

Deuteronomy 14 - 19, Section 5 of 6.

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Deuteronomy 14

"Ye are the children of the Lord your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead: for thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth." (Vers. 1, 2.)

The opening clause of this chapter sets before us the basis of all the privileges and responsibilities of the Israel of God. It is a familiar thought amongst us that we must be in a relationship before we can know the affections or discharge the duties which belong to it. This is a plain and undeniable truth. If a man were not a father, no amount of argument or explanation, could make him understand the feelings or affections of a father's heart; but the very moment he enters upon the relationship, he knows all about them.

Thus it is as to every relationship and position; and thus it is in the things of God. We cannot understand the affections or the duties of a child of God until we are on the ground. We must be Christians before we can perform Christian duties. Even when we are Christians, it is only by the gracious aid of the Holy Ghost that we can walk as such; but clearly if we are not on Christian ground, we can know nothing of Christian affections or Christian duties. This is so obvious, that argument is needless.

Now, most evidently, it is God's prerogative to declare how His children ought to conduct themselves, and it is their high privilege and holy responsibility to seek, in all things, to meet His gracious approval. "Ye *are* the children of the Lord your God: ye shall not cut yourselves." They were not their own; they belonged to Him, and therefore they had no right to cut themselves or disfigure their faces for the dead. Nature, in its pride and self-will, might say, "Why may we not do like other people? What harm can there be in cutting ourselves, or making a baldness between our eyes? It is only an expression of grief, an affectionate tribute to our loved departed ones. Surely there can be nothing morally wrong in such a suited expression of sorrow!

To all this there was one simple but conclusive answer, "Ye are the children of the Lord your God" This fact altered everything. The poor ignorant and uncircumcised Gentiles around them might cut and disfigure themselves, inasmuch as they knew not God, and were not in relationship to Him. But as for Israel, they were on the high and holy ground of nearness to God, and this one fact was to give tone and character to all their habits. They were not called upon to adopt or refrain from any particular habit or custom, in order to be the children of God. This would be, as we say, beginning at the wrong end; but, being His children, they were to act as such.

"Thou *art* an holy people unto the Lord thy God." He does not say, "Ye *ought to be* an holy people." How could they ever make themselves an holy people, or a peculiar people unto Jehovah? Utterly impossible. If they were not His people, no effort of theirs could ever make them such. But God, in His sovereign grace, in pursuance of His covenant with their fathers, had made them His children, made them a peculiar people above all the nations that were upon the earth. Here was the solid foundation of Israel's moral edifice. All their habits and customs, all their doings and ways, their food and their clothing, what they did and what they did not do — all was to flow out of the one grand

fact, with which they had no more to do than with their natural birth, namely, that they actually were the children of God, the people of His choice, the people of His own special possession.

Now, we cannot but acknowledge it to be a privilege of the very highest order to have the Lord so near to us, and so interested in all our habits and ways. To mere nature, no doubt, to one who does not know the Lord, is not in relationship to Him, the very idea of His holy presence, or of nearness to Him would be simply intolerable. But to every true believer, every one who really loves God, it is a most delightful thought to have Him near us, and to know that He interests Himself in all the most minute details of our personal history, and most private life; that He takes cognisance of what we eat and what we wear; that He looks after us by day and by night, sleeping and waking, at home and abroad; in short, that His interest in and care for us go far beyond those of the most tender, loving mother for her babe.

All this is perfectly wonderful; and surely if we only realised it more fully we should live a very different sort of life, and have a very different tale to tell. What a holy privilege, what a precious reality to know that our loving Lord is about our path by day, and about our bed by night; that His eye rests upon us when we are dressing in the morning, when we sit down to our meals, when we go about our business, and in all our intercourse, from morning till night. May the sense of this be a living and abiding power in the heart of every child of God on the face of the earth!

From verse 3 to 20, we have the law as to clean and unclean beasts, fishes and fowls. The leading principles as to all these have already come under our notice in Leviticus 11.* But there is a very important difference between the two scriptures. The instructions in Leviticus are given primarily to Moses and Aaron; in Deuteronomy they are given directly to the people. This is perfectly characteristic of the two books. Leviticus may be specially termed, the priest's guide book. In Deuteronomy the priests are almost entirely in the background, and the people are prominent. This is strikingly apparent all through the book, so that there is not the slightest foundation for the idea that Deuteronomy merely repeats Leviticus. Nothing can be further from the truth. Each book has its own peculiar province, its own design, its own work. The devout student sees and owns this with deep delight. Infidels are wilfully blind, and can see nothing.

{*As we have given in our "Notes on the Book of Leviticus," chapter 11, what we believe to be the scriptural import of Verses 4-20 of our chapter, we must refer the reader to what is there advanced.}

In verse 21 of our chapter, the marked distinction between the Israel of God and the stranger is strikingly presented. "Ye shall not eat of anything that dieth of itself; *thou shalt give it unto the stranger* that is in thy gates; that *he may eat it*; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien; for thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God" The grand fact of Israel's relationship to Jehovah marked them off from all the nations under the sun. It was not that they were, in themselves, a whit better or holier than others; but Jehovah was holy, and they were His people. "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

Worldly people often think that Christians are very Pharisaic in separating themselves from other people, and refusing to take part in the pleasures and amusements of the world; but they do not really understand the question. The fact is, for a Christian to participate in the vanities and follies of a sinful world would be, to use a typical phrase, like an Israelite eating that which had died of itself. The Christian, thank God, has gotten something better to feed upon than the poor dead things of this world. He has the living bread that came down from heaven, the true manna; and not only so, but he eats of "the old corn of the land of Canaan," type of the risen and glorified Man in the heavens. Of these most precious things the poor unconverted worldling knows absolutely nothing and, hence, he must feed upon what the world has to offer him. It is not a question of the right or the wrong of things looked at in themselves. No one could possibly have known ought about the wrong of eating of anything that had

died of itself, if God's word had not settled it.

This is the all-important point for us. We cannot expect the world to see or feel with us as to matters of right and wrong. It is our business to look at things from a divine standpoint. Many things may be quite consistent for a worldly man to do which a Christian could not touch at all, simply because he is a Christian. The question which the true believer has to ask as to everything which comes before him is simply, "Can I do this to the glory of God? Can I connect the Name of Christ with it?" If not, he must not touch it.

In a word, the Christian's standard and test for everything is Christ. This makes it all so simple. Instead of asking, Is such a thing consistent with *our* profession, *our* principles, *our* character or *our* reputation? we have to ask, Is it consistent with Christ? This makes all the difference. Whatever is unworthy of Christ is unworthy of a Christian. If this be thoroughly understood and laid hold of it will furnish a great practical rule which may be applied to a thousand details. If the heart be true to Christ, if we walk according to the instincts of the divine nature, as strengthened by the ministry of the Holy Ghost, and guided by the authority of holy scripture, we shall not be much troubled with questions of right or wrong in our daily life.

Before proceeding to quote for the reader the lovely paragraph which closes our chapter, we would very briefly call his attention to the last clause of verse 21. "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk." The fact that this commandment is given three times, in various connections, is sufficient to mark it as one of special interest and practical importance. The question is, what does it mean? what are we to learn from it? We believe it teaches very plainly that the Lord's people must carefully avoid everything contrary to nature. Now, it was, manifestly, contrary to nature that what was intended for a creature's nourishment should be used to seethe it.

We find, all through the word of God, great prominence given to what is according to nature — what is comely. "Does not even nature itself teach you?" says the inspired apostle, to the assembly at Corinth. There are certain feelings and instincts implanted in nature, by the Creator, which must never be outraged. We may set it down as a fixed principle, an axiom in Christian ethics, that no action can possibly be of God that offers violence to the sensibilities proper to nature. The Spirit of God may, and often does, lead us beyond and above nature, but never against it.

We shall now turn to the closing verses of our chapter, in which we shall find some uncommonly fine Practical instruction. "Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always. And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the Lord thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the Lord thy God hath blessed thee; then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose; and thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth; and thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household, and the Levite that is within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee. At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates And the Levite (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat, and be satisfied, that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest." (Vers. 22-29.)

This is a deeply interesting and most important passage, setting before us, with special simplicity, the basis, the centre and practical features of Israel's national and domestic religion. The grand foundation of Israel's worship was laid in the fact that both they themselves and their land belonged to Jehovah. The land was His, and they held as tenants under Him. To this precious truth they were called, periodically, to bear testimony by faithfully tithing their land. "Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that thy field bringeth forth year by year." They were to own, in this practical way, the proprietorship of Jehovah, and never lose sight of it. They were to own no other landlord but the Lord their God. All they were and all they had belonged to Him. This was the solid groundwork of their national worship — their national religion.

And then as to the centre, it is set forth with equal clearness. They were to gather to the place where Jehovah recorded His Name. Precious privilege for all who truly loved that glorious Name! We see in this passage, as also in many other portions of the word of God, what importance He attached to the periodical gatherings of His people around Himself. Blessed be His Name, He delighted to see His beloved people assembled in His presence, happy in Him and in one another; rejoicing together in their common portion, and feeding in sweet and loving fellowship on the fruit of Jehovah's land. "Thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, *in the place which He shall choose*, to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn*that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always.*"

There was — there could be, no other place like that, in the judgement of every faithful Israelite, every true lover of Jehovah. All such would delight to flock to the hallowed spot where that beloved and revered Name was recorded. It might seem strange and unaccountable to those who knew not the God of Israel, and cared nothing about Him, to see the people travelling — many of them — a long distance from their homes, and carrying their tithes to one particular spot. They might feel disposed to call in question the needs-be for such a custom. "Why not eat at home? they might say. But the simple fact is, such persons knew nothing whatever about the matter, and were wholly incapable of entering into the preciousness of it. To the Israel of God, there was the one grand moral reason for journeying to the appointed place, and that reason was found in the glorious motto — *Jehovah Shammah* — "the Lord is there." If an Israelite had wilfully determined to stay at home, or to go to some place of his own choosing, he would neither have met Jehovah there, nor his brethren, and hence he would have eaten alone. Such a course would have incurred the judgement of God; it would have been an abomination. There was but one centre, and that was not of man's choosing, but of God's. The godless Jeroboam, for his own selfish political ends, presumed to interfere with the divine order, and set up his calves at Bethel and Dan; but the worship offered there was offered to demons and not to God. It was a daring act of wickedness which brought down upon him and upon his house the righteous judgement of God; and we see, in Israel's after history, that "Jeroboam the son of Nebat" is used as the terrible model of iniquity for all the wicked kings.

But all the faithful in Israel were sure to be found at the one divine centre, and nowhere else. You would not find such making all sorts of excuses for staying at home; neither would you find them running hither and thither to places of their own or other people's choosing; no, you would find them gathered to Jehovah Shammah, and there alone. Was this narrowness and bigotry? Nay, it was the fear and love of God. If Jehovah had appointed a place where He would meet His people, assuredly His people should meet Him there.

And not only had He appointed the place, but in His abounding goodness, He devised a means of making that place as convenient as possible for His worshipping people. Thus we read, "And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if *the place* be too far from thee *which the Lord thy God shall choose to set his name there*, when the Lord thy God hath blessed thee; then thou

shalt turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose.... *And thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God*, and thou shalt rejoice, thou and thy household."

This is perfectly beautiful. The Lord, in His tender care and considerate love, took account of everything. He would not leave a single difficulty in the way of His beloved people, in the matter of their assembling round Himself. He had His own special joy in seeing His redeemed people happy in His presence; and all who loved His Name would delight to meet the loving desire of His heart by being found at the divinely appointed centre.

If any Israelite were found neglecting the blessed occasion of assembling with his brethren, at the divinely chosen place and time, it would have simply proved that he had no heart for God or for His people, or, what was worse, that he was wilfully absent. He might reason as he pleased about his being happy at home, happy elsewhere; it was a false happiness, inasmuch as it was happiness found in the path of disobedience, the path of wilful neglect of the divine appointment.

All this is full of most valuable instruction for the church of God now. It is the will of God now, no less than of old, that His people should assemble in His presence, on divinely appointed ground, and to a divinely appointed centre. This, we presume, will hardly be called in question by any one having a spark of divine light in his soul. The instincts of the divine nature, the leadings of the Holy Ghost, and the teachings of holy scripture, do all, most unquestionably, lead the Lord's people to assemble themselves together for worship, communion, and edification. However dispensations may differ, there are certain great principles and leading characteristics which always hold good; and the assembling of ourselves together is, most assuredly, one of these. Whether under the old economy or under the new, the assembling of the Lord's people is a divine institution.

Now, this being so, it is not a question of our happiness, one way or the other; though we may be perfectly sure that all true Christians will be happy in being found in their divinely appointed place. There is ever deep joy and blessing in the assembly of God's people. It is impossible for us to find ourselves together in the Lord's presence and not be truly happy. It is simply heaven upon earth for the Lord's dear people — those who love His Name, love His Person, love one another, to be together, round His table, around Himself. What can exceed the blessedness of being allowed to break bread together in remembrance of our beloved and adorable Lord, to show forth His death until He come; to raise, in holy concert, our anthems of praise to God and the Lamb; to edify, exhort and comfort one another, according to the gift and grace bestowed upon us by the risen and glorified Head of the church; to pour out our hearts, in sweet fellowship, in prayer, supplication, intercession and giving of thanks for all men, for kings and all in authority, for the whole household of faith, the church of God, the body of Christ, for the Lord's work and workmen all over the earth.

Where, we would ask, with all possible confidence, is there a true Christian, in a right state of soul, who would not delight in all this, and say, from the very depths of his heart, that there is nothing this side the glory to be compared with it?

But, we repeat, our happiness is not the question; it is less than secondary. We are to be ruled, in this, as in all beside, by the will of God as revealed in His holy word. The question for us is simply this, Is it according to the mind of God that His people should assemble themselves together for worship and mutual edification? If this be so, woe be to all who wilfully refuse, or indolently neglect to do so, on any ground whatsoever; they not only suffer serious loss, in their own souls, but they are offering dishonour to God, grieving His Spirit, and doing injury to the assembly of His people.

These are very weighty consequences, and they demand the serious attention of all the Lord's

people. It must be obvious to the reader that it is according to the revealed will of God that His people should assemble themselves together, in His presence. The inspired apostle exhorts us, in the tenth chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. There is special value, interest and importance attaching to the assembly. The truth as to this begins to dawn upon us in the opening pages of the New Testament. Thus, in Matt. 18: 20, we read the words of our blessed Lord, "*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*" Here we have the divine centre. "*My Name.*" This answers to "The place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name there," so constantly named, and so strongly insisted upon in the book of Deuteronomy. It was absolutely essential that Israel should gather at that one place. It was not a matter as to which people might choose for themselves. Human choice was absolutely and rigidly excluded. It was "The place which the Lord thy God shall choose," and no other. This we have seen distinctly. It is so plain that we have only to say, "How readest thou?"

Nor is it otherwise with the church of God. It is not human choice, or human judgement, or human opinion, or human reason, or human anything. It is absolutely and entirely divine. The *ground* of our gathering is divine, for it is accomplished redemption. The *centre* round which we are gathered is divine, for it is the Name of Jesus. The *power* by which we are gathered is divine, for it is the Holy Ghost. And the *authority* for our gathering is divine, for it is the word of God.

All this is as clear as it is precious; and all we need is the simplicity of faith to take it in and act upon it. If we begin to reason about it, we shall be sure to get into darkness; and if we listen to human opinions, we shall be plunged in hopeless perplexity between the conflicting claims of Christendom's sects and parties. Our only refuge, our only resource, our only strength, our only comfort, our only authority is the precious word of God. Take away that, and we have absolutely nothing. Give us that, and we want no more.

This is what makes it all so real and so solid for our souls. Yes; reader, and so consolatory and tranquillizing, too. The truth as to our assembly is as clear, and as simple, and as unquestionable as the truth in reference to our salvation. It is the privilege of all Christians to be as sure that they are gathered on God's ground, around God's centre, by God's power, and on God's authority, as that they are within the blessed circle of God's salvation.

And, then, if we be asked, "How can we be certain of being round God's centre?" We reply, simply by the word of God. How could Israel of old be sure as to God's chosen place for their assembly? By His express commandment. Were they at any loss for guidance? Surely not; His word was as clear and as distinct as to their place of worship as it was in reference to everything else. It left not the slightest ground for uncertainty. It was so plainly set before them that, for any one to raise a question, could only be regarded as wilful ignorance or positive disobedience.

Now, the question is, Are Christians worse off than Israel in reference to the great subject of their place of worship, the centre and ground of their assembly? Are they left in doubt and uncertainty? Is it an open question? Is it a matter as to which, every man is left to do what is right in his own eyes? Has God given us no positive, definite instruction on a question so intensely interesting, and so vitally important? Could we imagine, for a moment, that the One who graciously condescended to instruct His people of old in matters which we, in our fancied wisdom, would deem unworthy of notice, would leave His church now without any definite guidance as to the ground, centre, and characteristic features of our worship? Utterly impossible! Every spiritual mind must reject, with decision and energy, any such idea.

No, beloved Christian reader, you know it would not be like our gracious God to deal thus with

His heavenly people. True, there is no such thing now as a particular place to which all Christians are to betake themselves periodically for worship. There was such a place, for God's earthly people; and there will be such a place for restored Israel and for all nations by-and-by. "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for *out of Zion* shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isa. 2) And again, "It shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be that whoso will not come up of *all the families of the earth, unto Jerusalem*, to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain." (Zech. 14: 16, 17.)

Here are two passages culled, one from the first, and the other from the last but one, of the divinely inspired prophets, both pointing forward to the glorious time when Jerusalem shall be God's centre for Israel and for all nations. And we may assert, with all possible confidence, that the reader will find all the prophets, with one consent, in full harmony with Isaiah and Zechariah, on this profoundly interesting subject. To apply such passages to the church, or to heaven, is to do violence to the clearest grandest utterances that ever fell on human ears; it is to confound things heavenly and earthly, and to give a flat contradiction to the divinely harmonious voices of prophets and apostles.

It is needless to multiply quotations. All scripture goes to prove that Jerusalem was and will yet be God's earthly centre for His people, and for all nations. But, just now, that is to say, from the day of Pentecost, when God the Holy Ghost came down, to form the church of God, the body of Christ, until the moment when our Lord Jesus Christ shall come to take His people away out of this world, there is no place, no city, no sacred locality, no earthly centre for the Lord's people. To talk to Christians about holy places or consecrated ground is as thoroughly foreign to them — at least it ought to be — as it would have been to talk to a Jew about having his place of worship in heaven. The idea is wholly out of place, wholly out of character.

If the reader will turn, for a moment, to the fourth chapter of John, he will find, in our Lord's marvellous discourse with the woman of Sychar, the most blessed teaching on this subject. "The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (Vers. 19-24.)

This passage entirely sets aside the thought of any special place of worship now. There really is no such thing. "*The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands*; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord; or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?" (Acts 7.48-50.) And again, "God that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, *dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with man's hands*, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." (Acts 17: 24, 25.)

The teaching of the New Testament, from beginning to end, is clear and decided as to the subject

of worship; and the Christian reader is solemnly bound to give heed to that teaching, and to seek to understand and submit his whole moral being to its authority. There has ever been, from the very earliest ages of the church's history, a strong and fatal tendency to return to Judaism, not only on the subject of righteousness, but also on that of worship. Christians have not only been put under the law for life and righteousness, but also under the Levitical ritual for the order and character of their worship. We have dealt with the former of these in chapters 4 and 5 of these "Notes;" but the latter is hardly less serious in its effect upon whole tone and character of Christian life and conduct.

We have to bear in mind that Satan's great object is to cast the church of God down from her excellency, in reference to her standing, her walk and her worship. No sooner was the church set up on the day of Pentecost than he commenced his corrupting and undermining process, and for eighteen long centuries he has carried it on with diabolical persistency. In the face of these plain passages quoted above, in reference to the character of worship which the Father is now seeking, and as to the fact that, God does not dwell in temples made with hands, we have seen, in all ages, the strong tendency to return to the condition of things under the Mosaic economy. Hence the desire for great buildings, imposing rituals, sacerdotal orders, choral services, all of which are in direct opposition to the mind of Christ and to the plainest teachings of the New Testament. The professing church has entirely departed from the spirit and authority of the Lord in all these things; and yet, strange and sad to say, these very things are continually appealed to as proofs of the wonderful progress of Christianity. We are told by some of our public teachers and guides that the blessed Apostle Paul had little idea of the grandeur to which the church was to attain; but if he could only see one of our venerable cathedrals, with its lofty aisles and painted windows, and listen to the peals of the organ and the voices of the choristers, he would see what an advance had been made upon the upper room at Jerusalem!

Ah! reader, be assured it is all a most thorough delusion. It is true, indeed, the church has made progress, but it is in the wrong direction; it is not upward but downward. It is away from Christ, away from the Father, away from the Spirit, away from the word.

We should like to ask the reader this one question, If the Apostle Paul were to come to London for next Lord's day? where could he find what he found in Troas, eighteen hundred years ago, as recorded in Acts 20: 7? Where could he find a company of disciples gathered simply by the Holy Ghost, to the Name of Jesus, to break bread in remembrance of Him, and to show forth His death till He come? Such was the divine order then, and such must be the divine order now. We cannot for a moment, believe that the apostle would accept anything else. He would look for the divine thing; he would have that or nothing. Now, where could He find it? Where could he go and find the table of his Lord as appointed by Himself, the same night in which He was betrayed?

Mark, reader, we are bound to believe that the apostle Paul would insist upon having the table and the supper of his Lord, as he had received them direct from Himself in the glory, and given them by the Spirit, in the tenth and eleventh chapter of his epistle to the Corinthians — an epistle addressed to all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours." We cannot believe that he would teach God's order, in the first century and accept man's disorder in the nineteenth. Man has no right to tamper with a divine institution. He has no more authority to alter a single jot or tittle connected with the Lord's supper than Israel had to interfere with the order of the Passover.

Now, we repeat the question — and earnestly entreat the reader to ponder and answer it in the divine presence, and in the light of scripture — Where could the apostle find this in London, or anywhere else in Christendom on next Lord's day? Where could he go and take his seat at the table of his Lord, in the midst of a company of disciples gathered simply on the *ground* of the one body, to the

one centre, the Name of Jesus, by the *power* of the Holy Ghost, and on the *authority* of the word of God? Where could he find a sphere in which he could exercise his gifts without human authority, appointment, or ordination? We ask these questions in order to exercise the heart and conscience of the reader. We are fully convinced that there are places, here and there, where Paul could find these things carried out, though in weakness and failure; and we believe the Christian reader is solemnly responsible to find them out. Alas! alas! they are few and far between, compared with the mass of Christians meeting otherwise.

We may perhaps be told that if people knew that it was the apostle Paul, they would willingly allow him to minister. But then he would neither seek nor accept their permission, inasmuch as he tells us plainly, in the first chapter of Galatians, that his ministry was "not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead."

And not only so, but we may rest assured that the blessed apostle would insist upon having the Lord's table spread upon the divine ground of the *one body*; and he could only consent to eat the Lord's Supper according to its divine order as laid down in the New Testament. He could not accept, for a moment, anything but the divine reality. He would say, "Either that or nothing." He could not admit any human interference with a divine institution; neither could He accept any new ground of gathering, or any new principle of organisation. He would repeat his Own inspired statements, "There is *one body* and one Spirit;" and "We being many, are one bread, *one body*; for we are all partakers of that one bread." These words apply to "all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord; and they hold good in all ages of the church's existence on earth.

The reader must be very clear and distinct as to this. God's principle of gathering and unity must, on no account, be surrendered. The moment men begin to organise, to form societies, churches or associations, they act in direct opposition to the word of God, the mind of Christ, and the present action of the Holy Ghost. Man might as well set about to form a world as to form a church. It is entirely a divine work. The Holy Ghost came down, on the day of Pentecost, to form the church of God, the body of Christ; and this is the only church, the only body that scripture recognises; all else is contrary to God, even though it may be sanctioned and defended by thousands of true Christians.

Let not the reader misunderstand us. We are not speaking of salvation, of eternal life, or of divine righteousness, but of the true ground of gathering the divine principle on which the Lord's table should be spread, and the Lord's supper celebrated. Thousands of the Lord's beloved people have lived and died in the communion of the church of Rome; but the church of Rome is not the church of God, but a horrible apostasy; and the sacrifice of the mass is not the Lord's supper, but a marred, mutilated and miserable invention of the devil. If the question in the mind of the reader be merely what amount of error he can sanction without forfeiting his soul's salvation, it is useless to proceed with the grand and important subject before us.

But where is the heart that loves Christ that could be content to take such miserably low ground as this? What would have been thought of an Israelite of old who could content himself with being a child of Abraham, and could enjoy his vine and his fig-tree, his flocks and his herds, but never think of going to worship at the place where Jehovah had recorded His Name? Where was the faithful Jew who did not love that sacred spot? "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thine house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth"

And when, by reason of Israel's sin, the national polity was broken up, and the people were in captivity, we hear the true-hearted exiles amongst them Pouring forth their lament in the following touching and eloquent strain, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, *we wept, when we*

remembered Zion, We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem," — God's centre for His earthly people — "let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." (Ps. 137.)

And again, in Daniel 6, we find that beloved exile opening his window, three times a day, and praying toward Jerusalem, although he knew that the lions' den was the penalty. But why insist upon praying toward Jerusalem? Was it a piece of Jewish superstition? Nay; it was a magnificent display of divine principle; it was an unfurling of the divine standard amid the depressing and humiliating consequences of Israel's folly and sin. True, Jerusalem was in ruins; but God's thoughts respecting Jerusalem were not in ruins. It was His centre for His earthly people. "Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together, whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of Lord. For there are set thrones of judgement, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. *For my brethren and companions' sakes*, I will now say, Peace be within thee. *Because of the house of the Lord our God* I will seek thy good." (Ps. 122)

Jerusalem was the centre for Israel's twelve tribes, in days gone by, and it will be so in the future. To apply the above and similar passages to the church of God here or hereafter, on earth or in heaven, is simply turning things upside down, confounding things essentially different, and thus doing an incalculable amount of damage both to scripture and the souls of men. We must not allow ourselves to take such unwarrantable liberties with the word of God.

Jerusalem was and will be God's earthly centre; but, now, the church of God should own no centre but the glorious and infinitely precious Name of Jesus. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Precious centre! To this alone the New Testament points, to this alone the Holy Ghost gathers. It matters not where we are gathered, in Jerusalem or Rome, London, Paris or Canton. It is not *where* but *how*.

But be it remembered, it must be a divinely real thing. It is of no possible use to profess to be gathered in or to the blessed Name of Jesus, if we are not really so. The apostle's word as to faith may apply with equal force to the question of our centre of gathering. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say "he is gathered to the Name of Jesus? God deals in moral realities; and while it is perfectly clear that a man who desires to be true to Christ cannot possibly consent to own any other centre or any other ground of gathering but His Name, yet it is quite possible — alas! alas! how very possible — for people to profess to be on that blessed and holy ground, while their spirit and conduct, their habits and ways, their whole course and character go to prove that they are not in the power of their profession.

The apostle said to the Corinthians that he would "know not the speech but the power." A weighty word, most surely, and much needed at all times, but specially needed in reference to the important subject now before us. We would lovingly, yet most solemnly press upon the conscience of the Christian reader his responsibility to consider this matter in the holy retirement of the Lord's presence, and in the light of the New Testament. Let him not set it aside on the plea of its not being essential. It is, in the very highest degree, essential, inasmuch as it concerns the Lord's glory, and the maintenance of His truth. This is the only standard by which to decide what is essential and what is not. Was it essential for Israel to gather at the divinely appointed centre? Was it left an open question? Might every

man choose a centre for himself? Let the answer be weighed in the light of Deuteronomy 14. It was absolutely essential that the Israel of God should assemble round the centre of the God of Israel. This is unquestionable. Woe be to the man who presumed to turn his back on the place where Jehovah had set His Name. He would, very speedily, have been taught his mistake. And if this was true for God's earthly people, is it not equally true for the church, and the individual Christian? Assuredly it is. We are bound, by the very highest and most sacred obligations, to refuse every *ground* of gathering but the one body; every *centre* of gathering but the Name of Jesus; every *power* of gathering but the Holy Ghost; every *authority* of gathering but the word of God. May all the Lord's beloved people, everywhere, be led to consider those things in the fear and love of His holy Name!

We shall now close this section by quoting the last paragraph of our chapter, in which we shall find some most valuable practical teaching.

"At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates; and the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, *shall come, and shall eat, and be satisfied*; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest."

Here we have a lovely home-scene, a most touching display of the divine character, a beautiful outshining of the grace and kindness of the God of Israel. It does the heart good to breath the fragrant air of such a passage as this. It stands in vivid and striking contrast with the cold selfishness of the scene around us. God would teach His people to think of, and care for, all who were in need. The tithe belonged to Him, but He would give them the rare and exquisite privilege of devoting it to the blessed object of making hearts glad.

There is peculiar sweetness in the words, "shall come" — "shall eat" — "and be satisfied." So like our own ever Gracious God! He delights to meet the need of all. He opens His hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing. And not only so, but it is His joy to make His people the channel through which the grace, the kindness and the sympathy of His heart may flow forth to all. How precious is this! What a privilege to be God's almoners, the dispensers of His bounty, the exponents of His goodness! Would that we entered more fully into the deep blessedness of all this! May we breathe more the atmosphere of the divine presence, and then we shall more faithfully reflect the divine character!

As the deeply interesting and practical subject presented in verses 28 and 29 will come before us in another connection, in our study of chapter 26, we shall not dwell further upon it here.

Deuteronomy 15

"At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. And this is the manner of the release. Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; *because it is called the Lord's release*. Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it again; but that which is thine with thy brother thine hand shall release. Save when there shall be no poor among you; for the Lord shall greatly bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it; only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all these commandments which I command thee this day. For the Lord thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee; and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you." (Vers. 1-6.)

It is truly edifying to mark the way in which the God of Israel was ever seeking to draw the hearts of His people to Himself by means of the various sacrifices, solemnities and institutions of the Levitical

ceremonial. There was the morning and evening lamb, every *day*; there was the holy Sabbath, every *week*; there was the new moon, every *month*; there was the Passover, every *year*; there was the tithing, every *three years*; there was the release, every *seven years*; and there was the jubilee, every *fifty years*.

All this is full of deepest interest. It tells its own sweet tale, and teaches its own precious lesson to the heart. The morning and evening lamb, as we know, pointed ever to "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" The Sabbath was the lovely type of the rest that remaineth to the people of God. The new moon beautifully pre-figured the time when restored Israel shall reflect back the beams of the Sun of righteousness upon the nations. The Passover was the standing memorial of the nation's deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The year of tithing set forth the fact of Jehovah's proprietorship of the land, as also the lovely way in which His rents were to be expended in meeting the need of His workmen and of His poor. The sabbatic year gave promise of a bright time when all debts would be cancelled, all loans disposed of, all burdens removed. And, finally, the jubilee was the magnificent type of the times of the restitution of all things, when the captive shall be set free, when the exile shall return to his long lost home and inheritance; and when the land of Israel and the whole earth shall rejoice beneath the beneficent, government of the Son of David.

Now, in all these lovely institutions we notice two prominent characteristic features, namely, glory to God, and blessing to man These two things are linked together by a divine and everlasting bond. God has so ordained that His full glory and the creature's full blessing should be indissolubly bound up together. This is deep joy to the heart, and it helps us to understand, more fully, the force and beauty of that familiar sentence: "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." When that glory shines forth in its full lustre, then, assuredly, human blessedness, rest and felicity shall reach their full and eternal consummation.

We see a lovely pledge and foreshadowing of all this in the seventh year. It was "The Lord's release," and therefore its blessed influence was to be felt by every poor debtor from Dan to Beersheba. Jehovah would grant unto His people the high and holy privilege of having fellowship with Him in causing the debtor's heart to sing for joy. He would teach them, if they would only learn, the deep blessedness of frankly forgiving all. This is what He Himself delights in, blessed for ever be His great and glorious Name!

But alas! the poor human heart is not up to this lovely mark. It is not fully prepared to tread this heavenly road. It is sadly cramped and hindered, by a low and miserable selfishness, in grasping and carrying out the divine principle of grace. It is not quite at home in this heavenly atmosphere. It is but ill-prepared for being the vessel and channel of that royal grace which shines so brightly in all the ways of God. This will only too fully account for the cautionary clauses of the following passage. "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates, in thy land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou *shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand* from thy poor brother; but thou shalt *open thine hand wide* unto him, and surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought *in thy wicked heart*, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand: and *thine eye be evil* against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee. *Thou shalt surely give him*, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him; because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of thy land; therefore I command thee, saying, *thou shalt open thine hand wide* unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land." (verses. 7-11.)

Here the deep springs of the poor selfish heart are discovered and judged. There is nothing like

grace for making manifest the hidden roots of evil in human nature. Man must be renewed in the very deepest springs of his moral being ere he can be the vehicle of divine love; and even those who are thus through grace renewed, have to watch continually against the hideous forms of selfishness in which our fallen nature clothes itself. Nothing but grace can keep the heart open wide to every form of human need. We must abide hard by the fountain of heavenly love if we would be channels of blessing in the midst of a scene of misery and desolation like that in which our lot is cast.

How lovely are those words, "Thou shalt open thine hand wide!" They breathe the very air of heaven. An open heart and a wide hand are like God. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver. because that is precisely what He is Himself. "He giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not." And He would grant unto us the rare and most exquisite privilege of being imitators of Him. Marvellous grace! The very thought of it fills the heart with wonder, love and praise. We are not only saved by grace, but we stand in grace, live under the blessed reign of grace, breathe the very atmosphere of grace, and are called to be the living exponents of grace, not only to our brethren but to the whole human family. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all, especially unto them which are of the household of faith."

Christian reader, let us diligently apply our hearts to all this divine instruction. It is most precious; but its real preciousness can only be tasted in the practical carrying out of it. We are surrounded by ten thousand forms of human misery, human sorrow, human need. There are broken hearts, crushed spirits, desolate homes, around us, on every side. The widow, the orphan and the Stranger meet us, daily, in our walks. How do we carry ourselves in reference to all these? Are we hardening our hearts and closing our hands against them? Or are we seeking to act in the lovely spirit of "the Lord's release"? We must bear in mind that we are called to be reflectors of the divine nature and character, to be direct channels of communication between our Father's loving heart and every form of human need. We are not to live for ourselves; to do so is a most miserable denial of every feature and principle of that morally glorious Christianity which we profess. It is our high and holy privilege, yea, it is our special mission, to shed around us the blessed light of that heaven to which we belong. wherever we are, in the family, in the field, in the mart or the manufactory, in the shop or in the counting house, all who come in contact with us should see the grace of Jesus shining out in our ways, our words, our very looks. And then if any object of need come before us, if we can do nothing more, we should drop a soothing word into the ear, or shed a tear or heave a sigh of genuine heartfelt sympathy.

Reader, is it thus with us? Are we so living near the fountain of divine love, and so breathing the very air of heaven that the blessed fragrance of these things shall be diffused around us? Or are we displaying the odious selfishness of nature, the unholy temper and dispositions of our fallen and corrupt humanity? What an unsightly object is a selfish Christian. He is a standing contradiction, a living, moving lie. The Christianity which he professes throws out into dark and terrible relief the unholy selfishness which governs his heart and comes out in his life.

The Lord grant that all who profess and call themselves Christians may so carry themselves, in daily life, as to be an unblotted epistle of Christ, known and read of all men! In this way, infidelity will, at least, be deprived of one of its weightiest arguments, its gravest objections. Nothing affords a stronger plea to the infidel than the inconsistent lives of professing Christians.

Not that such a plea will stand for a moment, or even be urged before the judgement-seat of Christ, inasmuch as each one who has within his reach a copy of the holy scriptures will be judged by the light of those scriptures, even though there were not a single consistent Christian on the face of the earth. Nevertheless, Christians are solemnly responsible to let their light so shine before men that they

may see their good works and glorify our Father in heaven. We are solemnly bound to exhibit and illustrate in daily life the heavenly principles unfolded in the word of God. We should leave the infidel without a shred of a plea or an argument; we are responsible so to do.

May we lay these things to heart, and then we shall have occasion to bless God for our meditation on the delightful institution of "The Lord's release."

We shall now quote for the reader the touching and beautiful institution in reference to the Hebrew servant. We increasingly feel the importance of giving the veritable language of the Holy Ghost; for albeit it may be said that the reader has his Bible to refer to, yet we know, as a fact, that when passages of scripture are referred to, there is, in many cases, a reluctance to lay down the volume which we hold in our hand in order to read the reference. And beside, there is nothing like the word of God; and as to any remarks which we may offer, their object is simply to help the beloved Christian reader to understand and appreciate the scriptures which we quote.

"If thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years, then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty; *thou shalt furnish him liberally* out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress; of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him."

How perfectly beautiful, how like our own ever gracious God is all this! He would not have the brother go away empty. Liberty and poverty would not be in moral harmony. The brother was to be sent on his way free and full, emancipated and endowed, not only with his liberty but with a liberal fortune to start with.

Truly, this is divine. We do not want to be told the school where such exquisite ethics are taught. They have the very ring of heaven about them; they emit the fragrant odour of the very paradise of God. Is it not in this way that our God has dealt with us? All praise to His glorious Name! He has not only given us life and liberty, but He has furnished us liberally with all we can possibly want for time and eternity. He has opened the exhaustless treasury of heaven for us; yea, He has given the Son of His bosom for us, and to us — *for us, to save; to us, to satisfy*. He has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness; all that pertains to the life that now is, and to that which is to come, is fully and perfectly secured by our Father's liberal hand.

And is it not deeply affecting to mark how the heart of God expresses itself in the style in which the Hebrew servant was to be treated? "Thou shalt furnish him *liberally*." Not grudgingly or of necessity. It was to be done in a manner worthy of God. The actings of His people are to be the reflection of Himself. We are called to the high and holy dignity of being His moral representatives. It is marvellous; but thus it is, through His infinite grace. He has not only delivered us from the flames of an everlasting hell, but He calls us to act for Him, and to be like Him in the midst of a world that crucified His Son. And not only has He conferred this lofty dignity upon us, but He has endowed us with a princely fortune to support it. The inexhaustible resources of heaven are at our disposal. "All things are ours," through His infinite grace. Oh! that we may more fully realise our privileges, and thus more faithfully discharge our holy responsibilities!

At verse 15 of our chapter, we have a very touching motive presented to the heart of the people, one eminently calculated to stir their affections and sympathies. "And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee; *therefore* I command thee this thing today. The remembrance of Jehovah's grace in redeeming them out of Egypt was to be the ever-abiding and all-powerful motive-spring of their actings towards the poor brother. This is a never

failing principle; and nothing lower than this will ever stand. If we look for our motive-springs anywhere but in God Himself, and in His dealings with us, we shall soon break down in our practical career. It is only as we keep before our hearts the marvellous grace of God displayed toward us, in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, that we shall be able to pursue a course of true, active benevolence, whether toward our brethren or those outside. Mere kindly feelings bubbling up in our own hearts, or drawn out by the sorrows and distresses and necessities of others, will prove evanescent. It is only in the living God Himself we can find perennial springs.

At verse 16, a case is contemplated in which a servant might prefer remaining with his master. "And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee, because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with thee, then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever"

In comparing this passage with Exodus 21: 1-6, we observe a marked difference arising, as we might expect, from the distinctive character of each book. In Exodus, the *typical* feature is prominent; in Deuteronomy, the *moral*. Hence, in the latter, the inspired writer omits all about the wife and the children, as foreign to his purpose here, though so essential to the beauty and perfectness of the type in Exodus 21. We merely notice this as one of the many striking proofs that Deuteronomy is very far indeed from being a barren repetition of its predecessors. There is neither repetition, on the one hand, nor contradiction, on the other but lovely variety in perfect accordance with the divine object and scope of each book. So much for the contemptible shallowness and ignorance of those infidels who have had the impious temerity to level their shafts at this magnificent portion of the oracles of God.

In our chapter, then, we have the moral aspect of this interesting institution. The servant loved his master and was happy with him. He preferred perpetual slavery and the mark thereof, with a master whom he loved, to liberty and a liberal portion away from him. This, of course, would argue well for both parties. It is ever a good sign for both master and servant when the connection is of long standing. Perpetual changing may, as a general rule, be taken as a proof of moral wrong somewhere. No doubt, there are exceptions; and not only so, but in the relation of master and servant, as in everything else, there are two sides to be considered. For instance, we have to consider whether the master is perpetually changing his servants, or the servant perpetually changing his masters. In the former case, appearances would tell against the master; in the latter, against the servant.

The fact is, we have all to judge ourselves in this matter. Those of us who are masters have to consider how far we really seek the comfort, happiness and solid profit of our servants. We should bear in mind that we have very much more to think of, in reference to our servants, than the amount of work we can get out of them. Even upon the low-level principle of "live and let live," we are bound to in every possible way, to make our servants happy and comfortable; to make them feel that they have a home under our roof; that we are not content with the labour of their hands, but that we want the love of their hearts. We remember once asking the head of a very large establishment, "How many hearts do you employ?" He shook his head, and owned with real sorrow how little heart there is in the relation of master and servant. Hence, the common heartless phrase of "employing *hands*."

But the Christian master is called to stand upon a higher level altogether; he is privileged to be an imitator of his Master, Christ. The remembrance of this will regulate all his actings towards the servant; it will lead him to study, with ever-deepening interest and solid profit, his divine model, in order to reproduce Him, in all the practical details of daily life.

So also, in reference to the Christian servant, in his position and line of action. He, as well as the master, has to study the great example set before him in the path and ministry of the only true Servant

that ever trod this earth. He is called to walk in His blessed footsteps, to drink into His spirit, to study His word. It is not a little remarkable that the Holy Ghost has devoted more attention to the instruction of servants than to all the other relationships put together. This the reader can see at a glance, in the Epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Titus. The Christian servant can adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, by not purloining and not answering again. He can serve the Lord Christ, in the most common-place duties of domestic life, just as effectually as the man who is called to address thousands on the grand realities of eternity.

Thus when both master and servant are mutually governed by heavenly principles, both seeking to serve and glorify the one Lord, they will get on happily together. The master will not be severe, arbitrary and exacting; and the servant will not be self-seeking, heady and high-minded; each will contribute, by the faithful discharge of their relative duties, to the comfort and happiness of the other, and to the peace and happiness of the whole domestic circle. Would that it were more after this heavenly fashion, in every Christian household on the face of the earth! Then indeed would the truth of God be vindicated, His word honoured, and His Name glorified in our domestic relations and practical ways.

In verse 18, we have an admonitory word which reveals to us, very faithfully, but with great delicacy, a moral root in the poor human heart. "It shall not seem hard unto thee, when thou sendest him away free from thee; for he hath been worth a double hired servant to thee, in serving thee six years; and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all that thou doest."

This is very affecting. Only think of the most High God condescending to stand before the human heart — the heart of a master, to plead the cause of a poor servant, and set forth his claims! It is as if He were asking a favour for Himself. He leaves nothing unsaid in order to strengthen the case. He reminds the master of the value of six years' service, and encourages him by the promise of enlarged blessing as a reward for his generous acting. It is perfectly beautiful. The Lord would not only have the generous thing done, but done in such a way as to gladden the heart of the one to whom it was done; He thinks not only of the *substance* of an action, but also of the *style*. We may, at times, brace ourselves up to the business of doing a kindness; we do it as a matter of duty; and, all the while, it may "seem hard" that we should have to do it; thus the act will be robbed of all its charms. It is the generous heart that adorns the generous act. We should so do a kindness as to assure the recipient that our own heart is made glad by the act. This is the divine way: "When they had nothing to pay, he *frankly* forgave them both." "It is meet that we should make merry, and be glad." "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth" Oh! to be a brighter reflection of the precious grace of our Father's heart!

Ere closing our remarks on this deeply interesting chapter, we shall quote for the reader its last paragraph. "All the firstling males that come of thy herd and of thy flock thou shalt sanctify unto the Lord thy God; thou shalt do no work with the firstling of thy bullock, nor shear the firstling of thy sheep; thou shalt eat it before the Lord thy God year by year, *in the place which, the Lord shall choose*, thou and thy household. And if there be any blemish therein, as if it be lame, or blind, or have any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the Lord thy God. Thou shalt eat it within thy gates, the unclean the clean person shall eat it alike, as the roebuck, as the hart. Only thou shalt not eat the blood thereof. Thou shalt pour it upon the ground as water." (Vers 19-23)

Only that which was perfect was to be offered to God. The first-born, unblemished male, the apt figure of the spotless Lamb of God, offered upon the cross for us, the imperishable foundation of our peace, and the precious food of our souls, in the presence of God. This was the divine thing; the assembly gathered together, around the divine centre, feasting in the presence of God, on that which

was the appointed type of Christ, who is, at once, our sacrifice, our centre, and our feast. Eternal and universal homage to His most precious and glorious Name!

Deuteronomy 16.

We now approach one of the most profound and comprehensive sections of the Book of Deuteronomy, in which the inspired writer presents to our view what we may call the three great cardinal feasts of the Jewish year, namely, the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles; or redemption, the Holy Ghost, and the glory. We have here a more condensed view of lovely institutions than that given in Leviticus 23 where we have, if we count the Sabbath, eight feasts but if we view the Sabbath as distinct, and having its own special place as the type of God's own eternal rest, then there are seven feasts, namely, the Passover; the feast of unleavened bread; the feast first-fruits; Pentecost; trumpets; the day of atonement; and tabernacles.

Such is the order of feasts in the Book of which, as we have ventured to remark in our studies on that most marvellous book, may be called "*The priests guide book*" But in Deuteronomy, which is pre-eminently *the people's book*, we have less of ceremonial detail, and the lawgiver confines himself to those great moral and national landmarks which, in the very simplest manner, as adapted to the people, present the past, the present, and the future.

"Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover unto the Lord thy God; for in the month of Abib the Lord thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night. Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the Passover unto the Lord thy God, of the flock and the herd, *in the place which the Lord shall choose to place his name there*. Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even *the bread of affliction*; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste; that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life. And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coasts seven days; neither shall there anything of the flesh, which thou sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the morning. Thou mayest not sacrifice the Passover within any of thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee" — as if it were a matter of no importance where, provided the feast were kept — "*but at the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name in, there*" — and nowhere else "thou shalt sacrifice the Passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt. And thou shalt roast and eat it *in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose*; and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents. Six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread; and on the seventh day shall be a solemn assembly to the Lord thy God; thou shalt do no work therein" (vers. 1-8.)

Having, in our "Notes on Exodus," gone, somewhat fully, into the great leading principles of this foundation feast, we must refer the reader to that volume, if he desires to study the subject. But there are certain features peculiar to Deuteronomy to which we feel it our duty to call his special attention. And, in the first place, we have to notice the remarkable emphasis laid upon "the place" where the feast was to be kept. This is full of interest and practical moment. The people were not to choose for themselves. It might, according to human thinking, appear a very small matter how or where the feast was kept provided it was kept at all. But — be it carefully noted and deeply pondered by the reader — human thinking had nothing whatever to do in the matter; it was divine thinking and divine authority altogether. God had a right to prescribe and definitively settle where He would meet His people; and this He does in the most distinct and emphatic manner, in the above passage, where, three times over, He inserts the weighty clause, "In the place which the Lord thy God shall choose."

Is this vain repetition? Let no one dare to think, much less to assert it. It is most necessary emphasis; Why most necessary? Because of our ignorance, our indifference, and our wilfulness. God,

in His infinite goodness, takes special pains to impress upon the heart, the conscience and the understanding of His people, that He would have one place, in particular, where the memorable and most significant feast of the Passover was to be kept.

And be it remarked that it is only in Deuteronomy that the place of celebration is insisted upon. We have nothing about it in Exodus, because there it was kept *in Egypt*. We have nothing about it in Numbers, because there it was kept in *the wilderness*. But, in Deuteronomy, it is authoritatively and definitively settled, because there we have the instructions for *the land*. Another striking proof that Deuteronomy is very far indeed from being a barren repetition of its predecessors.

The all-important point, in reference to "the place" so prominently and so peremptorily insisted upon in all the three great solemnities recorded in our chapter, is this, God would gather His beloved people around Himself, that they might feast together in His presence; that He might rejoice in them, and they in Him and in one another. All this could only be in the one special place of divine appointment. All who desired to meet Jehovah and to meet His people, all who desired worship and communion according to God, would thankfully betake themselves to the divinely appointed centre. Self-will might say, "Can we not keep the feast in the bosom of our families? What need is there of a long journey? Surely if heart is right, it cannot matter very much as to place." To all this we reply that the clearest, and best proof of the heart being right would be found in the simple, earnest desire to do the will of God. It was quite sufficient for every one who loved and feared God that He had appointed a Place where He would meet His people; there they would be found and nowhere else. His presence it was that could alone impart joy, comfort, strength and blessing to all their great national reunions. It was not the mere fact of a large number of people gathering together, three times a year, to feast and rejoice together; this might minister to human pride, self complacency and excitement. But to flock together to meet Jehovah, to assemble in His blessed presence, to own the place where He had recorded His Name, this would be the deep joy of every truly loyal heart throughout the twelve tribes of Israel. For any one, *wilfully*, to abide at home, or to go anywhere else than to the one divinely appointed place, would not only be to neglect and insult Jehovah, but actually to rebel against His supreme authority.

And now, having briefly spoken of the *place*, we may, for a moment, glance at the *mode* of celebration This, too, is, as we might expect, quite characteristic of our book. The leading feature here is "the unleavened bread." But the reader will specially note the interesting fact that this bread is "*the bread of affliction*." Now what is the meaning this? We all understand that unleavened bread is the type of that holiness of heart and life so absolutely essential to the enjoyment of true communion with God. We are not saved by personal holiness but, thank God, we are saved to it. It is not the ground of our salvation; but it is an essential element in our communion. *Allowed leaven is the death-blow to communion and worship*.

We must never, for one moment, lose sight of this great cardinal principle in that life of personal holiness and Practical godliness which, as redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, we are called, bound and privileged to live from day to day, in the midst of the scenes and circumstances through which we are journeying home to our eternal rest in the heavens. To speak of communion and worship while living in known sin is the melancholy proof that we know nothing of either the one or the other In order to enjoy communion with God or the communion of saints, and in order to worship God in spirit and in truth, we must be living a life of personal holiness, a life of separation from all known evil. To take our place in the assembly of God's people, and appear to take part in the holy fellowship and worship pertaining thereto, while living in secret sin, or allowing evil in others, is to defile the assembly, grieve the Holy Ghost, sin against Christ, and bring down upon us the judgement of God, who is now judging His house and chastening His children in order that they may not ultimately be condemned with the

world.

All this is most solemn, and calls for the earnest attention of all who really desire: to walk with God, and serve Him with reverence and godly fear. It is one thing to have the doctrine of the type in the region of our understanding, and another thing altogether to have its great, moral lesson engraved on heart and worked out in the life. May all who profess to have the blood of the Lamb sprinkled on their conscience seek to keep the feast of unleavened bread. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Cor. 5: 6-8.)

But what are we to understand by "the bread of affliction"? Should we not rather look for joy, praise and triumph, in connection with a feast in memory of deliverance from Egyptian bondage and misery? No doubt, there is very deep and real joy, thankfulness and praise in realising the blessed truth of our full deliverance from our former condition, with all its accompaniments and all its consequences. But it is very plain that these were not the prominent features of the paschal feast; indeed, they are not even named. We have "the bread of affliction," but not a word about joy, praise or triumph.

Now, why is this? What great moral lesson is conveyed to our hearts by the bread of affliction? We believe it sets before us as those deep exercises of heart which the Holy Ghost produces by bringing powerfully before us what it cost our adorable Lord and Saviour to deliver us from our sins and from the judgement which those sins deserved. Those exercises are also typified by the "bitter herbs" of Exodus 12, and they are illustrated, again and again, in the history of God's people of old who were led, under the powerful action of the word and Spirit of God to chasten themselves and "afflict their souls" in the divine presence.

And be it remembered that there is not a tinge of the legal element, or of unbelief in these holy exercises; far from it. When an Israelite partook of the bread of affliction with the roasted flesh of the Passover, did it express a doubt or a fear as to his full deliverance? Impossible! How could it? He was in the land; he was gathered to God's own centre, His own very presence. How could he then doubt his full and final deliverance from the land of Egypt? The thought is simply absurd.

But although he had no doubts or fears as to his deliverance, yet had he to eat the bread of affliction; it was an essential element in his paschal feast, "For thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt *in haste*, that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt *all the days of thy life*."

This was very deep and real work. They were never to forget their Exodus out of Egypt; but to keep up the remembrance of it, in the promised land throughout all generations. They were to commemorate their deliverance by a feast emblematic of those holy exercises which ever characterise true, practical Christian piety.

We would, very earnestly, commend to the serious attention of the Christian reader the whole line of truth indicated by "that bread of affliction." We believe it is much needed by those who profess great familiarity with what are called the doctrines of grace. There is very great danger, especially to young professors, while seeking to avoid legality and bondage, of running into the opposite extreme of levity — a most terrible snare. Aged and experienced Christians are not so liable to fall into this sad evil; it is the young amongst us who so need to be most solemnly warned against it. They hear, it may be, a great deal about salvation by grace, justification by faith, deliverance from the law, and all the peculiar privileges of the Christian position.

Now, we need hardly say that all these are of cardinal importance; and it would be utterly impossible for any one to hear too much about them. Would they were more spoken about, written about, and preached about. Thousands of the Lord's beloved people spend all their days in darkness, doubt and legal bondage, through ignorance of those great foundation truths.

But, while all this is perfectly true, there are, on the other hand, many — alas! too many who have a merely intellectual familiarity with the principles of grace but — if we are to judge from their habits and manners, their style and deportment — the only way we have of judging — who know but little of the sanctifying power of those great principles — their power in the heart and in the life.

Now, to speak according to the teaching of the paschal feast, it would not have been according to the mind of God for any one to attempt to keep that feast without the unleavened bread, even the bread of affliction. Such a thing would not have been tolerated in Israel of old. It was an absolutely essential ingredient. And so, we may rest assured, it is an integral part of that feast which we, as Christians, are exhorted to keep, to cultivate personal holiness and that condition of soul which is so aptly expressed by the "bitter herbs" of Exodus 12 or the Deuteronomic ingredient, "the bread of affliction," which latter would seem to be the permanent figure for the land.

In a word, then, we believe there is a deep and urgent need amongst us of those spiritual feelings and affections, those profound exercises of soul which the Holy Ghost would produce by unfolding to our hearts the sufferings of Christ — what it cost Him to put away our sins namely — what He endured for us when passing under the billows and waves of God's righteous wrath against our sins. We are sadly lacking — if one may be permitted to speak for others — in that deep contrition of heart which flows from spiritual occupation with the sufferings and death of our precious Saviour. It is one thing to have the blood of Christ sprinkled on the conscience, and another thing to have the death of Christ brought home, in a spiritual way, to the heart, and the cross of Christ applied, in a practical way, to our whole course and character.

How is it that we can so lightly commit sin, in thought, word and deed? How is it that there is so much levity, so much unsubduedness, so much self-indulgence, so much carnal ease, so much that is merely frothy and superficial? Is it not because that ingredient typified by "the bread of affliction" is lacking in our feast? we cannot doubt it. We fear there is a very deplorable lack of depth and seriousness in our Christianity. There is too much flippant discussion of the profound mysteries of the Christian faith, too much head knowledge without the inward power.

All this demands the serious attention of the reader. We cannot shake off the impression that not a little of this melancholy condition of things is but too justly traceable to a certain style of preaching the gospel, adopted, no doubt, with the very best intentions, but none the less pernicious in its moral effect. It is all right to preach a simple Gospel. It cannot, by any possibility, be put more simply than God the Holy Ghost has given it to us in scripture.

All this is fully admitted; but, at the same time we are persuaded there is a very serious defect in the preaching of which we speak. There is a want of spiritual depth, a lack of holy seriousness. In the effort to counteract legality, there is that which tends to levity. Now, while legality is a great evil, levity is much greater. We must guard against both. We believe grace is the remedy for the former, truth for the latter; but spiritual wisdom is needed to enable us rightly to adjust and apply these two. If we find a soul, deeply exercised, under the powerful action of truth, thoroughly ploughed up by the mighty ministry of the Holy Ghost, we should pour in the deep consolation of the pure and precious grace of God, as set forth in the divinely efficacious sacrifice of Christ. This is the divine remedy for a broken heart, a contrite spirit, a convicted conscience. When the deep furrow has been made by the spiritual

ploughshare, we have only to cast in the incorruptible seed of the gospel of God, in the assurance that it will take root, and bring forth fruit in due season.

But, on the other hand, if we find a person going on in a light, airy, unbroken condition, using very high-flown language about grace, talking loudly against legality, and seeking, in a merely human way to set forth an easy way of being saved, we consider this to be a case calling for a very solemn application of truth to the heart and conscience.

Now, we greatly fear there is a vast amount of this last named element abroad in the professing church. To speak according to the language of our type, there is a tendency to separate the Passover from the feast of unleavened bread — to rest in the fact of being delivered from judgement and forget the *roasted* lamb, the bread of *holiness*, and the bread of *affliction*. In reality, they never can be separated, inasmuch as God has bound them together; and, hence, we do not believe that any soul can be really in the enjoyment of the precious truth that "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us," who is not seeking to "keep the feast." When the Holy Spirit unfolds to our hearts something of the deep blessedness, preciousness, and efficacy of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, He leads us to meditate upon the soul-subduing mystery of His sufferings, to ponder in our hearts all that He passed through for us, all that it cost Him to save us from the eternal consequences of that which we, alas! so often lightly commit.

Now this is very deep and holy work, and leads the soul into those exercises which correspond with "the bread of affliction" in the feast of unleavened bread. There is a wide difference between the feelings produced by dwelling upon our sins and those which flow from dwelling upon the sufferings of Christ to put those sins away.

True, we can never forget our sins, never forget, the hole of the pit from whence we were digged. But it is one thing to dwell upon the pit, and another and a deeper thing altogether to dwell upon the grace that digged us out of it, and what it cost our precious Saviour to do it. It is this latter we so much need to keep continually in the remembrance of the thoughts of our hearts. We are so terribly volatile, so ready to forget.

We need to look, very earnestly, to God to enable us to enter more deeply and practically into the sufferings of Christ, and into the application of the cross to all that in us which is contrary to Him. This will impart depth of tone, tenderness of spirit, an intense breathing after holiness of heart and life, practical separation from the world, in its every phase, a holy subduedness, jealous watchfulness over ourselves, our thoughts, our words, our ways, our whole deportment in daily life. In a word, it would lead to a totally different type of Christianity from what we see around us, and what, alas! we exhibit in our own personal history. May the Spirit of God graciously unfold to our hearts, by His own direct and powerful ministry, more and more of what is meant by "the *roasted* lamb," the "*unleavened* bread," and "the bread of *affliction*!"* We shall now briefly consider the feast of Pentecost which stands next in order to the Passover. "Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee; begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn. And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the Lord thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the Lord thy God, according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee; and thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, *in the place which the Lord thy God hath chosen to place his name there*. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt; and thou shalt observe and do these statutes." (Vers. 9-12.)

{*For further remarks on the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread, the reader is referred to

Exodus 12, and Numbers 9. Specially, in the latter, the connection between the Passover and the Lord's supper. This is a point of deepest interest, and immense practical importance. The Passover looked forward to the death of Christ; the Lord's supper looks back to it. What the former was to a faithful Israelite, the latter is to the church. If this were more fully seen it would greatly tend to meet the prevailing laxity, indifference and error as to the table and supper of the Lord.

To any one who lives habitually in the holy atmosphere of scripture, it must seem strange indeed to mark the confusion of thought and the diversity of practice in reference to a subject so very important, and one so simply and clearly presented in the word of God.

It can hardly be called in question by any one who bows to scripture, that the apostles and the early church assembled on the first day of the week to break bread. There is not a shadow of warrant, in the New Testament, for confining that most precious ordinance to once a month, once a quarter, or once in six months. This can only be viewed as a human interference with a divine institution. We are aware that much is sought to be made of the words, "as oft as ye do it;" but we do not see how any argument based on this clause can stand, for a moment, in the face of apostolic precedent, in Acts 20: 7. The first day of the week is, unquestionably, the day for the church to celebrate the Lord's supper.

Does the Christian reader admit this? If so, does he act upon it? It is a perilous thing to neglect a special ordinance of Christ, and one appointed by Him the same night in which He was betrayed, under circumstances so deeply affecting. Surely all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity would desire to remember Him in this special way, according to His own word, "This do in remembrance of me." Can we understand any true lover of Christ living in the habitual neglect of this precious memorial? If an Israelite of old neglected the Passover, he would have been "cut off." But this was law, and we are under grace. True; but is that a reason for neglecting our Lord's commandment?

We would commend this subject to the reader's careful attention. There is much more involved in it than most of us are aware. We believe the entire history of the Lord's supper, for the last eighteen centuries, is full of interest and instruction. We may see in the way in which the Lord's table has been treated, a striking moral index of the church's real condition. In proportion as the church departed from Christ and His word, did she neglect and pervert the precious institution of the Lord's supper. And, on the other hand, just as the Spirit of God wrought, at any time, with special power in the church, the Lord's supper has found its true place in the hearts of His people.

But we cannot pursue this subject further in a footnote; we have ventured to suggest it to the reader, and we trust he may be led to follow it up for himself. We believe he will find it a most profitable and suggestive study.}

Here we have the well-known and beautiful type of the day of Pentecost. The Passover sets forth the death of Christ. The sheaf of first-fruits is the striking figure of a risen Christ. And, in the feast of weeks, we have prefigured before us the descent of the Holy Ghost, fifty days after the resurrection.

We speak, of course, of what these feasts convey to us, according to the mind of God, irrespective altogether of the question of Israel's apprehension of their meaning. It is our privilege to look at all these typical institutions in the light of the New Testament; and when we so view them we are filled with wonder and delight at the divine perfectness, beauty and order of all those marvellous types.

And not only so, but — what is of immense value to us — we see how the scriptures of the New Testament dovetail, as it were, into those of the Old; we see the lovely unity of the divine Volume, and how manifestly it is one Spirit that breathes through the whole, from beginning to end. In this way we are inwardly strengthened in our apprehension of the precious truth of the divine inspiration of the holy

scriptures, and our hearts are fortified against all the blasphemous attacks of infidel writers. Our souls are conducted to the top of the mountain where the moral glories of the Volume shine upon us in all their heavenly lustre, and from whence we can look down and see the clouds and chilling mists of infidel thought rolling beneath us. These clouds and mists cannot affect us, inasmuch as they are far away below the level on which, through infinite grace, we stand. Infidel writers know absolutely nothing of the moral glories of scripture; but one thing is awfully certain, namely, that one moment in eternity will completely revolutionise the thoughts of all the infidels and atheists that have ever raved or written against the Bible and its Author.

Now, in looking at the deeply interesting feast of weeks or Pentecost, we are at once struck with the difference between it and the feast of unleavened bread. In the first place, we read of "a freewill offering" Here we have a figure of the church, formed by the Holy Ghost and presented to God as "a kind of first-fruits of his creatures."

We have dwelt upon this feature of the type in the "Notes on Leviticus," chapter 23, and shall not therefore enter upon it here, but confine ourselves to what is purely Deuteronomic. The people were to present a tribute of a freewill offering of their hand, according as the Lord their God had blessed them. There was nothing like this at the Passover, because that sets forth Christ offering Himself for us, as a sacrifice, and not our offering anything. We remember our deliverance from sin and Satan, and what that deliverance cost. We meditate upon the deep and varied sufferings of our precious Saviour as prefigured by the roasted lamb. We remember that it was our sins that were laid upon Him. He was bruised for our iniquities, judged in our stead, and this leads to deep and hearty contrition, or, what we may call, true Christian repentance. For we must never forget that repentance is not a mere transient emotion of a sinner when his eyes are first opened, but an abiding moral condition of the Christian, in view of the cross and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. If this were better understood, and more fully entered into, it would impart a depth and solidity to the Christian life and character in which the great majority of us are lamentably deficient.

But, in the feast of Pentecost, we have before us the power of the Holy Ghost, and the varied effects of His blessed presence in us and with us. He enables us to present our bodies and all that we have as a freewill offering unto our God, according as He hath blessed us. This, we need hardly say, can only be done by the power of the Holy Ghost; and hence the striking type of it is presented, not in the Passover which prefigures the death of Christ; not in the feast of unleavened bread, which sets forth the moral effect of that death upon us, in repentance, self-judgment and practical holiness; but in Pentecost, which is the acknowledged type of the precious gift of the Holy Ghost.

Now, it is the Spirit who enables us to enter into the claims of God upon us — claims which are to be measured only by the extent of the divine blessing. He gives us to see and understand that all we are and all we have belong to God. He gives us to delight in consecrating ourselves, spirit, soul and body, to God. It is truly "a freewill offering." It is not of constraint, but willingly. There is not an atom of bondage, for "where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.

In short we have here the lovely spirit and moral character of the entire Christian life and service. A soul under law cannot understand the force and beauty of this. Souls under the law never received the Spirit. The two things are wholly incompatible. Thus the apostle says to the poor misguided assemblies of Galatia, "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by works of law, or by the hearing of faith?... He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by works of law, or by the hearing of faith?" The precious gift of the Spirit is consequent upon the death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of our adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and

consequently can have nothing whatever to do with "works of law" in any shape or form. The presence of the Holy Ghost on earth, His dwelling with and in all true believers is a grand characteristic truth of Christianity. It was not, and could not be known in Old Testament times. It was not even known by the disciples in our Lord's life time. He Himself said to them, on the eve of His departure, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient [or profitable — *sumpherei*] for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him Unto you." (John 16: 7.)

This proves, in the most conclusive manner, that even the very men who enjoyed the high and precious privilege of personal companionship with the Lord Himself, were to be put in an advanced position by His going away, and the coming of the Comforter. Again, we read, "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you."

We cannot, however, attempt to go elaborately into this immense subject here. Our space does not admit of it, much as we should delight in it. We must just confine ourselves to one or two points suggested by the feast of weeks, as presented in our chapter.

We have referred to the very interesting fact that the Spirit of God is the living spring and power of the life of personal devotedness and consecration beautifully prefigured by "the tribute of a freewill offering." The sacrifice of Christ is the ground, the presence of the Holy Ghost, is the power of the Christian's dedication of himself, spirit, soul and body, to God. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12: 1.)

But there is another point of deepest interest presented in verse 11 of our chapter, "And thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God." We have no such word in the paschal feast, or in the feast of unleavened bread. It would not be in moral keeping with either of these solemnities. True it is, the Passover lies at the very foundation of all the joy we can or ever shall realise here or hereafter; but, we must ever think of the death of Christ, His sufferings, His sorrows — all that He passed through, when the waves and billows of God's righteous wrath passed His soul. It is upon these profound mysteries that our hearts are, or ought to be mainly fixed, when we surround the Lord's table and keep that feast by which we show the Lord's death until He come.

Now, it is plain to the spiritual and thoughtful reader that the feelings proper to such a holy and solemn institution are not of a jubilant character. We certainly can and do rejoice that the sorrows and sufferings of our blessed Lord are over, and over for ever; that those terrible hours are passed never to return. But what we recall in the feast is not simply their being over, but their being gone through — and that for us. "Ye do show the Lord's death," and we know that, whatever may accrue to us from that precious death, yet when we are called to meditate upon it, our joy is chastened by those profound exercises of soul which the Holy Spirit produces by unfolding to us the sorrows, the sufferings, the cross and passion of our blessed Saviour. Our Lord's words are, "This do in remembrance of me but what we especially *remember* in the Supper is Christ suffering and dying for us; what we show is His death; and with these solemn realities before our souls, in the power of the Holy Ghost, there will — there must be holy subduedness and seriousness.

We speak, of course, of what becomes the immediate occasion of the celebration of the Supper — the suited feelings and affections of such a moment. But these must be produced by the powerful ministry of the Holy Ghost. It can be of no possible use to seek, by any pious efforts of our own, to work ourselves up to a suitable state of mind. This would be ascending by steps to the altar, a thing

most offensive to God. It is only by the Holy Spirit's ministry that we can worthily celebrate the holy Supper of the Lord. He alone can enable us to put away all levity, all formality, all mere routine, all wandering thoughts, and to discern the body and blood of the Lord in those memorials which, by His own appointment, are laid on His table.

But, in the feast of Pentecost, rejoicing was a prominent feature. We hear nothing of "bitter herbs" or "bread of affliction," on this occasion, because it is the type of the coming of the other Comforter, the descent of the Holy Ghost, Proceeding from the Father, and sent down by the risen, ascended and glorified Head in the heavens, to fill the hearts of His people with praise, thanksgiving and triumphant joy, yea to lead them into full and blessed fellowship with their glorified Head, in His triumph over sin, death, hell, Satan and all the powers of darkness. The Spirit's presence is connected with liberty, light, power and joy. Thus we read, "The disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost." Doubts, fears, and legal bondage flee away before the precious ministry of the Holy Ghost.

But we must distinguish between His work and indwelling — His quickening and His sealing. The very first dawn of conviction in the soul is the fruit of the Spirit's work. It is His blessed operation that leads to all true repentance, and this is not joyful work; it is very good, very needful, absolutely essential; but it is not joy, nay, it is deep sorrow. But when, through grace, we are enabled to believe in a risen and glorified Saviour, then the Holy Ghost comes and takes up His abode in us, as the seal of our acceptance and the earnest of our inheritance.

Now this fills us with joy unspeakable and full of glory; and being thus filled ourselves, we become channels of blessing to others. "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." The Spirit is the spring of power and joy in the heart of the believer. He fits, fills and uses us as His vessels in ministering to poor thirsty, needy souls around us. He links us with the Man in the glory, maintains us in living communion with Him, and enables us to be, in our feeble measure, the expression of what He is. Every movement of the Christian should be redolent with the fragrance of Christ. For one who professes to be a Christian to exhibit unholy tempers, selfish ways, a grasping, covetous, worldly spirit, envy and jealousy, pride and ambition, is to belie his profession, dishonour the holy Name of Christ, and bring reproach upon that glorious Christianity which he professes, and of which we have the lovely type in the feast of weeks — a feast pre-eminently characterised by a joy which had its source in the goodness of God, and which flowed out far and wide, and embraced in its hallowed circle every object of need: "Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God, thou and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the *Levite* that is within thy gates, and the *stranger*, and the *fatherless*, and the *widow*, that are among you."

How lovely! How perfectly beautiful! Oh! that its antitype were more faithfully exhibited amongst us! Where are those streams of refreshing which ought to flow from the church of God? Where those unblotted epistles of Christ known and read of all men? Where can we see a practical exhibition of Christ in the ways of His people — something to which we could point and say, "There is true Christianity"? Oh! may the Spirit of God stir up our hearts to a more intense desire after conformity to the image of Christ, in all things. May He clothe with His own mighty power the word of God which we have in our hands and in our homes; that it may speak to our hearts and consciences, and lead us to judge ourselves, our ways, and our associations by its heavenly light, so that there may be a thoroughly devoted band of witnesses gathered out to His Name, to wait for His appearing! Will the reader join us in asking for this?

We shall now turn for a moment to the lovely institution of the feast of tabernacles which gives such remarkable completeness to the range of truth presented in our chapter.

"Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine; and thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates. Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord shall choose; because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice. Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God *in the place which he shall choose*; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the Lord empty; every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee." (Vers. 13-17.)

Here, then we have the striking and beautiful type of Israel's future. The feast of tabernacles has not yet had its antitype. The Passover and Pentecost have had their fulfilment in the precious death of Christ, and the descent of the Holy Ghost; but the third great solemnity points forward to the times of the restitution of all things which God has spoken of by the mouth of all His holy prophets which have been since the world began.

And let the reader note particularly the time of the celebration of this feast. It was to be "after thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine;" in other words, it was after the harvest and the vintage. Now there is a very marked distinction between these two things. The one speaks of grace, the other of judgement. At the end of the age, God will gather His wheat into His garner, and then will come the treading of the winepress, in awful judgement.

We have in Revelation 14 a very solemn passage bearing upon the subject now before us. "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap; for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped."

Here we have the harvest; and then, "Another came out of the temple which is in heaven, he having a sharp sickle. And another angel came from the altar, which had power over fire" — the emblem of judgement — "and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs." Equal to the whole length of the land of Palestine!

Now these apocalyptic figures set before us in a characteristic way, scenes which must be enacted previous to the celebration of the feast of tabernacles. Christ will gather His wheat into His heavenly garner, and after that He will come in crushing judgement upon Christendom. Thus, every section of the Volume of inspiration, Moses, the Psalms, the Prophets, the Gospels — or the acts of Christ — the Acts of the Holy Ghost, the Epistles, and Apocalypse — all go to establish unanswerably the fact that the world will not be converted by the gospel, that things are not improving and will not improve, but grow worse and worse. That glorious time prefigured by the feast of tabernacles must be preceded by the vintage, the treading of the winepress of the wrath of Almighty God.

Why, then, we may well ask, in the face of such an overwhelming body of divine evidence, furnished by every section of the inspired canon, will men persist in cherishing the delusive hope of a world converted by the gospel? What mean "gathered wheat and a trodden winepress"? Assuredly, they do not and cannot mean a converted world.

We shall perhaps be told that we cannot build anything upon Mosaic types and Apocalyptic symbols. Perhaps not, if we had but types and symbols. But when the accumulated rays of inspiration's heavenly lamp converge upon these types and symbols and unfold their deep meaning to our souls, find them in perfect harmony with the voices of prophets and apostles, and the living teachings our Lord Himself, In a word, all speak the same language, all teach the same lesson, all bear the unequivocal testimony to the solemn truth that, the end of this age, instead of a converted world, prepared for a spiritual millennium, there will be a vine covered and borne down with terrible clusters fully ripe for the winepress of the wrath of Almighty God.

Oh! may the men and women of Christendom, and the teachers thereof apply their hearts to these solemn realities! May these things sink down into their ears, and into the very depths of their souls, so that they may fling to the winds their fondly cherished delusion, and accept instead the plainly revealed and clearly established truth of God!

But we must draw this section to a close; and ere doing so, we would remind the Christian reader, that we are called to exhibit in our daily life the blessed influence of all those great truths presented to us in the three interesting types on which we have been meditating. Christianity is characterised by those three great formative facts, redemption, the presence of the Holy Ghost, and the hope of glory. The Christian is redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, sealed by the Holy Ghost, and he is looking for the Saviour.

Yes, beloved reader, these are solid facts, divine realities, great formative truths. They are not mere principles or opinions, but they are designed to be a power in our souls, and to shine in our lives. See how thoroughly practical were these solemnities on which we have been dwelling; mark what a tide of praise and thanksgiving and joy and blessing and active benevolence flowed from the assembly of Israel when gathered round Jehovah in the place which He had chosen. Praise and thanksgiving ascended to God; and the blessed streams of a large-hearted benevolence flowed forth to every object of need. "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God.... *And they shall not appear before the Lord empty; every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath, given thee.*"

Lovely words! They were not to come empty into the Lord's presence; they were to come with the heart full of praise, and the hands full of the fruits of divine goodness to gladden the hearts of the Lord's workmen, and the Lord's poor. All this was perfectly beautiful. Jehovah would gather His people round Himself, to fill them to overflowing with joy and praise, and to make them His channels of blessing to others. They were not to remain under their vine and under their fig tree, and there congratulate themselves upon the rich and varied mercies which surrounded them. This might be all right and good in its place; but it would not have fully met the mind and heart of God. No; three times in the year they had to arise and betake themselves to the divinely appointed meeting place, and there raise their hallelujahs to the Lord their God, and there too, to minister liberally of that which He had bestowed upon them to every form of human need. God would confer upon His people the rich privilege of rejoicing the heart of the Levite, the stranger, widow and the fatherless. This is the work in He Himself delights, blessed for ever be His Name, and He would share His delight With His people. He would have it to be known, seen and felt, that the place where He met His people was a sphere of

joy and praise, and a centre from whence streams of blessing were to flow forth in all directions.

Has not all this a voice and a lesson for the church of God? Does it not speak home to the writer and the reader of these lines? Assuredly it does. May we listen to it! May it tell upon our hearts! May the marvellous grace of God so act upon us that our hearts may be full of praise to Him and our hands full of good works. If the mere types and shadows of our blessings were connected with so much thanksgiving and active benevolence, how much more powerful should be the effect of the blessings themselves!

But ah! the question is, Are we realising the blessings? Are we making our own of them? Are we grasping them in the power of an artless faith? Here lies the secret of the whole matter. Where do we find professing Christians in the full and settled enjoyment of what the Passover prefigured, namely, full deliverance from judgement and this present evil world? Where do we find them in the full and settled enjoyment of their Pentecost, even the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the seal, the earnest, the unction and the witness? Ask the vast majority of professors the plain question, "Have you received the Holy Ghost?" and see what answer you will get. What answer can the render give? Can he say, "Yes, thank God, I know I am washed in the precious blood of Christ, and sealed with the Holy Ghost"? It is greatly to be feared that comparatively few of the vast multitudes of professors around us know anything of those precious things, which nevertheless are the chartered privileges of the very simplest member of the body of Christ.

So also as to the feast of tabernacles, how few understand its meaning! True, it has not yet been fulfilled; but the Christian is called to live in the present power of that which it set forth. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Our life is to be governed and our character formed by the combined influence of the "grace" in which we stand, and the "glory" for which we wait.

But if souls are not established in grace, if they do not even know that their sins are forgiven; if they are taught that it is presumption to be sure of salvation, and that it is humility and piety to live in perpetual doubt and fear; and that no one can be sure of their salvation until they stand before the judgement-seat of Christ, how can they possibly take Christian ground, manifest the fruits of Christian life, or cherish proper Christian hope? If an Israelite of old was in doubt as to whether he was a child of Abraham, a member of the congregation of the Lord, and in the land, how could he keep the feast of unleavened bread, Pentecost or tabernacles? There would have been no sense, meaning or value in such a thing; indeed, we may safely affirm that no Israelite would have thought, for a moment, of anything so utterly absurd.

How is it then that professing Christians, many of them, we cannot doubt, real children of God, never seem to be able to enter upon proper Christian ground? They spend their days in doubt and fear, darkness and uncertainty. Their religious exercises and services, instead of being the outcome of life possessed and enjoyed, are entered upon and gone through more as a matter of legal duty, and as a moral preparation for the life to come. Many truly pious souls are kept in this state all their days; and as to "the blessed hope" which grace has set before us, to cheer our hearts and detach us from present things, they do not enter into it or understand it. It is looked upon as a mere speculation indulged in by a few visionary enthusiasts here and there. They are looking forward to the day of judgement, instead of looking out for "the bright and morning star." They are praying for the forgiveness of their sins and asking God to give them His Holy Spirit, when they ought to be rejoicing in the assured possession of eternal life, divine righteousness, and the Spirit of adoption.

All this is directly opposed to the simplest and clearest teaching of the New Testament; it is

utterly foreign to the very genius of Christianity, subversive of the Christian's peace and liberty, and destructive of all true and intelligent Christian worship, service and testimony. It is plainly impossible that people can appear before the Lord with their hearts full of praise for privileges which they do not enjoy, or their hands full of the blessing which they have never realised.

We call the earnest attention of all the Lord's people, throughout the length and breadth of the professing church, to this weighty subject. We entreat them to search the scriptures and see if they afford any warrant for keeping souls in darkness, doubt and bondage all their days. That there are solemn warnings, searching appeals, weighty admonitions, is most true, and we bless God for them; we need them, and should diligently apply our hearts to them. But let the reader distinctly understand that it is the sweet privilege of the very babes in Christ to know that their sins are all forgiven, that they are accepted in a risen Christ, sealed by the Holy Ghost and heirs of eternal glory. Such, through infinite and sovereign grace, are their clearly established and assured blessings — blessings to which the love of God makes them welcome, for which the blood of Christ makes them fit, and as to which the testimony of the Holy Ghost makes them sure.

May the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls lead all His beloved people, the lambs and sheep of His blood-bought flock, to know, by the teaching of His holy Spirit, the things that are freely given to them of God! And may those who do know them, in measure, know them more fully, and exhibit the precious fruits of them in a life of genuine devotedness to Christ and His service!

It is greatly to be feared that many of us who profess to be acquainted with the very highest truths of the Christian faith are not answering to our profession; we are not acting up to the principle set forth in verse 17 of our beautiful chapter, "*Every man shall give as he is able*, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee." We seem to forget that, although we have nothing to do and nothing to give for salvation, we have much that we can do for the Saviour, and much that we can give to His workmen and to His poor. There is very great danger of pushing the do-nothing and give-nothing principle too far. If, in the days of our ignorance and legal bondage, we worked and gave upon a false principle, and with a false object, we surely ought not to do less and give less now that we profess to know that we are not only saved but blessed with all spiritual blessings, in a risen and glorified Christ. We have need to take care that we are not resting in the mere intellectual perception and verbal profession of these great and glorious truths, while the heart and conscience have never felt their sacred action, nor the conduct and character been brought under their powerful and holy influence.

We venture, in all tenderness and love, just to offer these practical suggestions to the reader for his prayerful consideration. We would not wound, offend, or discourage the very feeblest lamb in all the flock of Christ. And, further, we can assure the reader, that we are not casting a stone at any one, but simply writing, as in the immediate presence of God, and sounding in the ears of the church a note of warning as to that which we deeply feel to be our common danger. We believe there is an urgent call, on all sides, to consider our ways, to humble ourselves before the Lord, on account of our manifold failures, shortcomings and inconsistencies, and to seek grace from Him to be more real, more thoroughly devoted, more pronounced in our testimony for Him, in this dark and evil day.

Deuteronomy 17.

We must remember that the division of scripture into chapters and verses is entirely a human arrangement, often very convenient, no doubt, for reference; but not infrequently it is quite unwarrantable, and interferes with the connection. Thus we can see, at a glance, that the closing verses of chapter 16. are much more connected with what follows than with what goes before.

"Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes; and they shall judge the people with just judgement. Thou shalt not wrest judgement; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift; for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

These words teach us a twofold lesson; in the first place, they set forth the even-handed justice and perfect truth which ever characterise the government of God. Every case is dealt with according to its own merits and on the ground of its own facts. The judgement is so plain that there is not a shadow of ground for a question; all dissension is absolutely closed, and if any murmur is raised, the murmurer is at once silenced by, "Friend, I do thee no wrong." This holds good everywhere and at all times, in the holy government of God, and it makes us long for the time when that government shall be established from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.

But, on the other hand, we learn, from the lines just quoted, what man's judgement is worth, if left to himself. It cannot be trusted, for a moment. Man is capable of "*wresting* judgement," of "respecting persons," of "taking a gift," of attaching importance to a person because of his position and wealth. That he is capable of all this is evident from the fact of his being told not to do it. We must ever remember this. If God commands man not to steal, it is plain that man has theft in his nature.

Hence, therefore, human judgement and human government are liable to the grossest corruption. Judges and governors if left to themselves, if not under the direct sway of divine principle, are capable of perverting justice for filthy lucre's sake, of favouring a wicked man because he is rich, and of condemning a righteous man because he is poor; of giving a judgement in flagrant opposition to the plainest facts because of some advantage to be gained, whether in the shape of money, or influence, or popularity, or power.

To prove this it is not necessary to point to such men as Pilate and Herod, and Felix and Festus; we have no need to go beyond the passage just quoted, in order to see what man is, even when clothed in the robes of official dignity, seated on the throne of government, or on the bench of justice.

Some, as they read these lines, may feel disposed to say, in the language of Hazeal, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" But let such reflect, for a moment, on the fact that the human heart is the seed plot of every sin, and of every vile and abominable and contemptible wickedness that ever was committed in this world; and the unanswerable proof of this is found in the enactments, commandments, and prohibitions which appear on the sacred page of inspiration.

And herein we have an uncommonly fine reply to the oft-repeated question, "What have we to do with many of the laws and institutions set forth in the Mosaic economy? Why are such things set down in the Bible? Can they possibly be inspired?" Yes; they are inspired, and they appear on the page of inspiration in order that we may see, as reflected in a divinely perfect mirror, the moral material of which we ourselves are made, the thoughts we are capable of thinking, the words we are capable of speaking, and the deeds we are capable of doing.

Is not this something? Is it not good and wholesome to find, for example, in some of the passages of this most profound and beautiful book of Deuteronomy, that human nature is capable, and hence we are capable of doing things that put us morally below the level of a beast? Assuredly it is, and well would it be for many a one who walks in Pharisaic pride and self-complacency, puffed up with false notions of his own dignity and high-toned morality, to learn this deeply humbling lesson.

But how morally lovely, how pure, how refined and elevated were the divine enactments for

Israel! They were not to wrest judgement, but allow it to flow in its own straight and even channel, irrespective altogether of persons. The poor man in vile raiment was to have the same impartial justice, as the man with a gold ring and gay clothing. The decision of the judgement-seat was not to be warped by partiality or prejudice, or the robe of justice to be defiled by the stain of bribery.

Oh! what will it be for this oppressed and groaning earth to be governed by the admirable laws which are recorded in the inspired pages of the Pentateuch, when a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall decree justice! "Give the king thy judgements, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and *thy poor* with judgment" — no wresting, no bribery, no partial judgements then — "The mountains [or higher dignities] shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills [or lesser dignities], by righteousness. He shall judge [or defend] *the poor* of the people, he shall save the children of *the needy*, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.... He shall deliver *the needy* when he crieth; *the poor* also, and *him that hath no helper*. He shall spare *the poor and needy*, and shall save *the souls of the needy*. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence; and precious shall their blood be in his sight." (Ps. 72.)

Well may the heart long for the time — the bright and blessed time when all this shall be made good, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea; when the Lord Jesus shall take to Himself His great power and reign; when the church in the heavens shall reflect the beams of His glory upon the earth; when Israel's twelve tribes shall repose beneath the vine and fig tree in their own promised land, and all the nations of the earth shall rejoice beneath the peaceful and beneficent rule of the Son of David. Thanks and praise be to our God, thus it shall be, ere long, as sure as His throne is in the heavens. A little while and all shall be made good, according to the eternal counsels and immutable promise of God. Till then, beloved Christian reader, be it ours to live in the constant, earnest, believing anticipation of this bright and blessed time, and to pass through this ungodly scene as thorough strangers and pilgrims, having no place or portion down here, but ever breathing forth the prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

In the closing lines of chapter 16 Israel is warned against the most distant approach to the religious customs of the nations around. "Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the Lord thy God, which thou shalt make thee. Neither shalt thou set thee up any image which the Lord thy God hateth." They were carefully to avoid everything which might lead them in the direction of the dark and abominable idolatries of the heathen nations around. The altar of God was to stand out in distinct and unmistakable separation from those groves and shady places where false gods were worshipped, and things were done which are not to be named.* In a word, everything was to be most carefully avoided which might, in any way, draw the heart away from the one living and true God.

{*It may interest the reader to know that the Holy Ghost, in speaking of the altar of God, in the New Testament, does not apply to it the word used to express a heathen altar, but has a comparatively new word — a word unknown in the world's classics. The heathen altar is *bomon*. (Acts 17. 23.) The altar of God is *thusiasterion*. The former occurs but once; the latter twenty-three times. So jealously is the worship of the only true God guarded and preserved from the defiling touch of heathen idolatry. Men may feel disposed to inquire why this should be? or how could the altar of God be affected by a name? We reply, the Holy Ghost is wiser than we are; and although the heathen word was before Him — a short and convenient word, too — He refuses to apply it to the altar of the one true and living God.

See Trench's "Synonyms of the New Testament".}

Nor this only; it was not enough to maintain a correct outward form; images and groves might be abolished, and the nation might profess the dogma of the unity of the Godhead, and, all the while, there might be an utter want of heart and genuine devotedness in the worship rendered. Hence we read, "Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the Lord thy God any bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish, or any evil-favouredness; for that is an abomination unto the Lord."

That which was absolutely perfect could alone suit the altar and answer to the heart of God. To offer a blemished thing to Him was simply to prove the absence of all true sense of what became Him, and of all real heart for Him. To attempt to offer an imperfect sacrifice was tantamount to the horrible blasphemy of saying that anything was good enough for Him.

Let us hearken to the indignant pleadings of the Spirit of God, by the mouth of the prophet Malachi. "Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts. And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us; this hath been by your means; will he regard your persons? saith the Lord of hosts. Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. For from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat is contemptible. Ye said also Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts: and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame and the sick; thus ye brought an offering; should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord. But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen" (Mal. 1: 7-14.)

Has all this no voice for the professing church? Has it no voice for the writer and the reader of these lines? Assuredly it has. Is there not, in our private and public worship a deplorable lack of heart, of real devotedness, deep-toned earnestness, holy energy, and integrity of purpose? Is there not much that answers to the offering of the lame and the sick, the blemished and the evil-favoured? Is there not a deplorable amount of cold formality and dead routine in our seasons of worship both in the closet and in the assembly? Have we not to judge ourselves for barrenness, distraction and wandering even at the very table of our Lord? How often are our bodies at the table, while our vagrant hearts and volatile minds are at the ends of the earth! How often do our lips utter words which are not the true expression of our whole moral being! We express far more than we feel. We sing beyond our experience.

And then, when we are favoured with the blessed opportunity of dropping our offerings into our Lord's treasury what heartless formality! What an absence loving, earnest, hearty devotedness! What little reference to the apostolic rule, "as God hath prospered us" What detestable niggardliness! How little of the whole-heartedness of the poor widow who, having but two mites in the world, and having the option of at least keeping one for her living, willingly cast in both — cast in her all! Pounds may be spent on ourselves, perhaps on superfluities during the week, but when the claims of the Lord's work, His poor, and His cause in general, are brought before us, how meagre is the response!

Christian reader, let us consider these things. Let us look at the whole subject of worship and

devotedness in the divine presence, and in the presence of the grace that has saved us from everlasting burnings. Let us calmly reflect upon the precious and powerful claims of Christ upon us. We are not our own; we are bought with a price. It is not merely our best, but our all we owe to that blessed One who gave Himself for us. Do we not fully own it? Do not our hearts own it? Then may our lives express it! May we more distinctly declare whose we are and whom we serve! May the heart, the head, the hands, the feet, the whole man be dedicated, in unreserved devotedness, to Him, in the power of the Holy Ghost, and according to the direct teaching of holy scripture. God grant it may be so, with us and with all His beloved people!

A very weighty and practical subject now claims our attention. We feel it right to adhere, as much as possible, to the custom of quoting, at full length, the passages for the reader; we believe it to be profitable to give the very word of God itself; and, moreover, it is convenient to the great majority of readers to be saved the trouble of laying aside the volume and turning to the Bible in Order to find the passages for themselves.

"If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the Lord thy God, in transgressing his covenant, and hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; and it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and *inquired diligently*, behold, it be *true* and the thing *certain*, that such abomination is *wrought in Israel* — something the whole nation — "Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, even that man or woman, and shalt stone them with stones till they die. At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not put to death. The hands of the witnesses shall first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you)' (Ver. 2-7.)

We have already had occasion to refer to the great principle laid down in the foregoing passage. It is one of immense importance, namely, the absolute necessity of having competent testimony ere forming a judgement in any case. It meets us constantly in scripture, indeed it is the invariable rule, in the divine government, and therefore it claims our attention. We may be sure it is a safe and wholesome rule, the neglect of which must always lead us astray. We should never allow ourselves to form, much less to express and act upon a judgement without the testimony of two or three witnesses. However trustworthy and morally reliable any one witness may be, it is not a sufficient basis for a conclusion. We may feel convinced in our minds that the thing is true because affirmed by one in whom we have confidence; but God is wiser than we. It may be that the one witness is thoroughly upright truthful, that he would not, for worlds, tell an untruth or bear false witness against any one; all this may be true, but we must adhere to the divine rule, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."

Would that this were more diligently attended to in the church of God! Its value in all cases of discipline, and in all cases affecting the character or reputation of any one is simply incalculable. Ere ever an assembly reaches a conclusion or acts on a judgement, in any given case, it should insist on adequate evidence. If this be not forthcoming, let all wait on God, wait patiently and confidingly, and He will surely supply what is needed.

For instance, if there be moral evil or doctrinal error in an assembly of Christians, but it is only known to one; that one is perfectly certain, and thoroughly convinced of the fact. What is to be done? Wait on God for further witness. To act without this, is to infringe a divine principle laid down with all

possible clearness, again and again, in the word of God. Is the one witness to feel aggrieved or insulted because his testimony is not acted upon? Assuredly not; indeed he ought not to expect such a thing, yea he ought not to come forward as a witness until he can corroborate his testimony by the evidence of one or two more. Is the assembly to be deemed indifferent or supine because it refuses to act on the testimony of a solitary witness? Nay, it would be flying in the face of a divine command were it to do so.

And be it remembered, that this great practical principle is not confined in its application to cases of discipline, or questions connected with an assembly of the Lord's people; it is of universal application. We should never allow ourselves to form a judgement or come to a conclusion without the divinely appointed -measure of evidence; if that be not forthcoming, it is our plain duty to wait, and if it be needful for us judge in the case, God will, in due time, furnish needed evidence. We have known a case in which a man was falsely accused because the accuser based his charge upon the evidence of one of his senses; had he taken the trouble of getting the evidence of one or two more of his senses, he would have made the charge.

Thus the entire subject of evidence claims the attention of the reader, let his position be what it may. We are all prone to rush to hasty conclusions to take up impressions, to give place to baseless surmisings, and allow our minds to be warped and carried away by prejudice. All these have to be most carefully guarded against. We need more calmness, seriousness and cool deliberation in forming and expressing our judgement about men and things. But specially about men, inasmuch as we may inflict a grievous wrong upon a friend, a brother, or a neighbour, by giving utterance to a false impression or a baseless charge. We may allow ourselves to be the vehicle of an utterly groundless accusation, whereby the character of another may be seriously damaged. This is very sinful in the sight Of God, and should be most jealously watched against in ourselves, and sternly rebuked in others, whenever it comes before us. Whenever any one brings a charge against another behind his back, we should insist upon his proving or withdrawing his statement. Were this plan adopted, we should be delivered from a vast amount of evil speaking which is not only most unprofitable, but positively wicked, and not to be tolerated.

Before turning from the subject of evidence, we may just remark that inspired history supplies with more than one instance in which a man has been condemned with an appearance of attention to Deuteronomy 17: 6, 7. Witness the case of Naboth in 1 Kings 21; and the case of Stephen in Acts 6 and 7 and, above all, the case of the only perfect Man that ever trod this earth. Alas! men can, at times, put on the appearance wonderful attention to the letter of scripture when it suits their own ungodly ends; they can quote its sacred words in defence of the most flagrant unrighteousness and shocking immorality. Two witnesses accused Naboth of blaspheming God and the king, and that faithful Israelite was deprived of his inheritance and of his life on the testimony of two liars hired by the direction of a godless cruel woman. Stephen, a man full of the Holy Ghost, was stoned to death for blasphemy, on the testimony of false witnesses received and acted upon by the great religious leaders of the day who could, doubtless, quote Deuteronomy 17 as their authority.

But all this, while it so sadly and forcibly illustrates what man is, and what mere human religiousness without conscience is, leaves wholly untouched the moral rule laid down for our guidance, in the opening lines of our chapter. Religion, without conscience or the fear of God, is the most degrading, demoralising, hardening thing beneath the canopy of heaven; and one of its most terrible features is seen in this, that men under its influence are not ashamed or afraid to make use of the letter of holy scripture as a cloak wherewith to cover the most horrible wickedness.

But, thanks and praise to our God, His word stands forth before the vision of our souls, in all its heavenly purity, divine virtue, and holy morality, and flings back in the face of the enemy his every attempt to draw from its sacred pages a plea for ought that is not true, venerable, just, pure, lovely and of good report.

We shall now proceed to quote for the reader the second paragraph of our chapter in which we shall find instruction of great moral value, and much needed in this day of self-will and independence.

"If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgement, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates; then shalt thou arise, and get thee up *into the place which the Lord thy God shall choose*; and thou shalt come unto the priests, the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and inquire; and they shall show thee the sentence of judgement. And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of *that place which the Lord shall choose* shall show thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee; according to the sentence of the law which they teach thee, and according to the judgement they shall tell thee, thou shalt do; thou shalt decline from the sentence which they shall show thee, to the right hand, nor to the left. And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the Lord thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die; and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. And all the people shall *hear and fear*, and *do no more presumptuously*." (Vers. 8-13)

Here we have divine provision made for the perfect settlement of all questions which might arise throughout the congregation of Israel. They were to be settled in the divine presence, at the divinely appointed centre, by the divinely appointed authority, Thus self-will and presumption were effectually guarded against. All matters of controversy were to be definitively settled by the judgement of God as expressed by the priest or the judge appointed God for the purpose.

In a word, it was absolutely and entirely a matter of divine authority. It was not for one man to set himself up in self-will and presumption against another. This would never do in the assembly of God. Each one had to submit his cause to a divine tribunal, and bow implicitly to its decision. There was to be no appeal, inasmuch as there was no higher court. The divinely appointed priest or judge spoke as the oracle of God, and both plaintiff and defendant had to bow, without a demur, to the decision.

Now, it must be very evident to the reader that no member of the congregation of Israel would ever have thought of bringing his case before a Gentile tribunal for judgement. This, we may feel assured, would have been utterly foreign to the thoughts and feelings of every true Israelite. It would have involved a positive insult to Jehovah Himself who was in their midst to give judgement in every case which might arise. Surely He was sufficient. He knew the ins and outs, the pros and cons, the roots and issues of every controversy however involved or difficult. All were to look to Him, and to bring their causes to the place which He had chosen, and nowhere else. The idea of two members of the assembly of God appearing before a tribunal of the uncircumcised for judgement would not have been tolerated for a moment. It would be as much as to say that there was a defect in the divine arrangement for the congregation.

Has this any voice for us? How are Christians to have their questions and their controversies settled? Are they to betake themselves to the world for judgement? Is there no provision in the assembly of God for the proper settlement of cases which may arise? Hear what the inspired apostle says on the point, to the assembly at Corinth, and "to all that in every Place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours," and therefore to all true Christians, now.

"Dare any of you, having a matter against another; go to law before the unjust, and not before the

saints Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgements of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather be defrauded? Nay ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren. Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? *Be not deceived.*" (1 Cor. 6: 1-9)

Here, then, we have the divine instruction for church of God, in all ages. We must never, for a moment, lose sight of the fact that the Bible is a Book for every stage of the church's earthly career. True it is, alas! the church is not as it was when the above lines were penned by the inspired apostle; a vast change has taken place in the church's practical condition. There was no difficulty, in early days, in distinguishing between the church and the world, between "the saints" and "unbelievers;" between "those within" and "those without." The line of demarcation was broad, distinct, and unmistakable, in those days. Any one who looked at the face of society, in a religious point of view, would see three things, namely, Paganism, Judaism and Christianity the Gentile, the Jew and the church of God — the temple, the synagogue, and the assembly of God. There was no confounding these things. The Christian assembly stood out in vivid contrast with all beside. Christianity was strongly and clearly pronounced in those primitive times. It was neither a national, provincial nor parochial affair, but a personal, practical, living reality. It was not a mere nominal, national, professional creed, but a divinely wrought faith, a living power in the heart flowing out in the life.

But now things are totally changed. The church and the world are so mixed up, that the vast majority of professors could hardly understand the real force and proper application of the passage which we have just quoted. Were we to speak to them about "the saints" going to law "before the unbelievers," it would seem like a foreign tongue. Indeed the term "saint" is hardly heard in the professing church save when used with a sneer, or as applied to such as have been canonised by a superstitious reverence.

But has any change come over the word of God, or over the grand truths which that word unfolds to our souls? Has any change come over the thoughts of God in reference to what His church is, or what the world is, or as to the proper relation of the one to the other? Does He not know who are "saints" and who are "unbelievers"? Has it ceased to be "a fault" for "brother to go to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers"? In a word, has holy scripture lost its power, its point, its divine application? Is it no longer our guide, our authority, our one perfect rule and unerring standard? Has the marked change that has come over the church's moral condition deprived the word of God of all power of application to us — "to all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"? Has our Father's most precious Revelation become, in any one particular, a dead letter — a piece of obsolete writing — a document pertaining to days long gone by? Has our altered condition robbed the word of God of a single one of its moral glories?

Reader, what answer does your heart return these questions? Let us, most earnestly, entreat you to weigh them honestly, humbly and prayerfully in the presence of your Lord. We believe your answer will be a wonderfully correct index of your real position and moral state. Do you not clearly see and fully admit that scripture can never lose its power? Can the principles of 1 Cor 6 ever cease to be binding on the church of God. It is fully admitted — for who can deny that things are sadly changed? — but "scripture cannot be broken and therefore what was "a fault" in the first century cannot be right

in the nineteenth; there may be more difficulty in carrying out divine principles, but we must never consent to surrender them, or to act on any lower ground. If once we admit the idea that because the whole professing church has gone wrong, it is impossible for us to do right, the whole principle of Christian obedience is surrendered. It is as wrong for "brother to go to law with brother, before the unbelievers" today, as it was when the apostle wrote his epistle to the assembly at Corinth* True, the church's *visible* unity is gone; she is shorn of many gifts, she has departed from her normal condition; but the principles of the word of God can no more lose their power than the blood of Christ can lose its virtue, or His Priesthood lose its efficacy.

{*It is well for us to bear in mind that wherever there are "two or three" gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus, in ever such weakness, there will be found, if only they are truly humble and dependent, spiritual ability to judge in any case that may arise between brethren. They can count on divine wisdom being supplied for the settlement of any question, plea or controversy, so that there need not be any reference to a worldly tribunal.

No doubt, worldly men would smile at such an idea; but we must adhere, with holy decision, to the guidance of scripture. Brother must not go to law with brother before the unbelievers. This is distinct and emphatic. There are resources available for the assembly in Christ the Head and Lord, for the settlement of every possible question.

Let the Lord's people seriously apply their hearts to the consideration of this subject. Let them see that they are gathered on the true ground of the church of God; and then, though ever conscious that things are not as they once were, in the church, though sensible Of the greatest weakness, failure and shortcoming, they will, nevertheless, find the grace of Christ ever sufficient for them, and the word of God full of all needed instruction and authority, so that they need never betake themselves to the world for help, counsel or judgement. Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

This surely is enough for every exigency. Is there any question that our Lord Christ cannot settle? Do we want natural cleverness, worldly wisdom, longheadedness, great learning, keen sagacity, if we have Him? Surely not; indeed all such things can only prove like Saul's armour to David. All we want is simply to use the resources which we have in Christ. We shall assuredly find, "in the place where his name is recorded," priestly wisdom to judge in every case which may arise between brethren.

And, farther, let the Lord's dear people remember, in all cases of local difficulty which might arise, that there is no need whatever for them to look for extraneous aid, to write to other places to get some wise men to come and help them. No doubt, if the Lord sends any of His beloved servants, at the moment, their sympathy, fellowship, counsel and help will be highly prized. We are not encouraging independence one another, but absolute and complete dependence upon Christ our Head and Lord.}

And, further, we must bear in mind that there are resources of wisdom, grace, power and spiritual gift treasured up for the church in Christ her Head, ever available for those who have faith to use them. We are not straitened in our blessed and adorable Head. We need never expect to see the body restored to its normal condition on the earth; but, for all that, it is our privilege to see what the true ground of the body is, and it is our duty to occupy that ground and no other.

Now, it is perfectly wonderful the change that takes place in our whole condition, in our view of things, in our thoughts of ourselves and our surroundings, the moment we plant our foot on the true ground of the church of God. Everything seems changed. The Bible seems a new book. We see everything in a new light. Portions of scripture which we have been reading for years without interest or profit now sparkle with divine light, and fill us with wonder, love and praise. We see every thing

from a new stand-point; our whole range of vision is changed; we have made our escape from the murky atmosphere which enwraps the whole professing church, and can now look round and see things clearly in the heavenly light of scripture. In fact, it seems like a new conversion; and we find we can now read scripture intelligently, because we have the divine key. We see Christ to be the centre and object of all the thoughts, purposes and counsels of God from everlasting to everlasting, and hence we are conducted into that marvellous sphere of grace and glory which the Holy Ghost delights to unfold in the precious word of God.

May the reader be led into the thorough understanding of all this, by the direct and powerful ministry of the Holy Spirit! May he be enabled to give himself to the study of scripture, and to surrender himself, unreservedly to its teaching and authority! Let him not confer with flesh and blood, but cast himself, like a little child, on the Lord, and seek to be led on, in spiritual intelligence and practical conformity to the mind of Christ.

We must now look for a moment at the closing verses of our chapter in which we have a remarkable onlook into Israel's future, anticipating the moment in which they should seek to set a king over them.

"When thou art come unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee whom the Lord thy God shall choose; one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee; thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses; forasmuch as the Lord hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away; neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold"

How very remarkable that the three things which the king was not to do, were just *the* very things which were done — and extensively done by the greatest and wisest of Israel's monarchs. "King Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon. And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence *gold*, four hundred and twenty talents [over two millions], and brought it to king Solomon." "And Hiram sent to the king six-score talents of gold." "And the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred three-score and six talents of gold. [Nearly three-and a-half millions.] Beside that he had of the merchantmen, and of the traffic of the spice merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country." Again, we read, "And the king made *silver* to be in Jerusalem as stones.... And Solomon *had horses brought out of Egypt*.... But king Solomon loved many strange women.... And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart." (1 Kings 10, 11.)

What a tale this tells! What a commentary it furnishes upon man in his very best and highest estate! Here was a man endowed with wisdom beyond all others, surrounded by unexampled blessings, dignities, honours and privileges; his earthly cup was full to the brim; there was nothing lacking which this world could supply to minister to human happiness. And not only so, but his remarkable prayer at the dedication of the temple might well lead us to cherish the brightest hopes respecting him, both personally and officially.

But, sad to say, he broke down, most deplorably, in every one of the particulars as to which the law of his God had spoken so definitely and so clearly. He was told not to multiply silver and gold, and

yet he multiplied them. He was told not to return to Egypt to multiply horses, and yet to Egypt he went for horses. He was told not to multiply wives, and yet he had a thousand of them, and they turned away his heart! Such is man! Oh! how little is he to be counted upon! "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." "Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

But we may ask, how are we to account for Solomon's signal, sorrowful and humiliating failure? What was the real secret of it? To answer this, we must quote for the reader the closing verses of our chapter.

"And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites; *and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of His life;* that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them; that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand or to the left; to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel." (Vers. 18-20.)

Had Solomon attended to these most precious and weighty words, his historian would have had a very different task to perform. But he did not. We hear nothing of his having made a copy of the law; and, most assuredly, if he did make a copy of it, he did not attend to it; yea, he turned his back upon it, and did the very things which he was told not to do. In a word, the cause of all the wreck and ruin that so rapidly followed the splendour of Solomon's reign, was neglect of the plain word of God.

It is this which makes it all so solemn for us, in this our own day, and which leads us to call the earnest attention of the reader to it. We deeply feel the need of seeking to rouse the attention of the whole church of God to this great subject. Neglect of the word of God is the source of all the failure, all the sin, all the error, all the mischief and confusion, the heresies, sects and schisms that have ever been or are now in this world. And we may add, with equal confidence, that the only real sovereign remedy for our present lamentable condition will be found in returning, *every one for himself and herself*, to the simple but sadly neglected authority of the word of God. Let each one see his own departure, and that of the whole professing body, from the plain and positive teaching of the New Testament — the commandments of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of our God, because of our common sin, and let us turn to Him in true self-judgment, and He will graciously restore, and heal, and bless us, and lead us in that most blessed path of obedience which lies open before every truly humble soul.

May God the Holy Ghost, in His own resistless power, bring home to the heart and conscience of every member of the body of Christ, on the face of the earth, the urgent need of an immediate and unreserved surrender to the authority of the word of God!

Deuteronomy 18.

The opening paragraph of this chapter suggests a deeply interesting and practical line of truth.

"The priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and his inheritance. Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the Lord is their inheritance, as he hath said unto them. And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep; and they shall give unto the priest, the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw. The firstfruit also of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him. For the Lord thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of the Lord, him and his

sons for ever. And if a Levite come from any of thy gates out of all Israel, where he sojourned, and *come with all the desire of his mind unto the place which the Lord shall choose*; then he shall minister in the name of the Lord his God, as all his brethren the Levites do, which stand there before the Lord. They shall have like portions to eat, beside that which cometh out of the sale of his patrimony." (Vers. 1-8.)

Here, as in every part of the book of Deuteronomy, the Priests are classed with the Levites, in a very marked way. We have called the reader's attention to this, as a special characteristic feature of our book, and shall not dwell upon it now, but merely, in passing, remind the reader of it, as something claiming his attention. Let him weigh the opening words of our chapter, "The priests the Levites," and compare them with the way in which the priests, the sons of Aaron, are spoken of in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers; and if he should be disposed to ask the reason of this distinction, we believe it to be this, that in Deuteronomy the divine object is to bring the whole assembly of Israel more into prominence, and hence it is that the priests, in their official capacity, come rarely before us. The grand Deuteronomic idea is, *Israel in immediate relationship with Jehovah*.

Now, in the passage just quoted, we have the priests and the Levites linked together, and presented as the Lord's servants, wholly dependent upon Him, and intimately identified with His altar and His service. This is full of interest, and opens up a very important field of practical truth to which the Church of God would do well to attend.

In looking through the history of Israel, we observe that when things were in anything like a healthful condition, the altar of God was well attended to, and, as a consequence, the priests and Levites were well supplied. If Jehovah had His portion, His servants were sure to have theirs. If He was neglected, so were they. They were bound up together. The people were to bring their offerings to God, and He shared them with His servants. The priests the Levites were not to exact or demand of the people, but the people were privileged to bring their gifts to the altar of God, and He permitted His servants to feed upon the fruit of His people's devotedness to Him.

Such was the true, the divine idea as to the Lord's servants of old. They were to live upon the voluntary offerings presented to God by the whole congregation. True it is that, in the dark and evil days of the sons of Eli, we find something sadly different from this lovely moral order. Then "the priest's custom with the people was, that, when any one offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand; and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the flesh hook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither. Also before they burnt the fat" — God's special portion — "the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now; and if not, *I will take it by force*. Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord; for men abhorred the offering of Lord." (1 Sam. 2: 13-17.)

All this was truly deplorable, and ended in the solemn judgement of God upon the house of Eli. It could not be otherwise. If those who ministered at the altar could be guilty of such terrible iniquity and impiety, judgement must take its course.

But the normal condition of things, as presented in our chapter, was in vivid contrast with all this frightful iniquity. Jehovah would surround Himself with the willing offerings of His people, and, from these offerings He would feed His servants who ministered at His altar. Hence, therefore, when the altar of God was diligently, fervently and devotedly attended to, the priests the Levites had a rich

portion, an abundant supply; and, on the other hand, when Jehovah and His altar were treated with cold neglect, or merely waited upon in a barren routine or heartless formalism, the Lord's servants were correspondingly neglected. In a word, they stood intimately identified with the worship and service of the God of Israel.

Thus, for example, in the bright days of the good king Hezekiah, when things were fresh and hearts happy and true, we read, "And Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests and the Levites after their courses, every man according to his service, the priests and Levites for burnt offerings, and for peace offerings, to minister, and to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the tents of the Lord. He appointed also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt offerings, to wit, for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, *as it is written in the law of the Lord*. Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem *to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord*. And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought *in abundance* the firstfruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of *all things* brought they *in abundantly*. And concerning the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated unto the Lord their God, and laid them by heaps. In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished them in the seventh month. And when Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed the Lord, and his people Israel. Then Hezekiah questioned with the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps. And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok answered him, and said, *Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of Lord, we have had enough, to eat, and have left plenty, for the Lord hath blessed his people; and that which is left is this great store.*" (2 Chr. 31: 2-10.)

How truly refreshing is all this! And how encouraging! The deep, full, silvery tide of devotedness flowed around the altar of God bearing upon its bosom an ample supply to meet all the need of the Lord's servants, and "heaps" beside. This, we feel assured, was grateful to the heart of the God of Israel, as it was to the hearts of those who had given themselves, at His call and by His appointment, to the service of His altar and His sanctuary.

And let the reader specially note those precious words, "*As it is written in the law of the Lord.*" Here was Hezekiah's authority, the solid basis of his whole line of conduct, from first to last. True, the nation's visible unity was gone; the condition of things, when he began his blessed work, was most discouraging; but the word of the Lord was as true, as real, and as direct in its application in Hezekiah's day as it was in the days of David or Joshua. Hezekiah rightly felt that Deuteronomy 18: 1-8 applied to his day and to his conscience, and that he and the people were responsible to act upon it, according to their ability. Were the priests and the Levites to starve because Israel's national unity was gone? Surely not. They were to stand or fall with the word, the worship, and the work of God. Circumstances might vary, and the Israelite might find himself in a position in which it would be impossible to carry out in detail all the ordinances of the Levitical ceremonial, but he never could find himself in circumstances in which it was not his high privilege to give full expression to his heart's devotedness to the service, the altar, and the law of Jehovah.

Thus, then, we see, throughout the entire history of Israel, that when things were at all bright and healthy, the Lord's worship, His work, and His workmen were blessedly attended to. But, on the other hand, when things were low, when hearts were cold, when self and its interests had the uppermost place, then all these great objects were treated with heartless neglect. Look for example, at Nehemiah 13. When that beloved and faithful servant returned to Jerusalem, after an absence of certain days, he

found, to his deep sorrow, that, even in that short time, various things had gone sadly astray; amongst the rest, the poor Levites had been left without anything to eat. " And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them; for the Levites and the singers that did the work were fled every one to his field." There were no "heaps" of firstfruits in those dismal days, and surely it was hard for men to work and sing when they had nothing to eat. This was not according to the law of Jehovah, nor according to His loving heart. It was a sad reproach upon the people that the Lord's servants were obliged, through their gross neglect, to abandon His worship and His work, in order to keep themselves from starving.

This, truly, was a deplorable condition of things. Nehemiah felt it keenly, as we read, "Then contended I with the rulers, and said, *why is the house of God forsaken?* And I gathered them together, and set them in their place. Then brought all Judah the tithes of the corn, and the new wine, and the oil, unto the treasuries. And I made treasurers over the treasuries....for they were counted faithful;" — they were entitled to the confidence of their brethren — "and their office was to distribute unto their brethren." It needed a number of tried and faithful men to occupy the high position of distributing to their brethren the precious fruit of the people's devotedness; they could take counsel together, and see that the Lord's treasury was faithfully managed, according to His word, and the need of His true and *bona fide* workmen fully met, without prejudice or partiality.

Such was the lovely order of the God of Israel — an order to which every true Israelite such as Nehemiah and Hezekiah, would delight to attend. The rich tide of blessing flowed forth from Jehovah to His people, and back from His people to Him, and from that flowing tide His servants were to draw a full supply for all their need. It was a dishonour to Him to have the Levites obliged to return to their fields; it proved that His house was forsaken, and that there was no sustenance for His servants.

Now, the question may here be asked, What has all this to say to us? What has the church of God to learn from Deuteronomy 18: 1-8? In order to answer this question, we must turn to 1 Corinthians 9 where the inspired apostle deals with the very important subject of the support of the Christian ministry — a subject so little understood by the great mass of professing Christians. As to *the law of the case*, it is as distinct as possible. "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written; that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless" — here grace shines out, in all its heavenly lustre — "we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know, that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. But" — here, again, grace asserts its holy dignity — "I have used none of these things; neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me; for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel." (1 Cor. 9: 7-18)

Here we have this interesting and weighty subject presented in all its bearings. The inspired

apostle lays down, with all possible decision and clearness the divine law on the point. There is no mistaking it. "The Lord hath ordained that they that preach the gospel should live of the gospel;" that, just as the priests and the Levites, of old, lived on offerings presented by the people, so, now, those who are really called of God, gifted by Christ, and fitted by the Holy Ghost, to Preach the gospel, and who are giving themselves constantly and diligently, to that glorious work, are morally entitled to temporal support. It is not that they should look to those to whom they preach for a certain stipulated sum. There is no such idea as this in the New Testament. The workman must look to his Master, and to Him alone for support. Woe be to him if he looks to the church, or to men in any way The priests and Levites had their portion in and from Jehovah. He was the lot of their inheritance. True, He expected the people to minister to Him in the persons of His servants. He told them what to give, and blessed them in giving; it was their high privilege as well as their bounden duty to give; had they refused or neglected, it would have brought drought and barrenness upon their fields and vineyards. (Haggai 1: 5-11)

But the priests the Levites had to look *only* to Jehovah. If the people failed in their offerings, the Levites had to fly to their fields and work for their living. They could not go to law with any one for tithes and offerings; their only appeal was to the God of Israel who had ordained them to the work, given them the work to do.

So also with the Lord's workmen, now; they must look *only* to Him. They must be well assured that He has fitted them for the work and called them to it ere they attempt to push out — if we may so express it — from the shore of circumstances, and give themselves wholly to the work of preaching. They must take their eyes completely off from men, from all creature streams and human props, and lean exclusively upon the living God. We have seen the most disastrous consequences resulting from acting under a mistaken impulse in this most solemn matter; men not called of God, or fitted for the work, giving up their occupations, and coming forth, as they said, to live by faith and give themselves to the work. Deplorable shipwreck was the result in every instance. Some, when they began to look the stern realities of the path straight in the face, became so alarmed, that they actually lost their mental balance, lost their reason for a time; some lost their peace; and some went right back into the world again.

In short, it is our deep and thorough conviction, after forty years' observation, that the cases are few and far between in which it is morally safe and good for one to abandon his bread-winning calling in order to preach the gospel. It must be so distinct and unquestionable to the man himself, that he has only to say, with Luther, at the Diet of Worms, "Here am; I can do no otherwise: God help me! Amen" Then he may be perfectly sure that God will sustain him in the work to which He has called him, and meet all his need, "according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." And as to men, and their thoughts respecting him and his course, he has simply to refer them to his Master. He is not responsible to them nor has he ever asked them for anything. If they were compelled to support him, reason would they might complain or raise questions; but, as they are not, they must just leave him, remembering that to his own Master he standeth or falleth.

But when we look at the splendid passage just quoted from 1 Corinthians 9, we find that the blessed apostle, after having established, beyond all question, his right to be supported, relinquishes it completely. "Nevertheless, I have used none of these things." He worked with his hands; he wrought with labour and travail night and day, in order not to be chargeable or burdensome to any. These hands," he says, "have ministered to my necessities, and those that were with me." He coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. He travelled, he preached, he visited from house to house, he was the laborious apostle, the earnest evangelist the diligent pastor, he had the care of all the churches. Was not he entitled to support? Assuredly he was. It ought to have been the joy of the church of God to minister

to his every need. But he never enforced his claim; nay, he surrendered it. He supported himself and his companions by the labour of his hands; and all this as an example, as he says to the elders of Ephesus, "I have showed you all things how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Now, it is perfectly wonderful to think of this beloved and revered servant of Christ, with his extensive travels, from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum, his gigantic labours as an evangelist, a pastor and a teacher, and yet finding time to support himself and others by the work of his hands. Truly he occupied high moral ground. His case is a standing testimony against hirelingism, in every shape and form. The infidel's sneering reference to well-paid ministers could have no application whatever to him. He certainly did not preach for hire.

And yet he thankfully received help from those who knew how to give it. Again and again, beloved assembly at Philippi ministered to the necessities of their revered and beloved father in Christ. How well for them that they did so! It will never be forgotten. Millions have read the sweet record of their devotedness, and been refreshed by the odour of their sacrifice; it is recorded in heaven where nothing of the kind is ever forgotten, yea, it is engraved on the very tablets of the heart of Christ. Hear how the blessed apostle pours out his grateful heart to his much loved children "I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want;" — blessed, self-denying servant — "for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere, and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Notwithstanding, ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction Now ye know Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all and abound; I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4: 10-19.)

What a rare privilege to be allowed to comfort the heart of such an honoured servant of Christ, at the close of his career, and in the solitude of his prison at Rome! How seasonable, how right, how lovely was their ministry! What joy to receive the apostle's acknowledgments! And then how precious the assurance that their service had gone up, as an odour of sweet smell, to the very throne and heart of God! Who would not rather be a Philippian ministering to the apostle's need, than a Corinthian calling his ministry in question, or a Galatian breaking his heart? How vast the difference! The apostle could not take anything from the assembly at Corinth. Their state did not admit of it. Individuals in that assembly did minister to him, and their service is recorded on the page of inspiration, remembered above, and it will be abundantly rewarded in the kingdom by-and-by. "I am glad of the coming of Stephanus and Fortunatus and Achaicus: *for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.* For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such." (1 Cor. 16: 17, 18.)

Thus, then, from all that has passed before us, we learn, most distinctly, that both under the law and under the gospel, it is according to the revealed will, and according to the heart of God that those who are really called of Him to the work, and who devote themselves, earnestly, diligently and faithfully to it, should have the hearty sympathy and practical help of His people. All who love Christ will count it their deepest joy to minister to Him in the persons of His servants. When He Himself was

here upon earth, He graciously accepted help from the hands of those who loved Him, and had reaped the fruit His most precious ministry — "certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto Him of their substance." (Luke 8: 2, 3.)

Happy, highly privileged women! What joy be allowed to minister to the Lord of glory, in the days of His human need and humiliation! There stand their honoured names, on the divine page written down by God the Holy Ghost, to be read by untold millions, to be borne along the stream of time right onward into eternity. How well it was for those women that they did not waste their substance in self-indulgence, or hoard it up to be rust on their souls, or a positive curse, as money must ever be if not used for God!

But, on the other hand, we learn the urgent need on the part of all who take the place of workers, whether in or out of the assembly, of keeping themselves perfectly free from all human influence, all looking to men, in any shape or form. They must have to do with God in the secret of their own souls, or they will, assuredly, break down, sooner or later. They must look to Him alone for the supply of their need. If the church neglect them, the church will be the serious loser here and hereafter. If they can support themselves by the labour of their hands, without curtailing their direct service to Christ, so much the better; it is unquestionably the more excellent way. We are as persuaded of this as of the truth of any proposition that could be submitted to us. There is nothing more spiritually and morally noble than a truly gifted servant of Christ supporting himself and his family, by the sweat of his brow or the sweat of his brain, and, at the same time, giving himself diligently to the Lord's work, whether as an evangelist, a pastor or a teacher. The moral antipodes of this is presented to our view in the person of a man who, without gift, or grace, or spiritual life, enters what is called the ministry, as a mere profession or means of living. The position of such a man is morally dangerous and miserable in extreme. We shall not dwell upon it, inasmuch as it does not come within the range of the subject which been engaging our attention, and we are only too thankful to leave it, and proceed with our chapter.

"When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For *all that do these things are an abomination unto Lord*; and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners; *but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.*" (Vers. 9-14.)

Now, it may be that, on reading the foregoing quotation, the reader feels disposed to ask what possible application it can have to professing Christians? We ask, in reply, Are there any Christians who are in the habit of going to the performances of wizards, magicians and necromancers? Are there any who take part in table- turning, spirit-rapping, mesmerism, or *clairvoyance*?* If so, the passage which we have just quoted very pointedly and solemnly, upon all such. We most surely believe that all these things which we have named are of the devil. This may sound harsh and severe; but we cannot help that. We are thoroughly persuaded that when people lend themselves to the awful business of bringing up, in any way, the spirits of the departed, they are simply putting themselves into the hands of the devil to be deceived and deluded by his lies. What, we may ask, do those who hold in their hands a perfect revelation from God, want of table-turning and spirit-rapping? Surely nothing. And, if not content with that precious word, they turn to the spirits of departed friends or others, what can they

expect but that God will judicially give them over to be blinded and deceived by wicked spirits who come up and personate the departed, and tell all manner lies?

{*Some of our readers may object to our classing with mesmerism with spirit-rapping and table-turning. It may be they would regard it in the same light, and use it in the same way, as ether or chloroform, in medical practice. We do not attempt to dogmatise on the point. We can only say that we could have nothing whatever to do with it. We consider it a solemn thing for any one to allow himself to be placed by another in a state of utter unconsciousness [mesmerism, Compiler.], for any purpose whatsoever. And as to the idea of listening to, or being guided by the ravings of a person in that state, we can only regard it as absolutely absurd, if not positively sinful.}

We cannot attempt go fully into this subject here. We have no time, for anything of the sort. We merely felt it to be our solemn duty to warn the reader about having anything whatever to do with consulting departed spirits. We believe it to be most dangerous work. We do not enter upon the question as to whether souls can come back to this world; no doubt, God could permit them to come if He saw fit; but this we leave. The great point for us to keep ever before our hearts is the perfect sufficiency of divine revelation, what do we want of departed spirits? The rich man imagined that if Lazarus were to go back to earth and speak to his five brethren, it would have a great effect. "I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have *Moses and the prophets; let them hear them*. And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not *Moses and the prophets*, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16: 27-31.)

Here we have a thorough settlement of this question. If people will not hear the word of God, if they will not believe its clear and solemn statements as to themselves, their present condition, their future destiny, neither will they be persuaded though a thousand departed souls were to come back and tell them what they saw, and heard, and felt in heaven above or in hell beneath; it would produce no saving or permanent effect upon them. It might cause great excitement, great sensation, furnish great material for talk, and fill the newspapers far and wide; but there it would end. People would go on all the same, with their traffic and gain, their folly and vanity, their pleasure-hunting and self-indulgence. "If they hear not *Moses and the prophets*," — and we may add, Christ and His holy apostles — "neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. The heart that will not bow to scripture will be not convinced by anything; and as to the true believer, he has in scripture all he can possibly want, and therefore he has no need to have recourse to table-turning, spirit-rapping or magic. "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter; should not a people seek unto their God for the living to the dead? *To the law and to the testimony*; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isaiah 8: 19, 20.)

Here is the divine resource of the Lord's people, at all times and in all places; and to this it is that Moses refers the congregation in the splendid paragraph which closes our chapter. He shows them, very distinctly, that they had no need to apply to familiar spirits, enchanters, wizards, or witches, which all were an abomination to the Lord. The Lord thy God," he says, " will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me *unto him ye shall hearken*; according to all that desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb, in day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I

shall command him. And it shall to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him." (Vers. 15-22.)

We can be at no loss to know who this Prophet is, namely, our adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In the third chapter of Acts, Peter so applies the words of Moses. "He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." (Vers. 20-23.)

How precious the privilege of hearing the voice of such a Prophet! It is the voice of God speaking through the lips of the Man Christ Jesus — speaking, not in thunder, not with flaming fire, nor the lightning's flash, but in that still small voice of love and mercy which falls in soothing power, on the broken heart and contrite spirit, which distills like the gentle dew of heaven upon the thirsty ground. This voice we have in the holy scriptures, that precious revelation which comes so constantly and so powerfully before us, in our studies on this blessed book of Deuteronomy. We must never forget this. The voice of scripture is the voice of Christ, and the voice of Christ is the voice of God.

We want no more. If any one presumes to come with a fresh revelation, with some new truth not contained in the divine Volume, we must judge him and his communication by the standard of scripture and reject them utterly. "Thou shalt not be afraid of him" False prophets come with great pretensions, high-sounding words and sanctimonious bearing. Moreover they seek to surround themselves with a sort of dignity, weight and impressiveness which are apt to impose on the ignorant. But they cannot stand the searching power of the word of God. Some simple clause of holy scripture will strip them of all their imposing surroundings, and cut up by the roots their wonderful revelations. Those who know the voice of the true Prophet will not listen to any other; those who have heard the voice of the good Shepherd will not listen to the voice of a stranger.

Reader, see that you listen *only* to the voice of Jesus.

Deuteronomy 19.

"When the Lord thy God hath cut off the nations, whose land the Lord thy God giveth thee, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their cities, and in their houses; thou shalt separate three cities for thee *in the midst of thy land*, which the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it. *Thou shalt prepare thee a way*, and divide the coasts of thy land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee to inherit, into three parts, *that every slayer may flee thither.*" (Vers. 1-3.)

What a very striking combination of "goodness and severity" we observe in these few lines! We have the "cutting off" of the nations of Canaan, because of their consummated wickedness which had become positively unbearable. And, on the other hand, we have a most touching display of divine goodness in the provision made for the poor manslayer, in the day of his deep distress, when flying for his life, from the avenger of blood. The government and the goodness of God are, we need hardly say, both divinely perfect. There are cases in which goodness would be nothing but a toleration of sheer

wickedness and open rebellion which is utterly impossible under the government of God. If men imagine that, because God is good, they may go on and sin with a high hand, they will, sooner or later, find out their woeful mistake.

"Behold," says the inspired apostle, "the goodness and severity of God!"* God will, most assuredly, cut off evil doers who despise His goodness and long-suffering mercy. He is slow to anger, blessed be His Holy Name! and of great kindness. For hundreds of years He bore with the seven nations; of Canaan, until their wickedness rose up to the very heavens, and the land itself could bear them no longer. He bore with the enormous wickedness of the guilty cities of the plain; and if He had found even ten righteous people in Sodom, He would have spared it for their sakes. But the day of terrible vengeance came, and they were "cut off"

{*The word rendered "severity" is *apotomia*, which literally means "Cutting off."}

And so will it be, ere long, with guilty Christendom. "Thou also shalt be cut off." The reckoning time will come, and oh! what a reckoning time it will be! The heart trembles at the thought of it, while the eye scans and the pen traces the soul subduing words.

But mark how divine "goodness" shines out in the opening lines of our chapter. See the gracious painstaking of our God to make the city of refuge as available as possible for the slayer. The three cities were to be "*in the midst of thy land*" It would not do to have them in remote corners, or in places difficult of access. And not only so, but "*thou shalt prepare thee a way.*" And again, "thou shalt divide the coasts of thy land... *into three parts.*" Everything was to be done to facilitate the slayer's escape. The gracious Lord thought of the feelings of the distressed one "flying for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him." The city of refuge was to be "brought near, just as "the righteousness of God" is brought near to the poor broken-hearted helpless sinner — so near, that it is "to him that *worketh not*, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly."

There is peculiar sweetness in the expression, "*Thou shalt prepare thee a way*". How like our own ever gracious God — "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" And yet it was the same God that cut off the nations of Canaan in righteous judgement, who thus made such gracious provision for the manslayer "Behold, the goodness and severity of God."

"And this is the case of the slayer which shall flee thither, *that he may live*, whoso killeth his neighbour ignorantly, whom he hated not in time past; as when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbour, that he die; he shall flee unto one of those cities and live; lest the avenger of the blood pursue the slayer, while his heart is hot, and overtake him, *because the way is long*" — most touching.. and exquisite grace! — "and slay him; whereas he was not worthy of death, inasmuch as he hated him not in time past. Wherefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt separate three cities for thee." (Vers. 4-7.)

Here we have a most minute description of the man for whom the City of refuge was provided. If he did not answer to this, the city was not for him; but if he did, he might feel the most perfect assurance that a gracious God had thought of him, and found a refuge for him where he might be as safe as the hand of God could make him. Once the slayer found himself within the precincts of the city of refuge, he might breathe freely, and enjoy calm and sweet repose. No avenging sword could reach him there, not a hair of his head could be touched there.

He was safe; yes, perfectly safe; and not only perfectly safe, but perfectly *certain*. He was not hoping to be saved, he was sure of it. He was in the city, and that was enough. Before he got in, he

might have many a struggle deep down in his poor terrified heart, many doubts and fears and painful exercises. He was flying for his life, and this was a serious and an all-absorbing matter for him — a matter that would make all beside seem light and trifling. We could not imagine the flying slayer stopping to gather flowers by the roadside. Flowers, he would say, "What have I to do with flowers just now? My life is at stake. I am flying for my life. What if the avenger should come and find me gathering flowers? No, the city is my one grand all-engrossing object; nothing else has the smallest interest or charm for me. I want to be saved; that is my exclusive business now.

But the moment he found himself within the gates, he was safe, *and he knew it*. How did he know it? By his feelings? By his evidences? By experiences? Nay; but simply by the word of God. No doubt, he had the feeling, the evidence and the experience, and most precious they would be to him after his tremendous struggle and conflict to get in. But these things were, by no means, the ground of his certainty or the basis of his peace. He knew he was safe because God told him so. The *grace* of God had made him *safe*, and the *word* of God made him *sure*.

We cannot conceive a manslayer, within the walls of the city of refuge, expressing himself as many of the Lord's dear people do, in reference to the question of safety and certainty. He would not deem it presumption to be sure he was safe. If any one had asked him, "Are you sure you are safe?" "Sure!" he would say, "How can I be otherwise than sure? Was I not a slayer? Have I not fled to this city of refuge? Has not Jehovah, our covenant God, pledged His word for it? Has not said that, 'fleeing thither he may live'? Yes, thank God, I am perfectly sure. I had a terrible run for it — a fearful struggle. At times, I felt as if the avenger had me in his dreaded grasp. I gave myself up for lost; but then, God, in infinite mercy, made the way so plain, and made the city so easy of access to me, that, spite of all doubts and fears, here I am, safe and certain. The struggle is all over, the conflict past and gone. I can breathe freely now, and walk up and down in the perfect security of this blessed place, praising our gracious covenant God, for His great goodness in having provided such a sweet retreat for a poor slayer like me."

Can the reader speak thus as to his safety Christ? Is he saved, and does he know it? If not, may the Spirit of God apply to his heart the simple illustration of the manslayer within the walls of the city of refuge! May he know that "strong consolation" which is the sure, because divinely appointed portion of all those who have "fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them." (Heb. 6: 18.)

We must now proceed with our chapter; and, in so doing, we shall find that there was more to be thought of in the cities of refuge than the question of the slayer's safety. That was provided for perfectly, as we have seen; but the glory of God, the purity of His land, and the integrity of His government had to be duly maintained. If these things were touched, there could be no safety for any one. This great principle shines on every page of the history of God's ways with man. Man's true blessing and God's glory are indissolubly bound together, and both the one and the other rest on the same imperishable foundation, namely, Christ and His precious work.

"And if the Lord thy God enlarge thy coast, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, and give thee all the land which he promised to give unto thy fathers; if thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to love the Lord thy God, and to walk ever in his ways; then shalt thou add three cities more for thee, beside these three; *that innocent blood be not shed in thy land*, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and so blood be upon thee. But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities; then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. Thine eye shall not pity him, *but thou shalt*

put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee." (Vers. 8-13.)

Thus, whether it was *grace* for the slayer, or *judgement* for the murderer, the glory of God, and the claims of His government had to be duly maintained. The unwitting manslayer was met by the provision of mercy; the guilty murderer fell beneath the stern sentence of inflexible justice. We must never forget the solemn reality of divine government. It meets us everywhere; and if it were more fully recognised, it would effectually deliver us from one-sided views of the divine character. Take such words as these, "Thine eye shall not pity him." Who uttered them? Jehovah. Who penned them? God the Holy Ghost. What do they mean? Solemn judgement upon wickedness. Let men beware how they trifle with these weighty matters. Let the Lord's people beware how they give place to foolish reasonings in reference to things wholly beyond their range. Let them remember that a false sentimentality may constantly be found in league with an audacious infidelity in calling in question the solemn enactments of divine government. This is a very serious consideration. Evil doers must look out for the sure judgement of a sin-hating God, If a wilful murderer presumed to avail himself of God's provision for the ignorant manslayer, the hand of justice laid hold of him and put him to death, without mercy. Such was the government of God in Israel Of old; and such will it be in a day that is rapidly approaching. Just now, God is dealing in long-suffering mercy with the world; this is the day of salvation, the acceptable time. The day of vengeance is at hand. Oh! that man, instead of reasoning about the justice of God's dealings with evil doers, would flee for refuge to that precious Saviour who died on the cross to save us from the flames of an everlasting hell!*

{*For other points presented in the cities of refuge we must refer the reader to 'Notes on the Book of Numbers,' chapter 35.}

Before quoting for the reader the closing paragraph Of our chapter, we would just call his attention to Verse 14, in which we have a very beautiful proof of God's tender care for His people, and His most gracious interest in everything which, directly or indirectly concerned them. "Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it."

This passage, taken in its plain import and primary application is full of sweetness, as presenting the loving heart of our God, and showing us how marvellously He entered into all the circumstances of His beloved people. The landmarks were not to be meddled with. Each one's portion was to be left intact according to the boundary lines set up by those of old time. Jehovah had given the land to Israel; and, not only so, but He had assigned to each tribe and to each family their proper portion, marked off With perfect precision, and indicated by landmarks so plain that there could be no confusion, no clashing of interests, no interference one with another, no ground for lawsuit or controversy about property. There stood the ancient landmarks marking off each one's portion in such a manner as to remove all possible ground of dispute. Each one held as a tenant under the God of Israel, who knew all about his little holding, as we say; and every tenant had the comfort of knowing that the eye of the gracious and Almighty Landlord was upon his bit of land, and His hand over it to protect it from every intruder. Thus he could abide in peace under his vine and under his fig-tree, enjoying the portion assigned by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Thus much as to the obvious sense of this beautiful clause of our chapter. But surely it has a deep spiritual meaning also. Are there not spiritual landmarks for the church of God, and for each individual member thereof, marking off, with divine accuracy, the boundaries of our heavenly inheritance — those landmarks which they of old time, even the apostles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus have set up? Assuredly there are, and God has His eye upon them, and He will not permit them to removed with

impunity. Woe be to the man that attempts to touch them; he will have to give account to God for so doing. It is a serious thing for any one to interfere, in any way, with the place, portion, and prospect of the church of God; and it is to be feared that many are doing it without being aware of it.

We do not attempt to go into the question of what these landmarks are; we have sought to do this in our first volume of "Notes on Deuteronomy," as well as in the other four volumes of the series; but we feel it to be our duty to warn, in the most solemn manner, all whom it may concern, against doing that which, in the church of God, answers to the removal of the landmarks in Israel. If any one had come forward in the land of Israel to suggest some new arrangement in the inheritance of the tribes, to adjust the property of each upon some new principle, to set up some new boundary lines, what would have been the reply of the faithful Israelite? A very simple one, we may be sure. He would have replied in the language of Deuteronomy 19: 14. He would have said "We want no novelties here; we are perfectly content with those sacred and time-honoured landmarks which they of old time have set in our inheritance. We are determined, by the grace of God, to keep to them, and to resist, with firm purpose, any modern innovation."

Such, we believe, would have been the prompt reply of every true member of the congregation of Israel; and surely the Christian ought not to be less prompt or less decided in his answer to all those who, under the plea of progress and development, remove the landmarks of the church of God, and instead of the precious teaching of Christ and His apostles, offer us the so-called light of science, and the resources of philosophy. Thank God, we want them not. We have Christ and His word; what can be added to these? What do we want of human progress or development, when we have "*that which was from the beginning*"? What can science or philosophy do for those who possess "*all truth*"? No doubt, we want, yea, long to make progress in the knowledge of Christ; long for a fuller, clearer development of the life of Christ in our daily history; but science and philosophy cannot help us in these; nay, they could only prove a most serious hindrance.

Christian reader, let us seek to keep close to Christ, close to His word. This is our only security, in this dark and evil day. Apart from Him, we are nothing, have nothing, can do nothing. In Him we have all He is the portion of our cup and the lot of our inheritance. May we know what it is not only to be safe in Him, but separated to Him, and satisfied with Him, till that bright day when we shall see Him as He is, and be like Him and with Him for ever.

We shall now do little more than quote the remaining verses of our chapter. They need no exposition. They set forth wholesome truth to which professing Christians, with all their light and knowledge, may well give attention.

"One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth; at the mouth of two witnesses, or at mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established." (Ver. 15.)

This subject has already come before us. It cannot be too strongly insisted upon. We may judge of its importance from the fact that, not only does Moses, again and again, press it upon Israel's attention, but our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and the Holy Ghost in the apostle Paul, in two of his epistles, insists upon the principle of "two or three witnesses," in every case. One witness, be he ever so trustworthy, is not sufficient to decide a case. If this plain fact were more carefully weighed and duly attended to, it would put an end to a vast amount of strife and contention. We in our fancied wisdom, might imagine that one thoroughly reliable witness ought to be sufficient to settle any question. Let us remember that God is wiser than we are, and that it is ever our truest wisdom as well as our greatest moral security to hold fast by His unerring word.

"If a false witness rise up against any man, to testify against him that which is wrong; then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges which shall be in those days; and *the judges shall make diligent inquisition:* and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and have testified falsely against his brother; then shall ye do unto him as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. And those which remain shall hear and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." (Vers. 16-21.)

We may here see how God hates false witness; and further, we have to bear in mind that, though we are not under law but under grace, false witness is not less hateful to God; and surely the more fully we enter into the grace in which we stand, the more intensely we shall abhor false witness, slander, and evil speaking, in every shape and form. The good Lord preserve us from all such!