

## **Deuteronomy 1 - 3**, Section 1 of 6.

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### **Introduction.**

The character of the book on which we now enter it quite as distinct as that of any of the four preceding sections of the Pentateuch. Were we to judge from the title of the book, we might suppose that it is a mere repetition of what we find in previous books. This would be a very grave mistake, There is no such thing as mere repetition in the word of God. Indeed God never repeats Himself, either in His word or in His works. Wherever we trace our God, whether on the page of holy scripture, or in the vast fields of creation, we see divine fullness, infinite variety, marked design; and, just in proportion to our spirituality of mind, will be our ability to discern and appreciate these things. Here, as in all beside, we need the eye anointed with heavenly eye-salve. What a poor idea must the man entertain of inspiration who could imagine, for a moment, that the fifth book of Moses is a barren repetition of what is to be found in Exodus, Leviticus; and Numbers! Why, even in a human composition, we should not expect to find such a flagrant imperfection, much less in the perfect revelation which God has so graciously given us in His holy word. The fact is, there is not, from cover to cover of the inspired volume, a single superfluous sentence, not one redundant clause, not one statement without its own distinct meaning, its own direct application. If we do not see this, we have yet to learn the depth, force and meaning of the words, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God."

Precious words! Would they were more thoroughly understood in this our day! It is of the utmost possible importance that the Lord's people should be rooted, grounded and settled in the grand truth of the plenary inspiration of holy scripture. It is to be feared that laxity as to this most weighty subject is spreading in the professing church to an appalling extent. In many quarters it has become fashionable to pour contempt upon the idea of plenary inspiration. It is looked upon as the veriest childishness and ignorance. It is regarded by many as a great proof of profound scholarship, breadth of mind, and original thinking to be able, by free criticism, to find out flaws in the precious volume of God. Men presume to sit in judgment upon the Bible as though it were a mere human composition. they undertake to pronounce upon what is, and what is not, worthy of God. In fact they do, virtually, sit in judgement upon God Himself. The present result is, as might be expected, utter darkness and confusion, both for those learned doctors themselves, and for all who are so foolish as to listen to them. And as for the future, who can conceive the eternal destiny of all those who shall have to answer before the judgement seat of Christ for the sin of blaspheming the word of God, and leading hundreds astray by their infidel teaching?

We shall not, however, occupy time in commenting upon the sinful folly of infidels and sceptics — even though called Christians — or their puny efforts to cast dishonour upon that peerless volume which our gracious God has caused to be written for our learning. They will, some day or other, find out their fatal mistake. God grant it may not be too late! And as for us, let it be our deep joy and consolation to meditate upon the word of God, that so we may ever be discovering some fresh treasure in that exhaustless mine, some new moral glories in that heavenly revelation!

The Book of Deuteronomy holds a very distinct place in the inspired canon. Its opening lines are sufficient to prove this. "These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan, in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red Sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab."

Thus much as to the place in which the lawgiver delivered the contents of this marvellous book. The people had come up to the eastern bank of the Jordan, and were about to enter upon the land of promise. Their desert wanderings were nearly ended, as we learn from the third verse in which the point of time is as distinctly marked, as is the Geographical position in verse 1. "It came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that: Moses spake unto the children of Israel according unto all that the Lord had given him in commandment unto them."

Thus, not only have we both time and place set forth with divine precision and minuteness, but we also learn, from the words just quoted, that the communications made to the people, in the plains of Moab, were very far indeed from being a repetition of what has come before us in our studies on the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. Of this we have further and very distinct proof in a passage in Deuteronomy 29. "These are the Words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, *beside the covenant which he made with them at Horeb.*"

Let the reader note, particularly, these words. They speak of two covenants, one at Horeb, and one in Moab; and the latter, so far from being a mere repetition of the former, is as distinct from it as any two things can be. Of this we shall have the fullest and clearest evidence in our study of the profound book which now lies open before us.

True, the Greek title of the book, signifying the law a second time, might seem to give rise to the idea of its being a mere recapitulation of what has gone before; but we may rest assured it is not so. Indeed it would be a very grave error to think so. The book has its own specific place. Its scope and object are as distinct as possible. The grand lesson which it inculcates from first to last, is obedience, and that, too, not in the mere letter, but in the spirit of love, and fear—an obedience grounded upon a known and enjoyed relationship — an obedience quickened by the sense of moral obligations of the weightiest and most influential character.

The aged lawgiver, the faithful, beloved and honoured servant of the Lord was about to take leave of the congregated He was going to heaven and they were about to cross the Jordan; and hence his closing discourses are solemn and affecting in the very highest degree. He reviews the whole of their wilderness history, and that, too, in a manner most touching and impressive. He recounts the scenes and circumstances of their forty eventful years of desert life, in a style eminently calculated to touch the deepest moral springs of the heart. We hang over these most precious discourses with wonder and delight. They possess an incomparable charm arising from the circumstances under which they were delivered, as well as from their own divinely powerful contents. They speak to us no less effectively!- than to those for whom they were specially intended. Many of the appeals and exhortations come home to us with a power of application as if they had been uttered but yesterday.

And is it not thus with all scripture? Are we not continually struck with its marvellous power of adaptation to our own very state, and to the day in which our lot is cast? It speaks to us with a point and freshness as if it were written expressly for us — written this very day. There is nothing like scripture. Take any human writing: of the same date as the Book of Deuteronomy; if you could lay your hand on some volume written three thousand years ago, what would you find? A curious relic of antiquity, something to be placed in the British Museum, side by side with an Egyptian mummy, having no application whatever to us or to our time, a musty document, a piece of obsolete writing, practically useless to us, referring only to a state of society and to a condition of things long since passed away and buried in oblivion.

The Bible, on the contrary, is the Book for today. It is God's own Book, His perfect revelation. It

is His Own very voice speaking to each one of us. It is a Book for every age, for every clime, for every class, for every condition, high and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, old and young. It speaks in a language so simple that a child can understand it; and yet so profound that the most gigantic intellect cannot exhaust it. Moreover, it speaks right home to the heart; it touches the deepest springs of our moral being; it goes down to the hidden roots of thought and feeling in the soul; it judges as thoroughly. In a word, it is, as the inspired apostle tells us, "Quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4: 12.)

And then mark the marvellous comprehensiveness of its range. It deals as accurately and as forcibly with the habits and customs, the manners and maxims of the nineteenth century of the Christian era as with those of the very earliest ages of human existence. It displays a perfect acquaintance with man, in every stage of his history The London of today, and the Tyre of three thousand years ago are mirrored, with like precision and faithfulness, on the sacred page. Human life, in every stage of its development, is portrayed by a master hand, in that wonderful volume which our God has graciously penned for our learning.

What a privilege to possess such a book! — to have in our hands a divine Revelation! — to have access to a Book, every line of which is given by inspiration of God! — to have a divinely given history of the past, the present, and the future! Who can estimate aright such a privilege as this?

But then, this Book judges man — judges his ways — judges his heart. It tells him the truth about himself. Hence man does not like God's Book. An unconverted man would vastly prefer a newspaper or a sensational novel to the Bible. He would rather read the report of a trial in one of our criminal courts, than a chapter in the New Testament.

Hence, too, the constant effort to pick holes in God's blessed Book. Infidels, in every age and of every class, have laboured hard to find out flaws and contradictions in holy scripture. The determined enemies of the word of God are to be found, not only in the ranks of the vulgar, the coarse and the demoralised, but amongst the educated, the refined and the cultivated. Just as it was in the days of the apostles, "Certain lewd fellows of the baser sort," and "Devout and honourable women" Two classes so far removed from each other, socially and morally — found one point in which they could heartily agree, namely, the utter rejection of the word of God and of those who faithfully preached it (compare Acts 13: 50, with 17: 5.) So we ever find that men who differ in almost everything else agree in their determined opposition to the Bible. Other books are let alone. Men care not to point out defects in Virgil, in Horace, in Homer or Herodotus; but the Bible they cannot endure because it exposes them and tells them the truth about themselves and the world to which they belong.

And was it not exactly the same with the living word — the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ when He was here among men? Men hated Him because He told them the truth. His ministry, His words, His way's, His whole life was a standing testimony against the world; hence their bitter and persistent opposition: other men were allowed to pass on; but He was watched and waylaid at every turn of His path. The great leaders and guides of the people "sought to entangle him in His talk;" to find occasion against Him in order that they might deliver Him to the power and authority of the governor. Thus it was, during His marvellous life; and, at the close, when the blessed One was nailed to the cross between two malefactors, these latter were let alone; there were no insults hurled upon them; the chief priests and elders did not wag their heads at them. No; all the insults, all the mockery, all the coarse and heartless vulgarity — all was heaped upon the divine occupant Of the centre cross.

Now, it is well we should thoroughly understand the real source of all the opposition to the word

of God—whether it be the living Word or the written word. It will enable us to estimate it at its real worth. The devil hates the word of God — hates it with a perfect hatred; and hence he employs learned infidels to write books to prove that the Bible is not the word of God, that it cannot be, inasmuch as there are mistakes and discrepancies in it; and not only so, but, in the Old Testament, we find laws and institutions, habits and practices unworthy of a gracious and benevolent Being!

To all this style of argument we have one brief and pointed reply; of all these learned infidels we simply say, They know nothing whatever about the matter. They may be very learned, very clever, very deep and original thinkers, well made up in general literature, very competent to give an opinion on any subject within the domain of natural and moral philosophy, very able to discuss any scientific question. Moreover, they may be very amiable in private life, truly estimable characters, kind, benevolent, philanthropic, beloved in private and respected in public. All this they may be, but, being unconverted, and not having the Spirit of God, they are wholly unfit to form, much less to give, a judgement on the subject of holy scripture. If any one wholly ignorant of astronomy were to presume to sit in judgement on the principles of the Copernican system, these very men of whom we speak would, at once, pronounce him utterly incompetent to speak, and unworthy to be heard on such a subject, In short, no one has any right whatever to offer an opinion on a matter with which he is unacquainted. This is an admitted principle on all hands; and therefore its application in the case now before as cannot justly be called in question.

Now, the inspired apostle tells us, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, that, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; *neither can he know them*, because they are spiritually discerned." This is conclusive. He speaks of man in his natural state, be he ever so learned, ever so cultivated. He is not speaking of any special class of men; but simply of man in his unconverted state, man destitute of the Spirit of God. Some may imagine that the apostle refers to man in a state of barbarism, or savage ignorance. By no means; it is simply man in nature, be he a learned philosopher or an ignorant clown. " He cannot know the things of the Spirit of God." How then can he form or give a judgement as to the word of God? How can he take it upon him to say what is, or what is not worthy of God to write? And if he is audacious enough to do so — as alas! he is — who will be foolish enough to listen to him? His arguments are baseless; his theories worthless; his books only fit for the waste paper basket. And all this, be it observed, on the universally admitted principle above stated, that no one has any title to be heard on a subject of which he is wholly ignorant.

In this way we dispose of the whole tribe of infidel writers. Who would think of listening to a blind man on the subject of light and shades And yet such a man has much more claim to be heard than an unconverted man on the subject of inspiration. Human learning, however extensive and varied; human wisdom, however profound, cannot qualify a man to form a judgement upon the word of God. No doubt, a scholar may examine and collate MSS. simply as a matter of criticism; he may be able to form a judgement as to the question of authority for any particular reading of a passage; but this is a different matter altogether from an infidel writer undertaking to pronounce judgement upon the Revelation which God has, in His infinite goodness, given to us. We maintain that no man can do this. It is only by the Spirit who Himself inspired the holy scriptures that those scriptures can be understood and appreciated. The word of God must be received upon its own authority. If man can judge it or reason upon it, it is not the word of God at all. Has God given us a Revelation or has He not? If He has, it must be absolutely perfect, in every respect; and being such, it must be entirely beyond the range of human judgement. Man is no more competent to judge scripture than he is to judge God. The scriptures judge man, not man the Scriptures.

This makes all the difference. Nothing can be more miserably contemptible than the books which

infidels write against the Bible. Every page, every paragraph, every sentence only goes to illustrate the truth of the apostle's statement that, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; *neither can he know them*, because they are spiritually discerned." Their gross ignorance of the subject with which they undertake to deal is only equalled by their self-confidence. Of their irreverence we say nothing; for who would think of looking for reverence in the writings of infidels? We might perhaps look for a little modesty, were it not that we are fully aware of the bitter animus which lies at the root of all such writings, and renders them utterly unworthy of a moment's consideration. Other books may have a dispassionate examination; but the precious Book of God is approached with the foregone conclusion that it is not a divine Revelation because, forsooth, infidels tell us that God could not give us a written revelation of His mind.

How strange! Men can give us a revelation of their thoughts; and infidels have done so pretty plainly; but God cannot. What folly! What presumption! Why, we may lawfully inquire, could not God reveal His mind to His creatures? Why should it be thought a thing incredible? For no reason whatever, but because infidels would have it so. The wish is, in this case assuredly, father to the thought. The question raised by the old serpent, in the garden of Eden, nearly six thousand years ago, has been passed on, from age to age, by all sorts of sceptics, rationalists and infidels, namely, "Hath God said?" We reply, with intense delight, Yes; blessed be His Holy name, He has spoken — spoken to us. He has revealed His mind; He has given us the holy scriptures. "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God*, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect [*artios*], thoroughly furnished unto all good works." And again, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17; Rom. 15: 4.)

The Lord be praised for such words! They assure us that all scripture is given of God; and that all scripture is given to us. Precious link between the soul and God! What tongue can tell the value of such a link? God has spoken — spoken to us. His word is a rock against which all the waves of infidel thought dash themselves in contemptible impotency, leaving it in its own divine strength and eternal stability. Nothing can touch the word of God. Not all the powers of earth and hell, men and devils combined can ever move the word of God. There it stands, in its own moral glory, spite of all the assaults of the enemy, from age to age. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." What remains for us? Just this, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." Here lies the deep secret of peace. The heart is linked to the throne, yea, to the very heart of God by means of His most precious word, and is thus put in possession of a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. What can all the theories, the reasonings and the arguments of infidels effect? Just nothing. They are esteemed as the dust of the summer threshing floor. To one who has really learnt, through grace, to confide in the word of God — to rest on the authority of holy scripture, all the infidel books that ever were written are utterly worthless, pointless, powerless; they display the ignorance and terrible presumption of the writers; but as to scripture, they leave it just where it ever has been and ever will be, "settled in heaven," as immovable as the throne of God.\* The assaults of infidels cannot touch the throne of God; neither can they touch His word; and, blessed be His Name, neither can they touch the peace that flows through the heart that rests on that imperishable foundation. "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." "The word of our God shall stand for ever." "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1: 24, 25.)

{\*In referring to infidel writers, we should bear in mind that by far the most dangerous of such are those calling themselves Christian. In our young days, whenever we heard the word "infidel" we at once thought of a Tom Paine or a Voltaire; now, alas! we have to think of so-called bishops and doctors of the professing church. Tremendous fact!}

Here we have the same precious golden link again. The word which has reached us, in the form of glad tidings, is the word of the Lord which endureth for ever; and hence our salvation and our peace are as stable as the word on which they are founded. If *all* flesh is as grass, and *all* the glory of man as the flower of grass, then what are the arguments of infidels worth? They are as worthless as withered grass or a faded flower; and the men who put them forth and those who are moved by them will find them to be so, sooner or later. Oh! the sinful folly of arguing against the word of God — arguing against the only thing in all this world that can give rest and consolation to the poor weary human heart — arguing against that which brings the glad tidings of salvation to poor lost sinners — brings them fresh from the heart of God!

But we may perhaps, here, be met by the question so often raised, and which has troubled many and led them to fly for refuge to what is called "The authority of the church." The question is this, "How are we to know that the Book which we call the Bible is the word of God?" Our answer to this question is a very simple one, it is this, The One who has graciously given us the blessed Book can give us also the certainty that the Book is from Him. The same Spirit who inspired the various writers of the holy scriptures can make us know that those scriptures are the very voice of God speaking to us. It is only by the Spirit that any one can discern this. As we have already seen, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." If the Holy Spirit does not make us know, and give us the certainty that the Bible is the word of God, no man, or body of men can possibly do it; and, on the other hand, if He does give us the blessed certainty, we do not need the testimony of man.

We freely admit that, on this great question, a shadow of uncertainty would be positive torture and misery. But who can give us certainty? God alone. If all the men upon earth were to agree in their testimony to the authority of holy scripture; if all the councils that ever sat, all the doctors that ever taught, all the fathers that ever wrote were in favour of the dogma of plenary inspiration; if the universal church, if every denomination in Christendom were to assert to the truth that, the Bible is, in very deed, the word of God; in a word, if we had all the human authority that could possibly be had, in reference to the integrity of the word of God, it would be utterly insufficient, as a ground of certainty; and if our faith were founded on that authority, it would be perfectly worthless. God alone can give us the certainty that He has spoken, in His word; and blessed be His Name, when He gives it, all the arguments, all the cavillings, all the quibblings, all the questionings of infidels ancient and modern, are as the foam on the water, the smoke from the chimney top, or the dust on the floor. The true believer rejects them as so much worthless rubbish, and rests in holy tranquillity in that peerless Revelation which our God has graciously given us.

It is of the very last possible importance for the reader to be thoroughly clear and settled as to this grave question, if he would be raised above the influence of infidelity on the one hand, and superstition on the other. Infidelity undertakes to tell us that God has not given us a book-revelation of His mind — could not give it. Superstition undertakes to tell us that even though God has given us a Revelation, yet we cannot be assured of it without man's authority nor understand it without man's interpretation. Now it is well to see that, by both alike, we are deprived of the precious boon of holy scripture. And this is precisely what the devil aims at. He wants to rob us of the word of God; and he can do this quite as effectually by the apparent self-distrust that humbly and reverently looks to wise and learned men for,

authority, as by an audacious infidelity that boldly rejects all authority, human or divine.

Take a case. A father writes a letter to his son at Canton, a letter full of the affection and tenderness of a father's heart. He tells him of his plans and arrangements; tells him of everything that he thinks would interest the heart of a son — everything that the love of a father's heart could suggest. The son calls at the post office in Canton to inquire if there is a letter from his father. He is told by one official that there is no letter, that his father has not written and could not write, could not communicate his mind by such a medium at all; that it is only folly to think of such a thing. Another official comes forward, and says, "Yes; there is a letter here for you, but you cannot possibly understand it; it is quite useless to you, indeed it can only do you positive mischief inasmuch as you are quite unable to read it aright. You must leave the letter in our hands, and we will explain to you such portions of it as we consider suitable for you." The former of these two officials represents infidelity; the latter superstition. By both alike would the son be deprived of the longed for letter — the precious communication from his father's heart. But what, we may inquire, would be his answer to these unworthy officials? A very brief and pointed one we may rest assured. He would say to the first, "I know my father can communicate his mind to me, by letter; and that he has done so." He would say to the second, "I know my father can make me understand his mind far better than you can." He would say to both, and that, too, with bold and firm decision, "Give me up, at once, my father's letter; it is addressed to me, and no man has any right to withhold it from me."

Thus, too, should the simple-hearted Christian meet the *insolence* of infidelity, and the *ignorance* of superstition — the two special agencies of the devil, in this our day, in setting aside the precious word of God. "My Father has communicated His mind, and He can make me understand the communication." "All scripture is given *by inspiration of God*," And "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written *for our learning*." Magnificent answer to every enemy of God's precious and peerless Revelation, be he rationalist or ritualist!

We do not attempt to offer any apology to the reader for this lengthened introduction to the Book of Deuteronomy. Indeed we are only too thankful for an opportunity of bearing our feeble testimony to the grand truth of the divine inspiration of the holy scriptures. We feel it to be our sacred duty, as most surely it is our high privilege, to press upon all to whom we have access, the immense importance, yea, the absolute necessity of the most uncompromising decision on this point. We must faithfully maintain, at all cost, the divine authority, and therefore the absolute supremacy and all-sufficiency of the word of God, at all times, in all places, for all purposes. We must hold to it that the scriptures, having been given of God, are complete, in the very highest and fullest sense of the word; that they do not need any human authority to accredit them, or any human voice to make them available; they speak for themselves, and carry their own credentials with them. All we have to do is to believe and obey, not to reason or discuss. God has spoken it: it is ours to hearken and yield an unreserved and reverent obedience.

This is one grand leading point throughout the Book of Deuteronomy, as we shall see in the progress of our meditations; and never was there a moment, in the history of the church of God, in which it was more needful to urge home on the human conscience the necessity of implicit obedience to the word of God. It is, alas! but little felt. Professing Christians, for the most part, seem to consider that they have a right to think for themselves, to follow their own reason, their own judgement, or their own conscience. they do not believe that the Bible is a divine and universal guide book. They think there are very many things in which we are left to choose for ourselves. Hence the almost numberless sects, parties, creeds and schools of thought. If human opinion be allowed at all, then, as a matter of course, one man has as good a right to think as another; and thus it has come to pass that the professing

church has become a proverb and a byword for division.

And what is the sovereign remedy for this wide spread disease? Here it is, *absolute and complete subjection to the authority of holy scripture*. It is not men going to scripture to get *their* opinions and *their* views confirmed; but going to scripture to get the mind of God as to everything, and bowing down their whole moral being to divine authority: this is the one pressing need of the day in which our lot is cast — reverent subjection, in all things, to the supreme authority of the word of God. No doubt, there will be variety in our measure of intelligence, in our apprehension and appreciation of scripture; but what we specially urge upon all Christians is that condition of soul, that attitude of heart expressed in those precious words of the psalmist, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee." This, we may rest assured, is grateful to the heart of God. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

Here lies the true secret of moral security. Our knowledge of scripture may be very limited; but if our reverence for it be profound, we shall be preserved from a thousand errors, a thousand snares. and then there will be steady growth. We shall grow in the knowledge of God, of Christ, and of the written word. We shall delight to draw from those living and exhaustless depths of holy scripture, and to range through those green pastures which infinite grace has so freely thrown open to the flock of Christ. Thus shall the divine life be nourished and strengthened; the word of God will become more and more precious to our souls, and we shall be led by the powerful ministry of the Holy Ghost into the depth, fullness, majesty and moral glory of holy scripture. We shall be delivered completely from the withering influences of all mere systems of theology, high, low or moderate—a most blessed deliverance! We shall be able to tell the advocates of all the schools of divinity under the sun that, whatever elements of truth they may have in their systems, we have in divine perfectness in the word of God; not twisted and tortured to make them fit into a system, but in their right place in the wide circle of divine revelation which has its eternal centre in the blessed Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

#### Deuteronomy 1

"These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan, in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red Sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahah. There are eleven days' journey from Horeb, by the way of mount Seir, unto Kadesh-barnea."

The inspired writer is careful to give us, in the most precise manner, all the bearings of the place in which the words of this book were spoken in the ears of the people. Israel had not yet crossed the Jordan. They were just beside it; and over against the Red Sea where the mighty power of God had been so gloriously displayed, nearly forty years before. The whole position is described with a minuteness which shows how thoroughly God entered into everything that concerned His People. He was interested in all their movements and in all their way's. He kept a faithful record of all their encampments. There was not a single circumstance connected with them, however trifling, beneath His gracious notice. He attended to everything. His eye rested continually on that assembly as a whole, and on each member in particular. By day and by night, He watched over them. Every stage of their journey was under His immediate and most gracious superintendence. There was nothing, however small, beneath His notice; nothing, however great, beyond His power.

Thus it was with Israel, in the wilderness, of old; and thus it is with the church, now — the church, as a whole, and each member, in particular. A Father's eye rests upon us continually, His everlasting arms are around and underneath us, day and night. "He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous." He counts the hairs of our heads, and enters, with infinite goodness, into everything that

concerns us. He has charged Himself with all our wants and all our cares. He would have us to cast our every care on Him, in the sweet assurance that He careth for us. He, most graciously, invites us to roll our every burden over on Him, be it great or small.

All this is truly wonderful. It is full of deepest consolation. It is eminently calculated to tranquilize the heart, come what may. The question is, do we believe it? Are our hearts governed by the faith of it? Do we really believe that the Almighty Creator and Upholder of all things, who bears up the pillars of the universe, has graciously undertaken to do for us, all the journey through? Do we thoroughly believe that "The possessor of heaven and earth" is our Father, and that He has charged Himself with all our wants, from first to last? Is our whole moral being under the commanding power of those words of the inspired apostle: "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?" Alas! it is to be feared that we know but little of the power of these grand yet simple truths. We talk about them; we discuss them; we profess them; we give a nominal assent to them; but, with all this, we prove, in our daily life, in the actual details of our personal history, how feebly we enter into them. If we truly believed that our God has charged Himself with all our necessities — if we were finding all our springs in Him — if He were a perfect covering for our eyes, and a resting place for our hearts, could we possibly be looking to poor creature streams which so speedily dry up and disappoint our hearts? We do not, and cannot believe it. It is one thing to hold the theory of the life of faith, and another thing altogether to live that life. We constantly deceive ourselves with the notion that we are living by faith, when in reality we are leaning on some human prop which, sooner or later, is sure to give way.

Reader, is it not so? Are we not constantly prone to forsake the Fountain of living waters, and hew out for ourselves broken cisterns which can hold no water? And yet we speak of living by faith! We profess to be looking only to the living God for the supply of our need, whatever that need may be, when, in point of fact, we are sitting beside some creature stream, and looking for something there. Need we wonder if we are disappointed? How could it possibly be otherwise? Our God will not have us dependent upon ought or anyone but Himself. He has, in manifold places in His word, given us His judgement as to the true character and sure result of all creature confidence. Take the following most solemn assurance from the prophet Jeremiah, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited."

And then, mark the contrast. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is: for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river and shall not see when drought cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." (Jer. 17: 5-8.)

Here we have, in language divinely forcible, clear and beautiful, both sides of this most weighty subject put before us. Creature confidence brings a certain curse; it can only issue in barrenness and desolation. God, in very fruitfulness, will cause every human stream to dry up, every human prop to give way, in order that we may learn the utter folly of turning away from Him. What figure could be more striking or impressive than those used in the above passage? "A heath in the desert" — "Parched places in the wilderness" — "A salt land not inhabited." Such are the figures used by The Holy Ghost to illustrate all mere human dependence, all confidence in man.

But, on the other hand, what can be more lovely or more refreshing than the figures used to set forth the deep blessedness of simple trust in the Lord? "A tree planted by the waters" — "Spreading out

her roots by the rivers" — the leaf ever green — The fruit never ceasing. Perfectly beautiful! Thus it is with the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. He is nourished by those eternal springs that flow from the heart of God. He drinks at the Fountain, life-giving and free. He finds all His resources in the living God. There may be "heat," but he does not see it. "The year of drought" may come, but he is not careful. Ten thousand creature streams may dry up, but he does not perceive it, because he is not dependent upon them. He abides hard by the ever gushing Fountain. He can never want any good thing. He lives by faith.

And here, while speaking of the life of faith — that most blessed life, let us deeply understand what it is, and carefully see that we are living it. We some times hear this life spoken of in a way by no means intelligent. It is, not infrequently, applied to the mere matter of trusting God for food and raiment. Certain persons who happen to have no visible source of temporal supplies, no settled income, no property of any kind, are singled out and spoken of as "living by faith," as if that marvellous and glorious life had no higher sphere or wider range than temporal things; the mere supply of our bodily wants.

Now, we cannot too strongly protest against this most unworthy view of the life of faith. It limits its sphere, and lowers its range, in a manner perfectly intolerable to any one who understands ought of its most holy and precious mysteries. Can we, for a moment, admit that a Christian who happens to have a settled income of any kind is to be deprived of the privilege of living by faith? Or, further, can we permit that life to be limited and lowered to the mere matter of trusting God for the supply of our bodily wants? Does it soar no higher than food and raiment? Does it give no more elevated thought of God than that He will not let us starve or go naked?

Far away, and away for ever be the unworthy thought! The life of faith must not be so treated. We cannot allow such a gross dishonour to be offered to it, or such a grievous wrong done to those who are called to live it. What, we would ask, is the meaning of those few but weighty words, "The just shall live by faith? They occur, first of all, in Habakkuk 2. They are quoted by the apostle, in Romans 1, where he is, with a master hand, laying the solid foundation of Christianity. He quotes them again, in Galatians 3. where he is, with intense anxiety, recalling those bewitched assemblies to those solid foundations which they, in their folly, were abandoning. Finally, he quotes them again in Hebrews 10, where he is warning his brethren against the danger of casting away their confidence and giving up the race.

From all this, we may assuredly gather the immense importance and practical value of the brief but far-reaching sentence, "The just shall live by faith." And to whom does it apply? Is it only for a few of the Lord's servants, here and there, who happen to have no settled income? We utterly reject the thought. It applies to every one of the Lord's people. It is the high and happy privilege of all who come under the title — that blessed title, "the just." We consider it a very grave error to limit it in any way. The moral effect of such limitation is most injurious. It gives undue prominence to one department of the life of faith which — if any distinction be allowable — we should judge to be the very lowest. But, in reality, there should be no distinction. The life of faith is one. Faith is the grand principle of the divine life from first to last. By faith we are justified, and by faith we live; by faith we stand, and by faith we walk From the starting-post to the goal of the Christian course, it is all by faith.

Hence, therefore, it is a serious mistake to single out certain persons who trust the Lord for temporal supplies, and speak of them as living by faith, as if they alone did so. and not only so, but such persons are held up to the gaze of the church of God as some thing wonderful; and the great mass of Christians are led to think that the privilege of living by faith lies entirely beyond their range. In

short, they are led into a complete mistake as to the real character and sphere of the life of faith, and thus they suffer materially in the inner life.

Let the Christian reader, then, distinctly understand that it is his happy privilege, whoever he be, or whatever be his position, to live a life of faith, in all the depth and fullness of that word. He may, according to his measure, take up the language of the blessed apostle and say, "The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Let nothing rob him of this high and holy privilege which belongs to every member of the household of faith. Alas! we fail. Our faith is weak, when it ought to be strong, bold and vigorous. our God delights in a bold faith. If we study the gospels, we shall see that nothing so refreshed and delighted the heart of Christ as a fine bold faith — a faith that understood Him and drew largely upon Him. Look, for example, at the Syrophenician, in Mark 7; and the centurion, in Luke 7.

True, He could meet a weak faith — the very weakest. He could meet an "If thou *wilt*" with a gracious "I will" — an "If thou *canst*," with "If thou canst believe, all things are possible." The very faintest look, the feeblest touch was sure to meet with a gracious response; but the Saviour's heart was gratified and His spirit refreshed when He could say, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt;" and again, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

Let us remember this. We may rest assured it is the very same today, as when our blessed Lord was here amongst men. He loves to be trusted, to be used, to be drawn upon. We can never go too far in counting on the love of His heart or the strength of His hand. There is nothing too small, nothing too great for Him. He has all power in heaven and on earth. He is Head over all things to His church. He holds the universe together. He upholds all things by the word of His power. Philosophers talk of the forces and laws of nature. The Christian thinks with delight of Christ, His hand, His word, His mighty power. By Him all things were created, and by Him all things consist.

And then His love! What rest, what comfort, what joy to know and remember that the Almighty Creator and Upholder of the universe is the everlasting Lover of our souls; that He loves us perfectly; that His eye is ever upon us, His heart ever toward us; that He has charged Himself with all our wants, whatever these wants may be, whether physical, mental, or spiritual. There is not a single thing within the entire range of our necessities that is not treasured up for us in Christ. He is heaven's treasury, God's storehouse; and all this for us.

Why then should we ever turn to another? Why should we ever, directly or indirectly, make known our wants to a poor fellow mortal? Why not go straight to Jesus? Do we want sympathy? Who can sympathise with us like our most merciful High Priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities? Do we want help of any kind? Who can help us like our Almighty Friend, the Possessor of unsearchable riches! Do we want counsel or guidance? who can give it like the blessed One who is the very wisdom of God, and who is made of God unto us wisdom? Oh! let us not wound His loving heart, and dishonour His glorious Name by turning away from Him. Let us jealously watch against the tendency so natural to us to cherish human hopes, creature confidences, and earthly expectations. Let us abide hard by the fountain, and we shall never have to complain of the streams. In a word, let us seek to live by faith, and thus glorify God in our day and generation.

We shall now proceed with our chapter and, in so doing we would call the reader's attention to verse 2. It is certainly a very remarkable parenthesis. "There are eleven days' journey from Horeb, by the way of mount Seir, unto Kadesh-barnea." Eleven days! And yet it took them forty years! How was this? Alas! we need not travel far for the answer. It is only too like ourselves. How slowly we get over the ground! What windings and turnings! How often we have to go back and travel over the same

ground again and again. We are slow travellers, because we are slow learners. It may be we feel disposed to marvel how Israel could have taken forty years to accomplish a journey of eleven days; but we may, with much greater reason, marvel at ourselves. We, like them, are kept back by our unbelief and slowness of heart; but there is far less excuse for us than for them, inasmuch as our privileges are so very much higher.

Some of us have much reason to be ashamed of the time we spend over our lessons. The words of the blessed apostle do but too forcibly apply to us, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." Our God is a faithful and wise, as well as a gracious and patient Teacher. He will not permit us to pass cursorily over our lessons. Sometimes, perhaps, we think we have mastered a lesson, and we attempt to move on to another; but our wise Teacher knows better and He sees the need of deeper ploughing. He will not have us mere theorists or smatterers. He will keep us, if need be, year after year at our scales until we learn to sing.

Now while it is very humbling to us to be so slow in learning, it is very gracious of Him to take such pains with us, in order to make us sure. We have to bless Him for His mode of teaching, as for all beside; for the wonderful patience with which He sits down with us, over the same lesson, again and again, in order that we may learn it thoroughly.\*

{\*The journey of Israel, from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea. illustrates but too forcibly the history of many souls in the matter of finding peace. Many of the Lord's beloved people go on for years, doubting and fearing, never knowing the blessedness of the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free. It is most distressing to any one who really cares for souls to see the sad condition in which some are kept all their days, through legality, bad teaching false manuals of devotion, and such like. It is a rare thing now-a-days, to find in Christendom a soul fully established in the peace of the gospel. It is considered a good thing, a sign of humility, to be always doubting. Confidence is looked upon as presumption. In short, things are turned completely upside down. The gospel is not known; souls are under law, instead of under grace; they are kept at a distance, instead of being taught to draw nigh. Much of the religion of the day is a deplorable mixture of Christ and self, law and grace, faith and works. Souls are kept in a perfect muddle, all their days.

Surely these things demand the grave consideration of all who occupy the responsible place of teachers and preachers in the professing church. There is a solemn day approaching when all such will be called to render an account of their ministry.}

"And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the Lord had given him in commandment unto them." (Ver. 3.) These few words contain a volume of weighty instruction for every servant of God, for all who are called to minister in the word and doctrine. Moses gave the people just what he himself had received from God, nothing more, nothing less. He brought them into direct contact with the living word of Jehovah. This is the grand principle of ministry at all times. Nothing else is of any real value. The word of God is the only thing that will stand. There is divine power and authority in it. All mere human teaching however interesting, however attractive, at the time, will pass away and leave the soul without any foundation to rest upon.

Hence it should be the earnest, jealous care of all who minister in the assembly of God, to preach the word in all its purity, in all its simplicity; to give it to the people as they get it from God; to bring them face to face with the veritable language of holy scripture. Thus will their ministry tell, with living power, on the hearts and consciences of their hearers. It will link the soul with God Himself, by means

of the word, and impart a depth and solidity which no human teaching can ever produce.

Look at the blessed apostle Paul. Hear him express himself on this weighty subject. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." What was the object of all this fear and trembling "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Cor 2: 1-5)

This true-hearted faithful servant of Christ sought only to bring the souls of his hearers into direct personal contact with God Himself. He sought not to link them with Paul. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed" All false ministry has for its object the attaching of souls to itself. Thus the minister is exalted; God is shut out; and the soul is left without any divine foundation to rest upon. True ministry, on the contrary, as seen in Paul and Moses, has for its blessed object the attaching of the soul to God. Thus the minister gets his true place — simply an instrument; God is exalted; and the soul established on a sure foundation which can never be moved.

But let us hear a little more from our apostle on this most weighty subject. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. *For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received—nothing more, nothing less, nothing different*" how that Christ died for our sins *according to the scriptures*; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day *according to the scriptures*."

This is uncommonly fine. It demands the serious consideration of all who would be true and effective ministers of Christ. The apostle was careful to allow the pure stream to flow down from its living source, the heart of God, into the souls of the Corinthians. He felt that nothing else was of any value. If he had sought to link them on to himself, he would have sadly dishonoured his Master; done them a grievous wrong; and he himself would, most assuredly, suffer loss in the day of Christ.

But no; Paul knew better. He would not, for worlds, lead any to build upon himself. Hear what he says to his much loved Thessalonians. "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, *when ye received the word of God* which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, *as it is in truth, the word of God*, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." (1 Thess. 2: 13.)

We feel solemnly responsible to commend this grave and important point to the serious consideration of the church of God. If all the professed ministers of Christ were to follow the example of Moses and Paul, in reference to the matter now before us, we should witness a very different condition of things in the Professing church; but the plain and serious fact is that the church of God, like Israel of old, has wholly departed from the authority of His word. Go where you will, and you find things done and taught which have no foundation in scripture. Things are not only tolerated but sanctioned and stoutly defended which are in direct opposition to the mind of Christ. If you ask for the divine authority for this, that and the other institution or practice, you will be told that Christ has not given us directions as to matters of church government; that in all questions of ecclesiastical polity, clerical orders, and liturgical services, He has left us free to act according to our consciences, judgement, or religious feelings; that it is simply absurd to demand a "Thus saith the Lord" for all the details connected with our religious institutions; there is a broad margin left to be filled up according to our national customs, and our peculiar habits of thought. It is considered that professing Christians are left perfectly free to form themselves into so-called churches, to choose their own form of government,

to make their own arrangements, and to appoint their own office-bearers.

Now the question which the Christian reader has to consider is, "Are these things so?" Can it be that our Lord Christ has left His church without guidance as to matters so interesting and momentous? Can it be possible that the church of God is worse off, in the matter of instruction and authority, than Israel? In our studies on the books of Exodus, Leviticus; and Numbers, we have seen — for who could help seeing? — the marvellous pains which Jehovah took to instruct His people as to the most minute particulars connected with their public worship and private life. As to the tabernacle, the temple; the priesthood, the ritual, the various feasts and sacrifices, the periodical solemnities, the months, the days, the very hours, all was ordered and settled with divine precision. Nothing was left to mere human arrangement. Man's wisdom, his judgement, his reason, his conscience had nothing whatever to do in the matter. Had it been left to man, how should we ever have had that admirable, profound and far-reaching typical system which the inspired pen of Moses has set before us? If Israel had been allowed to do what — as some would fain persuade us — the church is allowed, what confusion, what strife, what division, what endless sects and parties would have been the inevitable result.

But it was not so. The word of God settled everything "As the Lord commanded Moses." This grand and influential sentence was appended to everything that Israel had to do, and to everything they were not to do. Their national institutions and their domestic habits, their public and their private life — all came under the commanding authority of "Thus saith the Lord." There was no occasion for any member of the congregation to say, "I Cannot see this," or "I cannot go with that," or "I cannot agree with the other." Such language could only be regarded as the fruit of self-will. He might just as well say, "I cannot agree with Jehovah." And why? simply because the word of God had spoken as to everything, and that too with a clearness and simplicity which left no room whatever for human discussion. Throughout the whole of the Mosaic economy there was not the breadth of a hair of margin left in which to insert the opinion or the judgement of man. It pertained not to man to add the weight of a feather to that vast system of types and shadows which had been planned by the divine mind, and set forth in language so plain and pointed, that all Israel had to do was to *obey* — not to argue, not to reason, not to discuss, but to obey.

Alas! alas! they failed, as we know. They did their own will; they took their own way; they did "every man that which was right in his own eyes." They departed from the word of God, and followed the imaginations and devices of their own evil heart, and brought upon themselves the wrath and indignation of offended Deity, under which they suffer till this day, and shall yet suffer unexampled tribulation.

But all this leaves untouched the point on which we are just now dwelling. Israel had the oracles of God; and these oracles were divinely sufficient for their guidance in everything. There was no room left for the commandments and doctrines of men. The word of the Lord provided for every possible exigency, and that word was so plain as to render human comment needless.

Is the church of God worse off, as regards guidance and authority, than Israel of old. Are Christians left to think and arrange for themselves in the worship and service of God? Are there any questions left open for human discussion? Is the word of God sufficient, or is it not? Has it left anything unprovided for? Let us hearken diligently to the following powerful testimony: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be *perfect (artios) throughly furnished unto all good works*" (2 Tim. 3.)

This is perfectly conclusive. Holy scripture contains all that the man of God can possibly require

to make him perfect, to equip him thoroughly for everything that can be called a "good work." And if this be true as to the man of God individually, it is equally true as to the church of God collectively. Scripture is all-sufficient, for each, for all. Thank God that it is so. What a signal mercy to have a divine Guidebook! Were it not so, what should we do? whither should we turn? what would become of us? If we were left to human tradition and human arrangement, in the things of God, what hopeless confusion! What clashing of opinions! What conflicting judgements! And all this of necessity, inasmuch as one man would have quite as good a right as another to put forth his opinion and to suggest his plan.

We shall perhaps be told that, notwithstanding our possession of the holy scripture, we have, nevertheless, sects, parties, creeds, and schools of thought almost innumerable. But Why is this" Simply because we refuse to submit our whole moral being to the authority of holy scripture. This is the real secret of the matter — the true source of all those sects and parties which are the shame and sorrow of the church of God.

It is vain for men to tell us that these things are good in themselves; that they are the legitimate fruit of that free exercise of thought and private judgement which form the very boast and glory of Protestant Christianity. We do not and cannot believe, for a moment, that such a plea will stand, before the judgement-seat of Christ. We believe, on the contrary that this very boasted freedom of thought and independence of judgement are in direct opposition to that spirit of profound and reverent obedience which is due to our adorable Lord and Master. What right has a servant to exercise his private judgement in the face of his master's plainly expressed will? None whatever. The duty of a servant is simply to obey, not to reason or to question; but to do what he is told. He fails as a servant, just in so far as he exercises his own private judgement. The most lovely moral trait in a servant's character is implicit, unquestioning, and unqualified obedience. The one grand business of a servant is to do his master's will.

All this will be fully admitted in human affairs; but, in the things of God, men think themselves entitled to exercise their private judgement. It is a fatal mistake. God has given us His word; and that word is so plain that wayfaring men, though fools, need not err therein. Hence, therefore, if we were all guided by that word; if we were all to bow down, in a spirit of unquestioning obedience, to its divine authority, there could not be conflicting opinions and opposing sects. It is quite impossible that the voice of holy scripture can teach opposing doctrines. It cannot possibly teach one man Episcopacy; another, Presbyterianism; and another, Independency. It cannot possibly furnish a foundation for opposing schools of thought. It would be a positive insult offered to the divine volume to attempt to attribute to it all the sad confusion of the professing church. Every pious mind must recoil, with just horror, from such an impious thought. Scripture cannot contradict itself, and therefore if two men or ten thousand men are exclusively taught by scripture, they will think alike.

Hear what the blessed apostle says to the church at Corinth — says to us. "Now I beseech you, brethren, *by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*" — mark the mighty moral force of this appeal — "*that ye all speak the same thing*, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in *the same mind*, and in *the same judgement*."

Now, the question is, how was this most blessed result to be reached? Was it by each one exercising the right of private judgement? Alas! it was this very thing that gave birth to all the division and contention in the assembly at Corinth, and drew forth the sharp rebuke of the Holy Ghost. Those poor Corinthians thought they had a right to think, and judge and choose for themselves, and what was the result? "It hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of

Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that *every one of you saith*, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided?"

Here we have private judgement and its sad fruit, its necessary fruit. One man has quite as good a right to think for himself as another and no man has any right whatsoever to force his opinion upon his fellow. Where then lies the remedy? In flinging to the winds our private judgments, and reverently submitting ourselves to the supreme and absolute authority of holy scripture. If it be not thus, how could the apostle beseech the Corinthians to "speak the same thing, and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgement"? Who was to prescribe the "thing" that all were to "speak"? In Whose "mind" or whose "judgment" were all to be "perfectly joined together" Had any one member of the assembly, however gifted or intelligent, the slightest shadow of a right to set forth what his brethren were to speak, to think or to judge? Most certainly not. There was one absolute, because divine authority to which all were bound, or rather privileged to submit themselves. Human opinions, man's private judgement, his conscience, his reason, all these things must just go for what they are worth; and, most assuredly, they are perfectly worthless as authority. The word of God is the *only* authority; and if we are all governed by that we shall "all speak the same thing," and "there will be no divisions among us;" but we shall "be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgement."

Lovely condition! But alas! it is not the present condition of the church of God; and therefore it is perfectly evident that we are not all governed by the one supreme, absolute and all-sufficient authority — the voice of holy scripture — that most blessed voice that can never utter one discordant note — a voice ever divinely harmonious to the circumcised ear.

Here lies the root of the whole matter. The church has departed from the authority of Christ, as set forth in His word. Until this is seen, it is only lost time to discuss the claims of conflicting systems ecclesiastical or theological. If a man does not see that it is his sacred duty to test every ecclesiastical system, every liturgical service, and every theological creed, by the word of God, discussion is perfectly useless. If it be allowable to settle things according to expediency, according to man's judgement, his conscience, or his reason, then verily we may as well, at once, give up, the case as hopeless. If we have no divinely settled authority, no perfect standard, no infallible guide, we cannot see how it is possible for any one to possess the certainty that he is treading in the true path. If indeed it be true that we are left to choose for ourselves, amid the almost countless paths which lie around us, then farewell to all certainty; farewell to peace of mind and rest of heart; farewell to all holy stability of purpose and fixedness of aim. If we cannot say of the ground we occupy, of the path we pursue, and of the work in which we are engaged, "This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded" we may rest assured we are in a wrong position, and the sooner we abandon it the better.

Thank God, there is no necessity whatever for His child or His servant to continue, for one hour, in connection with what is wrong. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But how are we to know what is iniquity? By the word of God, Whatever is contrary to scripture, whether in morals or in doctrines, is iniquity, and I must depart from it, cost what it may. It is an individual matter. *"Let every one."* *"He that hath ears."* *"He that overcometh."* *"If any man hear my voice."*

Here is the point. Let us mark it well. It is Christ's voice. It is not the voice of this good man or that good man; it is not the voice of the church, the voice of the fathers, the voice of general councils, but the voice of our own beloved Lord and Master. It is the individual conscience in direct, living contact with the voice of Christ, the living, eternal word of God, the holy scriptures. Were it merely a

question of human conscience, or judgement, or authority, we are, at once, plunged in hopeless uncertainty, inasmuch as what one man might judge to be iniquity, another might consider to be perfectly right. There must be some fixed standard to go by, some supreme authority from which there can be no appeal; and, blessed be God, there is. God has spoken; He has given us His word; and it is at once our bounden duty, our high privilege, our moral security, our true enjoyment, to obey that word.

Not man's interpretation of the word, but the word itself. This is all-important. We must have nothing — absolutely nothing between the human conscience and divine revelation. Men talk to us about the authority of the church. Where are we to find it? Suppose a really anxious, earnest, honest soul, longing to know the true way. He is told to listen to the voice of the church. He asks, which church? Is it the Greek, Latin, Anglican or Scotch church? Not two of them agree. Nay more, there are conflicting parties, contending sects, opposing schools of thought in one and the self-same body. Councils have differed; fathers have disagreed; popes have anathematised one another. In the Anglican Establishment, we have high church, low church, and broad church, each differing from the rest. In the Scotch or Presbyterian church, we have the Established church, the United Presbyterian, and the Free church. And then if the anxious inquirer turns away, in hopeless perplexity, from those great bodies, in order to seek guidance amid the ranks of Protestant dissenters, is he likely to fare any better?

Ah! reader, it is perfectly hopeless. The whole professing church has revolted from the authority of Christ, and cannot possibly be a guide or an authority for any one. In the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation, the church is seen under judgement, and the appeal, seven times repeated, is, "He that hath an ear, let him hear" — what, The voice of the church? Impossible! the Lord could never direct us to hear the voice of that which is itself under judgement. Hear what, then "Let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

And where is this voice to be heard? Only in the holy scriptures, given of God, in His infinite goodness, to guide our souls in the way of peace and truth, notwithstanding the hopeless ruin of the church, and the thick darkness and wild confusion of baptised Christendom. It lies not within the compass of human language to set forth the value and importance of having a divine and therefore an infallible and all sufficient guide and authority for our individual path.

But, be it remembered, we are solemnly responsible to bow to that authority, and follow that guide. It is utterly vain, indeed morally dangerous, to profess to have a divine guide and authority unless we are thoroughly subject thereto. This it was that characterised the Jews, in the days of our Lord. They had the scriptures, but they did not obey them. And one of the saddest features in the present condition of Christendom is its boasted possession of the Bible, while the authority of that Bible is boldly set aside.

We deeply feel the solemnity of this, and would earnestly press it upon the conscience of the Christian reader. The word of God is virtually ignored amongst us. Things are practised and sanctioned, on all hands, which not only have no foundation in scripture, but are diametrically opposed to it. We are not exclusively taught and absolutely governed by scripture.

All this is most serious, and demands the attention of all the Lord's people, in every place. We feel compelled to raise a warning note, in the ears of all Christians, in reference to this most weighty subject. Indeed, it is the sense of its gravity and vast moral importance that has led us to enter upon the service of writing these "Notes on the Book of Deuteronomy. It is our earnest prayer that the Holy Ghost may use these pages to recall the hearts of the Lord's dear people to their true and proper place, even the place of reverent allegiance to His blessed word. We feel persuaded that what will characterise all those who will walk devotedly, in the closing hours of the church's earthly history, will be profound

reverence for the word of God, and genuine attachment to the Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The two things are inseparably bound together by a sacred and imperishable link.

"The Lord our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount; turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea-side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto, Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates." (Vers. 6, 7.)

We shall find, throughout the whole of the book of Deuteronomy, the Lord dealing much more directly and simply with the people, than in any of the three preceding books; so far is it from being true that Deuteronomy is a mere repetition of what has passed before us, in previous sections. For instance, in the Passage just quoted, there is no mention of the movement of the cloud; no reference to the sound of the trumpet. "The Lord our God spake unto us." We know, from the Book of Numbers, that the movements of the camp were governed by the movements of the cloud, as communicated by the sound of the trumpet. but neither the trumpet nor the cloud is alluded to in this book. It is much more simple and familiar. "The Lord our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount."

This is very beautiful. it reminds us somewhat of the lovely simplicity of patriarchal times, when the Lord spake unto the fathers as a man speaketh to his friend. It was not by the sound of a trumpet, or by the movement of a cloud that the Lord communicated His mind to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He was so very near to them that there was no need, no room for an agency characterised by ceremony and distance. He visited them, sat with them, partook of their hospitality, in all the intimacy of personal friendship.

Such is the lovely simplicity of the order of things in patriarchal times; and this it is which imparts a peculiar charm to the narratives of the Book of Genesis.

But, in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, we have something quite different. There we have set before us a vast system of types and shadows, rites, ordinances, and ceremonies, imposed on the people for the time being, the import of which is unfolded to us in the Epistle to the Hebrews. "The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing; which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation." (Heb. 9: 8-10.)

Under this system, the people were at a distance from God. It was not with them as it had been with their fathers, in the Book of Genesis. God was shut in from them; and they were shut out from Him. The leading features of the Levitical ceremonial, so far as the people were concerned, were, bondage, darkness, distance. But, on the other hand, its types and shadows pointed forward to that one great sacrifice which is the foundation of all God's marvellous counsels and purposes, and by which He can, in perfect righteousness, and according to all the love of His heart, have a people near unto Himself, to the praise of the glory of His grace, throughout the golden ages of eternity.

Now, it has been already remarked, we shall find, in Deuteronomy, comparatively little of rites and ceremonies. The Lord is seen more in direct communication with the people; and even the priests, in their official capacity, come rarely before us; and, if they are referred to, it is very much more in a moral than in a ceremonial way. Of this we shall have ample proof as we pass along; it is a marked feature of this beautiful book.

"The Lord our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount: turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites." What a rare privilege, for any people, to have the Lord so near to them, and so interested in all their movements, and in all their concerns great and small: He knew how long they ought to remain in any one place, and whither they should next bend their steps. They had no need to harass themselves about their journeyings, or about anything else. They were under the eye, and in the hands of One whose wisdom was unerring, whose power was omnipotent, whose resources were inexhaustible, whose love was infinite, who had charged Himself with the care of them, who knew all their need, and was prepared to meet it, according to all the love of His heart, and the strength of His holy arm.

What, then, we may ask, remained for them to do? What was their plain and simple duty? Just to obey. It was their high and holy privilege to rest in the love and obey the commandments of Jehovah their covenant God. Here lay the blessed secret of their peace, their happiness, and their moral security. They had no need whatever to trouble themselves about their movements, no need of planning or arranging. Their journeyings were all ordered for them by One who knew every step of the way from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea; and they had just to live by the day, in happy dependence upon Him.

Happy position! Privileged path! Blessed portion! But it demanded a broken will — an obedient mind — a subject heart. If, when Jehovah had said, "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough," they, on the contrary, were to form the plan of compassing it a little longer, they would have had to compass it without Him. His companionship, His counsel and His aid, could only be counted upon in the path of obedience.

Thus it was with Israel, in their desert wanderings, and thus it is with us. It is our most precious privilege to leave all our matters in the hands, not merely of a covenant God, but of a loving Father. He arranges our movements for us; He fixes the bounds of our habitation; He tells us how long to stay in a place, and where to go next. He has charged Himself with all our concerns, all our movements, all our wants. His gracious word to us is, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." And what then? "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

But it may be the reader feels disposed to ask, "How does God guide His people now? We cannot expect to hear His voice telling us when to move or where to go." To this we reply, at once, it cannot surely be that the members of the church of God, the body of Christ, are worse off, in the matter of divine guidance, than Israel in the wilderness. Cannot God guide His children — cannot Christ guide His servants, in all their movements, and in all their service? Who could think, for a moment, of calling in question a truth so plain and so precious? True, we do not expect to hear a voice, or see the movement of a cloud; but we have what is very much better, very much higher, very much more intimate. We may rest assured our God has made ample provision for us in this, as in all beside, according to all the love of His heart.

Now, there are three ways in which we are guided; we are guided by the word; we are guided by the Holy Ghost; and we are guided by the instincts of the divine nature. And we have to bear in mind that the instincts of the divine nature, the leadings of the Holy Ghost, and the teaching of holy scripture will always harmonise. This is of the utmost importance to keep before us. A person might fancy himself to be led by the instincts of the divine nature, or by the Holy Spirit, to pursue a certain line of action involving consequences at issue with the word of God. Thus his mistake would be made apparent. It is a very serious thing for any one to act on mere impulse or impression. By so doing, he may fall into a snare of the devil, and do very serious damage to the cause of Christ. We must calmly

weigh our impressions in the balances of the sanctuary, and faithfully test them by the standard of the divine word. In this way, we shall be preserved from error and delusion. It is a most dangerous thing to trust impressions or act on impulse. We have seen the most disastrous consequences produced by so doing. Facts may be reliable. Divine authority is absolutely infallible. Our own impressions may prove as delusive as a will-o'-the-wisp, or a mirage of the desert. Human feelings are most untrustworthy. We must ever submit them to the most severe scrutiny, lest they betray us into some fatally false line of action. We can trust scripture, without a shadow of misgiving; and we shall find, without exception, that the man who is led by the Holy Ghost, or guided by the instincts of the divine nature, will never act in opposition to the word of God. This is what we may call an axiom in the divine life — an established rule in practical Christianity. Would that it had been more attended to in all ages of the church's history! Would that it were more pondered in our own day!

But there is another point, in this question of divine guidance, which demands our serious attention. We, not infrequently, hear people speak of "The finger of divine Providence" as something to be relied upon for guidance. This may be only another mode of expressing the idea of being guided by circumstances, which, we do not hesitate to say, is very far indeed from being the proper kind of guidance for a Christian.

No doubt, our Lord may and does, at times, intimate His mind, and indicate our path by His providence; but we must be sufficiently near to Him to be able to interpret the providence aright, else we may find that what is called "an opening of providence" may actually prove an opening by which we slip off the holy path of obedience. Surrounding circumstances, just like our inward impressions, must be weighed in the presence of God, and judged by the light of His word, else they may lead us into the most terrible mistakes. Jonah might have considered it a remarkable providence to find a ship going to Tarshish; but had he been in communion with God, he would not have needed a ship. In short, the word of God is the one grand test and perfect touchstone for everything — for outward circumstances and inward impressions — for feelings, imaginations and tendencies — all must be placed under the searching light of holy scripture and there calmly and seriously judged. This is the true path of safety, peace and blessedness for every child of God.

It may, however, be said, in reply to all this, that we cannot expect to find a text of scripture to guide us in the matter of our movements, or in the thousand little details of daily life. Perhaps not; but there are certain great principles laid down in scripture which, if properly applied, will afford divine guidance even where we might not be able to find a particular text. And not only so, but we have the fullest assurance that our God can and does guide His children, in all things." "The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord." "The meek will he guide in judgement; and the meek will he teach his way." "I will guide thee with mine eye." He can signify His mind to us as to this or that particular act or movement. If not, where are we? How are we to get on? How are we to regulate our movements? Are we to be drifted hither and thither by the tide of circumstances? Are we left to blind chance, or to the mere impulse of our own will?

Thank God, it is not so. He can, in His own perfect way, give us the certainty of His mind, in any given case; and, without that certainty, we should never move. Our Lord Christ — all homage to His peerless Name! — can intimate His mind to His servant as to where He would have him to go and what He would have him to do; and no true servant will ever think of moving or acting without such intimation. We should never move or act in uncertainty. If we are not sure, let us be quiet and wait. Very often it happens that we harass and fret ourselves about movements that God would not have us to make at all. A person once said to a friend, "I am quite at a loss to know which way to turn." Then, "Don't turn at all" was the friend's wise reply.

But here an all-important moral point comes in, and that is, our whole condition of soul. This, we may rest assured, has very much to do with the matter of guidance. It is "the meek he will guide in judgement and teach his way." We must never forget this. If only we are humble and self-distrusting, if we wait on our God, in simplicity of heart, uprightness of mind, and honesty of purpose, He will, most assuredly, guide us. But it will never do to go and ask counsel of God in a matter about which our mind is made up, or our will is at work.

This is a fatal delusion. Look at the case of Jehoshaphat, in I Kings 22. "It came to pass, in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel" — a sad mistake, to begin with — "And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria? And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramoth Gilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses, and," as we have it in 2 Chronicles 18: 3, "we will be with thee in the war."

Here we see that his mind was made up before ever he thought of asking counsel of God in the matter. He was in a false position and a wrong atmosphere altogether. He had fallen into the snare of the enemy, through lack of singleness of eye, and hence he was not in a fit state to receive or profit by divine guidance. He was bent on his own will, and the Lord left him to reap, the fruits of it; and, but for infinite and sovereign mercy, he would have fallen by the sword of the Syrians, and been borne a corpse from the battle field.

True, he did say to the king of Israel, "Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord today." But where was the use of this, when he had already pledged himself to a certain line of action? What folly for any one to make up his mind, and then go and ask for counsel! Had he been in a right state of soul, he never would have sought counsel, in such a case at all. But his state of soul was bad, his position false, and his purpose in direct opposition to the mind and will of God. Hence, although he heard, from the lips of Jehovah's messenger, His solemn judgement on the entire expedition, yet he took his own way, and well-nigh lost his life in consequence.

We see the same thing in the forty-second chapter of Jeremiah. The people applied to the prophet to ask counsel as to their going down into Egypt. But they had already made up their minds, as to their course. They were bent on their own will. Miserable condition! Had they been meek and humble, they would not have needed to ask counsel, in the matter. But they said unto Jeremiah the prophet, "Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the Lord *thy* God" — Why not say, The Lord *our* God? — "even for all this remnant: (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us;) that the Lord *thy* God may show as the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do. Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, I have heard you; behold, I will pray unto the Lord *your* God, according to your words; and it shall come to pass, that whatsoever thing the Lord shall answer you, I will declare it unto you: I will keep nothing hack from you. Then they said to Jeremiah, The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us; if we do not even according to all things for the which the Lord *thy* God shall send thee to us. Whether it be good, or whether it be evil," — How could the will of God be anything but good? — "we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the Lord our God."

Now, all this seemed very pious and very promising. But mark the sequel. When they found that the judgement and counsel of God did not tally with their will, "Then spake.... *all the proud men*, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely; the Lord our God hath not sent thee to say, go not into Egypt to sojourn there."

Here, the real state of the case comes clearly out. Pride and self-will were at work. Their vows and promises were false. "Ye dissembled in your hearts," says Jeremiah, "when ye sent me unto the Lord your God, saying, Pray for us unto the Lord our God; and according unto all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it." It would have been all very well, had the divine response fallen in with their will in the matter; but, inasmuch as it ran counter, they rejected it altogether.

How often is this the case! The word of God does not suit man's thoughts; it judges them; it stands in direct opposition to his will; it interferes with his plans, and hence he rejects it. The human will and human reason are ever in direct antagonism to the word of God; and the Christian must refuse both the one and the other, if he really desires to be divinely guided. An unbroken will and blind reason, if we listen to them, can only lead us into darkness, misery and desolation. Jonah *would* go to Tarshish, when he ought to have gone to Nineveh; and the consequence was that he found himself "in the belly of hell," with "the weeds wrapped about his head." Jehoshaphat *would* go to Ramoth Gilead, when he ought to have been at Jerusalem; and the consequence was that he found himself surrounded by the swords of the Syrians. The remnant, in the days of Jeremiah, *would* go into Egypt, when they ought to have remained at Jerusalem; and the consequence was that they died by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence in the land of Egypt "whither they desired to go and to sojourn."

Thus it must ever be. The path of self-will is sure to be a path of darkness and misery. It cannot be otherwise. The path of obedience, on the contrary, is a path of peace, a path of light, a path of blessing, a path on which the beams of divine favour are ever poured in living lustre. It may, to the human eye, seem narrow, rough and lonely; but the obedient soul finds it to be the path of life, peace, and moral security. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Blessed path! May the writer and the reader ever be found treading it, with a steady step and earnest purpose!

Before turning from this great practical subject of divine guidance and human obedience, we must ask the reader to refer, for a few moments, to a very beautiful passage in the eleventh chapter of Luke. He will find it full of the most valuable instruction.

"The light of the body is the eye; therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light." (Vers. 34-36.)

Nothing can exceed the moral force and beauty of this passage. First of all, we have the "single eye." This is essential to the enjoyment of divine guidance. It indicates a broken will — a heart honestly fixed upon doing the will of God. There is no under current, no mixed motive, no personal end in view. There is the one simple desire and earnest purpose to do the will of God, whatever that will may be.

Now, when the soul is in this attitude, divine light comes streaming in and fills the whole body. Hence it follows that if the body is not full of light, the eye is not single; there is some mixed motive; self-will or self-interest is at work; we are not right before God. In this case, any light which we profess to have is darkness; and there is no darkness so gross or so terrible as that judicial darkness which settles down upon the heart governed by self-will while professing to have light from God. This will be seen in all its horrors, by-and-by, in Christendom, when "that Wicked shall be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming; even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with

all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because *they received not the love Of the truth*, that they might be saved. And *for this cause God* shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but *had pleasure in unrighteousness*," (2 Thess. 2: 8-12.)

How awful is this! How solemnly it speaks to the whole professing church! How solemnly it addresses the conscience of both the writer and the reader of these lines! Light not acted upon becomes darkness. "If the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" But on the other hand, a little light honestly acted upon, is sure to increase; for "to him that hath shall more be given and " the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

This moral progress is beautifully and forcibly set forth in Luke 11: 36. "If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having *no part dark*" — no chamber kept closed against the heavenly rays — no dishonest reserve — the whole moral being laid open, in genuine simplicity, to the action of divine light; then — "the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light." In a word, the obedient soul has not only light for his own path, but the light shines out, so that others see it, like the bright shining of a candle. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"

We have a very vivid contrast to all this in the thirteenth chapter of Jeremiah. "Give glory to the Lord your God, *before he cause darkness*, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness." The way to give glory to the Lord our God is to obey His word. The path of duty is a bright and blessed path; and the one who through grace, treads that path will never stumble on the dark mountains. The truly humble, the lowly, the self-distrusting will keep far away from those dark mountains, and walk in that blessed path which is ever illuminated by the bright and cheering beams of God's approving countenance.

This is the path of the just, the path of heavenly wisdom, the path of perfect peace. May we ever be found treading it, beloved reader; and let us never, for one moment, forget that it is our high privilege to be divinely guided in the most minute! details of our daily life. Alas! for the one who is not so guided. He will have many a stumble, many a fall, many a sorrowful experience. If we are not guided by our Father's eye, we shall be like the horse or the mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle — like the horse, impetuously rushing where he ought not, or the mule obstinately refusing to go where he ought. How sad for a Christian to be like these! How blessed to move, from day to day, in the path marked out for us by our Father's eye; a path which the vulture's eye hath not seen, or the lion's whelp trodden; the path of holy obedience, the path in which the meek and lowly will ever be found, to their deep joy, and the praise and glory of Him who has opened it for them and given them grace to tread it.

In the remainder of our chapter, Moses rehearses in the ears of the people, in language of touching simplicity, the facts connected with the appointment of the judges, and the mission of the spies. The appointment of the judges, Moses, here, attributes to his own suggestion. The mission of the spies was the suggestion of the people. That dear and most honoured servant of God felt the burden of the congregation too heavy for him; and assuredly, it was very heavy; though we know well that the grace of God was amply sufficient for the demand; and, moreover, that that grace could act as well by one man as by seventy.

Still, we can well understand the difficulty felt by "the meekest man in all the earth" in reference to the responsibility of so grave and important a charge; and truly the language in which he states his

difficulty is affecting in the highest degree. We feel as though we must quote it for the reader.

"And I spake unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone" — surely not; what mere mortal could? But God was there to be counted upon for exigency of every hour — "The Lord your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude. (The Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you as he hath promised you!") Lovely parenthesis! Exquisite breathing of a large and lowly heart! — "How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and *your strife*?"

Alas! here lay the secret of much of the "cumbrance" and the "burden." They could not agree among themselves; there were controversies, contentions and questions; and who was sufficient for these things? What human shoulder could sustain such a burden. How different it might have been with them! Had they walked lovingly together, there would have been no cases to decide, and therefore no need of judges to decide them. If each member of the congregation had sought the prosperity, the interest and the happiness of his brethren, there would have been no "strife," no "cumbrance," no "burden." If each had done all that in him lay to promote the common good, how lovely would have been the result!

But, ah! it was not so with Israel, in the desert; and, what is still more humbling, it is not so in the church of God, although our privileges are so much higher. Hardly had the assembly been formed by the presence of the Holy Ghost, ere the accents of murmuring and discontent were heard. And about what? About "neglect," whether fancied or real. Whatever way it was, *self* was at work. If the neglect was merely imaginary, the Grecians were to blame; and if it was real, the Hebrews were to blame. It generally happens, in such cases, that there are faults on both sides; but the true way to avoid all strife, contention and murmuring is to put self in the dust and earnestly seek the good of others. Had this excellent way been understood and adopted, from the outset, what a different task the ecclesiastical historian would have had to perform! But alas! it has not been adopted, and hence the history of the professing church, from the very beginning, has been a deplorable and humiliating record of controversy, division and strife. In the very presence of the Lord Himself, whose whole life was one of complete self-surrender, the apostles disputed about who should be greatest. Such a dispute could never have arisen, had each known the exquisite secret of putting self in the dust, and seeking the good of others. No one who knows ought of the true moral elevation of self-emptiness could possibly seek a good or a great place for himself. Nearness to Christ so satisfies the lowly heart, that honour, distinctions and rewards are little accounted of. But where self is at work, there you will have envy and jealousy, strife and contention, confusion and every evil work.

Witness the scene between the two sons of Zebedee and their ten brethren, in the tenth chapter of Mark. What was at the bottom of it? Self. The two were thinking of a good place for themselves in the kingdom; and the ten were angry with the two for thinking of any such thing. Had each set self aside, and sought the good of others, such a scene would never have been enacted. The two would not have been thinking about themselves, and hence there would have been no ground for the "indignation" of the ten.

But it is needless to multiply examples. Every age of the church's history illustrates and proves the truth of our statement that self and its odious workings are the producing cause of strife, contention and division, always. Turn where you will, from the days of the apostles down to the days in which our lot is cast, and you will find unmortified self to be the fruitful source of strife and schism. And, on the other hand, you will find that to sink self and its interests is the true secret of peace, harmony and brotherly love. If only we learn to set self aside, and seek earnestly the glory of Christ, and the

prosperity of His beloved people, we shall not have many "cases" to settle.

We must now return to our chapter.

"How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden and your strife Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you. And ye answered me, and said, The thing which thou hast spoken is good for us to do. So I took the chief of your tribes, *wise* men, and *known*" — men fitted of God, and possessing, because entitled to, the confidence of the congregation — "and made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes."

Admirable arrangement! If indeed it had to be made, nothing could be better adapted to the maintenance of order, than the graduated scale of authority, varying from the captain of ten to the captain of a thousand; the lawgiver himself at the head of all, and he in immediate communication with the Lord God of Israel.

We have no allusion, here, to the fact recorded in Exodus 18, namely, that the appointment of those rulers was at the suggestion of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law Neither have we any reference to the scene in Numbers 11. We call the reader's attention to this as one of the many proofs which lie scattered along the pages of Deuteronomy, that it is very far indeed from being a mere repetition of the preceding sections of the Pentateuch. In short, this delightful book has a marked character of its own, and the mode in which facts are presented is in perfect keeping with that character. It is very evident that the object of the venerable lawgiver, or rather of the Holy Ghost in him, was to bring everything to bear, in a moral way, upon the hearts of the people, in order to produce that one grand result which is the special object of the book, from beginning to end, namely, a loving obedience to all the statutes and judgments of the Lord their God.

We must bear this in mind, if we would study aright the book which lies open before us. Infidels, sceptics and rationalists may impiously suggest to us the thought of discrepancies in the various records given in the different books; but the pious reader will reject, with a holy indignation, every such suggestion, knowing that it emanates directly from the father of lies, the determined and persistent enemy of the precious Revelation of God. This, we feel persuaded, is the true way in which to deal with all infidel assaults upon the Bible. Argument is useless, inasmuch as infidels are not in a position to understand or appreciate its force. They are profoundly ignorant of the matter; nor is it merely a question of profound ignorance, but of determined hostility, so that, in every way, the judgement of all infidel writers on the subject of divine inspiration, is utterly worthless, and perfectly contemptible. We would pity and pray for the men, while we thoroughly despise and indignantly reject their opinions. The word of God is entirely above and beyond them. It is as perfect as its Author, and as imperishable as His throne; but its moral glories, its living depths, and its infinite perfections are only unfolded to faith and need. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

If we are only content to be as simple as a babe, we shall enjoy the precious revelation of a Father's love as given by His Spirit, in the holy scriptures. But on the other hand, those who fancy themselves wise and prudent, who build upon their learning, their philosophy and their reason, who think themselves competent to sit in judgement on the word of God, and hence, on God Himself, are given over to judicial darkness, blindness and hardness of heart. Thus it comes to pass that the most egregious folly, and the most contemptible ignorance, that man can display, will be found in the pages of those learned writers who have dared to write against the Bible. "Where is the wise? where is the

scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1 Cor. 1: 20, 21.)

"If any man will be wise, let him become a fool." Here lies the grand moral secret of the matter. Man must get to the end of his own wisdom, as well as of his own righteousness. He must be brought to confess himself a fool, ere he can taste the sweetness of divine wisdom. It is not within the range of the most gigantic human intellect, aided by all the appliances of human learning and philosophy, to grasp the very simplest elements of divine revelation. And, therefore, when unconverted men, whatever may be the force of their genius or the extent of their learning, undertake to handle spiritual subjects, and more especially the subject of the divine inspiration of holy scripture, they are sure to exhibit their profound ignorance, and utter incompetence to deal with the question before them. Indeed, whenever we look into an infidel book, we are struck with the feebleness of their most forcible arguments; and not only so, but, in every instance in which they attempt to find a discrepancy in the Bible, we see only divine wisdom, beauty and perfectness.

We have been led into the foregoing line of thought in connection with the subject of the appointment of the elders which is given to us in each book, according to the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, and in perfect keeping with the scope and object of the book. We shall now proceed with our quotation.

"And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and *judge righteously* between every man and his brother, and *the stranger* that is with him. *Ye shall not respect persons in judgement; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man;* for the judgement is God's; and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it."

What heavenly wisdom is here! What even handed justice! What holy impartiality! In every case of difference, all the facts, on both sides, were to be fully heard and patiently weighed. The mind was not to be warped by prejudice, predilection or personal feeling of any kind. The judgement was to be formed not by impressions, but by facts — clearly established, undeniable facts. Personal influence was to have no weight whatever. The position and circumstances of either party in the cause were not to be considered. The case must be decided entirely on its own merits. "Ye shall hear the small as well as the great." The poor man was to have the same evenhanded justice meted out to him as the rich; the stranger as one born in the land. No difference was to be allowed.

How important is all this! How worthy of our attentive consideration! How full of deep and valuable instruction for us all! True, we are not all called to be judges, or elders or leaders; but the great moral principles laid down in the above quotation are of the very utmost value to every one of us, inasmuch as cases are continually occurring which call for their direct application. Wherever our lot may be cast, whatever our line of life or sphere of action, we are liable alas! to meet with cases of difficulty and misunderstanding between our brethren; cases of wrong whether real or imaginary; and hence it is most needful to be divinely instructed as to how we ought to carry ourselves in respect to such.

Now, in all such cases, we cannot be too strongly impressed with the necessity of having our judgement based on facts — all the facts, on both sides. We must not allow ourselves to be guided by our own impressions, for we all know that mere impressions are most untrustworthy. They may be correct; and they may be utterly false. Nothing is more easily received and conveyed than a false impression, and therefore any judgement based on mere impressions is worthless. We must have solid,

clearly established facts — facts established by two or three witnesses, as scripture so distinctly enforces. (Deut. 17: 6; Matt. 18: 16; 2 Cor. 13: 1; 1 Tim. 5: 19.)

But further, we must never be guided in judgement by an *ex parte* statement. Every one is liable, even with the best intentions, to give a colour to his statement of a case. It is not that he would intentionally make a false statement, or tell a deliberate lie; but, through inaccuracy of memory, or one cause or another, he may not present the case as it really is. Some fact may be omitted, and that one fact may so affect all the other facts as to alter their bearing completely. "*Audi alteram partem*" (hear the other side), is a wholesome motto. And not only hear the other side, but hear all the facts on both sides, and thus you will be able to form a sound and righteous judgment. We may set it down as a standing rule that any judgment formed without an accurate knowledge of all the facts, is perfectly worthless. "Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him" Seasonable, needed words, most surely, at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances. May we apply our hearts to them!

And how important the admonition in verse 17? "Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not afraid of the face of man." How these words discover the poor human heart! How prone we are to respect persons; to be swayed by personal influence; to attach importance to position and wealth; to be afraid of the face of man!

What is the divine antidote against all these evils? Just this — the fear of God. If we set the Lord before us, at all times, it will effectually deliver us from the pernicious influence of partiality, prejudice and the fear of men. It will lead us to wait, humbly on the Lord, for guidance and counsel in all that may come before us; and thus we shall be preserved from forming hasty and one-sided judgments of men and things — that fruitful source of mischief amongst the Lord's people, in all ages.

We shall now dwell, for a few moments, on the very affecting manner in which Moses brings before the congregation all the circumstances connected with the mission of the spies which, like the appointment of the judges, is in perfect keeping with the scope and object of the book. This is only what we might expect. There is not, there could not be, a single sentence of useless repetition in the divine volume. Still less could there be a single flaw, a single discrepancy, a single contradictory statement. The word of God is absolutely perfect-perfect as a whole, perfect in all its parts. We must firmly hold and faithfully confess this in the face of this infidel age.

We speak not of human translations of the word of God, in which there must be more or less of imperfection; though even here, we cannot but be "filled with wonder, love and praise," when we mark the way in which our God so manifestly presided over our excellent English Translation, so that the poor man at the back of a mountain may be assured of possessing, in his common English Bible, the Revelation of God to his soul. And most surely we are warranted in saying that this is just what we might look for at the hands of our God. It is but reasonable to infer that the One who inspired the writers of the Bible would also watch over the translation of it; for, inasmuch as He gave it originally, in His grace, to those who could read Hebrew and Greek, so would He not, in the same grace, give it in every language under heaven? Blessed for ever be His holy Name, it is His gracious desire to speak to every man in the very tongue in which he was born; to tell us the sweet tale of His grace, the glad tidings of salvation, in the very accents in which our mothers whispered into our infant ears those words of love that went right home to our very hearts. (See Acts 2: 5-8.)

Oh, that men were more impressed and affected with the truth and power of all this; and then we should not be troubled with so many foolish and unlearned questions about the Bible.

Let us now hearken to the account given by Moses of the mission of the spies — its origin and its

result. We shall find it full of most weighty instruction, if only the ear be open to hear and the heart duly prepared to ponder.

"And I commanded you at that time all the things which ye should do." The path of simple obedience was plainly set before them. They had but to tread it with an obedient heart and firm step. They had not to reason about consequences, or weigh the results. All these they had just to leave in the hands of God, and move on, with steady purpose, in the blessed path of obedience.

"And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all *that great and terrible wilderness*, which ye saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the Lord our God commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea. And I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord our God doth give unto us. Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged."

Here was their warrant for entering upon immediate possession. The Lord their God had given them the land, and set it before them. It was theirs by His free gift, the gift of His sovereign grace, in pursuance of the covenant made with their fathers. It was His eternal purpose to possess the land of Canaan through the seed of Abraham His friend. This ought to have been enough to set their hearts perfectly at rest, not only as to the character of the land, but also as to their entrance upon it. There was no need of spies. Faith never wants to spy what God has given. It argues that what He has given must be worth having; and that He is able to put us in full possession of all that His grace has bestowed. Israel might have concluded that the same hand that had conducted them "through all that great and terrible wilderness" could bring them in and plant them in their destined inheritance.

So faith would have reasoned; for it always reasons from God down to circumstances; never from circumstances up to God. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" This is faith's argument, grand in its simplicity, and simple in its moral grandeur. When God fills the whole range of the soul's vision, difficulties are little accounted of. They are either not seen, or, if seen, they are viewed as occasions for the display of divine power. Faith exults in seeing God triumphing over difficulties.

But alas! the people were not governed by faith on the occasion now before us; and, therefore they had recourse to spies. Of this Moses reminds them, and that, too, in language at once most tender and faithful. "And ye came near unto me, every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come."

Surely, they might well have trusted. God for all this. The One who had brought them up out of Egypt; made a way for them through the sea; guided them through the trackless desert, was fully able to bring them into the land. But no; they would send spies, simply because their hearts had not simple confidence in the true, the living, the Almighty God.

Here lay the moral root of the matter; and it is well that the reader should thoroughly seize this point. True it is that, in the history given in Numbers, the Lord told Moses to send the spies. But why? Because of the moral condition of the people. And here we see the characteristic difference and yet the lovely harmony of the two books. Numbers gives us the public history, Deuteronomy the secret source of the mission of the spies; and as it is in perfect keeping with Numbers to give us the former, so it is in perfect keeping with Deuteronomy to give us the latter. The one is the complement of the other. We could not fully understand the subject, had we only the history given in Numbers. It is the touching commentary; given in Deuteronomy, which completes the picture. How Perfect is scripture! All we need is the eye anointed to see, and the heart prepared to appreciate its moral glories.

It may be, however, that the reader still feels some difficulty in reference to the question of the spies. He may feel disposed to ask, how it could be wrong to send them, when the Lord told them to do so? The answer is, the wrong was not in the act of sending them when they were told, but in the wish to send them at all. The wish was the fruit of unbelief; and the command to send them was because of that unbelief.

We may see something of the same in the matter of divorce, in Matthew 19. "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses, *because of the hardness of your hearts* suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so."

It was not in keeping with God's original institution, or according to His heart, that a man should put away his wife; but, in consequence of the hardness of the human heart, divorce was Permitted by the lawgiver. Is there any difficulty in this? Surely not, unless the heart is bent on making one. Neither is there any difficulty in the matter of the spies. Israel ought not to have needed them. Simple faith would never have thought of them. But the Lord saw the real condition of things, and issued a command accordingly; just as, in after ages, He saw the heart of the people bent on having a king, and he commanded Samuel to give them one. "And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. Now, therefore, hearken unto their voice; *howbeit yet protest solemnly* unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them." (1 Sam. 8: 7-9.)

Thus we see that the mere granting of a desire is no proof whatever that such desire is according to the mind of God. Israel ought not to have asked for a king was not Jehovah sufficient? Was not He their King? Could not He, as He had ever done, lead them forth to battle, and fight for them? Why seek an arm of flesh a Why turn away from the living, the true, the Almighty God, to lean on a poor fellow worm? What power was there in a king but that which God might see fit to bestow upon him? None whatever. All the power, all the wisdom, all real good was in the Lord their God; and it was there for them — there at all times, to meet their every need. They had but to lean upon His almighty arm, to draw upon His exhaustless resources, to find all their springs in Him.

When they did get a king, according to their hearts" desire, what did he do for them? "All the people followed him trembling." The more closely we study the melancholy history of Saul's reign, the more we see that he was, almost from the very outset, a positive hindrance rather than a help. We have but to read his history, from first to last, in order to see the truth of this. His whole reign was a lamentable failure, aptly and forcibly set forth in two glowing sentences of the prophet Hosea, "I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath." In a word, he was the answer to the unbelief and self-will of the people, and therefore, all their brilliant hopes and expectations respecting him were, most lamentably, disappointed. He failed to answer the mind of God; and, as a necessary consequence, he failed to meet the people's need. He proved himself wholly unworthy of the crown and sceptre; and his ignominious fall on mount Gilboa was in melancholy keeping with his whole career.

Now, when we come to consider the mission of the spies, we find it too, like the appointment of a king, ending in complete failure and disappointment. It could not be otherwise, inasmuch as it was the fruit of unbelief. True, God gave them spies; and Moses, with touching grace, says, "The saying pleased me well; and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe." It was grace coming down to the condition of the people, and consenting to a plan which was suited to that condition. But this, by no means, proves that either the plan or the condition was according to the mind of God. Blessed be His Name, He can meet us in our unbelief, though He is grieved and dishonoured by it. He delights in bold, artless faith. It is the only thing, in all this world, that gives Him His proper place. Hence, when Moses said to the people, "Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee; go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged;" what would have been the proper response from them? "Here we are; lead on, Almighty Lord; lead on to victory. Thou art enough. With Thee as our leader, we move on with joyful confidence. Difficulties are nothing to Thee, and therefore they are nothing to us. Thy word and thy presence are all we want. In these we find, at once, our authority and power. It matters not in the least to us who or what may be before us: mighty giants, towering walls, frowning bulwarks; what are they all in the presence of the Lord God of Israel, but as withered leaves before the whirlwind? Lead on, O Lord."

This would have been the language of faith; but alas! it was not the language of Israel, on the occasion before us. God was not sufficient for them. They were not prepared to go up, leaning on His arm alone. They were not satisfied with His report of the land. They would send spies, anything for the poor human heart but simple dependence upon the one living and true God. The natural man cannot trust God, simply because he does not know Him. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee."

God must be known, in order to be trusted; and the more fully He is trusted, the better He becomes known. There is nothing, in all this world, so truly blessed as a life of simple faith. But it must be a reality and not a mere profession. It is utterly vain to talk of living by faith, while the heart is secretly resting on some creature prop. The true believer has to do, exclusively, with God. He finds in Him all his resources. It is not that he undervalues the instruments or the channels which God is pleased to use; quite the reverse. He values them exceedingly; and cannot but value them as the means which God uses for his help and blessing. But he does not allow them to displace God. The language of his heart is, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He *only* is my rock."

There is peculiar force in the word "only." It searches the heart thoroughly. To look to the creature, directly or indirectly, for the supply of any need, is in principle to depart from the life of faith. And oh! it is miserable work, this looking, in any way, to creature streams. It is just as morally degrading as the life of faith is morally elevating. And not only is it degrading, but disappointing. Creature props give way, and creature streams run dry; but they that trust in the Lord shall never be confounded, and never want any good thing. Had Israel trusted the Lord instead of sending spies, they would have had a very different tale to tell. But spies they would send, and the whole affair proved a most humiliating failure.

"And they turned, and went up into the mountain, and came unto the valley of Eshcol, and searched it out. And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down unto us, and brought us word again, and said, It is a good land which the Lord our God doth give us." How could it possibly be otherwise, when God was giving it? Did they want spies to tell them that the gift of God was good? Assuredly, they ought not. An artless faith would have argued thus, "whatever God gives, must be worthy of Himself; we want no spies to assure us of this." But ah! this artless faith is an uncommonly rare gem in this world; and even those who possess it know but little of its value or how

to use it. It is one thing to talk of the life of faith, and another thing altogether to live it. The theory is one thing; the living reality, quite another. But let us never forget that it is the privilege of every child of God to live by faith; and, further, that the life of faith takes in everything that the believer can possibly need, from the starting-post to the goal of his earthly career. We have already touched upon this important point; it cannot be too earnestly or constantly insisted upon.

With regard to the mission of the spies, the reader will note, with interest, the way in which Moses refers to it. He confines himself to that portion of their testimony which was according to truth. He says nothing about the ten infidel spies. This is in perfect keeping with the scope and object of the book. Everything is brought to bear, in a moral way, on the conscience of the congregation. He reminds them that they themselves had proposed to send the spies; and yet, although the spies had placed before them the fruit of the land, and borne testimony to its goodness, they would not go up. "Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God." There was no excuse whatever. It was evident that their hearts were in a state of positive unbelief and rebellion, and the mission of the spies, from first to last, only made this fully manifest.

"And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the Lord hated us" — a terrible lie, on the very face of it! — "he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us." What a strange proof of hatred! How utterly absurd are the arguments of unbelief! Surely, had He hated them, nothing was easier than to leave them to die amid the brick kilns of Egypt, beneath the cruel lash of Pharaoh's taskmasters. Why take so much trouble about them? why those ten plagues sent upon the land of their oppressors? Why, if He hated them, did He not allow the waters of the Red Sea to overwhelm them as they had overwhelmed their enemies? Why had He delivered them from the sword of Amalek? In a word, why all these marvellous triumphs of grace on their behalf, if He hated them? Ah! if they had not been governed by a spirit of dark and senseless unbelief, such a brilliant array of evidence would have led them to a conclusion the direct opposite of that to which they gave utterance. There is nothing beneath the canopy of heaven so stupidly irrational as unbelief. And, on the other hand, there is nothing so sound, clear and logical as the simple argument of a child-like faith. May the reader ever be enabled to prove the truth of this!

"And ye murmured in your tents." Unbelief is not only a blind and senseless reasoner, but a dark and gloomy murmurer. It neither gets to the right side of things, nor the bright side of things. It is always in the dark, always in the wrong, simply because it shuts out God, and looks only at circumstances. They said, "Whither shall we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people is greater and taller than we." But they were not greater than Jehovah. "And the cities are great and *walled up to heaven*" — the gross exaggeration of unbelief! — "and moreover, we have seen the sons of the Anakims there."

Now, faith would say, Well, what though the cities be walled up to heaven, our God is above them, for He is in heaven. What are great cities or lofty walls to Him who formed the universe, and sustains it by the word of His power? What are Anakims in the presence of the Almighty God? If the land were covered with walled cities from Dan to Beersheba, and if the giants were as numerous as the leaves of the forest, they would be as the chaff of the threshing-floor before the One who has promised to give the land of Canaan to the seed of Abraham, His friend, for an everlasting possession"

But Israel had not faith, as the inspired apostle tells us in the third chapter of Hebrews, "They could not enter in because of unbelief." Here lay the great difficulty. The walled cities and the terrible Anakims would soon have been disposed of had Israel only trusted God. He would have made very short work of all these. But ah! that deplorable unbelief! it ever stands in the way of our blessing It

hinders the outshining of the glory of God; it casts a dark shadow over our souls, and robs us of the privilege of proving the all-sufficiency of our God to meet our every need and remove our every difficulty.

Blessed be His Name, He never fails a trusting heart. It is His delight to honour the very largest drafts that faith hands in at His exhaustless treasury. His assuring word to us ever is, "Be not afraid; only believe." And again, "According to your faith be it unto you." Precious soul-stirring words! May we all realise, more fully, their living power and sweetness! we may rest assured of this, we can never go too far in counting on God; it would be a simple impossibility. Our grand mistake is that we do not draw more largely upon His infinite resources. "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"

Thus we can see why it was that Israel failed to see the glory of God, on the occasion before us. They did not believe. The mission of the spies proved a complete failure. As it began so it ended, in the most deplorable unbelief. God was shut out. Difficulties filled their vision.

"They could not enter in." They could not see the glory of God. Harken to the deeply affecting words of Moses. It does the heart good to read them. They touch the very deepest springs of our renewed being. "Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them. The Lord your God, which goeth before you, he shall fight for you" — only think of God fighting for people! Think of Jehovah as a Man of war? — "He shall fight for you according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes; and in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that *the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son*, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place. Yet in this thing *ye did not believe the Lord your God*, who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to show you by what way ye should go, and by a cloud by day.

What moral force, what touching sweetness in this appeal! How clearly we can see here, as indeed on every page of the book, that Deuteronomy is not a barren repetition of facts, but a most powerful commentary on those facts. It is well that the reader should be thoroughly clear as to this. If, in the book of Exodus or Numbers, the inspired lawgiver records the actual facts of Israel's wilderness life, in the book of Deuteronomy he comments on those facts with a pathos that quite melts the heart. And here it is that the exquisite style of Jehovah's acts is pointed out and dwelt upon, with such inimitable skill and delicacy. Who could consent to give up the lovely figure set forth in the words, "*As a man doth bear his son*" Here we have the style of the action. Could we do without this? Assuredly not. It is the style of an action that touches the heart, because it is the style that so peculiarly expresses the heart. If the power of the *hand*, or the wisdom of the mind is seen in the *substance* of an action, the love of the heart comes out in the *style*. Even a little child can understand this, though he might not be able to explain it.

But alas! Israel could not trust God to bring them into the land. Notwithstanding the marvellous display of His power, His faithfulness, His goodness and loving kindness, from the brick kilns of Egypt to the very borders of the land of Canaan, yet they did not believe. With an array of evidence which ought to have satisfied any heart, they still doubted. "And the Lord heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and sware, saying, Surely, there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I sware to give unto your fathers, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it; and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the Lord"

"Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Such is the divine order. Men will tell you that seeing is believing; but, in the kingdom of God, believing is

seeing. Why was it that not a man of that evil generation was allowed to see the good land? Simply because they did not believe on the Lord their God. On the other hand, why was Caleb allowed to see and take possession? Simply because he believed. Unbelief is ever the great hindrance in the way of our seeing the glory of God. "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." If Israel had only believed, only trusted the Lord their God, only confided in the love of His heart and in the power of His arm, He would have brought them in and planted them in the mountain of His inheritance.

And just so is it with the Lord's people, now. There is no limit to the blessing which we might enjoy, could we only count more fully upon God. "All things are possible to him that believeth." Our God will never say, "You have drawn too largely; you expect too much." Impossible. It is the joy of His loving heart to answer the very largest expectations of faith.

Let us then draw largely. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." The exhaustless treasury of heaven is thrown open to faith. "*All things* whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, *nothing wavering*." Faith is the divine secret of the whole matter, the main spring of Christian life, from first to last. Faith wavers not, staggers not. Unbelief is ever a waverer and a staggerer, and hence it never sees the glory of God, never sees His power. It is deaf to His voice and blind to His actings; it depresses the heart and weakens the hands; it darkens the path and hinders all progress. It kept Israel out of the land of Canaan, for forty years; and we have no conception of the amount of blessing, privilege, power and usefulness which we are constantly missing through its terrible influence. If faith were in more lively exercise in our hearts, what a different condition of things we should witness in our midst. What is the secret of the deplorable deadness and barrenness throughout the wide field of Christian profession? How are we to account for our impoverished condition, our low tone, our stunted growth? why is it that we see such poor results in every department of Christian work? why are there so few genuine conversions? why are our evangelists so frequently cast down by reason of the paucity of their sheaves? How are we to answer all these questions? What is the cause? Will any one attempt to say it is not our unbelief?

No doubt, our divisions have much to do with it; our worldliness, our carnality, our self-indulgence, our love of ease. But what is the remedy for all these evils? How can our hearts be drawn out in genuine love to all our brethren by faith — that precious principle "that worketh by love." Thus the blessed apostle says to the dear young converts at Thessalonica, "Your faith groweth exceedingly. And what then? "The love of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth." Thus it must ever be. Faith puts us into direct contact with the eternal spring of love in God Himself; and the necessary consequence is the our hearts are drawn out in love to all who belong to Him — all in whom we can, in the very feeblest way, trace His blessed image. We cannot possibly be near the Lord and not love all who, in every place, call upon His Name out of a pure heart. The nearer we are to Christ, the more intensely we must be knit, in true brotherly love, to every member of His body.

Then, as to worldliness, in all its varied forms; how is it to be overcome? Hear the reply of another inspired apostle. "For, whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God" The new man, walking in the power of faith, lives above the world, above its motives, above its objects, its principles, its habits, its fashions. He has nothing in common with it. Though in it, he is not of it. He moves right athwart its current. He draws all his springs from heaven. His life, his hope, his all is there; and he ardently longs to be there himself, when his work on earth is done.

Thus we see what a mighty principle faith is. It purifies the heart, it works by love, and it overcomes the world. In short it links the heart, in living power, with God Himself; and this is the secret of true elevation, holy benevolence, and divine purity. No marvel, therefore, that Peter calls it "precious faith," for truly it is precious beyond all human thought.

See how this mighty principle acted in Caleb, and the blessed fruit it produced. He was permitted to realise the truth of those words, uttered hundreds of years afterwards, according to your faith be it unto you" He believed that God was able to bring them into the land; and that all the difficulties and hindrances were simply bread for faith. And God, as He ever does, answered his faith. "Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal; and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea. Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in my heart" — the simple testimony of a bright and lovely faith! — "nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt; but I wholly followed the Lord my God. And Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord my God. And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, *as he said*, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me; as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced; if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said."

How refreshing are the utterances of an artless faith! How edifying! How truly encouraging! How vividly they contrast with the gloomy, depressing, withering accents of dark, God-dishonouring unbelief! "And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, Hebron for an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb, the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, unto this day, because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel." (Joshua 14.) Caleb, like his father Abraham, was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and we may say, with all possible confidence, that, inasmuch as faith ever honours God, He ever delights to honour faith; and we feel persuaded that if only the Lord's people could more fully confide in God, if they would but draw more largely upon His infinite resources, we should witness a totally different condition of things from what we see around us. "Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Oh! for a more lively faith in God — a bolder grasp, of His faithfulness, His goodness and His power! Then we might look for more glorious results in the gospel field; more zeal, more energy, more intense devotedness in the church of God; and more of the fragrant fruits of righteousness in the life of believers individually.

We shall now, for a moment, look at the closing verses of our chapter, in which we shall find some very weighty instruction. And, first of all, we see the actings of divine government displayed in a most solemn and impressive manner. Moses refers, in a very touching way, to the fact of his exclusion from the promised land. "Also the Lord was angry with me *for your sakes*, saying, Thou also shalt not go in thither.

Mark the words, "for your sakes." It was very needful to remind the congregation that it was on their account that Moses, that beloved and honoured servant of the Lord, was prevented from crossing the Jordan, and setting his foot upon the land of Canaan. True, "he spake unadvisedly with his lips;" but

"they provoked his spirit" to do so. This ought to have touched them to the quick. They not only failed, through unbelief, to enter in themselves, but they were the cause of his exclusion, much as he longed to see "that goodly mountain and Lebanon." (see Ps. 106: 32.)

But the government of God is a grand and awful reality. Let us never, for one moment, forget this. The human mind may marvel why a few ill-advised words, a few hasty sentences should be the cause of keeping such a beloved and honoured servant of God from that which he so ardently desired. But it is our place to bow the head, in humble adoration and holy reverence, not to reason or judge. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Most surely. He can make no mistake. "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of nations." "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints; and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." "Our God is a consuming fire;" and "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Does it, in any wise, interfere with the action and range of the divine government, that we, as Christians, are under the reign of grace? By no means. It is as true, today, as ever it was that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Hence, therefore, it would be a serious mistake for any one to draw a plea from the freedom of divine grace to trifle with the enactments of divine government. The two things are perfectly distinct, and should never be confounded. Grace can pardon — freely, fully, eternally — but the wheels of Jehovah's governmental chariot roll on, in crushing power, and appalling solemnity. Grace pardoned Adam's sin; but government drove him out of Eden, to earn a living, by the sweat of his brow, amid the thorns and thistles of a cursed earth. Grace pardoned David's sin; but the sword of government hung over his house to the end. Bathsheba was the mother of Solomon; but Absalom rose in rebellion.

So with Moses, grace brought him to the top of Pisgah and showed him the land; but government sternly and absolutely forbade his entrance thither. Nor does it, in the least, touch this mighty principle to be told that Moses, in his official capacity, as the representative of the legal system, could not bring the people into the land. This is quite true; but it leaves wholly untouched the solemn truth now before us. Neither in Numbers 20, nor in Deuteronomy 1, have we anything about Moses in his official capacity. It is himself personally, we have before us; and he is forbidden to enter the land because of having spoken unadvisedly with his lips.

It will be well for us all to ponder deeply, as in the immediate presence of God, this great practical truth. We may rest assured that the more truly we enter into the knowledge of grace, the more we shall feel the solemnity of government, and entirely justify its enactments. Of this we are most fully persuaded. But there is imminent danger of taking up, in a light and careless manner, the doctrines of grace while the heart and the life are not brought under the sanctifying influence of those doctrines. This has to be watched against with holy jealousy. There is nothing in all this world more awful than mere fleshly familiarity with the theory of salvation by grace. It opens the door for every form of licentiousness. Hence it is that we feel the necessity of pressing upon the conscience of the reader the practical truth of the government of God. It is most salutary at all times, but particularly so in this our day when there is such a fearful tendency to turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness. We shall invariably find that those who most fully enter into the deep blessedness of being under the reign of grace do also, most thoroughly, justify the actings of divine government.

But we learn, from the closing lines of our chapter, that the people were by no means prepared to submit themselves under the governmental hand of God. In short, they would neither have grace nor government. When invited to go up, at once, and take possession of the land, with the fullest assurances of the divine presence and power with them, they hesitated and refused to go. They gave themselves

up, completely, to a spirit of dark unbelief. In vain did Joshua and Caleb sound in their ears the most encouraging words; in vain did they see before their eyes the rich fruit of the goodly land; in vain did Moses seek to move them by the most soul-stirring words; they would not go up, when they were told to go. And What then? They were taken at their word. According to their unbelief, so was it unto them. "Moreover, your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it. But as for you, turn you, and take your journey into the wilderness, by the may of the Red Sea"

How sad! And yet, how else could it be? If they would not, in simple faith, go up into the land, there remained nothing for them but turning back into the wilderness. But to this they would not submit. They would neither avail themselves of the provisions of grace nor bow to the sentence of judgement. "Then ye answered and said unto me, We have sinned against the Lord; we will go up and fight, according to all that the Lord our God commanded us. And when ye had girded on every man his weapon of war, ye were ready to go up into the hill."

This looked like contrition and self judgement; but it is a very easy thing to say, "We have sinned. Saul said it in his day; but it was hollow and false. "he said it without heart, without any genuine sense of what he was saying. We may easily gather the force and value of the words "I have sinned" from the fact that they were immediately followed by — "*Honour me now*, I pray thee, before the elders of my people." What a strange contradiction! "I have sinned," yet "Honour me." If he had really felt his sin, how different his language would have been! How different his spirit, style and deportment! But it was all a solemn mockery. Only conceive a man full of himself, making use of a form of words, without one atom of true heart feeling; and then, in order to get honour for himself, going through the empty formality of worshipping God. What a picture! Can anything be more sorrowful? How terribly offensive to Him who desires truth in the inward parts, and who seeks those to worship Him who worship Him in spirit and in truth! The feeblest breathings of a broken and contrite heart are precious to God; but oh, how offensive to Him are the hollow formalities of a mere religiousness, the object of which is to exalt man in his own eyes and in the eyes of his fellow! How perfectly worthless is the mere lip confession of sin where the heart does not feel it! As a recent writer has well remarked, "It is an easy thing to say, We have sinned; but how often we have to learn what it is not the quick abrupt confession of sin which affords evidence that sin is felt! It is rather a proof of hardness of heart. The conscience feels that a certain act of confessing the sin is necessary, but perhaps there is hardly anything which more hardens the heart than the habit of confessing sin without feeling it. This I believe, is one of the great snares of Christendom from of old and now — that is the stereotyped acknowledgment of sin, the mere habit of hurrying through a formula of confession to God. I dare say we have almost all done so, without referring to any particular mode; for alas! there is formality enough; and without having written forms, the heart may frame forms of its own, as we may have observed, if not known it, in our own experience, without finding fault with other people."\*

{\*Lectures Introductory to the Pentateuch," by W. Kelly. Broom, Paternoster Square.}

Thus it was with Israel, at Kadesh. Their confession of sin was utterly worthless. There was no truth in it. Had they felt what they were saying, they would have bowed to the judgement of God, and meekly accepted the consequence of their sin. There is no finer proof of true contrition than quiet submission to the governmental dealings of God. Look at the case of Moses. See how he bowed his head to the divine discipline. "The Lord," he says, "was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not go in thither. But Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: encourage him; for he shall cause Israel to inherit it."

Here, Moses shows them that they were the cause of his exclusion from the land; and yet he utters not a single murmuring word, but meekly bows to the divine judgement, not only content to be superseded by another, but ready to appoint and encourage his successor. There is no trace of jealousy or envy here. It was enough for that beloved and honoured servant if God was glorified and the need of the congregation met. He was not occupied with himself or his own interests, but with the glory of God and the blessing of His people.

But the people manifested a very different spirit. "We will go up and fight." How vain! How foolish! When commanded by God and encouraged by His true-hearted servants to go up and possess the land, they replied, "Whither shall we go up?" And when commanded to turn back into the wilderness, they replied, "we will go up and fight."

"And the Lord said unto me, Say unto them, Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you; lest ye be smitten before your enemies. So I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord, and went presumptuously up into the hill. And the Amorites which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah."

It was quite impossible for Jehovah to accompany them along the path of self-will and rebellion; and, most assuredly, Israel, without the divine presence, could be no match for the Amorites. If God be for us and with us, all must be victory. But we cannot count on God if we are not treading the path of obedience. It is simply the height of folly to imagine that we can have God with us if our ways are not right. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe." But if we are not walking in practical righteousness, it is wicked presumption to talk of having the Lord as our strong tower.

Blessed be His Name, He can meet us in the very depths of our weakness and failure, provided there be the genuine and hearty confession of our true condition. But to assume that we have the Lord with us, while we are doing our own will, and walking in palpable unrighteousness, is nothing but wickedness and hardness of heart. "Trust in the Lord, and do good." This is the divine order; but to talk of trusting in the Lord, while doing evil, is to turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and place ourselves completely in the hands of the devil who only seeks our moral ruin. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." When we have a good conscience, we can lift up the head and move on through all sorts of difficulties; but to attempt to tread the path of faith with a bad conscience, is the most dangerous thing in this world. We can only hold up the shield of faith when our loins are girt with truth, and the breast covered with the breastplate of righteousness.

It is of the utmost importance that Christians should seek to maintain practical righteousness, in all its branches. There is immense moral weight and value in these words of the blessed apostle Paul, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and men." He ever sought to wear the breastplate, and to be clothed in that white linen which is the righteousness of saints. And so should we. It is our holy privilege to tread, day by day, with firm step, the path of duty, the path of obedience, the path on which the light of God's approving countenance ever shines. Then, assuredly, we can count on God, lean upon Him, draw from Him, find all our springs in Him, wrap ourselves up in His faithfulness, and thus move on, in peaceful communion and holy worship, toward our heavenly home.

It is not, we repeat, that we cannot look to God, in our weakness, our failure, and even when we have erred and sinned. Blessed be His Name, we can; and His ear is ever open to our cry. "If we

confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," (1 John 1.) "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice; let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." (Ps. 130) There is absolutely no limit to divine forgiveness, inasmuch as there is no limit to the extent of the atonement, no limit to the virtue and efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, which cleanseth from all sin; no limit to the prevalence of the intercession of our adorable Advocate, our great High Priest, who is able to save to the uttermost — right through and through to the end, them that come unto God by Him.

All this is most blessedly true; it is largely taught and variously illustrated throughout the volume of inspiration. But the confession of sin, and the pardon thereof must not be confounded with practical righteousness. There are two distinct conditions in which we may call upon God; we may call upon Him in deep contrition, and be heard; or we may call upon Him with a good conscience and an uncondemning heart, and be heard. But the two things are very distinct; and not only are they distinct in themselves, but they both stand in marked contrast with that indifference and hardness of heart which would presume to count on God in the face of positive disobedience and practical unrighteousness. It is this which is so dreadful in the sight of the Lord, and which must bring down His heavy judgement. Practical righteousness He owns and approves; confessed sin He can freely and fully Pardon; but to imagine that we can put our trust in God, while our feet are treading the path of iniquity, is nothing short of the most shocking impiety. "Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgement between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger the fatherless and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt; then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever. Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder and commit adultery and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? (Jeremiah 7.)

God deals in moral realities. He desires truth in the inward parts; and if men will presume to hold the truth in unrighteousness, they must look out for His righteous judgement. It is the thought of all this that makes us feel the awful condition of the professing church. The solemn passage which we have just culled from the prophet Jeremiah, though bearing, primarily, upon the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, has a very pointed application to Christendom. We find in 2 Timothy 3, that all the abominations of heathenism, as detailed in the close of Romans 1, are reproduced in the last days, under the garb of the Christian profession, and in immediate connection with "a form of godliness." What must be the end of such a condition of things? Unmitigated wrath. The very heaviest judgments of God are reserved for that vast mass of baptised profession which we call Christendom. The moment is rapidly approaching when all the beloved and blood-bought people of God shall be called away out of this dark and sinful, though so-called Christian world," to be for ever with the Lord, in that sweet home of love prepared in the Father's house. Then the "strong delusion" shall be sent upon Christendom — upon those very countries where the light of a full-orbed Christianity has shone; where a full and free gospel has been preached; where the Bible has been circulated by millions, and where all, in some way or another, profess the name of Christ, and call themselves Christians.

And what then? What is to follow this "strong delusion" Any fresh testimony? Any further overtures of mercy? Any further effort of long suffering grace? Not for Christendom! Not for the rejecters of the gospel of God! Not for Christless, Godless professors of the hollow and worthless

forms of Christianity! The heathen shall hear "The everlasting gospel," "The gospel of the kingdom;" but as for that terrible thing, that most frightful anomaly called Christendom, the vine of the earth," nothing remains but the wine press of the wrath of Almighty God, the blackness of darkness for ever, the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

Reader, these are the true sayings of God. Nothing would be easier than to place before your eyes an array of scripture proof perfectly unanswerable; this would be foreign to our present object. The New Testament, from cover to cover, sets forth the solemn truth above enunciated; and every system theology under the sun that teaches differently will be found, on this point at least, to be totally false.

## Deuteronomy 2.

The closing lines of chapter 1 show us the people weeping before the Lord. "And ye returned and wept before the Lord; but the Lord would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you. So ye abode in Kadesh many days, according unto the days that ye abode there."

There was no more reality in their tears than in their words. Their weeping was no more to be trusted than their confession. It is possible for People to confess and shed tears without any true sense of sin, in the presence of God. This is very solemn. It is really mocking God. We know, blessed for ever be His Name, that a truly contrite heart is His delight. He makes His abode with such. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." The tears that flow from a penitent heart are more precious, by far, to God, than the cattle upon a thousand hills, because they prove that there is room in that heart for Him; and this is what He seeks, in His infinite grace. He wants to dwell in our hearts, and fill us with the deep, unspeakable joy of His own most blessed presence.

But Israel's confession and tears at Kadesh were not real; and, hence, the Lord could not accept them. The feeblest cry of a broken heart ascends directly to the throne of God, and is immediately answered by the soothing healing balm of His pardoning love; but when tears and confession stand connected with self-will and rebellion, they are not only utterly worthless, but a positive insult to the Divine Majesty.

Thus, then, the people had to turn back into the wilderness, and wander there for forty years. There was nothing else for it. They would not go up into the land, in simple faith, with God; and He would not go up with them in their self-will and self-confidence; they had therefore simply to accept the consequence of their disobedience. If they would not enter the land, they must fall in the wilderness.

How solemn is all this! and how solemn is the Spirit's commentary upon it, in the third chapter of Hebrews! And how pointed and forcible the application to us! We must quote the passage for the benefit of the reader "Wherefore — as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day Of temptation in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw My works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in heart, and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest. — Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. While it is said, Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke; howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore he that they should not

enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard."

Here, as in every page of the inspired volume, we learn that unbelief is *the* thing that grieves the heart and dishonours the Name of God. And not only so, but it robs us of the blessings, the dignities and the privileges which infinite grace bestows. We have very little idea of how much we lose, in every way, through the unbelief of our hearts. Just as in Israel's case, the land was before them, in all its fruitfulness and beauty; and they were commanded to go and take possession, but, "They could not enter in because of unbelief;" so with us, we fail to possess ourselves of the fullness of blessing which sovereign grace has put within our reach. The very treasure of heaven is thrown open to us, but we fail to appropriate. We are poor, feeble, empty and barren, when we might be rich, rigorous, full and fruitful. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ; but how shallow is our apprehension! how feeble our grasp! how poor our thoughts!

Then again, who can calculate how much we lose, through our unbelief, in the matter of the Lord's work in our midst? We read, in the gospel, of a certain place in which our blessed Lord could not do many mighty works because of their unbelief. Has this no voice for us? Do we too hinder Him by unbelief? We shall perhaps be told by some, that the Lord will carry on His work irrespective of us or our faith; He will gather out His own, and accomplish the number of His elect, spite of our unbelief; not all the power of earth and hell, men and devils; combined, can hinder the carrying out of His counsels and purposes; and as to His work, It is not by might nor by power, but by His Spirit, Human efforts are in vain? and the Lord's cause can never be furthered by nature's excitement.

Now, all this is perfectly true; but it leaves wholly untouched the inspired statement noted above. "He could there do not many mighty works because of their unbelief." Did not those people lose blessing through their unbelief? Did they not hinder much good being done? We must beware how we surrender our minds to the withering influence of a pernicious fatalism which, with a certain semblance of truth, is utterly false, inasmuch as it denies all human responsibility and paralyses all godly energy in the cause of Christ. We have to bear in mind that the same One who, in His eternal counsels, has decreed the end, has also designed the means; and if we, in the sinful unbelief of our hearts, and under the influence of one-sided truth, fold our arms and neglect the means, He will set us aside, and carry on His work by other hands. He will work, blessed be His Holy Name, but we shall lose the dignity, the privilege, and the blessing of being His instruments.

Look at that striking scene in the second of Mark. It most forcibly illustrates the great principle which we desire to press upon all who may read these lines. It proves the power of faith, in connection with the carrying on of the Lord's work. If the four men, whose conduct is here set forth, had suffered themselves to be influenced by a mischievous fatalism, they would have argued that it was no use doing anything — if the palsied man was to be cured he would be cured, without human effort. Why should they busy themselves in climbing up on the house, uncovering the roof, and letting down the sick man into the midst before Jesus? Ah! it was well for the palsied man, and well for themselves that they did not act on such miserable reasoning as this. See how their lovely faith wrought! It refreshed the heart of the Lord Jesus; it brought the sick man into the place of healing, pardon and blessing; and it gave occasion for the display of divine power which arrested the attention of all present, and gave testimony to the great truth that God was on earth, in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, healing diseases and forgiving sins.

Many other examples might be adduced, but there is no need. All scripture establishes the fact that unbelief hinders our blessing, hinders our usefulness, robs us of the rare privilege of being God's honoured instruments in the carrying on of His glorious work, and of seeing the operations of His hand and His Spirit, in our midst. And, on the other hand, that faith draws down power and blessing, not only for ourselves but for others; that it both glorifies and gratifies God, by clearing the platform of the creature and making room for the display of divine power. In short, there is no limit to the blessing which we might enjoy at the hand of our God, if our hearts were more governed by that simple faith which ever counts on Him, and which He ever delights to honour. "According to your faith, he it unto you." Precious soul-stirring words! May they encourage us to draw more largely upon those exhaustless resources which we have in God. He delights to be used, blessed for ever be His holy Name! His word to us is, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." We can never expect too much from the God of all grace who has given us His only begotten Son, and will, with Him, freely give us all things.

But Israel could not trust God to bring them into the land; they presumed to go in their own strength, and, as a consequence, were put to flight before their enemies. Thus it must ever be. Presumption and faith are two totally different things: the former can only issue in defeat and disaster; the latter in sure and certain victory.

"Then we turned and took our journey into the wilderness, by the way of the Red Sea, as the Lord spake unto me; and we compassed Mount Seir, many days." There is great moral beauty in the little word "*we*" Moses links himself thoroughly with the people. He and Joshua and Caleb had all to turn back into the wilderness, in company with the unbelieving congregation. This might, in the judgement of nature, seem hard; but we may rest assured, it was good and profitable. There is always deep blessing in bowing to the will of God, even though we may not always be able to see the why and the wherefore of things. We do not read of a single murmuring word from these honoured servants of God, at having to turn back into the wilderness for forty years, although they were quite ready to go up into the land. No; they simply turned back. And well they might, when Jehovah turned back also. How could they think of complaining, when they beheld the travelling chariot of the God of Israel facing round to the wilderness? Surely the patient grace and long-suffering mercy of God might well teach them to accept, with a willing mind, a protracted sojourn in the wilderness, and to wait for the blessed moment of entrance upon the promised land.

It is a great thing always to submit ourselves meekly under the hand of God. We are sure to reap a rich harvest of blessing from the exercise. It is really taking the yoke of Christ upon us, which, as He Himself assures us, is the true secret of rest. "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

What was this yoke? It was absolute and complete subjection to the Father's will. This we see, in perfection, in our adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He could say, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." Here was the point with Him. "Good in thy sight." This settled everything. Was His testimony rejected? Did He seem to labour in vain, and spend His strength for nought and in vain? What then? "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." It was all right. Whatever pleased the Father, pleased Him. He never had a thought or wish that was not in perfect consonance with the will of God. Hence He, as a man, ever enjoyed perfect rest. He rested in the divine counsels and purposes. The current of His peace was unruffled, from first to last.

This was the yoke of Christ; and this is what He, in His infinite grace, invites us to take upon us,

in order that we, too, may find rest unto our souls. Let us mark, and seek to understand the words. "Ye shall *find* rest." We must not confound the "rest" which *He gives* with the "rest" which we find. When the weary, burdened, heavy laden soul comes to Jesus in simple faith, He gives rest, settled rest, the rest which flows from the full assurance that all is done; sins for ever put away; perfect righteousness accomplished, revealed and possessed, every question divinely and eternally settled; God glorified; Satan silenced conscience tranquilized.

Such is the rest which Jesus gives, when we come to Him. But then we have to move through the scenes and circumstances of our daily life. There are trials, difficulties, exercises, buffetings, disappointments, and reverses of all sorts. None of these can, in the smallest degree, touch the rest which Jesus gives; but they may very seriously interfere with the rest which we are to find. They do not trouble the conscience; but they may greatly trouble the heart; they may make us very restless, very fretful, very impatient. For instance, I want to preach at Glasgow; I am announced to do so; but lo! I am shut up in a sickroom in London. This does not trouble my conscience; but it may greatly trouble my heart; I may be in a perfect fever of restlessness, ready to exclaim, "How tiresome! How terribly disappointing! Whatever am I to do? It is most untoward!"

And, how is this state of things to be met? How is the troubled heart to be tranquilized, and the restless mind to be calmed down? What do I want? I want to find rest. How am I to find it? By stooping down and taking Christ's precious yoke upon me; the very yoke which He Himself ever wore, in the days of His flesh; the yoke of complete subjection to the will of God. I want to be able to say, without one atom of reserve, to say from the very depths of my heart, "Thy will, O Lord, be done." I want such a profound sense of His perfect love to me, and of His infinite wisdom in all His dealings with me, that I would not have it otherwise, if I could; yea, that I would not move a finger to alter my position or circumstances, feeling assured that it is very much better for me to be suffering on a sickbed in London, than speaking on a platform in Glasgow.

Here lies the deep and precious secret of rest of heart, as opposed to restlessness. It is the simple ability to thank God for everything, be it ever so contrary to our own will and utterly subversive of our own Plans. It is not a mere assent to the truth that "All things work together for good to them that love God; to them that are called according to his purpose." It is the positive sense, the actual realisation of the divine fact that the thing which God appoints is the very best thing for us. It is perfect repose in the love, wisdom, power and faithfulness of the One who has graciously undertaken for us, in everything, and charged Himself with all that concerns us for time and eternity. We know that love will always do its very best for its object. What must it be to have God doing His very best for us? Where is the heart that would not be satisfied with God's best, if only it knows ought of Him?

But He must be known ere the heart can be satisfied with His will. Eve, in the garden of Eden, beguiled by the serpent, became dissatisfied with the will of God. She wished for something which He had forbidden; and this something the devil undertook to supply. She thought the devil could do better for her than God. She thought to better her circumstances by taking herself out of the hands of God and placing herself in the hands of Satan. Hence it is, that no unrenewed heart can ever, by any possibility, rest in the will of God. If we search the human heart to the bottom, if we submit it to a faithful analysis, we shall not find so much as a single thought in unison with the will of God no, not one. And even in the case of the true Christian, the child of God, it is only as he is enabled, by the grace of God, to mortify his own will, to reckon himself dead, and to walk in the Spirit, that he can delight in the will of God, and give thanks in everything. It is one of the very finest evidences of the new birth to be able, without a single shade of reserve, to say, in respect to every dealing of the hand of God, "Thy will be done." "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." When the heart is in this attitude, Satan

can make nothing of it. It is a grand point to be able to tell the devil, and to tell the world — tell them, not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth; not merely with the lips, but in the heart and the life — "*I am perfectly satisfied with the will of God.*"

This is the way to find rest. Let us see that we understand it. It is the divine remedy for that unrest, that spirit of discontent, that dissatisfaction with our appointed lot and sphere, so sadly prevalent on all hands. It is a perfect cure for that restless ambition so utterly opposed to the mind and Spirit of Christ, but so entirely characteristic of the men of this world.

May we, beloved reader, cultivate, with holy diligence, that meek and lowly spirit which is, in the sight of God, of great price, which bows to His blessed will in all things, and vindicates His dealings, come what may. Thus shall our peace flow as a river, and the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be magnified, in our course, character and conduct.

Ere turning from the deeply interesting and practical subject which has been engaging our attention, we would observe that there are three distinct attitudes in which the soul may be found in reference to the dealings of God, namely, subjection, acquiescence, and rejoicing. When the will is broken, there is subjection; when the understanding is enlightened as to the divine object, there is acquiescence; and when the affections are engaged with God Himself, there is positive rejoicing. Hence we read, in the tenth chapter of Luke, "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, *I thank thee*, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." That blessed One found His perfect delight in all the will of God. It was His meat and drink to carry out that will, at all cost. In service or in suffering, in life or in death, He never had any motive but the Father's will. He could say, "I do always the things that please him." Eternal and universal homage to His peerless Name!

We shall now proceed with our chapter.

"And the Lord spake unto me, saying, Ye have compassed this mountain long enough; turn you northward."

The word of the Lord determined everything. It fixed how long the people were to remain in any given place, and it indicated, with equal distinctness, whither they were next to bend their steps. There was no need whatever for them to plan or arrange their movements. It was the province and prerogative of Jehovah to settle all for them; it was theirs to obey. There is no mention here of the cloud and the trumpet. It is simply God's word and Israel's obedience..

Nothing can be more precious to a child of God, if only the heart be in a right condition, than to be guided, in all his movements by the divine command. It saves a world of anxiety and perplexity. In Israel's case, called as they were to journey through a great and terrible wilderness, where there was no way, it was an unspeakable mercy to have their every movement, their every step, their every halting-place ordered by an infallible guide. There was no need whatever for them to trouble themselves about their movements, no need to inquire how long they were to stay in any given place, or where they were to go next. Jehovah settled all for them. It was for them simply to wait on Him for guidance, and to do what they were told.

Yes, reader, here was the grand point — a waiting and an obedient spirit. If this were lacking, they were liable to all sorts of questionings, reasonings and rebellious activities. When God said, "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough," had Israel replied, "No; we want to compass it a little longer; we are very comfortable here, and we do not wish to make any change" or, again, if, when God said, "Turn you northward, they had replied, "No; we vastly prefer going eastward;" what would have

been the result? Why, they would have forfeited the divine presence with them; and who could guide, or help, or feed them then? They could only count on the divine Presence with them while they trod the path indicated by the divine command. If they chose to take their own way, there was nothing for them but famine, desolation and darkness. The stream from the smitten rock, and the heavenly manna, were only to be found in the path of obedience.

Now, we Christians have to learn our lesson in all this — a wholesome, needed, valuable lesson. It is our sweet privilege to have our path marked out for us, day by day, by divine authority. Of this we are to be most deeply and thoroughly persuaded. We are not to allow ourselves to be robbed of this rich blessing by the plausible reasonings of unbelief. God has promised to guide us, and His promise is yea and Amen. It is for us to make our own of the promise, in the artless simplicity of faith. It is as real and as solid and as true as God can make it. We cannot admit, for a moment, that Israel in the desert were better off, in the matter of guidance, than God's heavenly people, in their passage through this world. How did Israel know the length of the haltings or the line of their march? By the word of God. Are we worse off? Far be the thought. Yea, we are better off by far than they. We have the word and Spirit of God to guide us. To us pertains the high and holy privilege of walking in the footsteps of the Son of God.

Is not this perfect guidance? Yes, thank God, it is. Hear what our adorable Lord Jesus Christ saith to us: "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Let us mark these words, "He that followeth Me." He has left us an example that we should follow his steps." This is living guidance. How did Jesus walk? Always and only by the commandment of His Father. By that He acted; by that He moved; without it He never acted, moved or spoke.

Now, we are called to follow Him; and in so doing we have the assurance of His own word that we shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life! Precious words! "*The light of life.*" Who can sound their living depths? Who can duly estimate their worth? "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth," and it is for us to walk in the full blaze of the light that shines along the pathway of the Son of God, Is there any uncertainty, any perplexity, any ground for hesitation here? Clearly not. 'How could there be, if we are following Him? It is utterly impossible to combine the two ideas.

And be it remarked here, that it is not, by any means, a question of having; a literal text of scripture for every movement or every act. For example, I cannot expect to get a text of scripture, or a voice from heaven, to tell me to go to London or to Edinburgh; or how long I am to stay when I go. How, then, it may be asked, am I to know where I ought to go, or how long I am to stay? The answer is, wait on God, in singleness of eye, and sincerity of heart, and He will make your path as plain as a sunbeam. This was what Jesus did; and if we follow Him, we shall not walk in darkness. "I will guide thee with mine eye," is a most precious promise; but, in order to profit by it, we must be near enough to Him to catch the movement of His eye, and intimate enough with Him to understand its meaning.

Thus it is, in all the details, of our daily life; It would answer a thousand questions, and solve a thousand difficulties, if we did but wait for divine guidance, and never attempt to move without it. If I have not gotten light to move, it is my plain duty to be still. We should: never move in uncertainty. It often happens that we harass ourselves about moving or acting, when God would have us to be still and do nothing. We go and ask God about it, but get no answer; We betake ourselves to friends for advice and counsel, but they cannot help us; for it is entirely a question between our own souls and the Lord. Thus we are plunged in doubt and anxiety. And why? Simply because the eye is not single; we are not following Jesus, "The light of the world." we may set it down as a fixed principle, a precious axiom in

the divine life, that if we are following Jesus, we shall have the light of life. He has said it, and that is enough for faith.

Hence, then, we deem ourselves perfectly warranted in concluding that the One who guided His earthly people, in all their desert wanderings, can and will guide His heavenly people, now, in all their movements and in all their ways. But, on the other hand, let us see to it that we are not bent on doing our own will, having our own way and carrying out our own plans. "Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee." Be it our one grand aim to walk in the footsteps of that blessed One who pleased not Himself, but ever moved in the current of the divine will, never acted without divine authority; who, though Himself God over all, blessed for ever, yet, having taken His place as a man, on the earth, surrendered completely His own will, and found His meat and His drink in doing the will of His Father. Thus shall our hearts and minds be kept in perfect peace; and we shall be enabled to move on, from day to day, with firm and decided step, along the path indicated for us by our divine and ever-present Guide who not only knows, as God, every step of the way, but who, as man, has trodden it before us, and left us an example that we should follow His steps. May we follow Him, more faithfully, in all things, through the gracious ministry of the Holy Ghost who dwelleth in us!

We have, now, to invite the reader's attention to a subject of very deep interest, and one which occupies a large place in Old Testament scripture, and is forcibly illustrated in the chapter which lies open before us, namely, God's government of the world, and His wonderful ordering of the nations of the earth. It is a grand and all-important fact to keep ever before the mind, that the One whom we know as "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and our God and Father, takes a real, lively, personal interest in the affairs of nations; that he takes cognisance of their movements, and of their dealings one with another.

True, all this is in immediate connection with Israel and the land of Palestine, as we read in the thirty-second chapter of our book, and eighth verse — a passage of singular interest, and of great suggestive power. "when the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." Israel was, and shall yet be God's earthly centre, and it is a fact of the deepest interest that, from the very outset, as we see in Genesis 10. the Creator and Governor of the world formed the nations and fixed their bounds, according to His own sovereign will, and with direct reference to the seed of Abraham, and that narrow strip of land which they are to possess, in virtue of the everlasting covenant made with their fathers.

But, in Deuteronomy 2, we find Jehovah, in His faithfulness and righteousness, interfering to protect three distinct nations in the enjoyment of their national rights, and that, too, against the encroachments of His own chosen people. He says to Moses, "Command thou the people, saying, Ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir; and they shall be afraid of you: take ye good heed unto yourselves therefore meddle not with them: for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot-breadth, because I have given mount Seir unto Esau for a possession. Ye shall buy meat of them for money, that ye may eat; and ye shall also buy water of them for money, that ye may drink."

Israel might imagine that they had nothing to do but seize upon the lands of the Edomite; but they had to learn something very different; they had to be taught that the Most High is the governor amongst the nations; that the whole earth belongs to Him, and He portions it out to one or another according to His good pleasure.

This is a very magnificent fact to keep before the mind. The great majority of men think but little of it. Emperors, kings, princes, governors, statesmen, take little account of it. They forget that God interests 'Himself in the affairs of nations; that He bestows kingdoms, provinces and lands as He sees fit. They act, at times, as if it were only a question of military conquest, and as if God had nothing to do with the question of national boundaries and territorial possessions. This is their great mistake. They do not understand the meaning and force of this simple sentence, "*I have given* mount Seir unto Esau for a possession." God will never surrender His rights, in this respect. He would not allow Israel to touch a single atom of Esau's property. They were, to use a modern phrase, to pay ready cash for whatever they needed, and go quietly on their way. Indiscriminate slaughter and plunder were not to be thought of by the people of God.

And mark the lovely reason for all this. "For the Lord thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand; he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness; these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee, thou hast lacked nothing." They could well afford, therefore, to let Esau alone, and leave his possessions untouched. They were the favoured objects of Jehovah's tender care. He took knowledge of every step of their weary journey through the desert. He had, in His infinite goodness, charged Himself with all their necessities. He was going to give them the land of Canaan, according to His promise to Abraham; but the self-same land which was giving them Canaan, had given mount Seir to Esau.

We see the same thing exactly, in reference to Moab and Ammon. "The Lord said unto me, distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle; for I will not give thee of their land for a possession, because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession" And, again, "And when thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them; for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon any possession; because I have given it unto the children of Lot for a possession"

The possessions here alluded to had been, of old time, in the hands of giants; but it was God's purpose to give up their territories to the children of Esau and Lot, and therefore He destroyed these giants; for who or what can stand in the way of the divine counsels? "That also was accounted a land of giants; Giants dwelt therein in old times ....a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims; but the Lord destroyed them before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead; as he did to the children of Esau which dwelt in Seir, when he destroyed the Horims from before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead even unto this day." (Vv. 20-23.)

Hence, then, Israel were not permitted to meddle with the possessions of any of these three nations, the Edomites, Ammonites and Moabites. But, in the very next sentence, we see another thing altogether in the case of the Amorites. "Rise ye up, take your journey, and pass over the river Arnon: behold, I have given into thine hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land; begin to possess it, and contend with him in battle."

The great principle, in all these varied instructions to Israel, is that God's word must settle everything for His people. It was not for Israel to inquire why they were to leave the possessions of Esau and Lot untouched, and to seize upon those of Sihon. They were simply to do what they were told. God can do as He pleases. He has His eye upon the whole scene. He sees it all. Men may think He has forsaken the earth; but He has not, blessed be His Name. He is, as the apostle tells as in his discourse at Athens, "Lord of heaven and earth;" and "He hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth; and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation," And, further, "He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the habitable

earth [*oikoumenen*] in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance [Given proof] unto all, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

Here we have a most solemn and weighty truth to which men of all ranks and conditions would do well to take heed. God is the Sovereign Ruler of the world. He giveth no account of any of His matters. He puts down one and sets up another. Kingdoms, thrones, governments are all at His disposal. He acts according to His own will, in the ordering and arrangement of human affairs. But, at the same time, He holds men responsible for their actings, in the various positions in which His providence has placed them. The ruler and the ruled, the king, the governor, the magistrate, the judge, all classes and grades of men will have, sooner or later, to give account to God. Each one, as if he were the only one, will have to stand before the judgement-seat of Christ, and there review his whole course, from first to last. Every act, every word, every secret thought will there come out with awful distinctness. There will be no escaping in a crowd. The word declares that they shall be judged — *every man* according to his works." It will be intensely individual, and unmistakably discriminating. In a word, it will be a divine judgement, and therefore, absolutely perfect. Nothing will be passed over. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof at the day of judgement." Kings, governors and magistrates will have to account for the way in which they have used the power with which they were entrusted, and the wealth which passed through their hands. The noble and the wealthy who have spent their fortune and their time in folly, vanity, luxury and self-indulgence will have to answer for it all, before the throne of the Son of man, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, to read men through and through; and His feet as fine brass, to crush, in unsparing judgement, all that is contrary to God.

Infidelity may sneeringly inquire, "*How* can these things be? *How* could the untold millions of the human race find room before the judgement-seat of Christ? And how could there be time to enter so minutely into the details of each personal history?" Faith replies, "God says it shall be so; and this is conclusive; and as to the 'Hows' the answer is, God! Infinity! Eternity!" Bring God in, and all questions are hushed, and all difficulties disposed of in a moment. In fact, the one grand, triumphant answer to all the objections of the infidel, the sceptic, the rationalist, and the materialist, is just that one majestic word — "GOD!"

We press this upon the reader; not indeed to enable him to reply to infidels, but for the rest and comfort of his own heart. As to infidels, we are increasingly persuaded that our highest wisdom is to act on our Lord's words, in Matthew 15. "Let them alone." It is perfectly useless to argue with men who despise the word of God, and have no other foundation to build upon than their own carnal reasonings. But, on the other hand, we deem it to be of the very last possible importance that the heart should ever repose, in all the artless simplicity of a child, in the truth of God's word. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it a or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

Here is the sweet and hallowed resting-place of faith, the calm haven where the soul can find refuge from all the conflicting currents of human thought and feeling. "The word of the Lord endureth for ever; and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. Nothing can touch the word of our God, It is settled for ever in heaven; and all we want is to have it hidden in our hearts as our own very possession; the treasure which we have received from God; the living fountain where we may ever drink for the refreshment and comfort of our souls. Then shall our peace flow as a river; and our path shall be as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Thus may it be, O Lord, with all Thy beloved people, in these days of growing infidelity! May Thy holy word be increasingly precious to our hearts! May our consciences feel its power! May its heavenly doctrines form our character, and govern our conduct, in all the relationships of life, that Thy

name may he glorified in all things!

### Deuteronomy 3.

"Then we turned, and went up the way to Bashan; and Og the king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. And the Lord said unto me, Fear Him not: for I will deliver him, and all his people, and his land, into thy hand; and thou shalt do unto Him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon. So the Lord our God delivered into our hands Og also, the king of Bashan and all his people; and we smote him until none was left to him remaining. And we took all his cities at that time, there was not a city which we took not from them, threescore cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. All these cities were fenced with high walls, gates, and bars; beside unwalled towns a great many. And we utterly destroyed them, as we did unto Sihon, king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children of every city. But all the cattle, and the spoil of the cities, we took for a prey to ourselves." (Vers. 1-7.)

The divine instructions as to Og king of Bashan were precisely similar to those given, in the preceding chapter with respect to Sihon the Amorite; and in order to understand both, we must look at them purely in the light of the government of God — a subject but little understood, though one of very deep interest and practical importance. We must accurately distinguish between grace and government. When we contemplate God in government, we see Him displaying His power in the way of righteousness, punishing evil doers; pouring out vengeance upon His enemies; overthrowing empires; upturning thrones; destroying cities, sweeping away nations, tribes and peoples. We find Him commanding His people to slay men, women and little children, with the edge of the sword; to set fire to their houses, and turn their cities into desolate heaps.

Again, we hear Him addressing the prophet Ezekiel in the following remarkable words, "Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus; every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled; yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army. I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord God." (Ezek. 29: 18-20.)

This is a very wonderful passage of scripture; setting before us a subject which runs through the entire volume of Old Testament scripture — a subject demanding our profound and reverent attention. Whether we turn to the five books of Moses, to the historical books, to the Psalms or to the prophets, we find the inspiring Spirit giving us the most minute details of God's actings in government. We have the deluge in the days of Noah, when the whole earth, with all its inhabitants, with the exception of eight persons, was destroyed by an act of divine government. men, women, children, cattle, fowl and creeping things were all swept away and buried beneath the billows and waves of God's righteous judgement.

Then we have in the days of Lot, the cities of the plain, with all their inhabitants, men, women and children, in a few short hours, consigned to utter destruction, overthrown by the hand of Almighty God, and buried beneath the deep dark waters of the Dead Sea — those guilty cities, "Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

Then, again, as we pass down along the page of inspired history, we see the seven nations of Canaan, men, women, and children, given over into the hands of Israel, for unsparing judgement; nothing that breathed was to be left alive.

But we may truly say, time would fail us, even to refer to all the passages of holy scripture which set before our eyes the solemn actings of the divine government. Suffice it to say that the line of evidence runs from Genesis to Revelation, beginning "with the deluge and ending with the burning up of the present system of things.

Now, the question is, Are we competent to understand these ways of God in government? Is it any part of our business to sit in judgement upon them? Are we capable of unravelling the profound and awful mysteries of divine Providence? Can we — are we called upon to — account for the tremendous fact of helpless babes involved in the judgement of their guilty parents? Impious; infidelity may sneer at these things; morbid sentimentality may stumble over them; but the true believer, the pious Christian, the reverent student of holy scripture will meet them all with this one simple but safe and solid question, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?"

This, we may rest assured, reader, is the only true way in which to meet such questions. If man is to sit in judgement upon the actings of God in government; if he can take upon himself to decide as to what is, and what is not worthy of God to do, then, verily, we have lost the true sense of God altogether. And this is just what the devil is aiming at. He wants to lead the heart away from God; and to this end, he leads men to reason and question and speculate in a region which lies as far beyond their ken as heaven is above the earth. Can we comprehend God? If we could, we should, ourselves, be God.

"We comprehend Him not,  
Yet earth and heaven tell,  
God sits as Sovereign on the throne  
And ruleth all things well."

It is, at once, absurd and impious, in the very highest degree, for puny mortals to dare to question the counsels, enactments and ways of the Almighty Creator, and All-wise Governor of the universe. Assuredly, all who do so must, sooner or later find out their terrible mistake. Well would it be for all questioners and cavillers to give heed to the pungent question of the inspired apostle in Romans 9. "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the Potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"

How simple! How forcible! How unanswerable! This is the divine method of meeting all the hows, and whys, of infidel reason. If the potter has power over the lump of clay which he holds in his hand — a fact which none would think of disputing — how much more has the Creator of all things power over the creatures which His hand has formed! Men may reason and argue interminably as to why God permitted sin to enter; why He did not, at once, annihilate Satan and his angels; why He allowed the serpent to tempt Eve; why He did not keep her back from eating the forbidden fruit. In short, the hows, and whys, are endless; but the answer is one, "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" How monstrous for a poor worm of the earth to attempt to sit in judgement upon the unsearchable judgements and ways of the Eternal God! What blind and presumptuous folly for a creature, whose understanding is darkened by sin, and who is thus wholly incapable of forming a right judgement about anything divine, heavenly or eternal, to attempt to decide how God should act, in any given case! Alas! alas! it is to be feared that thousands who now argue with great apparent cleverness, against the truth of God, will find out their fatal mistake when it will be too late to correct it.

And as to all those who, though very far from taking common ground with the infidel, are nevertheless troubled with doubts and misgivings as to some of God's ways in government, and as to

the awful question of eternal punishment, we would earnestly recommend them to study and drink in the spirit of that lovely little Psalm, 131. "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child."\*

{\*With regard to the solemn subject of eternal punishment, we here offer a few remarks, seeing that so very many, both in England and America, are troubled with difficulties respecting it. There are three considerations which, if duly weighed, will, we think, settle every Christian on the doctrine.

1. The first is this. There are seventy passages, in the New Testament, where the word "everlasting" or "eternal" (*aionios*) occur. It is applied to the "life" which believers possess; to the "mansions" into which they are to be received; to the "glory" which they are to enjoy; it is applied to God, Romans 16: 26; to the "salvation" of which our Lord Jesus Christ is the Author; to the "redemption" which He has obtained for us; and to the "Spirit." Then, out of the seventy passages referred to above, which the reader can verify in a few moments, by a glance at a Greek Concordance, there are seven in which the selfsame word is applied to the "punishment" of the wicked; to the "judgement" which is to overtake them; to the "fire" which is to consume them. Now, the question is, upon what principle, or by what authority can any one mark off these seven passages and say that, in them, the word [*aionios*] does not mean "everlasting," while in the other sixty-three it does? We consider the statement utterly baseless and unworthy the attention of any sober mind. We fully admit that, had the Holy Spirit thought proper, when speaking of the judgement of the wicked, to make use of a different word from that used in the other passages, reason would that we should weigh the fact. But no; He uses the same word invariably, so that if we deny eternal punishment, we must deny eternal life, eternal glory, an eternal Spirit, an eternal God, an eternal anything. In short, if punishment be not eternal, nothing is eternal so far as this argument is concerned. To meddle with this stone, in the archway of divine revelation, is to reduce the whole to a mass of ruin around us. And this is just what the devil is aiming at. We are fully persuaded that to deny the truth of eternal punishment is to take the first step on that inclined plane which leads down to the dark abyss of universal scepticism.

2. Our second consideration is drawn from the great truth of the immortality of the soul. We read in Genesis 2, that, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Upon this one passage, as upon an immovable rock, even if we had not another, we build the great truth of the immortality of the human soul. The fall of man made no difference as to this. Fallen or unfallen, innocent or guilty, converted or unconverted, the soul must live for ever.

The tremendous question is, "Where is it to live?" God cannot allow sin into His presence. "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity." Hence, if a man dies in his sins, dies unrepentant, unwashed, unpardoned, then, most assuredly, where God is he never can come; indeed it is the very last place to which he would like to come. there is nothing for him but an endless eternity in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

3. And, lastly, we believe that the truth of eternal punishment stands intimately connected with the infinite nature of the atonement of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If nothing short of an infinite sacrifice could deliver us from the consequences of sin, those consequences must be eternal. This consideration may not, perhaps, in the judgement of some, carry much weight with it; but to us its force is absolutely irresistible. We must measure sin and its consequences, as we measure divine love and its results, not by the standard of human sentiment or reason, but only by the standard of the cross of Christ. }

Then, when the heart has, in some measure, taken in this exquisite breathing, it may turn, with real profit, to the words of the inspired apostle, 2 Corinthians 10 "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Doubtless, the philosopher, the scholar, the profound thinker would smile contemptuously at such a childish mode of dealing with such great questions. But this is a very small matter in the judgement of the devout disciple of Christ. The same inspired apostle makes very short work of all this world's wisdom and learning. He says, "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; for it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." (1 Cor. 3.) And again, "It is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1 Cor 1:19-21.)

Here lies the grand moral secret of the whole matter. Man has to find out that he is simply a fool; and that all the wisdom of the world is foolishness. Humbling, but wholesome truth! Humbling, because it puts man in his right place. Wholesome, yea, most precious, because it brings in the wisdom of God. We hear a great deal, now-a-days, about science, philosophy and learning. "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

Do we fully take in the meaning of these words? alas! it is to be feared they are but little understood. There are not wanting men who would fain persuade us that science has gone far beyond the Bible!\* Alas! for the science, and for all those who give heed to it. If it has gone beyond the Bible, whither has it gone? In the direction of God, of Christ, of heaven, of holiness, of peace? Nay; but quite in the opposite direction. And where must it all end? We tremble to think, and feel reluctant to pen the reply. Still we must be faithful, and declare solemnly that the sure and certain end of that path along which human science is conducting its votaries is the blackness of darkness for ever.

{\*We must distinguish between all true science and "science falsely so-called." And further, we must distinguish between the *facts* of science, and the *conclusions* of scientific men. The facts are what God has done and is doing; but when men set about drawing their conclusions from these facts, they make the most serious mistakes. However, it is a real relief to the heart to think that there are philosophers and men of science who give God His right place, and who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.}

"The world by wisdom knew not God." What did the philosophy of Greece do for its disciples? It made them the ignorant worshippers of "AN UNKNOWN GOD." The very inscription on their altar published to the universe their ignorance and their shame. And may we not lawfully inquire if philosophy has done better for Christendom than it did for Greece? Has it communicated the knowledge of the true God? Who could dare to say Yes? There are millions of baptised professors throughout the length and breadth of Christendom who know no more of the true God than those philosophers who encountered Paul in the city of Athens.

The fact is this, every one who really knows God is the privileged possessor of eternal life. So our Lord Jesus Christ declares, in the most distinct manner, in John 17. "This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." This is most precious to

every soul that, through grace, has gotten this knowledge. To know God is to have life — life eternal.

But how can I know God? Where can I find Him? Can science and philosophy tell me? Have they ever told any one? Have they ever guided any poor wanderer into this way of life and peace? No; never, "The world by wisdom knew not God." The conflicting schools of ancient philosophy could only plunge the human mind into profound darkness and hopeless bewilderment; and the conflicting schools of modern philosophy are not a whit better. They can give no certainty, no safe anchorage, no solid ground of confidence to the poor benighted soul. Barren speculation, torturing doubt, wild and baseless theory is all that human philosophy, in any age or of any nation, has to offer to the earnest inquirer after truth.

How then are we to know God? If such a stupendous result hangs on this knowledge; if to know God is life eternal — and Jesus says it is — then how is He to be known? "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (John 1: 18.)

Here we have an answer divinely simple, divinely sure. Jesus reveals God to the soul — reveals the Father to the heart. Precious fact! We are not sent to creation, to learn who God is — though we see His power, wisdom and goodness there. We are not sent to the Law — though we see His justice there. We are not sent to providence — though we see the profound mysteries of His government there. No; if we want to know who and what God is, we are to look in the face of Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, who dwelt in His bosom before the worlds, who was His eternal delight, the object of His affections, the centre of His counsels. He it is who reveals God to the soul. We cannot have the slightest idea of what God is apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead [*Theotes*] bodily." "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

Nothing can exceed the power and blessedness of all this. There is no darkness here; no uncertainty. "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." Yes; it shineth in the face of Jesus Christ. We can gaze, by faith, on that blessed One; we can trace His marvellous path, on the earth; see Him going about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; mark His very looks, His words, His works, His ways; see Him healing the sick, cleansing the leper, opening the eyes of the blind, unstopping the ears of the deaf, causing the lame to walk, the maimed to be whole, raising the dead, drying the widows tears, feeding the hungry, binding up broken hearts, meeting every form of human need, soothing human sorrow, hushing human fears; and doing all these things in such a style, with such touching grace and sweetness, as to make each one feel, in his very inmost soul, that it was the deep delight of that loving heart thus to minister to his need.

Now, in all this, He was revealing God to man; so that if we want to know what God is, we have simply to look at Jesus. When Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," the prompt reply was, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake."

Here is the rest for the heart. We know the true God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent; and this is life eternal. We know Him as our own very God and Father and Christ as our own personal, loving Lord and Saviour; we can delight in Him, walk with Him, lean on Him, trust in Him, cling to Him, draw from Him, find all our living springs in Him; rejoice in Him, all the day long; find our meat and

our drink in doing His blessed will, furthering His cause and promoting His glory.

Reader, do you know all this for yourself? Say, is it a living, divinely real thing in your own soul, this moment? This is true Christianity; and you should not be satisfied with anything less. You will, perhaps, tell us we have wandered far from Deuteronomy 3. But whither have we? To the Son of God and to the soul of the reader. If this be wandering, be it so; it, most assuredly, is not wandering from the object for which we are penning these "Notes" which is to bring Christ and the soul together, or to bind them together, as the case may be. We would never, for one moment, lose sight of the fact that, both in writing and speaking, we have not merely to expound scripture, but to seek the salvation and blessing of souls. Hence it is that we feel constrained, from time to time, to appeal to the heart and conscience of the reader as to his practical state, and as to how far he has made his very own of these imperishable realities which pass in review before us. And we earnestly beseech the reader, whoever he may be, to seek a deeper acquaintance with God in Christ; and, as a sure consequence of this, a closer walk with Him and more thorough consecration of heart to Him.

This, we are thoroughly persuaded, is what is needed, in this day of unrest and unreality, in the world, and of lukewarmness and indifference, in the professing church. We want a very much higher standard of personal devotedness, more real purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord, and follow Him. There is much — very much to discourage and hinder, in the condition of things around us. The language of the men of Judah, in the days of Nehemiah, may with some measure of appropriateness and force, be applied to our times, "The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish." But, thank God, the remedy now, as then, is to be found in this soul-stirring sentence, "Remember the Lord.

We now return to our chapter, in the remainder of which the lawgiver rehearses in the ears of the congregation the story of their dealings with the two kings of the Amorites, together with the facts connected with the inheritance of the two tribes and a half, on the wilderness side of Jordan. And, with regard to the latter subject, it is interesting to notice that he raises no question as to the right or the wrong of their choosing their possession short of the land of promise. Indeed, from the narrative given here, it could not be known that the two tribes and a half had expressed any wish in the matter. so far is our book from being a mere repetition of its predecessors.

Here are the words. "And this land, which we possessed at that time, from Aroer which is by the river Arnon, and half mount Gilead, and the cities thereof, *gave I unto the Reubenites and to the Gadites*, And the rest of Gilead and all Bashan, being the kingdom of Og, *gave I unto the half tribe of Manasseh*, all the region of Argob, with all Bashan, which was called the land of giants.... And I gave Gilead unto Machir. And unto the Reubenites, and unto the Gadites, I *gave* from Gilead even unto the river Arnon, half the valley, and the border, even unto the river Jabbok, which is the border of the children of Ammon.... And I commanded you at that time, saying, *the Lord your God hath given you this land to possess it*" — not a word about their having asked it

Ye shall pass over armed before your brethren the children of Israel, all that are meet for the war. But your wives and your little ones, and your cattle (for I know that ye have much cattle), shall abide in your *cities which I have given you*; until the Lord have given rest unto your brethren, as well as unto you, and until they also possess the land which the Lord your God hath given them beyond Jordan; and then shall ye return every man unto his possession which I have given you."

In our studies on the Book of Numbers, we have dwelt upon certain facts connected with the settlement of the two tribes and a half, proving that they were below the mark of the Israel of God, in choosing their inheritance anywhere short of the other side of Jordan. But in the passage which we have

just quoted, there is no allusion at all to this side of the question; because the object of Moses is to set before the whole congregation the exceeding goodness, loving-kindness, and faithfulness of God, not only in bringing them through all the difficulties and dangers of the wilderness, but also in giving them, every already, such signal victories over the Amorites, and putting them in possession of regions go attractive and so suited to them. In all this he is laying down the solid basis of Jehovah's claim upon their hearty obedience to His commandments; and we can at once see and appreciate the moral beauty of overlooking entirely, in such a rehearsal, the question as to whether Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh were wrong in stopping short of the land of promise. It is, to every devout Christian, a striking proof not only of the touching and exquisite grace of God, but also of the divine perfectness of scripture.

No doubt, every true believer enters upon the study of scripture with the full and deeply wrought conviction of its absolute perfectness in every part. He reverently believes that there is not, from the opening of Genesis to the close of Revelation, a single flaw, a single hitch, a single discrepancy — not one; all is as perfect as its divine Author.

But then the cordial belief of the divine perfectness of scripture, as a whole, can never lessen our appreciation of the evidences which come out in detail; nay, it enhances it exceedingly. Thus, for example, in the passage now before us, is it not perfectly beautiful to mark the absence of all reference to the failure of the two tribes and a half in the matter of choosing their inheritance, seeing that any such reference would be entirely foreign to the object of the lawgiver, and to the scope of the book! Is it not the joy of our hearts to trace such infinite perfections, such exquisite and inimitable touches? Assuredly it is; and not only so, but we are persuaded that the more the moral glories of the volume dawn upon our souls, and its living and exhaustless depths are unfolded to our hearts, the more we shall be convinced of the utter folly of infidel assaults upon it; and of the feebleness and gratuitousness of many well-meant efforts to prove that it does not contradict itself. Thank God, His word stands in no need of human apologists. It speaks for itself, and carries with it its own powerful evidences; so that we can say of it what the apostle says of his gospel, that, "If it be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." We are more and more convinced, each day that the most effective method of answering all infidel attacks upon the Bible is to cherish a more profound faith in its divine power and authority; and to use it as those who are most thoroughly persuaded of its truth and preciousness. The Spirit of God alone can enable any one to believe in the plenary inspiration of the holy scriptures. Human arguments may go for what they are worth; they may, doubtless, silence gainsayers; but they cannot read the heart; they cannot bring the genial rays of divine revelation to hear down in living saving power upon the soul; this is a work divine; and until it is done, all the evidences and arguments in the world must leave the soul in the moral darkness of unbelief but when it is done, there is no need of human testimony in defence of the Bible. External evidences, however interesting and valuable — and they are both — cannot add a single jot or tittle to the glory of that peerless Revelation which bears on every page, every paragraph, every sentence, the clear impress of its divine Author. As with the sun in the heavens, its every ray tells of the Hand that made it, so of the Bible, its every sentence tells of the Heart that inspired it. But, inasmuch as a blind man cannot see the sunlight, so neither can the unconverted soul see the force and beauty of holy scripture. The eye must be anointed with heavenly eye-salve, ere the infinite perfections of the divine Volume can be discerned or appreciated.

Now, we must own to the reader, that it is the deep, and ever deepening sense of all this that has led us to the determination not to occupy his time or our own, by reference to the attacks which have

been made by rationalistic writers on that portion of the word of God with which we are now engaged. We leave this to other and abler hands. What we desire for ourselves and our readers is that we may feed at peace upon the green pastures which the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls has graciously thrown open to us; that we may help each other, as we pass along, to see more and more of the moral glory of that which lies before us; and thus to build each other up on our most holy faith. This will be far more grateful work to us, and we trust also to our readers, than replying to men who, in all their puny efforts to find out flaws in the holy volume, only prove to those capable of judging that they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. If men will abide in the dark vaults and tunnels of a dreary infidelity, and there find fault with the sun, or deny that it shines at all, let it be ours to bask in the light, and help others to do the same.

We shall now dwell for a little on the remaining verses of our chapter, in which we shall find much to interest, instruct and profit us.

And, first, Moses rehearses in the ears of the people, his charge to Joshua. And I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, Thine eyes have seen all that the Lord our God hath done unto these two kings: so shall the Lord do unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest. Ye shall not fear them: for the Lord your God he shall fight for you." (Vers. 21, 22.)

The remembrance of the Lord's dealings with us, in the past, should strengthen our confidence in going on. The One who had given His people such a victory over the Amorites, who had destroyed such a formidable foe as Og king of Bashan, and given into their hands all the land of the giants, what could He not do for them? They could hardly expect to encounter in all the land of Canaan any enemy more powerful than Og whose bedstead was of such enormous dimensions as to call for the special notice of Moses. But what was he in the presence of his Almighty Creator? Dwarfs and giants are all alike to Him. The grand point is to keep God Himself ever before our eyes. Then difficulties vanish. If He covers the eyes, we can see nothing else; and this is the true secret of peace, and the real power of progress. "Thine eyes have seen all that the Lord your God hath done." And, as He has done, so He will do. He hath delivered; and He doth deliver; and He will deliver. Past, present, and future are all marked by divine deliverance.

Reader, art thou in any difficulty? Is there any pressure upon thee? Art thou anticipating, with nervous apprehension, some formidable evil? Is thine heart trembling at the very thought of it? It may be thou art like one who has come to the far end, like the apostle Paul in Asia, "Pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life." If so, beloved friend, accept a word of encouragement. It is our deep desire to strengthen your hands in God, and to encourage your heart to trust Him for all that is before you. "Fear not;" only believe. He never fails a trusting heart no, never. Make use of the resources which are treasured up for you in Him. Just put yourself, your surroundings, your fears, your anxieties, all into His hands, *and leave them there*.

Yes; leave them there. It is of little use your putting your difficulties, your necessities into His hands, and then, almost immediately, taking them into your own. We often do this. When in pressure, in need, in deep trial of some kind or other, we go to God, in prayer; we cast our burden upon Him, and seem to get relief. But alas; no sooner have we risen from our knees, than we begin again to look at the difficulty, ponder the trial, dwell upon all the sorrowful circumstances, until we are again at our very wits' end.

Now, this will never do. It sadly dishonours God, and of course, leaves us unrelieved and unhappy. He would have our minds as free from care, as the conscience is free from guilt. His word to us is, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your

requests be made known unto God." And what then? "The peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep [or garrison, *phrouresei*] your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus."

Thus it was that Moses, that beloved man of God and honoured servant of Christ, sought to encourage his fellow labourer and successor, Joshua, in reference to all that was before him. "Ye shall not fear them; for the Lord your God he shall fight for you." Thus, too, did the blessed apostle Paul encourage his beloved son and fellow servant Timothy to trust in the living God; to be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus; to lean, with unshaken confidence, on God's sure foundation; to commit himself, with unquestioning assurance, to the authority, teaching and guidance of the holy scriptures; and thus armed and furnished, to give himself, with holy diligence and true spiritual courage, to that work to which he was called. And thus, too, the writer and the reader can encourage one another, in these days of increasing difficulty, to cling, in simple faith, to that word which is settled for ever in heaven; to have it hidden in the heart as a living power and authority in the soul, something which will sustain us, though heart and flesh should fail, and though we had not the countenance or support of a human being. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1: 24, 25.)

How precious is this! What comfort and consolation! What stability and rest! What real strength, victory and moral elevation! It is not within the compass of human language to set forth the preciousness of the word of God, or to define, in adequate terms, the comfort of knowing that the selfsame word which is settled for ever in heaven, and which shall endure throughout the countless ages of eternity, is that which has reached our hearts in the glad tidings of the gospel, imparting to us eternal life, and giving us peace and rest in the finished work of Christ, and a perfectly satisfying object in His adorable Person. Truly, as we think of all this, we cannot but own that every breath should be a hallelujah. Thus it shall be, by-and-by, and that for ever, all homage to His peerless Name!

The closing verses of our chapter present a peculiarly touching passage between Moses and his Lord, the record of which as given here is in lovely keeping, as we might expect, with the character of the entire book of Deuteronomy. "And I besought the Lord at that time, saying, O Lord God, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand; for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works and according to thy might? I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter. Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan. But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him; for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see."(Vv. 23-28)

It is very affecting to find this eminent servant of God urging a request which could not be granted. He longed to see that good land beyond Jordan. The portion chosen by the two tribes and a half could not satisfy his heart. He desired to plant his foot upon the proper inheritance of the Israel of God. But it was not to be. He had spoken unadvisedly with his lips at the waters of Meribah; and, by the solemn and irreversible enactment of the divine government, he was prohibited from crossing the Jordan.

All this, the beloved servant of Christ most meekly rehearses in the ears of the people. He does not hide from them the fact that the Lord had refused to grant his request. True, he had to remind them that it was on their account. That was morally needful for them to hear. Still he tells them, in the most

unreserved manner, that Jehovah was wroth with him; and that He refused to hear him — refused to allow him to cross the Jordan, and called upon him to resign his office and appoint his successor.

Now, it is most edifying to hear all this from the lips of Moses himself. It teaches us a fine lesson, if only we are willing to learn it. Some of us find it very hard indeed to confess that we have done or said anything wrong — very hard to own before our brethren that we have entirely missed the Lord's mind, in any particular case. We are careful of our reputation; we are touchy and tenacious. And yet, with strange inconsistency, we admit, or seem to admit, in general terms, that we are poor, feeble, erring, creatures; and that, if left to ourselves, there is nothing too bad for us to say or to do. But it is one thing to make a most humiliating general confession, and another thing altogether to own that, in some given case, we have made a gross mistake. This latter is a confession which very few have grace to make. Some can hardly ever admit that they have done wrong.

Not so that honoured servant whose words we have just quoted. He, notwithstanding his elevated position as the called, trusted and beloved servant of Jehovah — the leader of the congregation, whose rod had made the land of Egypt to tremble, was not ashamed to stand before the whole assembly of his brethren, and confess his mistake, own that he had said what he ought not, and that he had earnestly urged a request which Jehovah could not grant.

Does this lower Moses in our estimation? The very reverse; it raises him immensely. It is morally lovely to hear his confession; to see how meekly he bows his head to the governmental dealings of God; to mark the unselfishness of his acting toward the man who was to succeed him in his high office. There was not a trace of jealousy or envy; no exhibition of mortified pride. With beautiful self-emptiness, he steps down from his elevated position, throws his mantle over the shoulders of his successor, and encourages him to discharge with holy fidelity, the duties of that high office which he himself had to resign.

"He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." How true was this in Moses' case! He humbled himself under the mighty hand of God. He accepted the holy discipline imposed upon him by the divine government. He uttered not a murmuring word at the refusal of his request. He bows to it all, and hence he was exalted in due time. If government kept him out of Canaan, grace conducted him to Pisgah's top, from whence, in company with his Lord, he was permitted to see that good land, in all its fair proportions — see it, not as inherited by Israel, but as given of God.

The reader will do well to ponder deeply the subject of grace and government. It is indeed a very weighty and practical theme, and one largely illustrated in scripture, though but little understood amongst us. It may seem wonderful to us, hard to be understood, that one so beloved as Moses should be refused an entrance into the promised land. But in this we see the solemn action of the divine government, and we have to bow our heads and worship. It was not merely that Moses, in his official capacity, or as representing the legal system, could not bring Israel into the land. This is true; but it is not all. Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips. He and Aaron his brother failed to glorify God, in the presence of the congregation; and for this cause, "The Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." And, again, we read, "The Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people; for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto mount Hor; and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there."

All this is most solemn. Here we have the two leading men in the congregation, the very men whom God had used to bring His people out of the land of Egypt, with mighty signs and wonders — "that Moses and Aaron" — men highly honoured of God; and yet refused entrance into Canaan. And for what? Let us mark the reason. *"because ye rebelled against my word"*.

Let these words sink down into our hearts. It is a terrible thing to rebel against the word of God; and the more elevated the position of those who so rebel, the more serious it is, in every way, and the more solemn and speedy must be the divine judgement. "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."

These are weighty words, and we ought to ponder them deeply. They were uttered in the ears of Saul, when he had failed to obey the word of the Lord; and thus we have before us examples of a prophet, a priest and a king, all judged, under the government of God, for an act of disobedience. The prophet and the priest were refused entrance into the land of Canaan, and the king was deprived of his throne simply because they disobeyed the word of the Lord.

Let us remember this. We, in our fancied wisdom, might deem all this very severe. Are we competent judges? This is the grand question, in all such matters. Let us beware how we presume to sit in judgement on the enactments of divine government. Adam was driven out of paradise; Aaron was stripped of his priestly robes; Moses was sternly refused entrance into Canaan; and Saul was deprived of his kingdom; and for what? Was it for what men would call a grave moral offence — some scandalous sin? No; it was, in each case, for neglecting the word of the Lord. This is the serious thing for us to keep before us, in this day of human wilfulness in which men undertake to set up their own opinions, to think for themselves, and judge for themselves, and act for themselves. Men proudly put the question, "Has not every man a right to think for himself?" We reply, Most certainly not. We have a right to obey. To obey what? Not the commandments of men; not the authority of the so-called church; not the decrees of general councils; in a word, not any merely human authority, call it what you please; but simply the word of the living God — the testimony of the Holy Ghost — the voice of holy scripture. This it is that justly claims our implicit, unhesitating, unquestioning obedience. To this we are to bow down our whole moral being. We are not to reason; we are not to speculate; we are not to weigh consequences; we have nothing to do with results; we are not to say "Why?" or "Wherefore?" It is ours to obey, and leave all the rest in the hands of our Master. What has a servant to do with consequences? What business has he to reason as to results? It is of the very essence of a servant to do what he is told, regardless of all other considerations. Had Adam remembered this, he would not have been turned out of Eden. Had Moses and Aaron remembered it, they might have crossed the Jordan; had Saul remembered it, he would not have been deprived of his throne. And so, as we pass down along the stream of human history, we see this weighty principle illustrated, over and over again; and we may rest assured, it is a principle of abiding and universal importance.

And, be it remembered, we are not to attempt to weaken this great principle by any reasonings grounded upon God's foreknowledge of all that was to happen, and all that man would do, in the course of time. Men do reason in this way, but it is a fatal mistake. What has God's foreknowledge to do with man's responsibility? Is man responsible or not? This is the question, If, as we most surely believe, he is, then, nothing must be allowed to interfere with this responsibility. Man is called to obey the plain word of God; he is, in no wise, responsible to know ought about God's secret purposes and counsels. Man's responsibility rests upon what is revealed, not upon what is secret. What, for example, did Adam know about God's eternal plans and purposes, when he was set in the garden of Eden and forbidden to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Was his transgression, in any wise, modified by the stupendous fact that God took occasion, from that very transgression, to display, in the view of all

created intelligences, His glorious scheme of redemption through the blood of the Lamb? Clearly not. He received a plain commandment; and by that commandment his conduct should have been absolutely governed. He disobeyed, and was driven out of paradise, into a world which has, for well-nigh six thousand years, exhibited the terrible consequences of one single act of disobedience — the act of taking the forbidden fruit.

True it is, blessed be God, that grace has come into this poor sin-stricken world and there reaped a harvest which could never have been reaped in the fields of an unfallen creation. But man was judged for his transgression. He was driven out by the hand of God in government; and, by an enactment of that government, he has been compelled to eat bread in the sweat of his brow. "Whatsoever a man" no matter who — "soweth, that shall he also reap."

Here we have the condensed statement of the principle which runs all through the word, and is illustrated on every page of the history of God's government. It demands our very gravest consideration. It is, alas! but little understood. We allow our minds to get under the influence of one-sided, and therefore false ideas of grace, the effect of which is most pernicious. Grace is one thing, and government is another. They must never be confounded. We would earnestly impress upon the heart of the reader the weighty fact that the most magnificent display of God's sovereign grace can never interfere with the solemn enactments of His government.