found sojourning in the land of Moab—son of the father—in the spirit of science, art, philosophy, and of humanitarianism in general. There is a time of God's judgments upon the family, the men die in whom Naomi put her trust, and there are found three widows in one house mourning their sad condition. This is the experience of being far away from God; beyond the reach of law and authority, of kindness or love. (2) "I will arise and go unto my Father," and to my King is the utterance of Naomi; she has become home-sick, and the sunny hills of Bethlehem, where there is plenty of bread, are more desirable than the husks which worldly men eat and enjoy. Yet all is not vile that is in Moab, there may be found an affectionate Orpah; and a gracious Ruth, who will fill and satisfy the soul. Moab is not wholly given up to false gods, there are satisfying truths in science, philosophy, government, and kindred subjects, which if separated from the false, proud, self-conceited spirit are worthy of admiration and love. These thoughts desire to live in a purer, holier home, and so the choice is made to be the companion of Naomi, the gracious and the beautiful one beloved by God. But as the two matrons pass

widowed soul cannot find rest apart from him, and thus, even as Ruth called upon him in her distress, so the soul clings to God in Christ. But even kinsmen must act according to the law. There is an elder kinsman according to the law of the inheritance, thus it is necessary in making good any claim he might possess, therefore it falls to God in Christ to raise up an inheritance, so that the name of the seed of the seed of Moab, there was a gracious and intellectual powers; it is a repetition of the name of Rachel under new conditions, because Haran, the son of Terah, the father of the spiritual one, as of truth and righteousness, no longer Marah, receives the seed of this world, but the father of Jesse—who is, present—the beloved—the king of Israel. This is the King they get their King; in other words, as Naomi, and they called his name Obed; born unto Mary and the Church of Christ, Jesus, the Saviour and the Servant; but found in Jesse who represents the spirit of the Messiah, is the beloved of God, the conditions prefigured in this narrative are when religion and science, the moral and intellectual, being in harmony with each other, then the Church of Christ will rejoice, men will be blessed, but in weakness and in unbelief.

bat way men and nations may fall away from grace, truth, and righteousness; the Book of Ruth teaches the method of the kingdom, and in what manner the King will come; Samuel, as prophet, priest, and ruler is a representative of the kingdom of heaven, as found in Jesus Christ or as in the Bible; Saul is a figure of the carnal king or man, selfish and rebellious, man's choice for a king; and David is God's chosen, His beloved, by whom victory is achieved over all enemies, so that there is preparation for the King of peace and the building of the temple of God.

"I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord," is the utterance of Jacob attached to the judge in Dan, and through Hannah the gracious and merciful, there is given in answer to prayer His gift of salvation as a sign that He hears prayer. The spirit in Samuel is that of truth and righteousness; the Bible and Christ are what men ask for that they may be taught righteousness and truth so that they may become like Him who is true and righteous. Samuel is not a priest of the order of Aaron, but a Levite, and a priest in the order of righteousness, that is, of Melchizedek and of Christ. He was given to the nation by God at its darkest hour, when the light of truth was almost extinct, and when the priests in the order of Aaron had become immoral and debased. As a priest he ministered before God when yet a child; and as a prophet the divine thoughts of mercy and of judgment were given unto him by God. He was the ruler over the people, and a righteous judge amongst men; and it was through him that men made known their wish to have a visible king to take the place of Him who is God and King. He is ruler, priest, and prophet, but also the founder of the schools of the prophets, that is, of institutions where men would be taught the knowledge of God in truth and righteousness. Men have rejected Samuel and God, Christ and His Word, and they have taken their own foolish ways; they have desired to be ruled and governed by kings, and to be led forth to battle by them; and their choice being granted their folly is openly manifested before mankind. They have been found beneath the heel of despots, and it is only now that they are rowing off the yoke and the chains which they desired to be placed upon them. Men who reject the gentle Samuel, the loving Jesus Christ, and the Word of God, as king and ruler, prophet and teacher, priest and intercessor, are self-willed and self-seeking; they are carnal, and not spiritual, and so they take their own way, and it is to find, when too late, that they have done foolishly.

The imperious Saul appears upon the scene looking for asses; and when men had degraded themselves below the standard of God-like, moral, responsible beings, they are committed to the care of this man who is the representation of a selfish, self-asserting king. The word "Saul" means ditch, destruction, or death, and in this carnal spirit, this son of Adam and Esau, taking the whole course of his life, there are no redeeming qualities. He is self in all the abominable perversions that are found in selfish men; self-sufficient as king or priest; self-conceited in his thoughts; self-seeking in his purposes; self-satisfied as related to truth and righteousness; self-glorying in his actions; self-asserting his authority; and self is his god whom he worships and serves.

These things apply to Saul, king of Israel, but also to every man who permits self to rule in his soul; he may begin well, but as it is impossible to get good fruit from a bad tree, so this spirit, though instructed by the Word of God, and brought under the gracious influences of the gospel is not changed, but goes on in its wilful way to destruction and death.

In David, the shepherd-king and sweet singer of psalms, there is found another spirit; he is God's chosen, the one anointed by God's Spirit, to bring about the unity of the nation victorious over all enemies. In him men can trace the humble spirit, anxious to have communion with God through His Word and works; full of faith in the power and grace of God; brave, generous, and loving; gentle and patient in adversity; wise and skilful in times of conflict; and as a king possessing power, though sometimes led astray by strong passions, yet a man and a saint of God, with few, if any, equals to be compared with him when placed under similar circumstances. The grace of God in David is a mighty power for good, and to understand his work in Israel the same spirit must be studied in the individual soul, and then men will sympathise more fully with this king of men. The thought may be presented in this form: Samuel represents the gracious power of God in the soul, which ought to be supreme in all things, not by constraint or restraint, but by free choice and in the order of grace. When Samuel, or the grace of God, is rejected by a soul, then the intellect becomes the ruler; this is the lawless, selfish one who despises the grace of God, and who hates and would destroy the moral nature. But God has a purpose of grace for the salvation of the soul, and thus into the moral nature there is introduced the Word and Spirit of grace, and it is this regenerating power in its operations that is so fully represented in the history of David. Moses rules in visible things by law, ritual, and ceremony; he is law-giver and schoolmaster. David is a figure in the spiritual world and his portraits are those of a shepherd caring for his flocks, a warrior overcoming Goliath-like lusts and passions; a friend and a follower of all that is good, true, just, and loving; hated and hunted because he loves the law of God and seeks to be true and righteous; merciful to his enemies; aspiring after holiness and God-likeness; longing for peace whilst compelled to be at war; persecuted and betrayed, yet gracious and forgiving; and when reviled by his enemies patiently forgiving them so that they might leave their evil ways. Moses as law-giver and judge, and even as teacher, is felt to be a power outside of a man; he is the schoolmaster, the leader, and the instructor in righteousness. David is felt and known to be within the man within the moral nature and its sphere; one upon whom the unction of the Holy Spirit rests; a companion in study; a strong friend to help against an enemy; a brother in loving affection; a counsellor in the day of trouble; in fact, one who, whilst dutiful in every sphere of life, is ever pointing forward to that better time when conflicts shall cease, and men will live in peace under the gracious reign of the King of peace, truth, and righteousness.

Solomon, the reign of peace, the building of the temple, the magnificence of his palaces, and the wisdom with which he was

endowed by God close this cycle of the Abrahamic era. Much might be written upon these interesting aspects of God's Word, but it is enough to show that in the Abrahamic family and nation God has been pleased to present to men for their study a perfect manifestation, as if in the womb, in visible forms and in spiritual struggles, what constitutes a prophetic or typical representation of the kingdom of heaven. In the nature of things this was necessary, because man is so constituted that it is only by such a presentation, by representation in the soul, and by the reason, that men can gain a knowledge of truth and righteousness. It is true that all these things are pictured as it were upon the canvas of God's Word, as an external vision presented to men; and yet it is marvellous to find so vivid a conception of the spiritual in man as there is delineated in this great cycle beginning with Joshua and ending with Solomon. The Book of God lives at every point; and the longer it is studied the more wonderful it becomes on account of its marvellous revealing power into the divine nature or order of things. It is Spirit, but even when visible forms are being studied they are seen to be like a living, beautiful human form, full of life and animated as by a spirit and soul.

THE FOURTH CYCLE, OR THE HIDDEN WISDOM OF GOD.

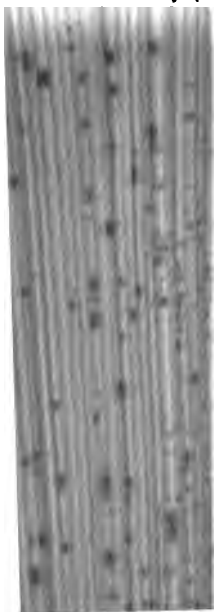
Thus far the Bible is a marvellous study in prophesying and delineating the natural development of God's kingdom of grace and mercy; through living men it lives, and becomes a transmitting power so that men may live in the same spirit. Is it too much to say that although this great Mosaic form and spirit have long since passed away from Israel, disintegrated amongst the nations, so that a higher, even a spiritual kingdom might be manifested, yet the nations—Jew and Christian—in their national capacity have not advanced beyond this conception, but in reality they may fairly be represented to be in a similar spiritual condition to Israel during the reign of King David. In other words, the nations are carnal and semi-barbarous in their actions; they have not the inspiring hope of a united Christendom or a peaceful world, and so the onward march of history, as related to visible things, has been, and is still, gloomy indeed. This may seem strange, since it is now nearly 3,000 years since God consummated the vision of visible things in the kingdom of Israel in the days of Solomon, to find after such a lapse of time the same spiritual conditions manifested in Christendom. But in reality it is what in the nature of things men might expect to find upon the surface of society, and being wrought out amongst the nations, because what was wrought out in the small kingdom of Israel has been in the course of development in Christendom working out to the same end on a greater scale, but with a higher purpose involved in the womb of time. In the Abrahamic cycle of Israel there is seen the involution of the promises of God as given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the evolution in the deliverance from Egypt of the nation; the experience of the wilderness; Sinai; the ceremonialism of Mosaism; the forty years in the wilderness; and the spiritual development of an ideal kingdom from Joshua up to Solomon. But as out of promises in themselves

men can only expect promises, so the whole of this order of things is that of promise, and not of fruition. Will men remain satisfied with these promises, or will the day come when men will draw upon the Promiser, and thus find out whether He is able to fulfil what has been promised? Here lies the great distinction betwixt Mosaism and Christianity; the former is only a promise, a shadow of good things, a sign of what exists in God; and the latter is the reality, the seed promised, the substantial value, God in Christ and in man. Therefore, since there has been the involution of the seed in humanity and the promise fulfilled, men ought to expect to see not the disintegration of Christianity as with Israel, but in due time, when it has developed so far, the spiritual manifestation of the seed that has been implanted into it; in other words, the spiritual Seed bearing spiritual seed. Mosaism held the promise in its bosom of spiritual things, but Christianity holds the potency for all spiritual manifestations. Israel according to the flesh knew not the real value attached to the promises; that generation made the mistake of putting more value upon the promises than upon the reality, and so it was found that when the Promiser came to redeem His promise by giving sterling value, they foolishly clung to the shadow and rejected the substance. In the nature of things it is not so with Christianity; although Christians have been found living very much like the Jews and placing a higher value upon the promise than upon the Promiser, upon the letter than the Spirit, yet the time will come when the Spirit will break through all these visible changeable things, and there will be manifested the spiritual kingdom of God in truth and righteousness. This is the great distinction betwixt Mosaism and Christianity, only so far as the development has gone in Christendom it is still Moses, and not Christ, that is visible; but the next movement will not be toward disintegration and decay, it will be for a spiritual birth, the travail-pangs being upon Christendom for this end at this time.

Viewed in this aspect the Books of the Kings close up this great cycle of promise, which is without potency; the fathers, the promises, the land of promise, and the visible nation pass away, and there is another beginning made to work the past over again in new forms and under new conditions, but in doing so to embody in itself the potency and power of all spiritual life as found in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As the Books of the Chronicles begin with Adam and end with the command of Cyrus for the rebuilding of the temple of God that had been cast down by men, and which lay in ruins, so the Bible, with certain exceptions, bearing upon the millennium and the history of man, is limited by the state of glory and the same boundaries. This is a great spiritual chronicle of historical events in miniature, and when men become spiritual they will be able to look beyond the letter of these books, and by the illumination of God's Spirit discern the kingdom of heaven in what is here given to men. As the Books of the Chronicles harmonise with the first Beatitude in this cycle, it follows that they contain in germ the kingdom of heaven; in other words, this is the seed, and in it all the developments in form and spirit are to be found. The contents of the Chronicles are not the same in kind as the Book of Isaiah, although they also are a beginning, the first in the great cycle

of mercy, the reason being that, as the books from Chronicles to the Song of Solomon harmonise with the fourth Beatitude, they must include all manifestations, whilst the book of Isaiah embodies the great principles of the kingdom of mercy. These books which harmonise with the fourth Beatitude are the summation of all that has gone before in the world and in the kingdom of Israel; but they are also the seeds which have involved within them all that will be manifested in a spiritual Christianity. The promises and forms are to be carried forward in their order of development; but along with these in this womb there are spiritual potencies unknown to the former manifestations.

The Chronicles are history in epitome, the microcosm seed of the kingdom of God upon the earth. The book of Ezra reveals the purpose of grace and the great object of the kingdom of mercy; it is to restore the temple of God in the soul of man and the glorious temple of God in humanity by Jesus Christ. The Book of Nehemiah makes known to men that the kingdom of God, the heavenly Jerusalem and its laws, which have been trodden under foot and despised by men, will one day be rebuilt; that God's enemies will be put to shame; His Word honoured and revered; His Sabbath held sacred; His covenant received and sealed on men's souls; and the people being cleansed from every form of false worship and every deceitful way will all speak one language in the unity of their spirit toward their God and King. In the Book of Esther—secret, hidden—men will be led to discern the wonderful providence, grace, and mercy of God in His government of the world; because they will be taught that sin, pride, covetousness, and vainglory in man have been circumvented by the Invisible; the devil of self will be hung up as high as Haman the Agagite, whilst the meek and lowly, the chosen and beloved of God, will possess, rule over the earth, and be satisfied with the faithfulness, truth, and righteousness of God. In the Book of Job men will find the germs of the mystery of the kingdom of God's grace and mercy; and in the light of the revealed truth in Jesus Christ they will comprehend those great problems which were so mysterious to the patient, Christ-like man of Uz. Not in the laws of Israel by Moses, nor in the philosophies of wise men, is God's wonderful wisdom contained, and His grace and mercy revealed, but in the suffering of the innocent for a time, and in that reward which is laid up for the righteous, for those who follow the gracious method of life in Jesus Christ. The Book of Psalms is the true utterance of the human soul; from the depths of hell there come the cries of the forsaken, unutterable in their misery because God is not with them; the mighty Deliverer is found rescuing man from the horrible pit and miry clay; there are dirges and wails of mourning which express the manifold experiences of human sorrow, trial, and temptation; the laws and testimonies are there for those who would walk in the paths of righteousness; the voice of wisdom, truth, and righteousness is found chanting the holiness, goodness, and grace of God; the river that makes glad the house and servants of God, and the tree of life with its fruits are found therein; the soul fighting against the world, the flesh, and the devil in the darkness may be discerned, and lo! the reward of this

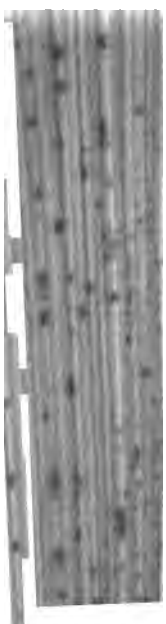


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will harmonise with the kingdom of mercy, the prophetic forethought of God, and the hope and desire of mankind. This great cycle embodies one important thought, and it is the kingdom of mercy in its manifold manifestations amongst men. The stand-point of the vision of the prophets is that of Isaiah, chapter i. ; men are listening to God and to His testimony of what men have been toward Him. Creation is called to witness the awful ingratitude of man, for the Lord has brought up children and they have become rebels: the rational creatures have become, as compared with the irrational beasts, inconsiderate, and so they are a corrupt seed, unable to bring forth good fruit. Humanity is seen as sick, wounded, bruised, and putrifying; there is the germ of spiritual life left in the mass, but it is like Lot in Sodom, so perverted that it is marvellous God should care for mankind at all. Men were not without forms of religion, but they were false and unrighteous; and instead of clean hands and souls, blood, hatred, and murder filled their souls. God broods over this cursed race, and He pleads with them with the tenderness of a mother and the wisdom of a father; if they will only be obedient and rebel no more, then every blessing shall be theirs. Not only is the body of humanity corrupt, ready for the grave, but the spiritual power has become as a common harlot, and those who rule have become thieves and murderers. This aspect of the vision stirs God up, and as the Purifier He enters humanity that He might purge and heal, redeem and restore, what is in ruins. But upon the wicked there shall fall the judgments of God, and the fire of His Holy Spirit will burn up all that is impure and corrupt.

1. What is the great object to be attained by this kingdom of mercy which is to be evolved before the inspired vision of God's seers? It is the establishment of the Lord's house upon the mountains, exalted far above the hills of time which men discern, and unto it all nations shall be gathered. The King of kings and the Teacher of truth will be there, and by His laws and Word the present state of conflict will pass away, to be followed by the kingdom of peace. This is the light that has been radiating forth upon good and gracious men; it is the goal of all their hopes. Betwixt the vision and its realisation there lie the broken, demolished gods of men; the wickedness of God's people; the great wilderness with its sanctuary, cloud of smoke by day, and the flame in the night; the vineyard which the Lord will plant in a fruitful hill; the terrible iniquities of the wicked; and at last the ensign will be lifted up which will guide men to the Lord's house upon the mountain top.

2. How shall men conceive of the revelation of God in a soul or amongst the nations? If men could see spiritually, then the realisation would be in harmony with the vision given unto Isaiah; but as they have not seen, they have become the confederates with those who work iniquity; whilst the Lord has given to men His sign of the incarnation of the Holy One into humanity. Though hand join hand in evil ways, and evil may seem to be regnant, yet it shall come to nought, for "God is with us." The law and the testimony of God—these shall live when necromancy and spiritualism are ways abhorred by men. The times shall be full of darkness, but *the* Light will arise, and in the



the Lord, as the waters cover the sea upon the earth, unto it shall all nations through Him, and they will thank ar Babylon, Palestine, Moab, Damascus, God and of His people, shall fall G will this work of the Lord be, that it m of the earth as if it were a vessel ; or t was found will be turned upside down, in it. In this mountain of God's mercy during that feast, the veil of sin coveri sin and death will be conquered ; and 1 sung by the followers of Jesus Christ. come, as it were, a new birth, a travai when the Child is born into this world, t will arise and sing the praises of God. and all His spiritual enemies shall be ca

4. The great mystery of the kingdom grace and mercy reigning in righteous people according to justice ; and to fin ness ; where the people see the King in men is forgiven. Then the meek will ir will be brought low ; the wilderness o gladness and joy will fill the earth, an past. During the day of mercy proud an the Name of God ; but the issue will b and the destruction of the wicked by the of man is death ; but God is able to r doom by His great work of grace and m dead shall live and praise His Name. Is able than this in history ? Yes : it is fo

enemies. He is God, the Creator, Ordainer, Preserver, and Redeemer of men. He is the Saviour, and unto Him all men must look for salvation. He is the Judge punishing the wicked, and the Purifier of His people in the furnace of affliction. He is the Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob, by whom the nations of the earth are redeemed.

6. Men sold themselves to the enemy, but they were unable to buy themselves back out of the tyrant's hands; therefore He gave His back to the smiters, and in the strength of God, obeying His Word and trusting Him, He redeemed Israel. Those who are redeemed are called to remember the past, to trust their mighty Saviour and to rejoice in Him; but they fall into the hands of the enemy and require another salvation: by this deliverance it is made manifest that God reigns. He reigns in grace, and thus He is seen with face and form marred; like a root out of a dry ground, despised, rejected, sorrow-stricken, wounded, bruised, afflicted like a lamb for the slaughter, in prison, dead; and yet He is alive, the travail of His soul has brought forth its seed, and at last there is joy and satisfaction. By such a work of mercy men find salvation, and abundant blessings fall upon the redeemed. The redeemed ought to be the consecrated, holy servants of Christ; it will be in a world of strife; but in due time the King will come, His standard will be raised up, and the enemy, though strong, proud and full of boasting, will be brought low.

7. The day of light is come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon men. The Servant of the Lord is seen as the Anointed, and through His mission truth and righteousness fill the earth, and men praise the God of salvation; the meek inherit the earth, and unto Zion salvation has come. He comes for man's salvation, but it is through man, by the path of pain and sorrow, and only by this way can mercy reach men. He comes as the gentle Shepherd seeking the lost, but also as the Judge to punish the wicked. He is the Re-Creator, by abolishing all that is sinful amongst men, and through Him men will see the universal glory of God.

II. JEREMIAH.—In the book of the prophet Jeremiah there is revealed this special thought, that the glory of the Lord God is to be found in His grace and mercy, by which He is pleased to come down into this sin-stricken, rebellious world as a Servant, and by taking this form, in due time to exalt, build up the temple of God that has been cast down. The prophecies of Isaiah reveal the way of the salvation of the Lord; in Jeremiah there is seen the man full of sorrow serving God, so that men may be saved. The almond rod reveals God's purpose of grace, the apparently humble means to be used for this great end, and the seething pot, the state of the nations into which the grace of God would come. The sinfulness of man is pictured by idolatry and adultery, the worship and service of what is not God, and the giving of the affections unto the creature instead of the Creator and Redeemer. Because of sin there are manifold judgments upon the people of God, great misery to be endured, famine for the Word, belief in lies and separation from God, so that He does not hear their prayer. But He is gracious, and so in His sovereignty there is redemption through "the Lord our Righteousness." The captivity and restoration are foretold,

the sorrow and suffering of the Church of Christ, and the supremacy of the Son of David ; but there is also made known another captivity to the powers of this world, the judgments upon the wicked nations, and the redemption of Israel.

In the Lamentations of Jeremiah it would seem that another sphere of thought is entered upon ; in other words, the first book has to do with the things that are visible amongst men and nations, whilst the second touches the spiritual world, the beloved and the redeemed of God. The world in its organisations is the great body ; the city of Zion, the spirit and the soul in its spiritual life. This fair city, created so beautiful, the glory of God, His image in truth, justice, and righteousness, is seen to be desolate, desecrate, separate from God, and lying in ruins. Sin is the cause of this great change ; sorrow and affliction have seized the daughter of Zion, and in her sad condition there is no one to give comfort or consolation. There is the voice of repentance and of hope, for "the Lord is righteous ;" but in the meantime the bitter cup is placed to the lip, and the enemy is seen rejoicing in the sorrow of the sinful and repentant. Is not this the mystery of the mercy of God, that through fire and water, trouble, trial, and sorrow of every kind, His redeemed return unto Himself? Alas ! by what other way is redemption possible? It is the way that Jesus trod, and it is the way along which the redeemed must pass. It is when there is such an experience ; and the tears fail in their flowing, and there is a great burning in the soul, even when there is no corn or wine, joy or gladness, that the voice is heard saying, "What thing shall I take to witness for thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? What shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breach is great like the sea : who can heal thee?" A poor despised thing amongst men is this spiritual beloved of God, for they say in their contempt and ridicule, "Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?" The Lord's ways seem strange to men, because the redeemed are those who suffer affliction, and they are led as it were into the darkness where there is no light ; but the issue of all these manifold experiences is the downfall of Edom, and the carnal things and the blessings of restoration to the daughter of Zion.

III. EZEKIEL.—I. Isaiah speaks of the salvation of the nations ; Jeremiah makes known the exaltation of the Zion of God through His Servant, "The Lord our righteousness ;" and Ezekiel—the strength of God—reveals the method of the kingdom of God amongst men. God's people are exiles far away from their native home ; Zion, Jerusalem, Judah, and Israel are all visions of the past, and the consecrated see around them a mighty Chebar—strength—flowing onward in its irresistible power. This was all that the veiled vision could see amongst men ; but in the invisible world there was to be seen, by the spiritual vision, God's kingdom of grace and mercy, moved by His Holy Spirit, and the Man Jesus Christ is seen as seated upon the throne of the universe with the rainbow of God's faithful promises surrounding His head. The King speaks to His servant, and unto him is given the commission of making known to men the kingdom of God ; he is sent forth with God's Word. As a faithful watchman, or shepherd, he is called to do his duty ; but

the Word which he is commissioned to proclaim being first received by himself he finds it full of sweetness, and what will fit him for his duties. How long will men rebel against God, and thus cause Him to besiege them in their fortresses? They will continue in their sinful ways even when famine-stricken, when the sword of judgment falls upon them, and when they are dispersed. They will not choose to serve God, therefore their portion is the famine, the sword, dispersion, and bondage, no bread, God's judgments, want of unity, and slavery. Is not this a true representation of the Israel of God in both Judaism and Christianity? This has been the condition of the Church of Christ, because men have been rebellious and self-willed.

2. How shall men be able to conceive of the state of the human soul and of the nations? It is described in the vision of the temple at Jerusalem. Men cannot sin with impunity; by their sins they are branded, and the avenging angel is on their track to punish them by death. In all these things God reigns, and His Holy Spirit is operating in the kingdom of God upon what appears to be a caldron full of flesh; but in reality His grace is working, so that the evil designs and mischievous actions of men may be overruled for good. His purpose of grace is that the desecrated place shall become, in Himself, "a little sanctuary," and that in due time there will be loving obedience unto God. But the mercy of God is overshadowed by calamities; the judgments of God fall upon men, and the issue is that there is still a remnant in the earth who will be able to teach men the meaning of God's mercy and judgments.

3. God has His chosen nation, but it has been an unfruitful vine. He has in His mercy had compassion upon the outcast seed of fallen humanity, and in His gracious compassion life and blessing were given unto it. But the recompense has been the basest ingratitude, idolatry, and spiritual adultery. Because of this unfaithfulness, God being jealous for His Name, the thing of shame is cast off, and she is seen as despised by all the nations. But there is restoration and favour, so that from that time forward there may not be any more boasting amongst Jews or Christians.

4. The kingdoms of men are compared to great cedar-trees and eagles; the kingdom is God's, but they take away His power and glory and use it for base purposes. His kingdom of grace and mercy is to be compared to the lowly, fruit-bearing vine; but this vine of race, growing up under the shadow of these perverted nations, became influenced by the spirit of the eagle, and it became selfish instead of gracious, proud and conceited instead of being lowly and selfless. The cedars or kingdoms in which men trust—usurping powers—will be brought low, and men are called to consider the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ, because under the shelter of His moral and gracious laws all men will find safety and peace. In the kingdom of God wise men will always find cause and effect; if the children's teeth be set on edge, surely it is because the fathers have been eating sour grapes. Still, it is true that He is merciful, and that all His ways are just and righteous. They are unable to understand His ways, being more like wild beasts than men; but when they have passed through

the furnace, then they will understand that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that He is their Redeemer in whom they find rest and peace.

5. The mercy of God is contained in His Holy Word ; the Word, in the hand of God's Spirit, is a double-edged weapon ; and thus, whilst it is the means of wounding, it can also pour out the balsam that will heal. It is drawn against evil ; and until evil is put down in the earth, it cannot rest. This is God's sword of power, the Word of God in the kingdom of mercy, and it will accomplish what the swords of men could never undertake. The sword of man devours and destroys, causing strife and murder ; His sword brings peace and joy to the soul and goodwill amongst men.

6. The kingdom of God's spiritual power overcomes all enemies and overthrows all other kingdoms upon this earth ; the sword of Ammon shall be turned into a ploughshare ; the wisdom of Moab and Seir, or rather their conceit and scepticism, will be put down ; the pride of man shall be brought low, and in fact every power contrary to the will of God will bite the dust before the coming King of kings.

7. The prophets, as servants of God, have been appointed as the watchmen over the house of Israel. There have been shepherds set over the flock of God, but they have sought their own good, and not the welfare of the flock over whom they have been overseers. Because of their guilt, they shall receive punishment, for God will be their Judge. The Good Shepherd will care for His flock and bring back those who have been driven away from the fold. The proud spirit of Seir will be broken, and unto Israel there will be restoration and a spiritual kingdom.

8. The day of God's mercy amongst the nations closes with the resurrection power of Christ, in unity in one spirit under the King of grace and mercy, judgments upon the wicked, victory and restoration for Israel. Then shall men see the new Jerusalem, the city of God, a new temple also amongst men, where there shall be spiritual worship and spiritual blessings. In that day of restoration, the Lord will be known by a new Name, Jehovah Shammah, or "the Lord is there;" and in His presence there will be fulness of joy, and at His right hand pleasures for evermore.

IV. DANIEL.—Isaiah, for the work of salvation in the world ; Jeremiah, for the regeneration of the fallen, and the exaltation through a gracious restoration by a new way of righteousness ; Ezekiel, for the work of God's kingdom of mercy in the earth until the city of God is seen, the temple of God restored, and the King present with His subjects ; and Daniel, for the judgment of God—that is, a judicial prophetic representation of the facts before they took place in history. These books involve the kingdom of mercy in the prophetic womb ; and every evolution during the periods from Isaiah to the end of the Christian era is a development in action of what is given in these books in prophecy. These books agree in spirit with the first four blessings uttered by Christ, and with many similar conceptions throughout the the Word of God ; as, for example, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph ; Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy ;

ate of the camp of Israel in the desert ; the living creatures and in Revelation, and the four Gospels. Superficially there appear much resemblance, but spiritually they breathe the life of thoughts in the kingdom of God.

The world is revealed as given up to the power of Nebuchadnezzar because of sin, the holy seed of grace has been scattered on the earth ; yet judgment upon Israel and Judah, even at the time not for the casting away of those beloved by God, but that in God's mercy might flow forth upon the Gentile nations. Israel and Judah at the captivity was a means to provoke the wrath of God to purity of worship ; and it was also, in the wisdom of God, a means whereby the riches of His grace might be made known to the world. It was a day of sorrow for Israel ; but it was a means of sowing gracious seed in the world, which would bear fruit years for its germination, growth, and reproduction. From the captivity were taken to Babylon, not merely princes of the seed but what was more important—the seed of grace in Daniel and his three companions. They were true Nazarites, men pure of heart who could see the face of God ; and unto them He gave wisdom and revealed all the wisdom of Babylon. The king's dream was a means of making known the true God, and with this knowledge came responsibility. God gives to men prophetic visions of His will that men might desire to know, but sufficient to teach them the " God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a Revealer of secrets." The vision closes with the seed of grace ruling over Babylon ; the judgment of God, is found sitting in the gate.

As revealed what men shall do in the great kingdom of this world is also what He will do to overthrow the glory and power of the world. He also makes known what the spirit of men's actions will be in his period of 2,500 years. They will attempt to compel all men to worship the great image that they set up, and if any refuse to obey the commands, then their doom is the furnace and death. The will of God could not sin against Him, even to please despotic men, so their portion has been the furnace seven times heated, and there has been seen with them in the furnace One " like the Son of Man." The persecutors have tried to destroy the seed of grace in the world, but fire cannot destroy the Holy Spirit who is compared to oil ; therefore the persecuted have been sent from the dominion of devils to walk in light with " the Son of God." The history of the spirit of Nebuchadnezzar amongst the nations. It is told in the vision of the great tree, the watchers, the fallen, and the beast-like nature of men. It is true that all men are required to " praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, whose works are truth and His ways judgment ; and those that do otherwise He is able to abase."

The kingdom of man is compared to a great feast in which there is drunkenness and sacrilege. Men have forgotten God, and in their pride they praise the creatures they have made, drinking out of golden cups to the glory and praise of their devils. Where is the man who behaves thus in the face of the universe? How is it

that He permits such manifestations amongst men? This is the mystery of man's wickedness, and of God's marvellous patience and mercy. How long will He wait? even until the cup is full, and men reject and despise their Creator and King; He will endure, absorb all the wickedness of vile men into the invisible until there is a surcharge, and then the hand of God in the lightning flash, radiant with judgment, will radiate forth before men the awful sentence of wrath treasured up against them.

4. How shall men be able to conceive of the history of the kingdom of truth and righteousness in this world? By thinking upon the righteous Daniel; the envious courtiers; the faithful servant of God and men; the success of the wicked; the righteous cast into the lion's den; the awful night of suspense to the king, and of safety to the servants of God; the resurrection as from death; the judgment upon the wicked; and the restoration of truth and righteousness upon the earth.

5. The kingdoms of mercy and cruelty, righteousness and unrighteousness, are seen side by side. Man's kingdom is compared to wild beasts with their horns, cruel and boastful; the kingdom of God as one of justice and judgment upon the wicked, and of mercy to men through the Son of man. This has been a marvellous vision to men in all ages; but the interpretation being known, men can perceive that the histories of Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome Pagan, and the Papal dominion in Christendom, harmonise with this vision given unto Daniel.

6. In the vision of the ram and he-goat there is traced the conflict betwixt Greece and Persia, in which the wisdom and power of Greece gain the supremacy followed by the division of the empire into four parts at the death of Alexander, as represented by the four horns. In this line there runs the great power of the East, which would receive help to prosper against the truth, during the long period of the desecration of God's temple. But the end of this power will be, that it will crumble to pieces and be broken without hand. When such a sign is seen upon the earth, then Christian men may take courage and hope that the end is drawing nigh; and they ought to prepare themselves by confession of sin and repentance before God, so that they may obtain God's favour, see His face, and receive His revelations of truth and righteousness.

7. By preparation, purifying the soul by faith and obedience to the King, men will receive a gracious revelation; but it will be one that will reveal their own inward, corrupt state, as well as the glory of God. He is gracious and full of mercy, and His words are peace to His beloved, so that they may receive His strength and be filled with His wisdom in the knowledge of the truth and righteousness of God's ways amongst men.

V. HOSEA.—In Hosea—saviour—men may discern the method of God's salvation in its manifestation amongst men. It is that of the fifth vision in the garden of Eden where the Help-meet comes in contact with the unclean race, and the woman is given to man. Here the Lord comes into contact with depraved humanity in the seed of Abraham, so that the seed of God might be manifested. The spiritual

ed shall be blessed, but the visible powers, as in Judah and Israel, shall not prosper. The mother of those children, the Jewish church, loves herself to be an adulteress, unfaithful to her Lord, and so she is set off for a time with the intention to allure her back to reconciliation on the day of mercy.

Again there is the manifestation of the grace and mercy of God, to the adulteress, the Christian Church, upon condition of a promise of faithfulness, and this engagement is to last during the period when the rael of God would not have any visible representation of kingly authority amongst men. The mercy of God is cast away upon a worthless, demoralised people, idolaters and adulterers; they are punished because of their sins, and in the day of their sorrow they return unto God.

Israel and Judah, Christian and Jew, are transgressors; they have been foolish, seeking after Egypt and Assyria, power and wisdom, instead of being true to God. Because of sin there have been judgments and unfruitfulness. The redeemed have been ungrateful and unfaithful, and the Saviour cannot give up His redeemed. By repentance, humility, and the fear of God, there is blessing, and in Him the redeemed are saved and made a blessing unto others.

VI. JOEL, &c.—In the prophecies of Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and Jonah there may be found the thoughts which harmonise with the sixth beatitude. Joel speaks of the wickedness of the wicked and of God's terrible judgments; of the coming of God, repentance, and mercy to the children of Zion; of the outpouring of God's Spirit amongst men, and the preaching of the gospel amongst the nations. Amos speaks of judgments upon the nations and grace to Israel; with the counsel to seek God, and not Bethel or false gods; and by being sincere and obedient they will receive blessing. Obadiah reveals the judgment of God upon the seed of Edom; the kingdom of man must fall in the world and amongst the nations, so that the kingdom of God may be manifested. Jonah preaches to men, through Jesus Christ, of the awful race of men, God's mercy, unfaithful, unwilling servants. His own purpose of grace amongst men, of death, resurrection, the preaching of God's Word amongst men, and His mercy toward the repentant.

VII. MICAH, &c.—In the prophecies of Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Jephthiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, there may be found the thoughts which harmonise with the seventh Beatitude. Micah reveals to men the coming of the Lord to His holy temple, and from thence speaking unto men with mighty spiritual power; he also makes known that out of Bethlehem there shall come forth the ruler of Israel. The words of Nahum are, "The burden of Nineveh;" the wickedness of the nations and their downfall. Habakkuk is the great wrestler with God; and through Him men are taught the way of salvation by faith. Jephthiah speaks of the sinfulness of men and the judgments of God upon the nations, and also of the restoration of Israel. Haggai reveals to men the glory that would come to the second temple by the coming of the Merciful; and also of the shaking of the heavens and the earth, that He may come who can bestow peace on the earth. Zechariah has many and varied visions; and in these there is found the finishing

of the temple of God by Zerubbabel; the Priest-King upon His throne; the coming of Jesus Christ, and His sufferings; and the worship of God by all nations in the Holy City at the Feast of Tabernacles. Malachi, the last of the prophets, prepares the way for the forerunner of Christ; and when the King is come, then shall His kingdom of truth and righteousness be amongst men.

THE SIXTH CYCLE, OR GOD'S PURE SPIRITUAL KINGDOM IN JESUS CHRIST.

"BEHOLD THE MAN!" Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary and the Son of God. The Saviour of men and the Anointed of God, so that He might live the perfect moral life; manifest the perfect, gracious, and merciful will of God, and having fulfilled His mission rise again from the dead, bringing with Him His redeemed, so that they might live in, and reign with, Him in glory. In Jesus Christ men may perceive the tree of humanity in its flower, and it was when this lovely Character, more pure and stainless than the falling snow, was trampled under the foot of men that the seed of grace was sown in the earth, which must bring forth fruit-bearing seed according to its kind. The seed of grace in humanity is a marvellous study; it is found in the promises given to Adam in Eden, and to Noah after the Flood; thus it is in all nations, and it is the spiritual possession of all those who with a poor, humble, self-renouncing spirit seek for the kingdom of heaven. It is specially in those who are the called of God, as was Abraham; the men who are led through grace, by faith, to give up this world with its pride and lustings, and to seek for a better country, even the heaven which God has prepared for those who love Him. In such men the kingdom of God is involved into their being by the experiences of life and by their relations with the world, and at last they find rest under the shadow of the true and faithful promises of God. The seed grows into a tree, the Cedar of God, in all its organic beauty as found in the history of Israel from Egypt to the days of Solomon; and at this point the visible development stops, and a new order of growth begins. This tree of God's purpose of grace is not barren or unfruitful; it is following the order of nature, therefore it is necessary that at this point another inward development should begin which has for its object the reproduction of the seed, and this germ is found stored up in the Books from Chronicles to the Song of Solomon. There is still further development, the buds which contain the germs of new life begin to show themselves; as found in the prophets; and it is at this time that the tree is seen as if in labour, all its reserve of power being required to produce the bud and flower. In due time the flower appears, and as it is during the flowering that there is contact with other seeds for propagation, so in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ men may see this stage of development in the kingdom of grace.

The four gospels may be considered as four representations of Jesus Christ, all these being necessary so that men might be able to see this King of men. He has four sides upon which men look upon Him; and when they have studied Him from these four stand-points they will be ready to say that they have been privileged to gaze upon One who is unique, distinct from all other men, but they have not been able

to penetrate into His depths or rise to the altitude of His revelations. The order of looking upon Jesus Christ is laid down ; men are called to begin with the gospel of Matthew ; in other words, they are to think of Jesus Christ as the Gift of God ; they are to come to Him in a state of grace, by the door of faith, and bowing down before Him as the King of those who, being sinners, seek salvation, truth, and righteousness. When the Saviour, Law-giver, and King has been reverently studied, as found in the first gospel, then with the humble spirit, sympathising with the Lord Jesus in His work of mercy, and full of pity and compassion for those who are out of the way of truth and righteousness, there may be the study of the second gospel, and an appreciation of the work of the Servant of God, as High Priest and Sacrifice, as the Healer and Redeemer of men. When there is fitness to understand the mission of Jesus Christ, then there opens up to view the third gospel which reveals the whole world under the heel of the tyrants—the devil, sin, and fleshly lusts ; and the companion of the Servant must also become a servant, become subject to the yoke and laws of grace in Jesus Christ, so that by the world-wide development of the kingdom of grace and mercy all men may be brought under its sway. In the fourth gospel there is found a still more glorious manifestation ; it is a universal, unlimited view of this Man as the Eternal Word of God, the Light, and Life of men. These four views of Jesus Christ have been amply sufficient for all men who have studied Him in the order suggested ; in fact, no man has attained by faith to the Spirit of the King of grace ; to the self-sacrificing service of the High Priest ; to the world-wide beneficence and mercy of His kingdom ; or to the Divine Omniscience. There is that within man which rebels against the King, and so the perfect, poor, and humble spirit is not attained ; there are the operations of the lusts and desires which grieve the soul, and these hinder faithful service or self-sacrificing, holy devotion ; there is the rebellious will which desires to rule and not to be under law in the spirit of meekness, and this prevents the dissemination of truth and righteousness ; and the spiritual vision being so miserable, the marvellous Light of God fails to transcribe upon the soul the universal, beneficent, and gracious thoughts of God.

When viewing the Gospels in their contents, in the order of their cycles, then there is revealed the perfection of Jesus Christ in every aspect of the kingdom of grace and mercy. (1) He is Prophet and Law-giver. (2) High Priest, Sacrifice, and Servant. (3) The King in Judah, or the visible order of things. (4) The Teacher in divine wisdom. (5) The Saviour. (6) The Shepherd and Purifier of the redeemed. (7) The Intercessor or Peacemaker. (8) The Burden-Bearer. (9) The Home, Dwelling, or Refuge for the soul. (10) The innocent Lamb. (11) The Sacrifice. (12) The King of the Right Hand of power by the resurrection. The cycles in each of the gospels may be studied in the light of these thoughts, and it will be seen that there is harmony throughout.

It is in this aspect that Jesus Christ is the Fulfilment of the kingdom of God as it is found involved in the children of Jacob ; Reuben as the first-born lost the birthright, and it was bestowed upon Joseph.

But in Christ there are found all the sons of Jacob in their order for the work of redemption ; and it is in Him that the work of mercy is really carried out. (1) He is Simeon, the Hearer, or Prophet, revealing truth to men. (2) Levi, the Priest and Servant, healing and helping the sinful. (3) Judah, the Law-giver and King in the visible order of things. (4) Dan, in whom there is divine wisdom and judgment. (5) Naphtali, the Wrestler and Saviour of men. (6) Gad, the Refiner and Purifier of the soul and the Church by the law and testimony. (7) Asher, the blessed Peacemaker in whom men find ever blessing. (8) Issachar, the Burden-Bearer, who gives rest and peace to the persecuted. (9) Zebulun, the Refuge of the soul. (10) Here the order is changed and the cycles of the passion are brought forward and in this respect the counsel of the Jews may be compared to the Shechemites ; and the Lord Jesus Christ to Dinah, justice. (11) Joseph is the Sacrifice on Golgotha ; by Him there is the birthright and blessing. (12) In Benjamin there is the resurrection power of the Son of the Right Hand.

Viewed from another aspect Jesus Christ is the Son of Abraham by faith, whose high destiny is government ; and with this relation He is brought as a babe into contact with the evil will of Herod, of the seed of Edom, the usurper. Considered as the Servant, He is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour, the Anointed, and God's peaceful Messenger to men. As a Man He is brought into relations with emperors and kings, high priests and great rulers. But as the Word of God, He transcends men's conceptions, and the words Light, Life, and Love are used to express His essential, divine nature.

Further, Jesus Christ may be viewed as fulfilling all history in the kingdom of grace and mercy amongst men. As in Adam, or Seth, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, the prophets, and in Jesus Christ, in His mission as the Peacemaker, the Burden-Bearer, the Refuge from divine justice, the Sacrifice for sin and the Resurrection. In the kingdom in its germ, in Judaism, in Christianity, and in the kingdom of peace that is coming to men, He is the Resurrection Power ; and if these thoughts are placed against the sons of Jacob, then it will be seen that He fills up all history as bearing upon the redemption of mankind.

And again, Jesus Christ is to the soul of man as Prophet to instruct in the will of God by revelation ; Priest and Healer to redeem the soul from sin ; Law-giver and King for His character and conduct ; the divine Teacher of gracious wisdom ; the Saviour of the soul from sinful lusts ; the Shepherd to care for, and Purifier to cleanse, the soul ; the Blessed Word of Life and Fountain of grace ; the Burden-Bearer who carries all cares ; the Refuge of the soul in trouble ; the Condemned as the Substitute, and yet the Holy and Just One in whom the soul is set free ; the Atonement ; and in Him the soul rises to a new life in God.

But surely enough has been written on this point to prove that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has no equal amongst the sons of men ; and that should any man be compared with Him, it is like comparing the sun in the heavens with a planet. There is no comparison in the fundamental principles ; and it is only where men reflect His gracious character, shine by His light, that they are worthy of notice at all.

In Himself, in a unique manner, the kingdom of man, of grace, and of the universe consists and subsists ; in the Gospels men find, when they study them in the right spirit, and in their order, His image ; in the Bible as a whole there is to be found the spiritual development of all that is found in Himself and in the Gospels ; His Spirit animates history for the redemption of man ; and last, but not least, every man who by faith receives the Spirit of Jesus Christ and follows Him, has the witness within himself, by his own personal spiritual experience, that these things are true.

THE SEVENTH CYCLE, OR THE SPIRITUAL KINGDOM IN HUMANITY.

The Flower of humanity was despised and rejected by sinful men ; the Holy, the Beautiful, and the Gracious, poured forth upon the desert the sweetest perfumes of a holy and consecrated life, and an atoning death, and yet men could not see anything beautiful in Him. Why was this ? It was because the prince of the darkness reigned amongst men ; they had become blind in their spiritual vision ; and so only what affected the senses, passions, and desires, as related to time influenced men. The visible Jesus in His bodily form was like other men, apparently a carpenter, and the son of a carpenter, but the Christ, the Seed of God, the Invisible, the Power incarnate in humanity, He lived, offered a sacrifice, died, and rose again from the dead, and men knew nothing of this marvellous work of grace going on in their midst. But God knew that this was the great work of grace, the consummation of all that had gone before ; and at last the marvellous manifestation of the Spirit of God incarnate in humanity became a possible thing. From Adam to the life and death of Jesus Christ, sin, death, law, visible forms, held men in their grasp, and there was no means of escape ; from the moment of the resurrection, Christ had risen above visible forms, He was no longer subject to law, and as for sin and death, they had become His slaves, bound to the glorious chariot of the resurrection ; and having spoiled these principalities and powers, in triumph He has openly showed forth His victory. The spiritual Seed has been incarnate in humanity, and from that time through the Head it has been going forth conquering and to conquer.

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

I. How shall men conceive of this spiritual manifestation of the kingdom of God ? They know that it is in Jesus Christ, but the method of its laws, or operations, is a mystery. Men follow slowly in the footsteps of the Master ; and the past with the forms of Judaism blinds the spiritual vision. But through grace, by faith, in patient obedience, by steadfastness in prayer and communion with God the darkness begins to be dispelled, the power of visible things loses its force, and at last men are prepared by God for that inward baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is compared to fire, as a purifying power. The Spirit of Christ has found an avenue into humanity, there is the descending Power from heaven to lift men up as if into heaven, so that heaven being within the soul there might be spiritual communion with God in His holy temple of the living soul, and in His Church. This is

the new wine of God's kingdom of grace which makes the soul joyful and glad ; it is the manifold spiritual diversity of operations for a world-wide humanity instead of the small school of Judaism. This is the true restoration of the kingdom ; and the Christ, the Lord of David, sits in the heavenly places, and Jesus of Nazareth is become the Jehovah and Messiah. Pentecost has given unto men corn as well as wine, for all who partake of this Bread have entered the state of rest, and the Manna of the wilderness life is at an end.

II. In the gift of the Holy Spirit all other gifts are included, but they are not all manifested at the same time. The descending fire sets the altar and the sacrifice on fire, and then faith, grace, healing, joy, praise, and glory to God, ascend from earth to heaven. There is light as well as fire, and it reveals the sinful actions of men "in denying the Holy and Righteous One," and in putting to death the Prince of life. Such thoughts must have either of two effects : they prick the soul, so that repentance follows, or there is the rejection of the truth, and persecution. This is the great test for men, not only in Jerusalem, but in Christendom, that Jesus Christ died and rose again ; that His Name is the Power of God to move the paralysed wills of men ; and that only in Him can men find salvation. The facts cannot be questioned ; this is history ; and though men oppose the truth it must prosper and bring blessing to men.

III. The flush of victory brings many zealous followers to the side of Christ, but there are also found those who are animated by the spirit of envy and self-seeking ; they have a desire to serve the Lord, but covetousness and greed, or Mammon, rules in the soul. To pretend to consecration to the Holy Spirit when the devil of self reigns in the soul is a grievous sin ; it is offering false fire unto God, and the punishment is death. It is the meek spirit that God loves ; and by it great signs are performed before men. The kingdom of God prosperous means the downfall of error and unrighteousness, therefore those who follow the Lord of mercy are persecuted. There is the struggle of good and evil for the supremacy, and each power works according to its own laws or principles ; but so long as wicked men are guided by experience they are prevented from carrying their evil wishes to their ultimate issue—death to those who oppose them.

IV. A spiritual Church will care for the sick and the poor as well as minister to men in truth and righteousness ; deacons require to be wise men, full of God's Spirit, so that they may be enabled by His grace to do His will in this sphere of labour. Stephen is the leading spirit in the fellowship of the deacons ; and it is seen that upon Him God's Spirit of wisdom is bestowed abundantly so that he might reason with men about the great truths of God's Word. His wisdom and fervour as a prophet and teacher raised up many enemies, so that he was persecuted as a heretic. His review of the history of Israel reveals his spiritual insight into the purpose of God's grace in history ; and as Moses, the prophets, and Jesus Christ, had been rejected so Stephen was rejected by men, and put to death by men who acted as if they had lost all control over their baser natures. They manifested the devilish spirit ; he was transfigured and was with Christ.

V. The wolf gets into the fold and scatters the sheep ; but shedding of blood becomes the means of sending forth the evangel of glad tidings to others. Evangelists moved by the spirit of mercy follow their Master, and there is awaking and seeking for salvation. But evangelists must come in contact with unclean spirits, the palsied, the lame, and self-glorifying men, and when they are guided by God and animated by the Holy Spirit, they will be blessed in their labours. God gives and withholds His gifts as it pleases Him ; to the evangelist He gives the power to overthrow the powers of evil, to cast down what is in opposition to the will of God ; but to others, pastors and teachers, He grants that they shall give to men the Holy Spirit, as by instruction in truth and righteousness, so that the desecrated temple may be sanctified and rebuilt for the glorious service of God. This gift is apostolic ; in other words, only those who have spiritually realised the living Christ in their own souls can do this work ; others who attempt to lay on spiritual hands without a spiritual life are guilty of Simony ; they are "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." The pastors who labour, testify, teach, and preach do not seem to be doing any mighty work ; but they are doing a great work, for are they not building up the kingdom of heaven in souls under their care ? The spirit of the evangelist is directed by God's angel, he goes where and when he is called ; in the city and the desert there are souls seeking Christ, and they are made His instruments for extending His kingdom in the earth. But when God has a great work to do, as for example to enter the citadel of the enemy, and there to put down, bind, and cast out the devil, then he strikes with His Own Right Hand, and the power that leads men to death is compelled to follow His glorious chariot of grace, "a chosen vessel of mercy" to manifest amongst men the matchless grace of God. To turn a Saul into a Paul is the marvellous miracle of redeeming grace, and it is a sign for all men in all ages unto whom it is made known.

VI. The man who persecuted Jesus in His members proclaims that Christ is the Son of God, and he who made havoc in the Church receives so much divine grace and strength that he confounds all his opponents in proving that Jesus is the Christ. The persecutor becomes the persecuted, and the wolf is changed into a lamb ready for sacrifice. Men may suspect the actions of such men, but in due time they are recognised as the chosen servants of Christ. These manifestations touch the spirits of men, causing the change in the soul equal to a new life, a resurrection from the dead ; by these things the Church is edified, paralysed members receive new power, and those who are dead are raised up to a spiritual life, in which they glorify God by their good works.

VII. But resurrection to life has its meaning in the nature of things, and it is that the new life given shall be set in operation for the manifestation of God's kingdom of mercy. Saul is changed in spirit, Eneas is renewed in will, and Tabitha is raised from the dead for a purpose in the economy of grace ; these are the signs of the travail-pangs of a new birth, and Judaism is about to bestow upon the Gentiles the gift of eternal life in Christ. Peter and Cornelius are signs ; in the former

Judaism vanishes from view by the vision of the clean and unclean being equally accepted and cleansed by God, and the latter makes known to men that faith and obedience to known duties are of greater importance in God's sight than rites and ceremonies. God's mercy is unto and upon all gracious souls in all nations, without any respect of persons, though for a time it seemed that the Jew was more highly favoured than Gentile, or Christian than heathen, but these are visible conditions only, for all men are under grace, and if gracious, faithful, and obedient, they are His in Jesus Christ. The door is thrown open to the Gentiles at Casarea, but at Antioch the chariot of the gospel went forth conquering the souls of men, and by the gospel Jew and Gentile became one in Jesus Christ.

VIII. The evangel had found a home in a new sphere, therefore the persecuting Jew and the proud son of Edom were permitted to bring about the separation of Judaism and Christianity. The proud rulers amongst men thought that they had won a victory; but to the Jewish church it became the means of cutting off the stream from the fountain of spiritual life, and to the state it was the sign of a disease so terrible that it ended in total corruption and an agonising death. These pass away, but the Word of God lives; He breathes upon His enemies, and they wither like the mown grass in the fierce sunshine; Jerusalem and its temple are no longer the place of worship for men, but Christianity is the temple of God and Christ the Object of worship. The mother dies, and Rachel cries in her expiring agony "Ben-oni;" but the Father lives and His word is "Benjamin." By a son of Benjamin the great work of mercy is carried forward, and Cyprus, Sergius Paulus, Bar-Jesus, and Paul are the signs in the kingdom of heaven. The Gentiles have received the Light of the world, and the Jews are left in the darkness groping their way, seeking light and guidance, but as yet they have not found the hand that will lead them back to God, and to peace in believing.

Why was the Flower of humanity crushed before the power of darkness, overwhelmed in the tempest of the surging passions of men? It was that through His death there might be manifested the strange spiritual development of the Christ-Spirit in humanity. In Jesus the Christ existed in the germ, a Seed standing alone; but by this incarnation into humanity in the germ, by union with it in all its subject-forms to sin and law, even unto death in the body, the spiritual power of grace being living, victorious, and regnant, it followed in the order of nature that this higher governing power should be transmitted into humanity. Avoiding all expressions which mystify men, the plain facts are these: God's gracious Holy Spirit, as found in Jesus Christ, is transmuted into men, and by this spiritual manifestation God's gracious Spirit, the regnant Power in the universe, is incarnate in humanity. This is a marvellous conception, but it is in perfect harmony with all that men can know of the other kingdoms of God that exist in the universe. When men know that the essences of matter, life, spirit, being, are all incomprehensible, then they do not stumble at the words of God by the apostle Paul, "in Him we live, and move, and have our being;" but they believe the revelation, receive the facts, and inquire

into the manifestations. The facts are these: God's gracious Holy Spirit descended upon mankind, encircling humanity as by a baptism of fire, and wherever this power of God could find a poor, empty spirit, a soul thrown open heavenward, the Holy Spirit took possession of that soul. This permeation of humanity with the Holy Spirit of grace, linked men with the Fountain of all grace; and by this new power in a soul, in a nation, or in the world, there was a removal of that paralysis which had hindered spiritual worship; the sacred fire being possessed, it finds a suitable avenue for manifestation in the meek and gentle spirit; and through this power the proud, covetous spirit, with its false fire and idolatrous worship, is cast down. An empty temple requires replenishing, and this is done by wisdom, truth, and righteousness. But even as the divine Wisdom was put to death by men, so the Spirit in men will be persecuted, stoned to death, by men inflamed with fierce passions; the body dies, but the Spirit lives, and thus the cry of the soul in which the Holy Spirit of Christ lives is not for vengeance, but mercy, and the manifestation of the Evangel amongst men. Men destroy the cisterns in which the stream of mercy flows; God's revenge is to strike down the leader in the rebel camp, and by His Holy Spirit to lead him to become the successor of the martyr. Proud men are found rejecting the Light from heaven, the sacred fire permeating the redeemed; and God turns the channel of His grace amongst the outcasts who are longing to receive the light of truth. This Son of God in humanity, making every man a son of God who acts in Christ's Spirit, goes forth into a world that is perishing; whilst Judaism, formalism, the outward, bodily forms of things, lose their power and glory, and they are used, if at all, only as tools for the extension of God's great work. The parable is a very comprehensive one, whether it is applied to a soul, a nation, or the whole world; it fits each and all in their order; and the great facts which lie at the root of the whole matter may be summed up in these thoughts, that the temple of God was desecrated; the means of consecration is God's Holy Spirit; with the consecration by the indwelling Holy Spirit there is the new power of volition Godward: worship, knowledge of truth, and righteousness in grace; the spirit of mercy toward others; the fight against all that is evil with the sword of the Spirit, God's Word; the spirit of the peaceful Son of God; the extension of God's kingdom of grace, from the soul or temple outward; and the downfall of the powers of evil, the kingdom of darkness. Do men require signs, wonders, miracles, before they will believe in this spiritual incarnation in humanity? Then let it be known that each gracious gift from God as seen operating in a Christian is a spiritual sign or miracle, manifestations in humanity which cannot possibly harmonise with the degenerate, perverted seed of the first Adam. What is a poor spirit, gracious, uttering the thoughts of God, but a great sign to men; or a will set free from the thralldom of sin praising God; or a meek suppliant at the throne of grace; or a soul thirsting after truth and righteousness; or a merciful spirit; or a purified soul; or a peace-making son of God; or a persecuted child of God, patient, uncomplaining, nay, even rejoicing in tribulation? These are all spiritual miracles so wonderful that men are unable to understand or appreciate their

value. But some may be inclined to say, Is this what is meant by the gift of the Holy Ghost, and is there not something marvellous and inconceivable about the whole question? There is the inconceivable, as already referred to, in the essence, but so far as the manifestations are concerned there does not seem to be any mystery. Is it not the very truth of God that if a man is poor in spirit, clothed with humility, unto such an one God gives His Holy Spirit as a new power in the soul for its regeneration and restoration to spiritual communion with God? That those who possess faith receive forgiveness of sin and are comforted? That the meek in soul who obey God's laws are quick to discern the spirits of men? That those who seek wisdom receive the knowledge of truth and righteousness? That the merciful find mercy in Christ? That the purified souls have a glorious hope through the revealed vision of God? That the peacemakers are gentle and patient? And that the persecuted are filled with the divine charity, or that love which forgives even the murderer? These, it may be said, are the graces of Christian character; but does it not follow in the nature of things, that according to the graces in the soul so ought the gifts to be? The humble souls are fit to be apostles of Christ because they are filled with His Holy Spirit; those who have faith do mighty works in destroying the works of the devil in the soul or in nations; those who are meek condemn the proud and lofty, and bring them down to the dust; the wise are teachers; the merciful are evangelists; the pure of soul can govern, heal, and help in the Church; the peacemakers can heal the wounds of humanity; and the patient can endure the contradictions of sinners even unto death, and thus become the means for reviving the Church of Christ. These are spiritual graces and gifts; but to see tongues of fire, to heal a paralysed man, to detect and punish a liar, to see heaven open, to see a man struck blind with light, to receive visions or dreams, to see a man dying with his body corrupt, or to see a deceitful man struck with blindness for a season, these are physical signs which harmonise with spiritual realities, such as will minister unto children for their edification, but they are not in reality spiritual gifts, as limited by the kingdom of God's grace and mercy. It is quite true that the kingdom of grace and mercy has for its purposes the overthrow of evil, as by Moses, and the setting up of the kingdom and temple of God upon the earth, as in Christ; but the order of the spiritual for the latter purpose is summed up in the Beatitudes uttered by Jesus Christ, and by these laws the spiritual are required to live, move, and have their being, so that the great work of restoration to the Christ-like spirit may be attained.

THE FIRST CYCLE IN GOD'S SPIRITUAL KINGDOM.

I. The spiritual kingdom of grace being come into humanity, there was the manifestation of the power of faith at Lystra upon the impotent man; and by this work as a sign, the gods of the Roman Empire were brought into subjection, Jupiter and Mercury were dethroned, and their priests would have done sacrifice to the prophets and priests of God. Through tribulation the meek souls must enter the kingdom of God and live in it; but they are blessed in their work, and the gospel

has its victories of peace far more wonderful than anything that has been written of the kingdom set up by men. The kingdom of grace in its visible manifestations has not been gracious or Christ-like in its spirit ; but it became leavened with Judaism, and through conference there was a falling back upon the world-wide principles that are found in the institutes of Noah. The spiritual platform of Christ is lowered, expediency, not principle, rules the elders ; they have become subjects to law, not sons of God, and so the glory of the Christian kingdom of free grace was lost.

II. There followed, as the natural consequence of the new position, the spirit of strife ; a disruption and separation, and fleshly circumcision were resorted to as a means for service and for honouring God, instead of faith and love. Although men departed in spirit from God, yet the Holy Spirit did not leave the Church, but directed its course. Men became proud of their great assemblies ; but the Holy Spirit took pleasure in the humble meeting-place at Philippi, and the gracious saints who joined together in prayer in that place. The evil spirit would thwart the work of the gospel, but it is cast out ; and because through this change ungodly men lost their profits, they persecuted the servant of God. But God reigns in man and amongst the nations, so in due time the earthquake brings trouble and fear, the conversion of the ungodly, and restitution for the evils that have been done.

III. Jesus is the Christ, the Hope of Israel ; but the Jews are seen rejecting their King, and paying homage to Cesar. The redeemed make the Bible their study, and by the Word of God there is light and life. The world of Christendom may be compared, in its spirit and worship to Athens, a place full of idols, philosophers, and babblers ; unto them there has been revealed Jesus Christ and His resurrection, but the gospel has been a theme for derision by men who are full of knowledge, and do not seek after righteousness in the fear of God. Resurrection to such men seems a craze, because they are self-sufficient. If the wise Athenians reject and despise the Word, there are those whom God has chosen, who receive it with gladness, and whilst they are busy making tents for men, they are at the same being prepared and preparing others for the eternal home. Through blasphemy the kingdom of grace is eventually taken away from the Jews and given unto the Gentiles, who are tolerated in their religion by the ruling powers.

IV. The spirit of Paul is that of restless work, and this is also the great feature of the Christian era. But there have been many learned men, eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures, who have not got beyond the spirit of John the Baptist ; they required spiritual teaching in the school of Christ, that they might be able to teach others the gracious way of life. The baptism into the visible things of Moses, as found in Judaism, in the Papacy, and elsewhere, prevents the manifestation of the Spirit of Christ ; and it may fairly be said that almost the whole of the Christian era requires to be baptized anew, seeing that it has been living in no higher order than that of John the Baptist. Indeed, the Church has been a place where great varieties of spiritual manifestations have been seen ; a place for persuasion, discussion,

miracle working, exorcism, and even magic and curious arts, have found their way into the temple of God. Even idolatry of visible images has not been unknown, and strange though it may seem, a woman has been made the chief goddess in a part of the Christian Church. There is a resurrection required from all such perversion, so that men may live unto God in the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

V. What has been the prominent aspiration in the Christian Church as a visible body but to go up to Jerusalem, or back to the spirit of Judaism? It is true this is a mysterious emotion in merciful souls, as well as by those who, by their traditions, link themselves with Jerusalem, and yet kill the servants of Christ. It is in and around Jerusalem that the battle rages, and friend and foe of Jesus Christ think that they are called to mix in the strife of tongues that has been waging. But Jerusalem, that is, the visible Christian religion, has not represented the Spirit of Christ, but rather Judaism, and a false spirit of expediency, which has been almost antichrist in its spirit, and the issue has been, as history can prove, the surrender of the Church to the civil power, dissensions, and confusion.

VI. This is a strange experience for a body in which the Holy Spirit lives. But all this is nothing new or unforeseen; it is the necessary outcome, not of the gospel, but of the evil that is in the world, the flesh, and the devil, because these have in their turn to work out their own vile ends before the gospel can be understood by men. God has not given up His Church, but during the dark ages in a corrupt church, in the Reformation under crafty and cruel kings, and in these later days of infidelity, His Word has been giving good cheer to men.

VII. Many charges have been brought against the Word of God, and the followers of Jesus Christ; but under all circumstances they have maintained that they follow the Way of God's mercy and peace, they follow in and make known to men the Resurrection from the dead with all that this implies, and they have one Hope, the coming of Jesus Christ, in whom all the promises of God are fulfilled.

VIII. What is the history of the Church of Christ? It is like a voyage on the stormy sea in winter; a great and prolonged storm; a shipwreck; safety, a great conflagration, and the viper of infidelity; gentle and loving works of mercy; Rome; an appeal to Jews about their Messiah; and the Church of Christ in bonds enjoying much freedom and waiting for the great trial.

THE SECOND CYCLE.—THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

I. In the first cycle the kingdom of Christ is expressed by history in the Acts, which in a marvellous manner seem to prophesy the condition of Christendom during the past nineteen centuries. In the second cycle the method is completely changed, and there is given a representation of the truths of the Gospel in a letter which has no equal as a means of expounding experimentally the way of salvation. The object of the Gospel and this Epistle is to make known the Son of God, raised from the dead by the power of God, so that men may be raised out of their dead condition through His gracious power. Faith in the gracious soul is the great necessity for man, so that there may be a revelation

of righteousness to the soul, because life can only be sustained by means of faith. Sin reigns triumphant in man; and yet men are without excuse before God, because they have sinned against God's moral law and gracious love; the Word of God, the visible creation, and the soul are all witnesses against men, and the experience of men is world-wide that salvation by personal conformity to law is impossible. Therefore all men are sinners, and only by grace through the mercy of God can they be forgiven, reconciled, and restored to His favour. Jew, Christian, and heathen all stand upon the same platform; they are unrighteous; those who have had greater privileges have greater responsibilities; but since all are guilty and all need to be saved, they must acknowledge their unrighteousness, else for them there is no salvation.

II. When the law of God speaks to man in any form, it speaks to a creature under law, whose duty or privilege it is to obey law. The moral law cannot bring salvation; it simply reveals sin, or want of conformity to law, and a complete unfitness to obey law in a perfect manner; therefore the sinner knows his guilt through a bitter experience; the eyes are cast down so that the spirit cannot look upon God, and the only sound reverberating through the soul is that of the confession of guilt before Him. Law cannot save a man; it convicts of sin, and would close the door of heaven against the soul; but through grace, by faith in the new way of righteousness, man can find salvation, because through this means God's heart of love is revealed to the helpless soul; and when God says that He is willing to forgive sin to all who come through Jesus Christ—that is, through grace by faith—it is a glorious hope for a straggling, despairing soul to lay hold upon God's promise, even as a drowning man would clutch that which is within his reach. Impossibilities count for nothing to the soul that has faith in God; it clings to Him, trusts His promise, and since He is the Promiser, it is for Him, not for the struggling soul, to fulfil His promise in any way that He pleases. Is it knowledge that saves? No; for if the soul of the sinner knows only this one thought that God is gracious and merciful, and trusts this word of God with sincerity, there is salvation through grace, by faith; but though a man should be familiar with all the doctrines in the Bible, and be without grace and faith, his knowledge is vain, and this cannot save. A man is made just by faith, and he receives peace with God; in reality, he is dead to sin; he is set free from the law, and he lives not in self, but in Christ—by the Holy Spirit, who is his life in the kingdom of grace. The position is a transmutation, a transformation, and a transfiguration, because where sin reigned unto death, there grace reigns through faith, and the free gift of eternal life is in the soul. Marvellous change this, and yet short of this point salvation is imperfect; the dominion of sin and the restraint of law make men slaves and servants, and it is only when grace—the Holy Spirit—reigns in the soul that there is the spirit of a son of God.

III. These are the facts of experience in the soul; but what can men say about the method or order of this strange transformation? The human analogy of marriage makes known this fact, that death

cancels the law which binds a man and his wife together ; and men may reason thus : if sin or the law are lords over the soul, and the man is living unto either of them, then they have dominion ; but if the soul chooses—as by God's grace it has a right to do—to reject such alliances, and to be considered, in Christ, as dead to them, and alive to God in Him, then they are dead to sin and law, and they have no authority over and no claim upon the soul. Christ, the new Lord, gives a complete discharge against all claims, and so there is the new life in conformity with His Holy Will and in His Spirit. Sin can have no claim, it is a slave chained to Christ's chariot of the resurrection, and the law has no claim, because Christ, the Head, has fulfilled the law, and therefore it is His servant. The Holy Spirit reigns in the soul supremely, the spirit of man is brought into harmony with the will of God, and there is adoption into the divine family. Being set free from sin and law, how shall Christ's man live? Not in sin or in subjection to law, but as a gracious and merciful son of God, willingly enduring, suffering, and working in hope for the complete redemption of the body of Christ. The gracious soul is guided by faith, animated by love, saved by hope, and patiently waits for the working out of God's great purpose of grace. Not that the spirit of man does all this ; but the Holy Spirit in the soul works for this end, all things being fore-known by God, though not known by the human soul. Indeed, if the spirit of man was the judge in this matter, it would make a shipwreck of faith, love would be quenched in the soul, hope would die, and man could not wait patiently for redemption. It is the Holy Spirit of all grace that helps the saint in all things according to the will of God ; and to the Holy Spirit of Christ must be given all the glory and praise for the great work of redemption within the souls of men and in the world. "What, then, shall we say to these things?" Simply that the God of all grace is for us, that His dearly beloved Son died for us, so that sin and law might lose their power, and that His Holy Spirit is working in us. These being the naked facts, the redeemed may well ask the question, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Why, since all creation is in subjection to God through Christ, sin and law included, the victory is seen to be complete, and it is only a question of working out in history what has already been accomplished in Jesus Christ.

IV. What is the mystery of the wisdom of the great purpose of grace? The human analogy is seen in the apostle Paul, who with great sorrow and unceasing pain in his heart desired the salvation of his brethren ; the great reality being the great sorrow and pain endured by God, in Christ, for the redemption of His brethren. It is in this mystery of the wisdom of God that the allegory of the kingdom of God in Abraham, Isaac, Esau, and Jacob is found ; the Seed is in the gracious One, the Son of faith, and the kingdom or birthright being despised by Esau, or Adam, it is bestowed upon Jacob and his family, that is, upon Jesus Christ. Is there then any unrighteousness in God because He passed by Adam, who sinned, and bestowed mercy upon men in Jesus Christ? Certainly not : the race of Adam had forfeited all favour, and so it was a question not of justice, but of the Sovereignty

of God's grace and mercy, whether He would be gracious or not. Adam and his seed were helpless to will, or to run, in God's ways, and the mercy that removes the paralysis of sin and gives strength for obedience is from God. Even the kingdom of man, Edom, Egypt, Rome, are all permitted to be manifested, so that the marvellous power of God's grace might be published in the earth. His mercy is free to all; and yet men may sin and become hardened against the love and grace of God; these thoughts are not contradictory, but rather complementary, and they are facts well known in the experience of men and in the history of the world. It has always been the miserable and contemptible method with proud, conceited men to find fault with God's method of administration in His kingdom of mercy. He has borne their criticisms, endured with patience their foolish contradictions, but still working around and beyond them, making these very fault-finders His footstool by which He extends His kingdom of mercy to the whole world. The conception here is regal with grace; the thought being that sin was never lord over God, but all along the line of history it has been made the unconscious means, the tool of God, for His great work of grace. If there is any point in the administration of the kingdom of grace that must be galling to proud, contentious, conceited men, who have thought so much of themselves, and who have in their folly exalted humanity and despised God, it must be this that they are treated by Him as mere unconscious accessories in His great work, not even consulted in what they shall do, but allowed to go on in the way ordained by Him, and though rebels, yet a means in working out His glory in the kingdom of grace. There is great glory to God in this; it is seen to be the dire necessity of the position; and yet God has done righteously, whilst the miserable creatures who have attempted to find fault with Him deserve the punishment that has fallen upon them, because of their own wilful, sinful ways. But whilst the redeemed acquiesce in this judgment as righteous, and marvel at the wisdom of God, there must be at the same time a trembling within their souls; because the difference betwixt the ungodly and the saved is not in themselves, but in the grace and mercy of God, in Jesus Christ, and in His Holy Spirit in them. It is His purpose of grace and mercy that reigns in the highest heavens, and shall be successful in this earth. But if there is a mystery in the relations of God in His kingdom of mercy toward sin (Adam or Pharaoh), there is also a strange manifestation in His dealings with Israel and the law of righteousness as given by Moses; for the means of grace given unto the Jews landed them in the greatest perversions of truth and righteousness, because what God graciously gave them as a help to faith was made by them their sole support, their salvation, and so Mosaism has become a great stumbling-block to all those who seek salvation by law. Law cannot save; it is not an end in itself; but faith can save the soul, because it transcends means and lays hold upon the grace of God. The law should lead to Jesus Christ; failing this end, which is the real object of Mosaism, it has failed as the servant in the house of God, and it is not merely useless but a stumbling-block to cause a fall into sin. Sin and law do not serve the same

purposes in the economy of grace; the former is the wilful rebel, but also the unconscious footstool used by God to advance His glory in the universe; the latter is the servant in the house of God's mercy used as a means of training the children; but if the blind servant mistake his position, then he will stumble upon the footstool of God, and sin and law are both made the means for advancing the kingdom of grace in the world. The kingdom, from the beginning, is one of grace and mercy; it is by faith or trust in the promises of God; and it is not for the creature to reason about impossibilities or contradictions in God's Word. The duties are plain if the knowledge is not perfect; they are: believe the Word, confess the salvation, obey the Saviour, be guided by the Holy Spirit of truth in the way of truth and righteousness, and salvation is certain and sure.

V. The glory of God in His kingdom of grace is not limited by Jew or Gentile, Christian or heathen, but it is in the Olive Tree of the gospel, which is for all men who are gracious and faithful. It is necessary for all branches to remember that they do not support the Root and give life; but that they are united with the Root and live by it. Because the Jews, in their foolish conceits, thought that the kingdom in its gracious life was dependent upon them they were cut off, but this fall from grace and trust in visible things was made the means of salvation to the Gentiles; and it may fairly be said that Christians have made the same mistake, but their fall will prove to be through their disobedience the means of the extension of the kingdom to all men. Man cannot understand the depths of the wisdom of God in His kingdom of grace; and as for giving Him counsel in its administration, men are altogether unfit. Grace and mercy are "of Him and through Him, and unto Him are all things;" and unto Him alone can praise and glory be given. The redeemed can bring glory to His Name by becoming Christ-like and by being guided by the Holy Spirit in the self-sacrificing work of mercy, so that whilst the work of mercy is being carried on in the world, there may also be at the same time the transforming change carried on in the soul. The family of God is one in Christ, and as they are gifted so ought they to labour; they are organs in the body of Christ, animated by the Holy Spirit, therefore let them live in harmony with law, or the gracious will of God in subjection to the Head and the powers ordained by Him for government.

VI. Live in love. Realise the dangerous position of the soul and of the world, for it is still night, although the day of salvation is nigh. Be gracious, compassionate, thoughtful, charitable, Christ-like. Do not judge the brethren in what is clean or unclean, or measure them by imperfect standards, for God's kingdom of grace is not meat and drink, but righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Spirit. Do not please self, but help the weak, and then this will show that Christ is by His Spirit guiding the soul. Glory only in Jesus Christ, and follow Him in all things.

VII. Let the sons of God give freely for the service of God's work of mercy, so that there may be reconciliation and peace amongst men. Pray that His kingdom may come, and that evil may be cast down. Receive and assist the gracious workers in the vineyard. Cherish the

spirit of brotherly love amongst the saints of God. Abstain from strifes and divisions; love peace, and seek the good of Zion, and in due time the God of peace will bruise the enemy's head beneath the feet of His people. Let there be free and full salutations and friendship amongst the brethren; and then the Church will give all glory, praise, and dominion "to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ." Amen.

THE THIRD CYCLE, AS FOUND IN I. CORINTHIANS.

I. The first great cycle expresses the spirit that has been manifested in Christianity as it is found in history; the second great cycle enunciates the great principles upon which the kingdom of grace and mercy is built up in a soul and amongst men, and this cycle makes known, it may be presumed, the order of the kingdom. The letter is sent to Corinth to those who are called to be saints, the meek in spirit who call upon the Name of Jesus Christ. They were in the possession of rich and gracious gifts, and these ought to have been the means of their edification and growth in grace. But they were not perfect, for divisions existed in the visible body, and they had forgotten that the unity of the spirit is in Christ, whilst through giving men pre-eminence there was contention and strife. There is one standard set up amongst men, and it is the cross of Jesus Christ, and by this sign, which means shame, sin, weakness, and death, God is pleased to save men, seeing it is His mightiest power in the direction of self-sacrifice. The order of salvation by grace, through self-sacrifice, is a revelation thoroughly opposed to the conceptions of Jew and Gentile; it is the Jesus Christ idea involved into humanity, and to the proud and conceited amongst men this conception is folly. Because such men reject God's conception they are rejected, and God is pleased in His grace to choose weak, base, despised instruments, who know they are nothing, so that the glory might be given to the God of grace. The servant of Jesus Christ is weak in self, the cross is kept before his eyes, it is by faith he stands, and through the grace of God he is made strong. This salvation is not a foolish thing, it is perfect wisdom involved in a mystery; so that sinful men by faith might find God and grace, whilst wilful rebels would find themselves baffled in every attempt to get initiated into the mysteries of redemption.

II. The initiated into the mystery of God—that is, His perfect wisdom—are those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells; but the illumination is spiritual in its kind; there is no attempt made to teach the Lord but there is humble waiting for instruction in the meek spirit of Christ. With the Church it has not been so, but Paul, Apollos, and other great names have been held up before men, and the great Worker, the Holy Spirit, has been almost forgotten. The Foundation is Jesus Christ, and whatever work any man may do in the building up of God's temple, it shall be tried by the Holy Spirit of truth and righteousness. The standard is Jesus Christ and His Cross; this is the pattern of the temple, and every man is called to build himself up a temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells. Glorifying in man is vain and foolish; it is to make man an idol, a god, and to fall down before him; when, as a son of God and an heir of all things, he is the

lord over life and death, past, present, and future, and is one with Christ. Standing upon this platform, Christ alone is Lord; and it is for the saints to be faithful unto Him, not judging or condemning until the day of revelation at the coming of the Lord. The saints of God may be examples for men, but let men see that the examples they choose follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and in the light of the Cross. The time for reigning in grace and mercy is now; the time to reign in glory will come in due time; but this has been the great error in the Christian era, that men have desired to forget the Cross and the example of Jesus Christ, and they have become, as they thought, rich in grace and filled with wisdom. This is a grievous mistake, and the spirit is not in harmony with the kingdom of grace and mercy.

III. Pride and self-will must bring about spiritual separation from God, and fornication with what is contrary to the will of God; the leaven of malice and covetousness would soon destroy the whole body. The meek and lowly, in whom the Holy Spirit lives, must loathe this unholy spirit; and instead of such leaven, there must be holiness and loyalty unto God, truth, and righteousness in the spirit of self-sacrifice. Every action in the life in a wicked world is to be in the spirit of grace and mercy, so that there may be sanctification and growth in grace. The Christian enjoys the fullest freedom as a son of God, but this freedom should never be used in a manner that is contrary to the Holy Spirit's teaching, else the temple would be desecrated and the sonship would be lost. It would be well if the consecrated could always live in this spirit of perfect freedom in Christ; but the idolatries and adulteries that exist in such a world prevent such a state being attained and maintained; therefore the gracious laws of mercy in Jesus Christ are helpful and permissible to those who are weak in faith, in working, or in suffering. It is good not to be subject to law, but to live in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, as a son of God, holy and undefiled; this is the heavenly state—perfection; but where, in this world, are the virgins of God holy and without blemish?

IV. The greatest idol ever set up in this world has been knowledge; unto this god men have sought from Eden until now, and its votaries have found out at last that in itself it is as nothing. To be wise as gods has been man's great ambition, and when the god is analysed it is nothing, mere relations, manifestations, changes, but no essence or entity; in fact, no god. This is man's vaunted wisdom; a god without a being, a mere shadow, a ghost of a god without any inherent power. What a magnificent, tremendous delusion has inspired men. Was there ever such a mirage for thirsting souls? Surely when they find out their folly, they will be most miserable. Men have called their vain conceits gods, but there is only "one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through Him;" and if men honour any other gods they do that which is wrong, and what may be the means of evil to others. The man who knows that there is one God by truth and righteousness is free to count such nonentities as of no account, but his freedom is limited by the spirit of grace and mercy in Jesus Christ. Every Christian ought to

rejoice in the knowledge of his freedom in Christ, but to use that freedom as self might suggest is contrary to the spirit of grace. It is not self, but Christ and His kingdom that must be kept in sight, and the soul must keep the goal and the crown that is incorruptible in view. Because the Israelites in the desert did not do this they perished ; therefore faith in God, meekness, and obedience to His will are of chief importance. How ought the Christian to act toward the idolatrous spirit that seeks wisdom, knowledge, power, and glory from any source except God? Flee from it ; it is a deadly serpent, which if taken into the bosom must work for sin and death. This is the cup of devils, not the cup of blessing ; therefore let Christians eat the broken bread of a poor, repentant, meek spirit, and drink the cup of self-sacrifice in the Name and in the footsteps of their Master. But above this conception of knowledge as an idol, a spirit to be detested, there arises a spirit that is Lord over the serpent, and it is that of liberty and lawfulness in the spirit of mercy and of self-sacrifice. Within this kingdom all things are lawful, though they may not be for edification ; in other words, the earth is the Lord's, and all its fulness, and to the Christian animated by the spirit of mercy he may eat that which has been in the shambles, or given to idols by those who worship the idol of knowledge ; he may take hold of the old serpent, the devil, and walk in the fire of infidelity ; but let such freedom be used in the Master's service only, for His glory and for the good of His creatures, else the venom will become poison in the soul, and the unholy fire will burn the spirit. In all things there must be subjection to the Head in meekness ; contention and strife in a soul, or in a church, is a mark of infidelity and carnality, and it grieves the Holy Spirit of God. The object of a Christian's life and death, even as of the Lord's life and death, should be to act like a son of God, as a peacemaker, and to be a communicant of the Spirit in Jesus Christ, as symbolised in the Lord's Supper. It is because Christians do not discern the Spirit in Christ that they are spiritually sick, and unfit for service, or disobedient and require chastisement, but at His coming in peace these things will be set in order, and better understood by His followers.

V. By what means can spiritual gifts or power come into humanity? Only through Jesus, that is to say, through Christ incarnate in man or the Spirit of God animating the body of humanity. It is because Jesus Christ died and rose again from the dead and ascended into glory, leading the powers which had held men captive as captives bound to His chariot, that He received gifts for men, and is able to bestow them upon His body the Church. These gifts are diverse in their methods of manifestation ; but as it is in every other kingdom in nature they issue from the Fountain of grace and mercy, and they have their order for the edification and well-being of His body. The body is not one organ, or governed by one law, or limited to one function ; but each organ, gift, power, law, has its own place in this kingdom, and all should work for the common weal. It is foolish, nay, wicked and sinful, for any member of Christ's body to complain or be dissatisfied, because this is to cause schism, and such spiritual pain that every member in the body suffers through the pride or haughtiness of the

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If men are as beasts, where would be the profit to humanity of self-sacrifice in the Spirit of Jesus Christ? But only men sunk in sin and shame, having no true knowledge of God, can conceive such thoughts. Admitting, for the sake of argument, the possibility of resurrection, the rational question is, "How are the dead raised?" Foolish one, wouldst thou like to see a corrupt body rising out of the grave and becoming alive as it had formerly been? and would this be a complete answer to thee? Then, know that it falls by several realms short of the glorious conception of God. Resurrection in plants and in the flesh are figures; but away, far beyond these there exist the moral facts of sin and death in Adam, and of the life-giving Spirit in Jesus Christ. There is an earthly conception and a heavenly reality; as men have borne the moral image of Adam, so the redeemed will awake, live, to find that they bear the image of God in Christ. But this takes men back to the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ; of His victory over death, sin, and law; and if the saints cannot comprehend this mystery, by faith they can say, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

VII. What follows the revelation of such mysteries? Simply this: be steadfast, abounding in God's work, and liberal in giving for His cause. Take an interest in the work of God's Evangel in the world; help the servants of Christ in their labours: be watchful against the enemy, faithful in service, brave and courageous, but all in the spirit of love, and of a son of God. Be in subjection one toward another in Christ, and help one another by the spiritual gifts and graces bestowed by God upon His people, and then the blessing of God, the grace of Christ, and the love of God amongst the brethren will be multiplied.

THE FOURTH CYCLE AS FOUND IN II. CORINTHIANS AND GALATIANS.

I. The will or desire of God is man's salvation; and it is God alone who grants to men grace and peace in Jesus Christ. But men are seen as in trouble, suffering, given over to death, and it is through the sufferings of Christ that there is deliverance and comfort. Possessing peace and comfort in Christ a life of righteousness is that which commends the gospel of Jesus Christ to men. It is Jesus Christ in the promises, in the Gospels, and in the Spirit that is the beginning and ending of the merciful work of God. Those who follow Him in His Spirit are not lords over their brethren, but helpers in their joy, so that the mercy of God may be known to men; and the spirit cherished must be one of friendship and of genuine forgiveness, so that the enemy of God might not gain an advantage over the servant of Christ. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, the means whereby great spiritual victories are gained; but it is like a double-edged sword; it is for defence and blessing as well as a means of destruction and cursing upon the enemy.

II. The redeemed are epistles of Christ, ministers unto men in the Spirit of God; they are living letters, not engraven signs, and because they are alive in Christ they understand why the glory of Christ exceeds that of Moses. The ministration of law was with glory, but the ministration of righteousness is so great that the law loses, in comparison,

all that made it glorious, being swallowed up in the glory that is in Christ. Moses was veiled lest the glory should burst through the visible forms; but *in Christ* the veil is removed, there is liberty in the Holy Spirit, and the glory of the Lord is seen in the transforming change of the saints to His image. This is the ministry of mercy in this world in Jesus Christ; men can choose the light of truth, or sin and darkness, but the servants of Jesus Christ are the servants of men, for His sake, so that they may see the glory of God. But this marvellous treasure, so precious, is found in weak, sinful men, and it is so that men may perceive that there is no comparison betwixt the visible cause and the spiritual results. The vessels of grace may be compared to small, even despised ships upon the great ocean, buffeted by every storm; they live, and yet they are found in the jaws of death; yea, they seem to be engulfed in the ocean depths, and still they live in Jesus Christ, and will be raised up in Him. With such a faith and hope there is no fainting in the struggle; it is true that the visible things decay, but the life within grows stronger day by day. There is a marvellous knowledge possessed by those who are animated by the Holy Spirit; and it is that even though there is a dissolution of the tabernacle of the body in which they live, yet there is a house prepared for them which is not a mortal habitation; but although they would prefer the permanent state to the temporary abode, they meekly try to obey the Father's will amongst men. There is another kind of knowledge with which they are familiar, and it is "the fear of the Lord." This motive influences all their actions; they act as in the presence of the Invisible, and the spiritually blind think they are insane; but as they do not know or understand the constraining love of God; it is impossible that they can comprehend what seems to them to be irrational. The position and condition are those of the resurrection; the flesh is crucified, and things are transformed, made new again. This is a new world; in it all things are of God; and His life of mercy reaches from the centre to the circumference of it.

III. Unto those who think that the Christian spirit is a form of insanity, the children of God are sent forth, a meek embassy, on Christ's behalf, entreating and praying men that they be reconciled to God by His Son Jesus Christ, who is the Atonement and the Reconciler before God. And Christians work and suffer in the Spirit of Christ so that they may be made the means of blessing to sinful men. God's heart of love toward sinful men is very large, and His Spirit enlarges the affections of the children of God, so that whatever straitness exists it is not in God, neither should it be in His faithful people. The soul of a man is small, but yet it can hold God if it is His temple and there is no other idol in it. But when there is unequal yoking, or trying to serve two masters, or obedience by the restraint of law, then it is very strait work and the yoke is intolerable. The remedy is separation from sin and law, consecration unto God, and obedience to His will; and when the soul is thrown open to God then there will descend His blessing, and the soul will be filled with comfort. Without there are afflictions and strugglings on every side; within the soul fears; and yet these, by God's grace, are made the means by which truth and

righteousness, holiness and zeal, are ardently desired and obtained. These do not destroy the life of grace in the soul, but this is found to be the very sphere in which it thrives, is blessed and becomes a blessing.

IV. Gracious giving of the whole being to Christ in the spirit of self-sacrifice; and a free will in giving what is possessed for His service and people are gracious imitations of the will of God in Jesus Christ. It is by giving that men are blessed; and as they sow so they reap according to the order that is ordained in the kingdom of mercy. God is the great Example in giving, and His greatest Gift is the One that cannot be valued by men, or expressed in their language. Those who would seek to influence others in the Christian life must not stand upon their authority and dignity; but putting these aside, it is necessary to entreat men in Christ's Spirit of gentleness and meekness, so that they may be conciliated to the truth, and be brought to receive and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. The servants of Christ must not only give body, soul, spirit, goods and service in the Master's Spirit, but they must be ready to remonstrate with the foolish, endure misrepresentation, forgive offences, enter into the arena with false brethren, speak about themselves; yea, even, when necessary, act the foolish part of a boaster in carnal things. There is no room for glorying in the sight of God and of His Son; here those who are redeemed are speechless; but, if necessary, it may be advisable, for the purpose of humiliating foolish brethren, to act the unpleasant part of a foolish boaster so that they may be ashamed of their folly. There is a sphere in which a Christian may glory, but it is one into which carnal men cannot follow him; it is that of the revelations of Christ to the soul in the unspeakable things which men cannot utter; and in the bitter experiences of life, where the poor soul is buffeted by temptations, and torn by conflicting desires until the spirit is utterly cast down, and in sheer weakness receives the strength of Christ as the new life which triumphs over all that is opposed to the will of God. This is the paradox of glorying; it is to go through the whole cycle of giving and forgiving for Christ's sake; and after all this to find the spirit proud, the soul unholy, and the lusts and passions like living serpents, ready to poison and destroy the being; and then, but not till then, the refuge of the soul is reached, self is found to be safe only when weak, and growth in grace is only possible when the Holy Spirit animates the man according to the method of grace and mercy.

V. "I seek not yours, but you," are the words of Paul, but they are more truly the thoughts of God in Christ. The Father has laid up all things in Christ for His children, and God has been spending Himself in redeeming His sinful children. Though God gives all things to His children, He will not *compel* them to give anything to Him; but He is anxious that they should avoid strife and every evil way, and by loving peace follow after holiness. They cannot do this in their own strength, but if, like Christ, they are crucified in weakness, then they will also possess His new life, with its divine power. Faith, as it is approved by works of mercy, serves this purpose; for those who follow and imitate Christ, cannot stop short of the perfection that is in Him. This is attainable by grace, love, and communion with God.

and this includes Jew and Gentile, and they are Christians. But the downward, contrary to the carnal standards, or conform death and resurrection of the standards in the Christian world, so that it can no longer dead to that spirit in the world carnal pleasures, and self-glory, and to be alive in Christ is to sin reigned and law asserted of God. This does not make whilst seeking after righteousness the spirit of grace. How is it by faith or by their own good works of grace, and never by law; and in that state the curse that men might by faith escape upon the disobedient, and receive

VII. Grace existed in the promise given to men by Moses; and to make manifest men's transgressions appear then men would be read in germ in the promises; the children for their inheritance amongst men, and they received The baptism into Christ, by which for ever, all carnal separations accept Christ, are in Christ.

fall from grace, and to seek to attain salvation, perfection, by obedience to "beggarly rudiments." The history of the Christian era is one great manifestation of this principle. Do those who err in this manner love those who speak the truth to them? By no means; they have been beguiled and become foolish, so that they cannot understand their errors; and so they can only be restored as by another new birth, and by Christ being formed in them by another gracious conception. But these spiritual conditions were openly manifested, as in a living allegory, in Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Isaac, and Ishmael; and these still speak to men, pointing out that it is not by carnal conceptions, or obedience to law, that a man is saved, but by the Child of promise. As the child of law, the carnal son, persecuted the promised seed, so the spirit of Judaism persecutes the Spirit of Christ, but the persecutor will be cast out with the spirit of strife, so that there may be peace and freedom.

VIII. Grace and faith, or law and works, which will a man choose? If the former, then he will wait patiently for "the hope of righteousness;" but if the latter, then there is the falling away from grace, the rejection of Christ, and the determination to gain heaven by works. These seeds may exist in the same soul, but not in a son of God. This is the development in Judaism, the state of minority; and before the sonship is realised in the subjection to law, the leaven may work toward bondage, but when "in Jesus Christ," then this spirit is abhorred and cast out. The children are subject to law, because they require tuition; but the sons of God are called to freedom and to love. They are not subject to law, but they follow, and conform to the law of liberty, in "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance;" and it is in this spirit that perfection will be found. After this conception of freedom, then there must be the manifestation of the same, that is, the work of mercy in the spirit of meekness, and becoming a burden-bearer for others in the spirit of Christ. The whole question of life and eternity is compared to sowing and reaping: for a time the seed is hidden away in the ground, or it grows into leaf and stem, but in due time there will be fruit according to the nature of the seed. It is not the Ishmael seed of strife and vain-glory that will bring peace on the earth, but men's lives are so changed, that they glory in the Cross or Self-sacrifice, that is, in Jesus Christ, and in being Christ-like in spirit, in grace, mercy, and peace. It is the new gracious creation that survives all imperfect means to that end; whilst the sin and evil, mixed with the legitimate means of grace, are purged as by fire. This is perfection; it is absorption into Jesus Christ; the fulfilment of the vision of Buddha; and it is gained much in the same way as Buddha strove to gain it, by self-sacrifice; only the brand and the marks which are seen upon the consecrated body are those of Jesus, and not what the creature endures. It is His grace that rules the spirit; or, rather, the conception may be even something like this—Paul is lost in Jesus, and it is His Holy Spirit that animates the body bearing the brand and the marks; and if Christianity was only developed to this conception, then, in very deed, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ would be in the brethren; there

would be unity with diversity ; not loss of consciousness, but the marvellous consciousness of living in God.

THE FIFTH CYCLE.—EPHESIANS—I. THESSALONIANS.

I. This mystery of absorption into Jesus Christ is the consummation of divine wisdom in the hidden things of the kingdom of God. But this termination is not the end only, it is also the starting point for another beginning, so that the absorption into Christ may become a power of radiation in the heaven of God's grace. Here the soul is found in heavenly places in Christ ; seen by God as holy and without blemish ; adopted into God's family ; knowing the mystery of God's will in Christ, and sealed with God's Spirit as God's possession. In Christ the saint is all-perfect ; but in himself, even though such a change has taken place, there is need to receive wisdom and knowledge, enlightenment, so that the riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in His saints, His power in the resurrection from the dead by His kingdom of grace, His dominion throughout the universe, and His Headship in the Church, may be known. In Christ universality, absorption into divinity ; in relation to Christ, reaching after His perfect example ; in self, the creature once dead in sin ; brought near to God by His mercy, salvation, and resurrection ; and being saved through faith, then there follow good works in Jesus Christ. Once a stranger to God, His promises and His Commonwealth ; but in Christ's sacrifice brought nigh to God, every hindrance being removed ; therefore no longer a stranger in God's house, but a living stone in the temple animated by the Holy Spirit. In this temple Jew and Gentile have no existence ; they are fellow-members in the same body, and partakers, upon the same spiritual conditions, of the gracious promises of God. This is done in the spirit of subjection and lowly submission to the Father ; the object of all training, education, and experience being the indwelling of Christ by faith in the soul ; and by this marvellous transmutation through knowing the love of Christ, to be filled with the fulness of God. For all these things no glory to the sinner saved by grace ; but all glory, praise, and dominion to Jesus Christ.

II. Here it is almost necessary to pause and think upon the marvellous spiritual conceptions that are emerging into view. What is this manifestation of the Holy Spirit in humanity, that is in the redeemed, but an emanation of the divine, as found in the apostles at Pentecost, in the infant Church at Jerusalem, and as found in the Acts in the history of the work of Paul ? What is the cycle of thought expressed in the Epistle to the Romans but a conception of the method of the work of the Holy Spirit, that is God in a human soul, and in the world ? What is the conception in the Corinthians but an exposition of the spiritual order of the kingdom of grace and mercy in humanity ? What is the idea expressed in II. Corinthians and Galatians but the emanation, the coming of the Holy Spirit into the Church to bring grace and mercy, peace and comfort, to the redeemed, the end being the absorption of the meek followers of Jesus Christ, who seek truth and righteousness, into God in Christ ? And what is embodied in Ephesians but the wonderful thought, the re-emanation from God in Christ of

His children, and their absorption of God into themselves? Are these thoughts mere visions, or are they the ghosts of ancient philosophies coming from the far East to speak to practical men in the West, the children and inheritors of past ages, of something of the glory, the light of truth, that once shone upon their path? Truly these spirits of the past do speak to men, and their message is like all the other messages of God to men of mercy and judgment. Whence did these ancient sages, men of marvellous wisdom, gain the knowledge they possessed, their intensive spiritual vision into the nature of things? God was gracious unto them, and through His servants He gave unto them the light of truth to guide them in the way of righteousness. Why have they fallen so far away from the grand original conceptions of the fathers amongst men as to think of God as unconscious, swallowed up in His Own works, matter being dominant, and spirit in subjection to the lower powers? Why should the darkness swallow up the light, and men be left groping for an unconscious state, or for a place of light unknown to men? These questions are only too easily answered. Men loved sin and hated truth, justice, and righteousness; they loved the darkness and hated the light, because it revealed their crimes and sins, and so history is a long sad record of sin, separation from God, and unrighteousness amongst men. Speaking in the language of the nineteenth century, men do not call these things the judgments of God, but development, or evolution, but in the language of heaven, it is God's method of bringing judgments upon men in harmony with His laws of mercy and of justice; it is the seed of evil working in its cycle, and bringing forth according to its nature its own fruits. Men may give any name they please to such facts, but a name will not alter the facts; and even though men of the nineteenth century put forth their hands, groping in the dark, to see whether they cannot shake hands with the sages of former ages, they must find that they are taking the wrong way to do so, because are they not trying to penetrate backward through a whole cycle of darkness, when what seems to be necessary is to turn round to these shadows of the past, and face the rising sun which will unite East and West. The point of union may not be very far away when Gentile, Jew, and Christian will find their cycles of probation at an end, and then upon all there will arise the Sun of righteousness, Christ the Lord of grace and mercy. It is something like this that emerges into view at the end of the third chapter, where the soul of man—or say, the Church of Christ, is filled with the fulness of God. There has been full absorption, and there must follow radiation, or emanation; the divine that has been involved must be evolved, so that there may be manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the soul and in the Church. Paul is not active in this emanation; he is a prisoner, yet from his spiritual altitude he can survey the world, and the future in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. It may be a long stretch of the imagination; but there does seem to be a parallel here betwixt Moses on Mount Pisgah and Paul the prisoner. The former was the hand of God to deliver Israel out of Egypt, to give them laws, and to lead them through the wilderness, until within sight of the promised land; the latter was the hand of God for taking a spiritual Israel out of the Roman Empire. He has given

to men through his Epistles their theology, Christian institutes, and confessions of faith, and by his spirit Christians have been led these many centuries. He has not been able to lead the redeemed Churches in Asia and Europe into the possession of the spiritual promises, and it must be confessed that his spirit has failed to do so in Christendom even to this day; but here "the prisoner in the Lord" points out the spirit required for those who would inherit the promises. Men must not walk in their formal, carnal ways, in strife and vainglory, but "with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Here schism must end, because in this inheritance there is only one body and the one Holy Spirit, one Lord Jesus Christ, one kind of faith, one baptism into His Spirit of self-sacrifice, that is, into the death of the Jordan and out into the life that is in Christ, and emerging into this spiritual state, then there is found to be only one God and Father over, through, and in all. This is the grand ideal in God; but in humanity there is to be seen the manifestation of the conception according to the measure of the kingdom of grace that was involved and evolved in Christ. The Microcosm lived, died, and rose again from the dead, and ascended into the heavens, and it is from thence that His gifts descend upon the macrocosm of His body, so that it might be built up and grow into "the fulness of Christ." This is the goal of the Christian ideal; therefore it is for Christians to turn away from this world and its vanities, the old man and his lustings, and to put on the new man in truth, holiness, and righteousness. Live in the sunshine of God's favour, receiving His grace, consciously obeying the Holy Spirit, and full of Christ's Spirit of mercy, being imitators of Him in all that is good and gracious, an offering and sacrifice that God can accept. Being alive in Christ and animated by His Spirit, live as becomes Christians in holy wisdom, filled with the Spirit, and ever giving thanks unto God. Subjection in the family of the heavenly Father is of great importance, because it is only by learning obedience that there comes the fitness to become the sons of God in Jesus Christ. The sons of God leave the family circle, and they go forth strong in the Lord to fight against the enemies of God in the world, in the flesh, and in the devil. This is a great warfare, but victory is certain, seeing that the King has vanquished all His and our enemies through His Own resurrection; therefore He will in due time, by His Spirit, raise up His body, and give to it also a great victory, and the blessings of peace, love, and grace.

III. In the Epistle to the Philippians, Paul and Timothy send salutations to the elders and deacons, with the blessings of grace and peace. There is companionship in the great warfare against evil; thankfulness and joy because of such a fellowship; hope that the good work of God will be made perfect; and longings after friends in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus. The spirit of the soldier of Christ is meekness and gentleness: self must be forgotten, and the King's message proclaimed; it is Christ and His cause that must be magnified, because Christ is everything. Yet it is in this very warfare that there is sometimes a sigh for rest, and the soul finds itself straitened betwixt what is desirable

That is the path of duty ; but these thoughts are banished, and the Lord of Christ, rising above his aspirations, buckles on afresh his armor for the conflict and encourages his companions in arms by the assurance of the victory that must come. To them it is given as soldiers of God not merely to believe—children cannot do that—as men to suffer with Him. And indeed it is in this warfare suffering that the comfort, consolation, fellowship, tender mercy, communion, joy, and love of Christ are to be found ; it is by joining one with Him in this campaign of the Cross that there will be the exaltation and the glory that are to be revealed. This is the end of a campaign that is in the very opposite spirit of what this world has manifested, because there is seen a solitary Messenger from heaven clothed with grace, mercy, truth, and righteousness, enlisting soldiers to His army in which the palm of peace is carried as its symbol. The Leader lays down His life when attacked by sinful men ; and His soldiers marching forward, animated by His Spirit, expect one by one to die in the same conflict ; they have eaten of His body, which is a precious and contrite spirit, and they have tasted His blood, the spirit of sacrifice, and onward the army must move over the whole world until the world is made subject to the King of grace. The worst state into which an army can fall is that of insubordination ; when all men are seen seeking their own ways and things, and paying no attention to the King's commands, then to put such to shame is the best thing to send into their midst one animated by the Spirit of God so that the discord, dissent, and discontent might come to an end. It is not apt to glory or boast in something about themselves, as their parentage, nation, position, or attainments ; but such boasting is vain and useless ; all these things must be trampled under foot by the Lord of Christ who would stand by His side in the campaign of suffering, and rise in Him to the glorious resurrection. There is still a goal to be reached, the prize to be won, and the citizenship to be secured upon those who are the followers of Jesus Christ.

The goal may be reached, and the crown won by steadfastness in the midst of battle. Strife and ambition must be laid aside ; and like soldiers joined together in the same work of mercy and self-sacrifice must be gentleness and forbearance in every work. There is joy in the Lord ; and if there is anxiety He is able to give help, peace, and strength to the soul against the enemy. Perfection of character is the goal, for the soldiers of Christ should be like Himself, pure and without reproach. Whilst intent on holiness they must not forget to love and love to the brethren, for such a sacrifice is well-pleasing to God. By following after these great ends of being, personal holiness and sanctification, and the perfect self-sacrificing spirit, God will supply to the soul every need according to His Own riches in

The Epistle to the Colossians speaks of the gospel, the Word of God, as the means by which there are fruit and increase in the kingdom of God and mercy. But for this purpose the eye of faith must be fixed on Christ, the First-born, in whom all fulness dwells. There must be the meek spirit of obedience to Christ, the bearing of the cross,

he can remove all that is against
His enemies. A son of God
of his prize by the foolish
held fast, and death decreed

VI. The death is by crucifixion,
with, and in, Christ, so that
heaven. There is separation
and communion with the hidden
within the veil, as with the
reappearance that there shall
in glory. In the mean time
the fire of God's Holy Spirit
knowledge, so that His image
being all in all in His body
that breathes compassion and
bearance and forgiveness, an
perfect, gracious love. In the
Word, and all actions are to be
Jesus. Subjection to the Holy
spirit opposed to this is lawless
of God in its operations. Pure
faith, walking in wisdom, in the
kingdom of grace, must also be
no disgrace may fall upon His
followers.

VII. The first Epistle to the
there for their "work of faith,
in our Lord Jesus Christ." This
for a pure worship, and patience
kingdom of God in Jesus Christ.

is that of affliction and temptation as related to the world, but as related to the brethren in Christ, gladness, comfort, thanksgiving, and praise before God on their behalf. In all their difficulties they have the Holy Spirit to guide them on the way; they seek after holiness, and they hope for and patiently wait His coming. The will of God is their perfect sanctification, union with Himself in love, and the Spirit of mercy toward the brethren. If any man reject such a calling, his rejection is not the rejection of man but of God.

THE SIXTH CYCLE. I. THESSALONIANS—PHILEMON.

I. In the family of God love should so predominate over every other affection that the children who see the Father's face should not require such a lesson as to be taught to love; indeed, this is God's great lesson to His children in Jesus Christ. If the divine instinct teaches love, human experience will exhort that quietness, diligence in business, and honesty toward the unsaved, may be observed, so that there may be no want among Christian brethren. There is a resurrection from the dead, an awaking of those who are asleep in their time and order, but those alive and those asleep will meet the Lord and be with Him. Such a consummation is one to be desired, but it has pleased the Lord not to reveal to the senses of man the method of this resurrection; therefore faith and hope, prayer and patience, are necessary during the time of the working out of God's purpose of grace. Subjection to rulers and to law, faithfulness in fulfilling duties, doing good, rejoicing, praying and giving, these are the will of God in Christ for His redeemed. The Holy Spirit lives in the soul, therefore receive His monitions graciously, honour teachers, prove their doctrines by God's Word and Spirit, hold fast to the good, and reject every form of evil; and in doing these things God will make them the means of grace for sanctification and preparation for the coming of Christ.

II. In Second Thessalonians it may be conceived there is expressed, in the opening paragraph, the intention of the gospel to the soul of man and to the world. This seed of grace grows not in congenial soil and in pleasant surroundings, but amidst persecution and suffering, so that good and evil may be manifested in their order, and that the gracious Name of the Lord Jesus may be glorified. In the order of things the antichrist, the man of sin, and the son of perdition, is found in every soul, saved and unsaved. To the former this revelation comes when the illumination of God's Word and Holy Spirit makes known the fact that the devil in self is lawless and deceitful, and opposed to the holy will of God; to the latter there may not be such a revelation, but in both instances it is the lawless one, sin, that reigns in man, in God's temple, to the exclusion of the Holy One. As in the individual so in history, lawlessness toward God and deceit amongst men find their manifestations, and wherever these are to be seen the spirit of lying and of all evil reigns. The saved have had such an experience, but they have also had a revelation of Jesus Christ; this brings deliverance from sin and lawlessness, and the call to sanctification through salvation by believing the truth. By obeying this call in the meek spirit, then, through and in Jesus Christ, there is received eternal comfort, hope, and grace, as the

means of preparation for every good work. With such a change the man of sin is put down, and the Word of God's mercy is at liberty to run and be glorified. There will be opposition from the man of sin, not in possession of the soul or the kingdom, but as an enemy. Still since the Lord Jesus Christ has cast sin out, and He remains faithful, He will guard those who follow Him. Not only must sin be counted as an enemy, but there must not be traitorous communications with such a foe. The spirit of evil in its every form must be abhorred, God's service in well doing must be chosen; and yet whilst sin is kept separate from the soul, the sinner is not to be treated as an enemy but admonished as a brother. In such a life the Lord of peace will bestow His Own peace upon His followers at all times and in all ways.

III. In the First Epistle to Timothy the order of thought is changed, cognizance is taken of the motives to action of men in their relation toward God. If men are animated with the spirit of the Gnostic, that is, seeking salvation by knowledge rather than by faith, they make a grievous mistake; if they make the law an end in itself and not a means of grace, then they are vain talkers, ignorant of the method of mercy. The law is good in its place as a means of showing men their sinfulness and unfitness to draw near to God, but it is the gospel, the glory of the blessed God, "that teaches the way of salvation through the meek spirit by faith in Jesus Christ." The greatest sinners can obtain salvation by grace; but whether great or little sinners, if saved at all, the glory must be given to the King of grace and mercy. Those who are saved become the saviours of others by going forth with *the* Saviour in His work of deliverance; but let them beware with what spirit they are animated, lest instead of being on Christ's side they may be delivered through their pride to Satan. The servants of Christ, by the means within their reach, seek the good of all men. In prayer they lift up holy hands to God, in the spirit of gentleness and meekness, having for their object the salvation of souls by subjection to Jesus Christ. Those who are animated by the Spirit of Christ have a good desire when they seek to be elders or deacons in the house of God; but it is necessary that they should not be novices, but men faithful and bold in the work of God. All who are in His Church have one example they can follow with safety, and it is the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the mystery of God-likeness is found; and there is no other standard law or order apart from the Lord and His Word that can be relied upon.

IV. As there is the mystery of God-likeness, so there is also the mystery of iniquity in man that will turn away from God, and make any creature a god or idol, if only God's presence can be forgotten. For the overthrowing of all such manifestations of the evil one it is the work of the teacher to be faithful in his vocation, specially teaching men to set their hope "on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe." The teacher or pastor is a shepherd over the flock for the good of those under his charge; and joined with him there ought to be elders, men who can rule well in the house of God. The spirit of the elder should be that of a son of God; but in his work in the church ruling according to law; not in the

spirit of familiarity or of sternness, but of grave, gentle, meek, and affectionate interest in the flock, seeking their highest welfare. All are servants in the Church of Christ, therefore as brethren let them help each other in the Spirit of the Master. The doctrines to be taught in the Church of Christ are "the words of our Lord Jesus Christ;" that is, grace, mercy, and peace to all men, and not those thoughts which would minister to pride, strife, vainglory, or covetousness. The men of God must flee, detest, abhor such a spirit as this antichrist; "and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." It is a fight of faith to which they are called, so that they may seize eternal life; but they are following the Lord Jesus Christ, who trod the same path, and in due time at His appearing men will know that He is the King of kings. The affections must be set on God and not on created things; doing His will for the salvation of men, and by doing this the Word and work of God will be guarded against all the oppositions of false science.

V. This letter from Paul is to his "beloved child" Timothy; and it breathes the spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ, who by it has abolished death and brought immortality to men. It is this gospel of grace and mercy that is the great treasure of the soul and of the world, and it requires to be guarded by the Holy Spirit. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ that causes separations; but, thank God, it also brings mercy and refreshing to those who are not ashamed of the yoke of Christ, or afraid to wear it. Those who are soldiers of Christ on service do not entangle themselves in the meshes of worldly affairs, but they seek to serve their Captain and King, so that they may please Him. They are one with Him, and thus whatever the Head commands the members are ready to obey. Strife, profane babblings, and seeking the knowledge that is not revealed, are unrighteous actions; the servant of the Lord in meekness refuses to take part in such questions, but rather prays for the salvation of those who are the slaves of sin. The day has come when men have become lovers of all that is evil; standing up against law and gospel, they have become "reprobate concerning the faith." Yet it is still true that God's Word is the means of grace by which men may be instructed in God's ways, and be saved from the wrath to come. Faithfulness to duty in all seasons is imperative on the servant of Christ, so that in due time, when the campaign is over, there may be received the crown of righteousness. The Christian soldier finds many comrades, some false, some true, but throughout the conflict there is One who cannot be unfaithful, and He delivers His Own redeemed ones from "out of the mouth of the lion."

VI. In the Epistle to Titus there is special reference to the gospel message intrusted to Paul, and through him to Titus, the object of the Word being that it might make known the state of the Cretans to themselves, and that by it they might be turned from sensuality, idolatry, and every evil way, to seek purity in God's sight. Pastors are specially required to teach and guide souls in the grace of God, so that there may be redemption from all iniquity, purification of the soul, and zeal in good works. Those who bear such a message have a right to speak, for they are under authority in Christ's service. Subjection, so that

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prodigal is changed into a
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THE SEVENTH CYCLE-

I. The subject of the Ep
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Blessing, and His relations
Word, their responsibilities
in Him is neglected by men
The truths of redemption ha
they may doubt and deny th
ample evidence to guide the
Lord Jesus Christ became su
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He is God's Apostle of merc
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Inheritance, and it is by belie
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of grace.

II. Jesus Christ is one with
and it is because He knows h
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salvation," the High Priest

Because Christ offered this spiritual sacrifice His is the heavenly throne and the spiritual kingdom ; there is the abolition of carnal ordinances, and men await the reappearing of the High Priest as King when He returns from within the veiled heavens.

IV. Shadowy rites must pass away, but ~~the~~ sacrifice upon Calvary, in its spiritual power, abides for ever. By the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, the way to heaven is thrown open for all men who are the true and faithful followers of Christ ; but if any man despise the Sacrifice, reject the Saviour and High Priest, and do despite to the gracious Spirit, how can such an one be saved ? The redeemed are not so, for they choose suffering and afflictions in the kingdom of mercy rather than draw back to perdition. It is by faith that they see the things that are invisible, realise the promises of God, and hope for their fulfilment ; and by faith they have great aspirations heavenward, and victory over spiritual enemies.

V. The life of the Christian is compared to a race in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and those who run are to follow in His footsteps, making His image in themselves the goal of their pursuit. They resist and strive against sin, and at the same time they are chastened by the Father, so that they may receive spiritual profit. They aspire to be like Christ : they inspire His spirit against sin ; and through God's merciful dealings with them, they become righteous and joyful in their service. Grace, peace, and holiness shine upon their pathway, and they find in Christ a kingdom that cannot be moved. The imitation of Jesus Christ in love, kindness, purity, obedience, zeal, and self-sacrifice, is the duty of every believer ; and it is by following Him that there is inwrought in the souls of men what is well pleasing in God's sight by His life of grace within the soul.

VI. The tempted and tried sons of God require faith and patience if they seek after perfection. They have the throne of grace and a gracious God willing to give them help, but His grace is given for merciful ends, and not for the glory of self. Temptation and patient endurance run side by side. The tempted one is in the dark, and, as he may think, forsaken of God, but if the cloud were removed that is trying the faith and purifying the soul, there would be seen the crown of life that cannot pass away. God takes no pleasure in trials, but this is the way that lust, sin and death are overcome ; and the Lord Jesus had no choice but to follow the same path. The wonder is not that there are trials and temptations in the way, but that sinful creatures get through them at all ; and for this they have to thank "the Father of lights," who gives light in the darkness and guides His children safe through the tangled pathway of life. Men *know* these things in theory, but they are slow in changing their knowledge into practical actions ; they are very forgetful, and they do not *live* the perfect law of love, mercy and purity. The just should be equal in all their ways, and whilst they never forget that faith is the means by which they are united with God and receive grace, mercy and power from Him, it is equally important that there should radiate from the life what men call good works, but these are the grace, mercy, and power of God coming forth as the natural fruit of Christian life in these forms.

VII. Teaching is good, but it brings responsibilities ; yet it is true

THE EIGHTH CYC

I. The first epistle of Peter is by the Holy Spirit unto obedient living hope by the resurrection heaven that cannot pass away. purification, sorrow, and yet joy u salvation. They possess what angels desire to look into ; and suffering with Christ and the gl race to run, but it can be done by Spirit. It is a work of long lab temple, and the consecration of 1 light saved by His grace and me should be one that will glorify Gc there is required subjection to la of mercy in which Jesus Christ is

II. How can a soul that is filled It cannot, because in such a soul that it changes evil into good, the is Marah into the sweet waters of and its operations are not seen to but the Lord Jesus Christ, who a for sin, made this the means of a prisoners have been blessed by h from the dead. The sign of Noal suffering, mercy, and salvation ; b water, but of Spirit, has come upo now upon the throne, with the u eight souls were saved by water, b

persecution. The elders who are so animated by the Spirit of Christ are required to watch over the flock of God, and at the coming of the Chief Shepherd, the crown of glory that will never fade will be their portion.

III. The second epistle of Peter is to all those who possess faith in Jesus Christ, and through His divine power all things that pertain to life and God-likeness. By the meek spirit and obedience to God's will in Christ there is a new, divine nature and escape from sin, so that there may be growth in the divine life and an abundant entrance into the kingdom. This divine life is a matter of experience, although all that it means is not understood; yet those who desire to be like the Divine One must study the Word of God, and by the Holy Spirit conform to His likeness. Since the light of God shines, why should men follow false lights which can only lead them astray from the path of righteousness? Christians walk by faith in the Word of God, and not by trusting in their own imaginations; and so they wait patiently for His coming, even though there may not be any visible sign of His reappearance. The Lord is faithful to His promises, not one shall fail; and He is also long-suffering toward the wicked, so that they may be led to repentance. The spiritual and the heavenly will survive the carnal and the earthly; and thus in the spiritual world men look for the Lord's coming, and for the new heavens and earth where righteousness will dwell. It becomes those who are thus faithful, and hope for such a change, to be holy and blameless in their lives in God's sight. And although the appearances may be altogether against such a fulfilment of the Word of God, yet it is not difficult to see that God's long-suffering patience means salvation to all who will obey the gospel. Peter and Paul, the doorkeeper of the house of God, and the spirit that has animated the visible body, agree that there are many things in the Bible that are hard to be understood, and those who are wilful wrest the meaning for their own destruction; but the meek and faithful seek grace first to be righteous, and then knowledge, so that the Name of Christ may be glorified.

IV. In John's epistles, the scene is changed as from earth to heaven. The divine word of life is not an abstract thing, but spiritually present, as by hearing, sight, and touch. The Father's house is a realised experience, and the spiritual fellowship is divine; the apostle of love makes known his own privilege, so that others may share in his joy. He has become a messenger to men, and the announcement he makes is that God is Truth, and in truth, holiness, and righteousness there is no darkness of sin or error. Light and darkness, holiness and sin, truth and error, do not embrace each other; they are opposites; and those who are opposed to God can only be brought into fellowship with Him through the grace and mercy of God in Jesus Christ. The children of God do not sin willingly, but should they do so there is propitiation in the Sin-offering, Jesus Christ. The commandment of God is love, and this is the eternal law of heaven; but it is gracious love that banishes the darkness from the Father's house, and Jesus Christ is the Light that dispels sin and sorrow from the soul and out of the world. There is forgiveness with God to those who love the light of truth and righteousness; and it is by His

Name that the perverted affections are turned from the world, the flesh, and the vanities of life, to the Father. Christ and antichrist, grace and sin, the Holy Spirit and the world, are opposites; these cannot agree, and the conflict betwixt them is that of good and evil; but by abiding in Him there will be power to overcome the enemy, and when the victory is complete He will come and show forth His glory in truth and righteousness.

V. The Father's love is His grace and mercy in Jesus Christ; and it is through Him that men are changed to become the children of God. His Spirit is obedience to God's will for the purification of the soul; but sin is lawlessness, unholiness, rebellion, hatred, and murder. Love is heaven; hatred is hell; and each seed works in its own order. Gracious love gives and forgives; but hatred covets and kills that it may receive and possess; these spirits cannot possibly harmonise. Prove the spirits by the Spirit of God; and the test that tries all spirits is that of Jesus Christ in the flesh, the meek spirit of a son of God, which knows both truth and error. Love God and man; let men love with a gracious love, and they will have heaven in their own souls. But love is proved by its works; and as this is a God-begotten power, by faith, it overcomes its opposite, the self-seeking world. They only can overcome this world, within and around, who are one with Christ. He has come by Moses, or visible ceremonies, in the flesh as Jesus, and by the Holy Spirit, as the risen Christ, and these three agree in their testimony that God has given to men eternal life, and it is in His Son. By knowing God's truth and righteousness men know that they possess eternal life; they are risen from death and live in Christ; and it is for them not to live unto themselves, but for the good of perishing creatures so that they may be saved from death. The holy seed cannot sin, it is kept by God, so that evil has no power over it. To be in Jesus Christ is to be in eternal life; and they who are so environed have need to guard their souls so that no idols may be set up in them.

VI. The second Epistle of John is to the elect, and the beloved in the truth; to those who walk in the truth and love, or in the perfect and gracious spirit of Jesus Christ. There are those who are animated by a different spirit, who are not gracious or merciful, but all such are deceivers and antichrist. Such a spirit must be avoided, for with it there cannot come any blessing, but rather a curse. In the mean time the meek spirit must discern the spirits until there is divine illumination—face to face. The measure of a man's prosperity is his spiritual state before God; if he possesses truth and righteousness, grace and love, his prosperity is great indeed, because he walks in truth, in light, in heaven. Be gracious and merciful, hospitable and kind, for this is to be like the Father in heaven, who receives all strangers into His house, that they may be blessed and become a blessing. Pride, ambition, strife, and lordship, are of the devil, even though they are seen in a church of Christ. Such men as are animated by these passions may pretend great things, but the plain truth is expressed in this thought, they have not seen God, and they are antichrist in their spirit. The apostle of love could write much; but when face to face with him *then men will enjoy his communications of peace, grace, and truth.*

VII. The Epistle of Jude speaks to those "that are called beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ." His message is one that warns the saints against evil men who are anti-Christian in their thoughts, words, and actions, constraining them to be faithful and earnest in the cause of God. It is necessary to remember, even though the facts be known, that not all who obtain deliverance receive salvation. His grace, mercy, and truth are unto all men who hear the gospel, in all lands, and in all ages; but if they will turn away from His gracious and holy method of life, salvation is impossible. It matters not what form the sin may take, lustings of the eyes, passions of the flesh, or desires of a vainglorious life, they are all condemned, and those who choose to be their slaves are not the sons of God. The Lord will judge the earth in due time, in the mean time men have the gospel and its glad tidings, prophecy with its warnings, and it is for them to know the truth, separate themselves from all that is sensual and devilish, and do what they can to save others. And unto Jesus Christ, the Saviour, shall be given all the glory of the redemption of His people, of His victory over sin, and the glory of their salvation and restoration to the family of God.

THE CYCLE IN THE REVELATION.

I. In the Revelation given to the Apostle John in Patmos there may be found a manifestation of the kingdom of grace and mercy, which, viewed from the heavenly standpoint, makes known to men by symbols the principles involved and evolved in history; the range of human experience of those who are within the kingdom of grace, and have it in their own souls; and the spiritual conception of the kingdom of mercy as it is found in germ and developed in the Bible. It is a revelation of grace to all men by Jesus Christ, God's Prophet; and they are the blessed who read and hear God's Word of prophecy. It is a gracious message to the redeemed Church, through the gracious apostle or elder, from the Eternal, the Holy Spirit, and from the Son, by whom there is redemption from sin through the High Priest, Jesus Christ, by His sacrifice, death, and resurrection. It is as King that He comes to all men of all nations. He is the Eternal, Almighty, All-inclusive Lord God, and as such far transcends human conceptions. But, although so great and holy, yet gracious and merciful also toward sinful men, so that He is their Saviour, and He has given to them the Book of salvation. As the Son of man, He is the Intercessor for the Church and its Purifier. He is Life; in Him is history; and from Him there radiates all truth.

II. To His Church in all its divisions He is the Light of truth; Life from the dead; Power to overcome evil; the Omniscient and Immutable; the All-wise and All-gracious; the Holy and True Brother; the Man upon whom the government is laid; and the faithful and true Witness or Word of God, including all things in His testimony to men. He has come to bestow life upon the dead in sin; to give a crown of life, that is a circle, life without end, and to preserve the redeemed from the second death. To the living in Him He gives True Bread, a holy nature, and new pure desires; to the meek and obedient there is

power and authority, but it is radiant with the love of Christ. He gives the garments to the redeemed, which are pure and white, truth and righteousness, and their names are written in the living book of the city of God, the kingdom of heaven. They shall be in the Temple of God, and also be holy, moral temples, in whom God will dwell through His grace by His new Name of Mercy. And to those who wait for Him He will give His friendship, power in truth, communion and fellowship with Himself.

III. Before men can understand the kingdom of God in grace and mercy, a door in heaven must be opened; there must be ascension into heaven, and living in the Spirit of Christ, then the throne of grace, the faithful promises, the law of God, the lamp of truth, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, are all revealed to view. The Book is God's Word, His Rod of power; the Lamb is the meek sacrifice for sin, through whom there is the revelation of mercy to men. The white horse is the pure, merciful gospel of free grace to mankind going forth to conquer the world; the red horse speaks of the conflict of good and evil, and the strenuous opposition of wicked men to the truth; the black horse represents the domination of error, ignorance, and sin amongst the nations; the pale horse the consequences of hatred to God, self-seeking and self-assertion as found in infidelity to God and death to righteousness. These work in their own sphere and order during the cycles of time, but with the opening of the fifth seal the work of mercy, which covers the day of grace, there is the vision of the altar, the suffering sons of God, and the means of their purification. Whilst with the sixth seal at its opening there is revealed the judgments of God upon the wicked.

IV. God's purpose of grace is expressed in the sealing of the saved and His great work of redemption in the world, in the multitudes who surround His throne of grace, drink the water of life, and have all their sorrows and troubles taken away by the Good Shepherd. The Lord reigns; therefore let the saints rejoice; but the wicked have cause to fear for the prayer of the Intercessor is heard on the part of those who fear God, whilst the judgments of God fall upon the wicked. His Word declares to men the thoughts of God; it is bitter to those who read it through conviction of sin; and although sweet to the taste, gracious in its words, yet to obey it means to drink the bitter cup of self-sacrifice. The Book is God's Minister to mankind; the means by which the saved are consecrated and purified; it is God's Witness unto men and nations. When the Book, the Witnesses, live, then the power of this world, antichrist, the secular spirit opposed to God, will be cast down, and Christ's kingdom of peace will be manifested amongst men.

V. The great sign in God's kingdom of mercy is His Church and His Spiritual Son, Jesus Christ; the great sign opposed to mercy is the red dragon of sin, the pride and power of man as manifested amongst men. There is war betwixt Christ and His followers and the kingdom of this world; and it is by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that the power of evil is cast out of the spiritual empire. But although cast down the power of evil persecutes the children of God with deadly hatred. This power in history is not humane, but beast-like, cruel, and

opposed to God in all things. The other beast, the lamb with the dragon's voice, is the antichrist in its fullest manifestation; in all its principles opposed to the Spirit of mercy in Jesus Christ. But these shall not prevail amongst men for ever. The King, the Lamb, shall possess Mount Zion; the gospel will be preached amongst all nations; and in due time there will follow the judgment upon the ungodly.

VI. This is a great and marvellous sign from God by His seven servants, His plagues bring upon wicked men His judgments. To the wicked it means woe and cursing; but to the redeemed great victories in the Name and power of Jesus Christ. It is God's holy and righteous work amongst men, and in a human soul that is symbolised here, because through the manifestation of God's grace there come conflict and passion, and not until the soul, or the earth, is purified can God's face be seen or His favour realised. The order of the vials of wrath may be viewed as cyclical in their order, as in a soul or in history; the kingdom of the beast, antichrist, the devil, sin, and death; or pride in power, fleshly rule, and infidelity are punished. The mystery of sin is the mystery of the great harlot: but upon self, or upon the mystical Babylon, the antichrist amongst the nations, God's judgments will fall. The doom falls upon the accursed, not from human hands, but from the Light, or Truth of God. When He appears lightening the earth then the uncleanness, darkness, and ignorance that exist are made manifest. Separation and sanctification are the words of command to the redeemed; they must not be partakers in the sins of men, or nations, else they must also share with them the doom that falls upon sin.

VII. The time of victory has come in the prophetic vision; the wicked have been punished, and the sons of God praise the Lord God, the Almighty. There is gladness because the day of union and communion is come, and there is restoration to the favour of God. The King rides forth amongst the nations, and by His Word all men are made subject to truth. The manifestations are those of mercy and of judgment; but the victory over the enemy is overwhelming in its grandeur; truth and righteousness are regnant, and before the glorious light of the Angel in the sun of grace every enemy is cast down, and cast into hell. By the Angel of mercy the old serpent is caught and shut up: in other words, the bruised heel of the Seed of the woman is victorious over death and hell, and He crushes the head of the devil, so that the poison of infidelity and intellectualism may come to an end. The Theocracy of the Spirit and not of the letter is seen to be amongst men, and for a thousand years men live in peace under the Prince of peace, giving glory to God. At the end of that period there will follow another perversion from truth and righteousness, to be followed by the final judgment, and at that time the devil's power to deceive men will be completely destroyed.

VIII. Eye of man hath not seen nor the ear heard what is in the Holy City; but in due time there will come the great jubilee of freedom from sorrow, pain, trouble, and every form of evil. There will be a great ascension into glory, even such a change as is prefigured by the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the change that came over His body.

The spiritual will be supreme then, and carnal things, no longer carnal, will be the willing servants of the spiritual powers in the universe. This city will have no temple, because the Lamb is the temple and city, and in Him the redeemed will live, move, and have their being. Because living they will drink of the river of God's grace and glory, and eat the fruits that grow upon the tree of life. The curse being past, there will not be any spiritual darkness, but the redeemed will walk in light and live in love. Now men hunger and thirst after truth and righteousness : then they will see the faithful and true Word of God and understand all that their souls desire to know. Then all means of grace will be ended, and the Jesus of the flesh, and even the Christ of the Spirit, will all be swallowed up in God the Father. The Word of God is an open Book, unsealed ; it is the means of grace and mercy for eternal life, or the means of death to the wicked. Jesus Christ, the Son of David, is the Hope of the ages ; and unto Him all are invited who wish to live in God by His grace. The Word is sacred ; it is God's Sign to man ; therefore let them love and reverence the Word which represents God in Christ until He comes in His power and glory.

THE SECOND WITNESS.

"I AM come a light unto the world, that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in the darkness." "For with Thee is the Fountain of Life ; in Thy light shall we see light." It is the Spirit that gives the quickening for a moral and gracious life ; and in the Spirit of truth the Light of truth becomes radiant, so that the darkness might be dispelled. Do men that have been blind and see like other men require witnesses to prove to them that they are in possession of the gift of vision ? Certainly not ; but as this is a new experience to them, though they do not wish the fact of sight to be proved, they might be considered as willing to compare their experience with other men, so that they may be satisfied that there is harmony of vision in the unity of light. As with the blind who have received sight, so with those who see truth in God's Spirit of truth ; there cannot be any questioning as to the facts of God's Word ; they are in the light, with the Sun of truth shining upon them ; therefore whilst perfectly satisfied that God's truth is as it is revealed by the Holy Spirit, there cannot be anything wrong in comparing notes with creation and man, to see whether their testimony harmonises with the Word of God. The leading thoughts in the Bible may be briefly summed up in the following thoughts :— Creation. Vision of Recreation, because of sin. (1) Humanity, as involved in germ, all-inclusive from Adam to Abram ; that is faith and salvation being included in mankind. (2) Abram, Isaac, and Jacob ; or the conception and involution of God's purpose of grace, His kingdom of mercy in mankind. (3) Moses to Solomon, or the manifestation of the kingdom of God's grace in forms and in spiritual figures. (4) The hidden wisdom of the thoughts of God as found in books from Chronicles to the Song of Solomon. (5) The prophets of righteousness and their thoughts upon God's great work of mercy in the world.

5) Jesus Christ, the perfect, moral, gracious Man. (7) The Holy Spirit and God's spiritual kingdom in humanity. (8) Revelation. These will touch the important points in the conception, birth, development, spiritual aspirations, the perfect Tree of Righteousness, the spiritual Seed bearing seed, and the light of truth as thrown upon the whole order of the kingdom of grace, mercy, and judgment, upon this earth, and as found in the new order that will succeed the kingdom of race amongst men.

With reference to creation it may be stated that science and philosophy are in harmony with the first chapter of Genesis. Passing beyond the visible relations, it can now be clearly conceived that every form of matter, and all modes of motion are the relations of an essence known as force or energy: it is power, and all power is of God. The relations or the manifestations of matter and motion are knowable by man: this is science, but the essence is not knowable. As with matter and motion, so with life; men know nothing of the essence of life, but of its relations and manifestations they know much, as they see them manifested in every form and kind of organism produced or enveloped by the power of life. These two principles or essences, force and life, in their manifestations constitute the visible creation; not merely what is usually visible, because motion of gases or air cannot be seen, but as even the lightest gas can be changed into a solid, they embrace all that can be seen or handled. In man, that is in all men, the macrocosm, there is the essence or principle named spirit; his is conceived of as the power in man that knows; the spirit does not know its own essence, only the relations of knowledge, that is, representations made by the organs of special sense, as sight and hearing and thoughts, or what is represented to the spirit by the power known as the memory. The spirit can know all thoughts and all sensations, and thus it is the great power in the spiritual nature of man. The spirit knows, by the special senses, what is in the external world by the contact upon these organs; and it also knows what is in the world within man, that is, in the kingdom of thought or the memory. It is true that all the elements of knowledge pass, by the special senses, through the spirit into the world of thought within the soul; but it is also true that memory or thought is a different essence or power from spirit, and its work or method of manifestation is the most marvellous of all the works of God in man. As the spirit can know all thoughts, if the memory, or thought-principle, can contain all that man can know; and although the capacity is almost infinite, yet it renders up only a few thoughts at a time for the spirit to operate upon. These four principles or essences, in their manifestations, constitute the visible creation, and the invisible world within creatures which are not rational, but are guided by instinct and intelligence; but man rises above such creatures (which are one with him in these principles), by the powers of the intellect and the moral nature; the former having for its work the relations of knowledge, whilst the latter has specially to do with moral law, that is authority, law, and righteousness. As subjects of science and philosophy the intellect and moral nature, each in its own sphere, is considered as a separate essence, power, or kingdom; the

intellect being the power by which all knowledge is gained of the universe in its relations as bearing upon truth and error; whilst the moral nature is brought into relations with God, law, righteousness, obedience, right and wrong, sin, conscience, and judgment. Philosophy building upon science, that is, the relations of manifested facts, conceives that the perfect moral creation consists of six principles or essences, or kingdoms; these are universal thoughts including all manifestations of the same kind throughout the whole universe; and as they are all inclusive, they also exclude the possibility of any other kingdom where the perfect moral law of God reigns. In the thought of Scripture this brings God's Sabbath of moral rest, because in the universe all is wise, true, good, and holy. How in a six-fold diversity there can still be a unity is seen in man; but men ought to remember that they cannot know the essence of unities, so that whether man is one unit, or a six-fold diversified unity, is of no practical importance to him: these are problems which seem to be beyond his reach. The facts which are of importance are these—that God is Creator; that the essence or essences of creation are unknowable by the reason of man, that man is God's representative in knowledge of truth and in righteousness of character; the king set over this world with powers to know the will of God, to love the Creator, and to obey His good and righteous will. These things being so, it is for man and all moral responsible creatures to live with the lower creatures in harmony with moral law in the love of God.

Philosophy guided by the Word of God and by science can discern the perfect fitness of the moral creation to make all creatures blessed and happy, but it finds as matters of fact that as related to this world there is transgression of law, sin against God, and iniquity amongst men. These facts cannot be disputed, although many methods may be taken to explain why abnormal, unhealthy, insane, sinful manifestations are found amongst men in this world. The Bible gives one explanation, and it is that man, the lord of this world, chose to believe a lie rather than the truth; wilfully took poisoned food instead of God's bread; followed the desires of the flesh instead of obeying God in love; and preferred self-glorification in wise conceits to righteousness in the fear of God. To believe the devil and reject God's truth is sin in the conception, and the issue must be separation from God by a moral death, in which the creature lives on poison, gratifies its base desires, and glorifies itself as if it were a god. Man has sinned; the macrocosm of humanity is a desecrated temple in which the devil of self reigns, and by sin there has come upon man disease, pain, sorrow, strife, hatred, murder, and death—an awful ruin, with every power in the organised unity working for disintegration, destruction, and eternal death.

“To this end was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” The works of the devil, the flesh, and the pride of life, are all sinful, and their end is death and hell; the work of Jesus Christ is re-creation by regeneration, renewal, and restoration to the likeness of God; but His work is like all God's works, it is one that has life in it, an organic kingdom, which requires time for its manifestation.

Humanity even when fallen is looked upon in the sight of God as one ; it is viewed in the concrete in Adam, and he is the representative head of all who by natural generation proceed from him. In the cycle of history from Adam by Noah to Terah and Abraham, there is set up, so to speak, one figure in the world, Adam, the fallen man, and in him all history is inclosed, involved, even including the spirit of faith in Abram. It is a great vision of God's ideal, and within it He puts the germ-seed of grace and faith which will in due time become greater, more powerful, than the mass in Adam ; this body is full of sin, lustings of the flesh, and unbelief in God, but the power of grace and faith will overcome what appears to be so mighty in the earth, and the new kingdom of mercy, the principle of grace, the spiritual re-creating power of God, will make this mass of corruption a means for the manifestation of His glory in the kingdom of grace and mercy. This cycle of thought covers all history from Adam to this day ; it is like the great image in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, only at this point in prophecy the disintegrating power is within the image as well as the new life of grace ; both are involved so that they may be evolved in history, whilst the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream is the evolution of the antichrist, and the means of the destruction of the body of sin.

In the Adamic body there is found involved sin, fleshly lusts, and infidelity, the means by which there would come the disintegration, destruction, and death of what is contrary to the will of God ; the seed of evil will grow according to its kind, but in the wisdom of God it is so constituted that it will grow and bring forth its own fruit according to its kind ; but also within the body there is the germ-seed of grace, so small that it is hardly noticeable, and this seed is God's Word for man's redemption. In the Abrahamic family, that is, from Abraham to Moses, there is the prophetic involution of this holy seed of grace in the womb of time and of humanity ; the germ of grace found in Adam becomes an infant organism, and into it or by it God speaks to men of His purpose of grace. There is separation to a new order of life, and yet the seed lives in contact with proud Egypt, the fleshly Canaanites, and Lot, the son of Haran ; there is a new life, but it is of the form as if in the womb ; and the prophetic involution speaks of the history of faith, of the kingdom of grace, and of the order of that kingdom in its manifested relations amongst men. The germ-thoughts of all the great movements in history find their prophetic involution in the spiritual, moral, and intellectual seeds planted in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The day of Moses and of deliverance of Israel from Egypt is the day of the birth of God's nation of grace and faith ; there is separation from the body of sin, the dominion of the pride of man is broken, and the child is delivered by the mighty power of God. This new, visible organism, a mere child as compared with Egypt, is a helpless babe, but Jehovah is unto it as an eagle with her young, and He bears it away from the enemy into the desert, there to train and fit it for the duties of life. The Lord is gracious and merciful unto this infant, He cares for it, brings it out of Egypt by His glorious right hand, so that men may praise and glorify the King of grace. In this movement there is seen the evolution of what was by involution wrought into the history of

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; but not as it was involved is it evolved, but rather beginning with Jacob or the visible kingdom there is the development of the visible kingdom, then of the promised Seed, and last of all the spirit of faith as found in Abraham. In the order of visible things men perceive (1) the great deliverance from the power of Egypt, and the experience of the desert ; (2) the unwritten moral law ; (3) the forms of Mosaism ; (4) the forms of the Christian era of truth and righteousness ; (5) the forms of sacrifice by God's servants as the means of mercy and of reconciliation to God ; (6) the visible history of mankind ; and (7) the great poem of life's history, or God's testimony to men of His grace and mercy, and of their sinfulness in His sight. Beyond these, which give the form to God's nation, there is to be found the development of the spiritual powers in this great form, by visible, historical facts, as in Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and in Samuel, Saul, Jonathan, and David. Joshua teaching men the great spiritual truth of conversion, meekness, and obedience to the will of God ; Judges, the corruptions in humanity ; Ruth, the order of proceeding, or lineage of the King ; Samuel, the Word of God as Prophet, Priest, and Ruler ; Saul, the wilful, self-asserting spirit ; the gracious Jonathan reveals the spirit of grace in the soul, which renounces self and loves God's chosen King, and prefers His kingdom because it is true, right, and gracious ; and David, in whom men may perceive the prophetic figure of the Christ who shall reign until all nations are subject to His gracious rule. Israel is seen in history as surrounded by the incubus of sin in the nations on all sides. God's intention in this manifestation in Israel is His great work of grace, and He works out His ideal in a marvellous manner ; but in and by this manifestation of law, order, method, visible and spiritual forms and ceremonies, which are merely means to lead men unto God, or what will tutor the rebellious and selfish spirit into harmony with the will of God, there is seen to be manifested the fleshly conceits which make law an end and not a means, thus falling short of the spiritual conceptions embodied in the visible kingdom.

God spake to men in the Adamic cycle by gracious words in Eden, by Noah, and by the call of Abram in the family of Terah ; thus all men know that God is gracious and merciful ; that He willeth not the death of sinful men ; that His grace and truth will overcome sin and darkness or lying ; and that He will hold all men responsible for their actions during the day of grace granted to them. God's grace, like the dove upon the waters, sought a resting-place, and it was found in Abraham and in his spiritual seed, even those who have faith in God. Grace works by faith, and also according to law ; that is, in a visible kingdom, and the kingdom of Israel expresses God's work of grace in humanity. These manifestations, though they seem to be limited in their development, are not in reality limited in their spiritual intention ; because the methods of grace, faith and law, have been free to all who would accept the grace, believe God, and obey His laws. None are shut out by God, only those who will not seek grace, trust God, and obey His will, shut themselves out from the mercy and favour of God. In grace, faith and law, as in the kingdom of Israel in all its ordinances, God has manifested the great objective thoughts which bear upon the

questions of redemption, sacrifice, and service ; and in the books of the Bible from Chronicles to the Song of Solomon, there will be found the great subjective conceptions of God's work of grace in the world; of the means of rebuilding or re-creating the temple that had been cast down; of restoring the kingdom; of manifesting truth and righteousness above envy and hatred; of revealing the grace and mercy of God through suffering; of the experience of mankind in the kingdom of mercy; of a God-fearing character in the wisdom of God; and of the glory of the kingdom of God in the day of its restoration to God's favour. These great thoughts, the mystery of grace and sin, were involved, not into the Jews merely, but into humanity, into all the Eastern nations, and through them, to almost all the nations on the face of the earth.

History involves and evolves the designs and purposes of God ; and it is within the sphere of humanity that the kingdom of grace must be wrought out, so that men may comprehend God's conceptions. From the era of visible things and their disintegration, men are found groping after an ideal which they call the good and the true ; but in Israel, the prophets specially sought after righteousness as well as goodness and truth. This era in history harmonises with the intellectual in man, and the revelation of mercy by God; and the issue to mankind was that by wisdom, that is, the great thoughts of men, they lost the knowledge of God, whilst by the Cross of Jesus Christ, God revealed to men what is the highest wisdom, truth and righteousness

It is in Jesus Christ that men find divine wisdom, truth and righteousness ; they can see converged into one Man all that responds to the highest conceptions of the noblest men and the greatest thinkers that have lived in all the ages. He comes into history at that point of development in mankind which corresponds with the condition of Adam when he transgressed God's law, and temptations of the flesh and intellect, of moral and grace relations, are found to have no power over His Holy Spirit. He is the perfect moral Man, for in Him all the powers of the being are subject to moral law ; because He is a perfect Man He is the fit Person to be the Head of humanity, that is to say, receive the forfeited birthright ; and because He gives Himself graciously as a sacrifice for His brethren, through Him there comes God's blessing upon mankind. Jew and Gentile had been puzzling themselves about good and evil, righteousness and sin, wisdom and folly, truth and error, and in their search they had failed to find goodness and grace, righteousness and truth. They had given themselves up to work evil, to serve sin, to love folly, and to believe lies, and in the midst of the awful moral and spiritual darkness that covered the earth there suddenly appeared the Light of the world, the Truth and Righteousness of God. These facts are the very spirit of history, and they make known the lost condition of humanity at the Advent of Jesus Christ, with the total inability of men to save themselves from the position into which they had fallen. Evil reigned triumphant on the earth ; Greece and Rome, the perverted intellect and the depraved moral power, were supreme in thought, word, and action amongst the Gentiles, and amongst the chosen people of God the devil of infidelity and the spirit of

expediency had desecrated His gracious temple, so that Grace and Truth in Jesus Christ were persecuted by these traitors to the cause of God. Evil, the devil, reigned supreme in the earth, God, the Good and Gracious, gave Himself up as a sacrifice for mankind, and in these two thoughts the climax of good and evil meet. There was a wrestle, and evil seemed to gain the victory; but in reality the holy and gracious powers of God in Jesus Christ outwitted the devil, the old serpent, and thus though the heel of the Seed was bruised, the Holy Spirit lived, and by this life the serpent's head was crushed, and lying, sin, and death became the prisoners and chained captives of Jesus Christ.

Because Jesus Christ the Son of God was incarnate into humanity, lived amongst men, manifested in His life the gifts and graces of God's Holy Spirit without measure, died as the sacrifice for sin, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, there to reign until His enemies should be subdued, the Holy Spirit became incarnate in humanity, in all those who become obedient to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The order of the kingdom in Jesus Christ is first the manifestation in the flesh, with this object, to set up the visible order of the kingdom of grace through His disciples and followers, and for this end He used the powers of the Holy Spirit He possessed (without measure) upon those who were brought under His gracious influence. After His passion and death, then there followed the spiritual resurrection, but there is no account of special miracles, such as healing, in the spiritual order of His resurrection. As with Jesus Christ so with His body, the redeemed Church. There is first a visible kingdom formed, a resurrection from amongst the dead mass of humanity, to form this living organism within which the Holy Spirit lives, God incarnate in mankind. It is at Pentecost and after this time that the body of Christ is seen as thus specially animated by the same forms of gracious power as was seen in Jesus Christ in the flesh, for His disciples spake the Word with power and authority as God's prophets; they healed the sick, and by doing so thus showed that they were spiritual priests serving God; they received the Spirit to discern betwixt good and evil, and by this gift they became kings in the realm of truth; they were taught the wisdom of God in history and in the Word, and by this gift they were made fit to teach others the way of salvation; they were filled with the spirit of mercy, the gift of the evangelist, and they went forth to seek and to save the lost; they received and could bestow the gift of the Holy Spirit, and by this gift they became mediators and intercessors with God for others; and being purified, having seen the face of God in Jesus Christ, they went forth as the sons of God, peacemakers, into a world where strife and hatred reigned supreme in men who were more like wolves and serpents than human creatures. But the cycle of the spiritual kingdom of God in humanity as found in the Acts and in the Epistles, represents the Holy Spirit of Christ in His body, the Church, in a somewhat different aspect, but not different in the underlying principles of truth and righteousness. For example, the story of Paul's missionary work may be conceived as the Holy Spirit's prophetic utterance of the history of the Christian era as it is related to the Christian Church. The Epistle to the Romans, second cycle, is

the Holy Spirit's revelation of the condition of humanity in its fallen state, and the means of the restoration, so that the desecrated temple may be consecrated, and men may become spiritual priests unto God. The third cycle, I. Corinthians, teaches the Holy Spirit's method of discerning the spirits of men by the Cross, and the whole order of this cycle will make known to men the means by which they may in gentle meekness become kings in the spiritual kingdom of God's grace and mercy. The fourth cycle, II. Corinthians and Galatians, is the Holy Spirit's word to men who seek after divine truth, grace, and righteousness; in these Epistles the marvellous union of God with humanity is made known, so that men are taught the truth, not merely that they live in God, but that God by His Holy Spirit lives in man. These are divine depths of wisdom which the intellect of man cannot fathom; they are lost in the ocean of God's thoughts, and they bow the head with all humility before Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of God. The fifth cycle in the Epistles is the Holy Spirit's manifestation of the Spirit of mercy in the body of Christ. It is swallowed up in Christ, crucified with Him, and bearing His marks, it goes forth to seek and to save the lost. Jesus Christ and His Cross, rejoicing in suffering, self-sacrifice, the transmutation of the Holy Spirit of mercy, with Christ for the Example, is the great thought for all those who by the Holy Spirit become the saviours of mankind. The sixth cycle in the Epistles may be termed the Holy Spirit's testimony upon the state of humanity; in the concrete figure Peter and John stand upon the side of holiness, truth, and righteousness, and Simon, the sorcerer, upon the side of deceit, lying, and unrighteousness. In humanity such thoughts as sanctification, loyalty to God, resurrection to eternal life, patience, love, and faithfulness are found in those who are obedient to the truth, whilst "the man of sin," "the son of perdition," "the lawless one," and "all deceit of unrighteousness" express the spirit ruling in the temple where the Holy Spirit is not to be found. The Holy Spirit is the Mediator and Intercessor in the body of Christ, and by the Holy Spirit there is communion with God in Christ. In the seventh cycle, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Holy Spirit points to the Son of God and to His mission, passion, and glory; and as Saviour, High Priest of righteousness, the Fulfiller of law and ceremony, in faithfulness, obedience, and self-sacrifice, men find the Example they ought to follow. In the eighth cycle, the Holy Spirit reveals to men that beyond suffering and persecution there is the inheritance that can never pass away; the holy priesthood and the perfect temple; the new heavens and earth wherein righteousness shall dwell; and in the spirit of the beloved apostle heaven is disclosed to view, and love is regnant in the body of Christ. Beyond all these, "in the Spirit on the Lord's day," the voice of the King is heard, and then there is revealed to men all prophecy; the gracious Healer and High Priest in His Church; the King and the kingdom of grace and mercy; the wisdom of God in His kingdom of grace; the mysteries of grace and iniquity in conflict; the mercy and judgments of God in the world; the success of the kingdom of truth and righteousness on the earth; the final overthrow of evil and the glorious victory of Christ and truth; the Holy City; the river of

life; the garden with the tree of life; and the open vision of pure knowledge where men shall know and see the Lord God as the Light of the universe.

These thoughts may seem to express the thoughts of Holy Scripture more than the facts of history; but in reality it is not so, because they are the complement of each other. The peculiarity of the position seems to be this, that the light is radiating from the Bible upon all history, and thus history is the object considered in the light of God's Word. The Bible is the Sun radiating forth rays of light in every direction, giving light to all that is within its reach; whilst history is the great absorbing world receiving the truth and grace of God, continuing to absorb what God graciously gives, thus heating, stimulating, disintegrating the dark mass of humanity until it is permeated with grace and truth. The mass is not radiant at all points at the same time, but by concentration on a single point there is the surcharge of divine grace and truth, and then the light in mankind flashes back to heaven in response to the light in God's Word; and in due time the whole mass will respond to the truth of God. The science of the Bible and the science of history harmonise with each other, but it is by the Spirit of God in His Word that men are brought to understand the relations that exist between them. When men are privileged to stand in the Light, then they see clearly that the First Cause exists beyond all effects as the Causer of all manifestations; that all manifestations are summed up in the Word; and that the Holy Spirit is the invisible Evolver of all manifestations of the works of God, by the divinely-appointed laws or order of the universe. As in the Bible the Father is the Cause, or Creator, the Son the Word, and the Holy Spirit the animating Power in prophets and apostles for the writing of the Word, so in history God is the Cause, Jesus Christ the perfect Manifestation of the will of God, and the Holy Spirit carries forward the great works of creation, providence, and redemption in the world amongst men by the divine methods of operation, or what men term laws.

THE THIRD WITNESS.

WHEN the thoughts are turned specially toward man, that is, a unit in the great mass of humanity, then it is found that he is the microcosm, or the small world which harmonises with the great world that is external to his own body. In the great world, the macrocosm, there are found all the forms, thoughts, emotions, and actions which agree with all that is known to exist within the form of flesh which covers man's being. By analysis, as in the visible and invisible creation, all that can be known in the universe is included in seven kingdoms which evolve from seven essences or principles, so in man there are found in his being, matter and motion, or force; organism, as the product of life; spirit, or the power by which there is knowledge; thought, or memory, by which thoughts are stored away and reproduced as they are required; and the rational powers of intellect and the moral nature, by which reasonable knowledge of the universe is obtained; and by faith,

knowledge of God's truth and righteousness are discerned. These six essences, principles, or powers constitute the pure moral creature made in the image of God in knowledge and righteousness; but man disobeyed God's holy law, he became an outlaw to the moral universe, and being shut out from communion with God by sin and self-seeking, the sword of judgment was stretched out against him, seeking his destruction. Within the kingdom of moral law—that is, of goodness, truth, and justice—there was no room for restoration; man forfeited his birthright, or estate of moral perfection, and so far as man's knowledge extended there was no means of reconciliation with God. It is by grace—the seventh principle, essence, or power—that man receives the mercy of God, the forgiveness of sin, and His favour; this is a new order of life in the universe unknown to the holy, unfallen creatures, and it reveals to all the rational intelligences in the universe the method of mercy that He is pleased to use as the means of bringing rebel creatures back to the bosom of His love, to the fold of the holy and the good. By the intellect men gain the knowledge of the relations of facts, that is, truth as found in science; by the moral nature man is enabled to apprehend the moral laws of God, His authority as King, Law-giver, and Judge; the duty of the creature, obedience in love, or in harmony with law and responsibility, and judgment if there is disobedience. But by grace, God's special revelation of mercy to rebels and sinful creatures, man transcends moral law, and by this kingdom he is taught what is supernal, heavenly, even the gracious love of God to His prodigal children. Each of these divisions is important in its own sphere, and must be kept distinct if men would understand God's method of creation and of re-creation when the state of sin, the transgression of moral law, existed amongst men.

Man is the microcosm of this world, not in abstract principles merely, but also in the active powers of his being. The conflicting powers found in history and in the Bible find their complement in a man, so that when the small kingdom of a human soul is known, then the soul is realised to be the Bible and history in miniature. This is what may be expected if it is true that in the Bible, history, and man, there are found seven principles, or kingdoms, in their manifestations, and that perverted, sinful condition which is named sin. The sphere of conflict is in the spiritual world of the lusts and passions, of the intellect, the moral nature, and the grace nature; and all thoughts, emotions, desires, passions, and aspirations, as found in the Bible, in history, or in a man, find their harmony in the light of these principles and their laws.

If the germ-nature of a child is considered in the light of the Word of God, then it may be seen that in it, as possibilities, there exist the nature of the first Adam, and all that is so vividly pictured in Genesis, chapters ii., iii.; Cain, or the fallen moral nature, with the lost birthright, the proud and rebellious spirit; Seth, or the grace of God by faith, may be found in the soul as the appointed means of grace in the reign of grace; yea, all that existed in humanity in the germ is found in man, and if there is not a world-wide manifestation in its manifold details, there is the small world with all its great possibilities; there are also the powers of apprehending by thought all that is in

the universe, and what man is able to think is the world within the soul from whence all his emotions and actions proceed. These thoughts do not exist in the babe, but there are implanted capacities or powers, and these harmonise with what is manifested in the world, and they may in due time be shown forth in the actions of a man.

But passing by the lower conditions of creation and what may be termed the prophetic prospect in man's being as related to the kingdom of grace, the thought arises that God's purpose of grace is to every soul the same in kind as it was to Abraham, that is to say, it is a gracious call, an election by God for the restoration of the soul to His favour. It is an undefinable call by man, it comes to a soul sitting in idolatry, in the old nature of things, which existed before the Flood, and this seed of grace finds its way into the soul, thus causing by a gracious instinct, not by rational knowledge, a seeking after better things than the desert of the soul and humanity can supply. This seed of grace has its aspirations, and by these the whole spiritual nature is moved in diverse directions; the intellect after the hidden things of God; the moral nature after the kingdom or power amongst the spiritual members for government; whilst the lusts and desires are all made more active in their places to gain their own ends. This is the state of infancy in which knowledge and duty are not understood; it is the time of development when the milk of the Word ought to be used for the nurture of the gracious nature within the soul.

The days of infancy pass by, and then there follow the experience as in Egypt under the hand of Moses, the desert, Sinai and the law, and the spiritual principles which ought to govern the soul as found in the history of Israel, from Joshua to Solomon. The experience of man during his minority, in the family, at school, and in every phase of life, is that of bondage; sin in the soul by selfish desires goads the soul in the direction it has no desire to go; in fact, the dominant devil of self is as great a tyrant as Pharaoh, and the lawless one brooks no control or interference in his dominion. There is the seed of grace in the soul that is grieved continually by this lawless, godless spirit, and it is by the power of God, that is Moses or the moral law in the soul, that the tyrant is cast down and his authority destroyed. The ages at which this experience becomes a reality in the soul of a child vary, but sin may be said to have lost its dominion when the law and authority of God, or the parent, are sufficiently strong to curb and restrain all lawless proceedings which are purely wilful or despotic in their nature. Deliverance from the power of sin may be termed redemption, but it is not salvation; the transition is from the lawless despot whose will is self-seeking and self-glorifying, to be subject to moral law for guidance and instruction. This is a very large field of experience, and to the selfish and self-willed it is far from being pleasant, though it is profitable to those who are exercised by good teachers and faithful parents. The experience of a child is that of being brought into a new world of thought, duty, responsibility, and action; it is oftentimes bitter enough, and in the soul there is nothing that will make up for what was formerly enjoyed; but God's gracious minister in the soul is nourished in this desert and gains power, an objective moral law is conceived, truth and righteousness

are perceived, the visible things of God's mercy are studied, the experiences of others are compared with personal conceptions, and by a review of the past the youth steps into his manhood, no longer under tutors and governors, but free to think, will, and act as may seem best. But the attainment of the majority, although it brings privileges, duties, and responsibilities, does not bring spiritual experience or fitness for the duties of life; the change ought to be introspective, retrospective, and prospective, because it is necessary to study the motives for all the actions, and whilst being guided by experience and by law there is required a steady eye fixed upon the goal where the race of life terminates. Man receives an inheritance, but it is already possessed by spiritual lusts and desires, and unless these are exterminated there is the risk of falling away from the righteous ways of God, and of subjection to the vile enemies of the gracious spirit. In the spiritual world of the soul the Word of God ought to be the prophet, priest, and ruler; no attention ought to be given to the lusts when they seek that the intellect should be their king in preference to the Word of God; and God's Beloved should possess the kingdom of the soul in all its powers, and by doing so He will bring peace, joy, and gladness into this kingdom that is within man. These thoughts as found in the Bible are not meant to fit into every man's experience, but they are meant to point out the great principles by which men are animated in this stage of their spiritual development; they are not meant to fit into the experience of the few, but to cover the whole world of such experiences, so that they may be useful for all men.

The experience prophesied or expressed in the Mosaic dispensation from Moses to David, along with the germ-thoughts that are found in the Book of Genesis, give to men the spirit of the kingdom of grace; its manifestation in a family and nation; and the method, laws, and order into which the visible forms are manifested. This is the presentation to the soul in sensible figures, symbols, rites, and ceremonies, which if received into the soul, become a kingdom of God in the visible order of things, and it harmonises with the knowledge that man obtains by means of the special senses, and by observation. This analogy of the Mosaic dispensation and the nature of man, requires much study to comprehend the full meaning of this method of education; but as a matter of fact, psychology, as related to a man, agrees with this development in the Word of God. But when the idea is conceived that the visible things in their order known by the special senses, are transmitted into the soul, then there arises the thought which is embodied in the fourth cycle in the Bible, and in the fourth principle in man's nature, that is, the thought-principle or memory, that all knowledge is subjective, or the world within is the true representation of what has been presented to it by the special senses, by observation, and by simple comparison. Within this field of thought, as bearing upon the kingdom of grace, the pure reason has not been in operation, the soul has been developing up to this point, so that by higher revelations there may come the fitness to reason upon them so that the science of the kingdom of grace might be known. The books of the Bible from ~~Chronicles~~ Chronicles to the Song of Solomon form the great memory, so to speak

of the Word of God ; it is the great capacity of undeveloped spiritual thoughts which will find a correspondence in the great spiritual development of the future. To put the matter in another form, these books harmonise with the state of the soul as God's will is treasured up in the memory ; Genesis, and the kingdom of Israel, being like the external world of forms conceived, and it is by comparing these with the higher revelations that the harmony of spiritual truth and righteousness is discovered ; but as expressed by the Lord in relation to the fig-tree of Judaism, the time for spiritual fruit is not yet come, there is still much to be revealed, known, and done, before the spiritual fig-tree of the kingdom of grace can possibly be understood by men.

It is at this point that the soul in experience fits in with the thoughts of the prophets, from Isaiah onward ; visible forms and ceremonies, and hidden wisdom, cannot satisfy the rational soul, and thus the intellect seeks after knowledge and the moral nature after righteousness. As the prophets desired to know the spiritual realities which the Holy Spirit inspired them to utter, so the soul of man may be represented as groping after the light of truth, the things which are good, true, and right ; diving into the mysteries of good and evil, and never reaching a solution of the problems which have confronted the intellectual powers of men. Rationalism finds its place in history from the days of Solomon to the coming of Jesus Christ ; not that the prophets were rationalists in the usual acceptance of that term, rather they were God's servants amongst men, trying to turn them away from their perverted reasonings toward the Messiah, the Hope of the world, who would reveal unto men what would be to them as the sunshine of truth and righteousness. It is at this phase of development that all honest rationalists must be placed. They live, not in the Christian era, but in the dark era of prophecy, and with their back to faith and righteousness they are groping after truth and goodness, and seeking to know about the mysteries of good and evil, light and darkness. They are in sympathy with the spirit that animated the thinkers of the pre-Christian era, and they omit in their intellectual reasonings the great revelations given to men by the Son of God, even divine wisdom and truth. As with the many, so with the individual soul, rationalism, that is, mere intellectual conceptions of truth, is unsatisfactory ; it solves none of the most important problems which have troubled men, as related to good and evil, heaven and hell, life and death, mortality and immortality, God and sin, and holiness and righteousness in the sight of God. The place is a great desert, a place of wrangling and strife ; and if ever peace is to reach the soul it must be by listening to the voice of the Baptist as he cries unto men to repent of their sin, to be obedient unto God, and by looking away from self to Jesus Christ, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

That there are greater difficulties for man than mere intellectual problems which tend to increase man's knowledge must be conceded ; in fact, man's greatest difficulties and troubles, as proved from history and personal experience, are not intellectual knowledge as to the relations of truths, but the anguish of the soul as it contemplates the thoughts of God, life, sin, law, judgment, death, and eternity. If men

shut out these great conceptions of existence from their world of thought and occupy themselves with art, science, literature, and many other subjects, all good enough in themselves, then they are mere dilettante worshippers of what is true, good, and beautiful, but they have not been awakened to righteousness and to the presence of God. There are few travail-pangs in such a world ; but where men grapple with sin, strain every nerve to obey the moral law, seek after God and find the sword of justice in their path barring their way to paradise, and begin to find that there is no return unto God and peace until that sword is sheathed in a soul so that there may be peace with God, then the calm of intellectualism is seen to be absurd, for it can do nothing to deliver a soul out of the hell in which it has been plunged, and by which it is surrounded, so that it may be lifted up to heaven by the power of God. It is in, and by, Jesus Christ, that the honest intellectualism which lands itself in this deplorable condition finds salvation ; the marvellous possibilities embodied in Jesus Christ, the Grace of God, open up a new heaven of thought, for He is Himself the Way to God, the forgiveness of sin and eternal life, and so by an experience that is oftentimes an agony, a wrestling, a forcing of the spirit into the things that are invisible, a new birth, there is such a change that old things are represented as having passed away and the man is brought into a new world. It is the gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ that meets and satisfies the great difficulties which surround the soul ; mere intellectual knowledge becomes a matter of secondary importance, and truth and righteousness as seen in Jesus Christ are known to be all-important for time and eternity. Not that the soul can grasp all that is in Jesus Christ, but there is quite enough to constrain the soul to accept Him without any reserve as God's Prophet revealing truth and righteousness ; the High Priest of the soul and of humanity through whom there is the forgiveness of sin by sacrifice ; the King whose laws are good and gracious ; the Teacher who can guide into all truth ; the Saviour who can deliver and save the soul from sin ; the Intercessor with the Father and the Purifier of the soul by His Holy Spirit ; the Peacemaker, the Son of God, who bears the burdens of His redeemed ; and the Man persecuted to death by wicked men, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. In all these the soul can trust Jesus Christ, and try to imitate Him in trying to be like Him in all that is good, true, right, and gracious ; and if the passion, death, resurrection, and glory of Christ in His kingdom are not matters of experience, they are the avenues by which higher spiritual hopes enter the soul, so that the future is not dark as the grave, but radiant with light and blessing for men.

Jesus Christ is to a man the objective Reality in the kingdom of God ; that is to say, He is the Truth, and by Him men gain knowledge ; He is Life, the moral Man in whom the Tree of life blossoms and bears fruit ; and He is the Grace of God, for by Him men find mercy with God and grace to help them in their days of trouble ; and besides being Light, Life, and Grace, He is also the Resurrection and the Life to men, so that they may live in Him. In Him, the Holy Spirit of grace, the Power to develop a gracious life in harmony with God.

moral and gracious laws, existed without measure ; but the aim and end of that matchless life and death were not merely example and sacrifice for reconciliation and favour, but that His Holy Spirit might be set free to work in man spiritually, so that the effects of His example and sacrifice might be manifested amongst men. He ascended into heaven so that humanity (or one human soul) might receive the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit of Christ ; in other words, have the gracious Christ incarnate in themselves, in a small measure, as He was in Jesus, the Christ, without any standard of human measurement. How ? and Why ? By the order or the laws of the kingdom of grace as laid down by the King ; and for this purpose that the soul might be changed in its order of thought, word, and action, to become like unto God, the Father as manifested in Jesus Christ. The sinner of the seed of Adam requires to become poor in spirit, so that he may be ready to receive the Holy Spirit by the Word of grace ; repentant because of sin, so that the Holy Spirit might cleanse the temple of the soul ; meek in heart, so that there may be a willing obedience to God's laws, and to the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit to renew the being in conformity with God's will ; strong desires to know truth and righteousness, so that there may be fitness for serving God ; the spirit of mercy and of forgiveness toward offenders against law cherished, so that the forgiveness and mercy of God may be free in their operations in the soul ; holiness or moral purity, so that there may be likeness to God and a knowledge of His holy will ; the peace-loving and peace-making spirit, so that evil men might be won back from their wicked ways and reconciled to God ; and patience with contentment cherished under the varying circumstances of life and death, friendships and persecutions, prosperity and adversity, so that there may be likeness to Christ and communion with Him in His life and passion. When the Holy Spirit sets before the soul the objective laws of the kingdom of grace and mercy, and these are graciously received and obeyed, then the Holy Spirit works in and by such a soul in a manner similar in spirit to that which He did by the followers of Christ in the first century of the Christian era. By Christians the Word of God is made the Medium of conveying the sacred fire of God's Word, Will, and Spirit into sinful men ; they become the healers of sin-sick souls, so that instead of sorrow, because of sin, there is peace, joy, and thanksgiving through God's restored favour ; the Word of God in public and private is made the great Power of God for discerning the spirits of men ; through the Word by the illumination of the Holy Spirit men become teachers of others in the mysteries of God ; there is the desire manifested, and efforts made to bring the lost sheep back to the fold of Christ ; the way of holiness and purity, resurrection from spiritual death is laid before men, so that in holiness, in the risen life of Christ, they may live unto God and not unto the world, the flesh, and the devil ; by such marvellous works of God's Holy Spirit even the enemies of God, through the gracious sons of peace, become the faithful servants of Christ amongst men, seeking in the face of persecution and death to extend the kingdom of Christ in the earth. Further, as the soul is related to God, it is animated by one thought, that is, how it may obey

the Truth in all things in a humble spirit. Being receptive of truth and righteousness there is conceived the great scheme of God's redemption in humanity as found in the great operating principles which lie at the back of all history and experience. The order, method, or laws of the spiritual kingdom of God's grace in the soul and amongst men are studied so that there may be the inworking of God's thoughts of grace in the soul, and absorption of the Holy Spirit; and the Word and Works of God terminate in the permeation of the soul with divine truth, so that the old Adam nature, sin and law, live no longer as powers possessing authority over the soul; the being is filled with Christ, the man is no longer his own master, he is Christ's possession, and the marks of Christ are upon him. As Christ radiated forth the divine grace and mercy amongst men, God's gracious Emanation of mercy, so from Christ's men, Christians in deed and truth, there ought to radiate forth the divine emanation of mercy, in pity and compassion, upon the sinful sons of men. Christians require to be careful in all their actions, because they are not their own, but God's sons, Christ's representatives, upon whom the dignity of princes of the realm of grace and mercy is laid, and therefore their love, loyalty, obedience, knowledge, and conformity to the will of God, should be perfect in all that is true, good, just, gracious, and merciful. This is the mystery of God's kingdom of grace, that the redeemed, meek, sanctified, merciful, holy, loyal, and loving brethren of Christ are "the sons of God," following His beloved Son, and seeking after what God desires. Now God's sons and Christ's brethren seem to be in disguise, and men cannot perceive the glory of the grace that is in them, but when He appears in His power and glory, then they will be like Him and see Him as He is. But for such a manifestation and favour toward the redeemed they have nothing of which they can boast; they are saved by grace through faith, which is God's gift unto them, and thus they ascribe "to the only wise God, our Saviour, glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever." Amen.

Is there any necessity to prolong the consideration of the unity and the harmony which are to be found in the Holy Scriptures, in creation and history, and in man? It does seem that these three witnesses agree in the same testimony, and that their harmony is all that man ought to desire. Each witness may be studied apart from the others, but the issue must be, in the light of God's Word, the same testimony to the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit. The line of study has been throughout specially upon God's Word, as expressing the thoughts of God's Spirit; the macrocosm of the world in its principles or essences, and their manifestations as found by science and philosophy; and the microcosm of the world as found manifested in man, as proved by science, experience, and philosophy. If these three agree in one testimony, as independent witnesses, of Creation, Providence, Redemption, or Restoration, there cannot be much that is wrong in interpreting these as the Spirit, the water, and the blood; but it would not be wise to limit the meaning to one interpretation, when it may be found applicable in other spheres of thought. Thus, for example, the Holy Scriptures may be divided in the same way, the Old Testament being-

the visible order of things, as in Mosaism, this would harmonise with the water; the Gospels which make known the life and death of Jesus Christ in the flesh, agree with the blood; and the Acts and Epistles which make known the spiritual kingdom of God, the Spirit, and these three agree in one. In the macrocosm of the world the same division may be made, visible things as representing the water; the perfect Man, Jesus, the blood; and redeemed humanity in its spiritual manifestations, the Spirit. In the microcosm of man's world the same order would be followed, the order of nature as known by the special senses being the water, Jesus Christ as conceived in the soul, the blood; and the spiritual truths of God, as they have been found in the Bible, the world, and experience, as the spirit. Again, as related to the following text, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost," it may be stated that the Old Testament is God's record upon the great questions of creation, sin, and redemption; the Gospels the record of the Word; and the Acts and Epistles the record of the Holy Spirit. The hidden things in the Bible, the world, and man, are of God; the manifestations of truth and righteousness are of the Word; and the spiritual conceptions according to the order of law and evolution are of the Holy Spirit. There must be terms for expressing essences, manifestations, and spiritual conceptions, but names only cover, they do not reveal, the essences, or fully explain the manifestations or spiritual laws in the Bible, the world, or in man. Hidden things and manifestations, essences and scientific relations, are not enough, there is also required the spiritual environment; to be "in the Spirit" and the Spirit in man is essential before man can comprehend the thoughts of God. It is "in the Spirit" that man is enabled, in some measure, to perceive and conceive the history of redemption, from the germ-seed onward in its development to the visible forms, the flower and the seed bearing seed. In other words, the Holy Bible is one great parable of the kingdom of heaven, showing the wisdom, power, justice, patience, grace, and mercy of God toward this great field, the world, where the good seed of grace and the tares of sin have been growing side by side, each in their order for the great harvest. To the God-fearing the time has been one of pain and sorrow; but the day of redemption draws nigh, and then the mourners will receive comfort, joy, and peace in their Saviour and King, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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