

## **Deuteronomy 5 - 7**, Section 3 of 6.

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Deuteronomy 5.

"And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgements which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them."

Let us carefully note these four words, so specially characteristic of the book of Deuteronomy, and so seasonable for the Lord's people, at all times and in all places — "*Hear*" — "*Learn*" — "*Keep*" — "*Do*." These are words of unspeakable preciousness to every truly pious soul — to every one who honestly desires to walk in that narrow path of practical righteousness so pleasing to God, and so safe and so happy for us.

The first of these word's places the soul in the most blessed attitude in which any one can be found, namely, that of *hearing*. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." "*Hear*; and your soul shall live." The hearing ear lies at the very foundation of all true, practical Christian life. It places the soul in the only true and proper attitude for the creature. It is the real secret of all peace and blessedness.

It can scarcely be needful to remind the reader that, when we speak of the soul in the attitude of hearing, it is assumed that what is heard is simply the word of God. Israel had to hearken to "the statutes and judgements" of Jehovah, and to nothing else. It was not to the commandments, traditions, and doctrines of men they were to give ear; but to the very words of the living God who had redeemed and delivered them from the land of Egypt, the place of bondage, darkness and death.

It is well to bear this in mind. It will preserve the soul from many a snare, many a difficulty. We hear a good deal, in certain quarters, about obedience; and about the moral fitness of surrendering our own will, and submitting ourselves to authority. All this sounds very well; and has great weight with a large class of very religious and morally excellent people. But when men speak to us about obedience, we must ask The question, "Obedience to what?" When they speak to us about surrendering our own will, we must inquire of them, "To whom are we to surrender it?" When they speak to us about submitting to authority, we must insist upon their telling us the source or foundation of the authority.

This is of the deepest possible moment to every member of the household of faith. There are many very sincere and very earnest, people who deem it very delightful to be saved the trouble of thinking for themselves, and to have their sphere of action and line of service laid out for them by wiser heads than their own. It seems a very restful and very pleasing thing to have each day's work laid out for us by some master hand. It relieves the heart of a great load of responsibility, and it looks like humility and self-distrust to submit ourselves to some authority.

But we are bound, before God, to look well to the basis of the authority to which we surrender ourselves, else we may find ourselves in an utterly false position. Take for example, a monk, or a nun, or a member of a sisterhood. A monk obeys his abbot; a nun obeys her mother abbess; "a sister" obeys her "lady superior." But the position and relationship of each is utterly false. There is not a shadow of authority in the New Testament for monasteries, convents, or sisterhoods; on the contrary, the teaching of holy scripture, as well as the voice of nature, is utterly opposed to every one of them, inasmuch as they take men and women out of the place and out of the relationship in which God has set them, and in which they are designed and fitted to move, and form them into societies which are utterly destructive

of natural affection, and subversive of all true Christian obedience.

We feel it right to call the attention of the Christian reader to this subject just now, seeing that the enemy is making a vigorous effort to revive the monastic system, in our midst, under various forms. Indeed some have had the temerity to tell us, that monastic life is the only true form of Christianity. Surely, when such monstrous statements are made and listened to, it becomes us to look at the whole subject in the light of scripture, and to call upon the advocates and adherents of monasticism to show us the foundations of the system in the word of God. Where, within the covers of the New Testament, is there anything, in the most remote degree, like a monastery, a convent, or a sisterhood? where can we find an authority for any such office as that of an abbot, an abbess, or a lady superior? There is absolutely no such thing, nor a shadow of it; and hence, we have no hesitation in pronouncing the whole system, from foundation to topstone, a fabric of superstition, alike opposed to the voice of nature and the voice of God; nor can we understand how any one, in his sober senses, could presume to tell us that a monk or a nun is the only true exponent of Christian life. Yet there are those who thus speak, and there are those who listen to them, and that, too, in this day when the full, clear light of our glorious Christianity is shining upon us from the pages of the New Testament.\*

{\*We must accurately distinguish between "*nature*" and "*flesh*." The former is recognised in scripture; the latter is condemned and set aside. "Doth not even nature itself teach you?" says the apostle. (1 Cor. 11: 14.) Jesus beholding the young ruler, in Mark 10, "loved him" although there was nothing but nature. To be without natural affection, is one of the marks of the apostasy. Scripture teaches that we are dead to sin; not to nature, else what becomes of our natural relationships?}

But, blessed be God, we are called to obedience. We are called to "hear" — called to bow down, in holy and reverent submission, to authority. And here we join issue with infidelity and its lofty pretensions. The path of the devout and lowly Christian is alike removed from superstition on the one hand, and from infidelity on the other. Peter's noble reply to the council, in Acts 5, embodies, in its brief compass, a complete answer to both. "We ought to obey God rather than men." We meet infidelity, in all its phases, in all its stages, and in its very deepest roots, with this one weighty sentence, "We ought to *obey*" And we meet superstition, in every garb in which it clothes itself, with the all-important clause, "We ought to *obey God*."

Here we have set forth, in the most simple form, the duty of every true Christian. He is to obey God. The infidel may smile, contemptuously, at a monk or a nun, and marvel how any rational being can so completely surrender his reason and his understanding to the authority of a fellow mortal, or submit himself to rules and practices so absurd, so degrading and so contrary to nature. The infidel glories in his fancied intellectual freedom, and imagines that his own reason is quite a sufficient guide for him. He does not see that he is further from God than the poor monk or nun whom he so despises. He does not know that, while priding himself in his self-will, he is really led captive by Satan, the prince and God of this world. Man is formed to obey — formed to look up to some one above him. The Christian is sanctified unto the obedience of Jesus Christ that is, to the very same character of obedience as that which was rendered by our adorable Lord and Saviour Himself.

This is of the deepest possible moment to every one who really desires to know what true Christian obedience is. To understand this is the real secret of deliverance from the self-will of the infidel, and the false obedience of superstition. It can never be right to do our own will. It may be quite wrong to do the will of our fellow. It must always be right to do the will of God. This was what Jesus came to do; and what He always did. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart."

Now, we are called and set apart to this blessed character of obedience, as we learn from the inspired apostle Peter, in the opening of his first epistle, where he speaks of believers as "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

This is an immense privilege; and, at the same time, a most holy and solemn responsibility. We must never forget, for a moment, that God has elected us, and the Holy Spirit has set us apart, not only to the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, but also to His obedience. Such is the obvious meaning and moral force of the words just quoted — words of unspeakable preciousness to every lover of holiness — words which effectually deliver us from self-will, from legality, and from superstition. Blessed deliverance!

But it may be the pious reader feels disposed to call our attention to the exhortation in Hebrews 13. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you."

A deeply important word, most surely, with which we should also connect a passage in 1 Thessalonians, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." (1 Thess. 5: 12, 13) And again, in 1 Cor 16: 15, 16, "I beseech you, Brethren — ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry [or service] of the saints — that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us and laboureth." To all these we must add another very lovely passage from the first epistle of Peter. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of Glory that fadeth not away." (1 Thess. 5: 1-4.)

We may be asked, "Do not the above passages set forth the principle of obedience to certain men? And, if so, why object to human authority?" The answer is very simple. Wherever Christ imparts a spiritual gift, whether it be the gift of teaching, the gift of rule, or the gift of pastorship, it is the bounden duty and privilege of Christians to recognise and appreciate such gifts. Not to do so, would be to forsake our own mercies. But then we must bear in mind that, in all such cases, the gift must be a reality - a Plain, palpable, *bona fide*, divinely given thing. It is not a man assuming a certain place or position, or being appointed by his fellow to any so-called ministry. All this is perfectly worthless and worse than worthless; it is a daring intrusion upon a sacred domain which must, sooner or later, bring down the judgement of God.

All true ministry is of God, and is based upon the possession of a positive gift from the Head of the church; so that we may truly say, No gift, no ministry. In all the passages quoted above, we see positive gift possessed, and actual work done. Moreover, we see a true heart for the lambs and sheep of the flock of Christ; we see divine grace and power. The word in Hebrews 13 is "Obey them that guide you" (*hegoumenois*). Now, it is essential to a true guide that he should go before you in the way. It would be the height of folly for any one to assume the title of guide, if he were ignorant of the way, and neither able nor willing to go in it. Who would think of obeying such?

So also when the apostle exhorts the Thessalonians to "know" and "esteem" certain persons, on what does he found his exhortation? Is it upon the mere assumption of a title, an office or a position

Nothing of the kind. He grounds his appeal upon the actual, well-known fact that these persons were "over them, *in the Lord*," and that they admonished them. And why were they to "esteem them very highly in love"? Was it for their office or their title? No; but "for their work's sake." And why were the Corinthians exhorted to submit themselves to the household of Stephanas? Was it because of an empty title or assumed office? By no means; but because "They addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." They were actually in the work. They had received gift and grace from Christ, and they had a heart for His people. They were not boasting of their office or insisting upon their title, but giving themselves devotedly to the service of Christ, in the persons of His dear people.

Now this is the true principle of ministry. It is not human authority at all, but divine gift and spiritual power communicated by Christ to His servants; exercised by them, in responsibility to Him; and thankfully recognised by His saints. A man may set up to be a teacher or a pastor, or he may be appointed by his fellows to the office or title of a pastor; but unless he possessed a positive gift from the Head of the church, it is all the merest sham, a hollow assumption, an empty conceit; and his voice will be the voice of a stranger which the true sheep of Christ do not know and ought not to recognise.\*

{\*The reader will do well to ponder the fact that there is no such thing in the New Testament as human appointment to preach the gospel, teach in the assembly of God, or feed the flock of Christ. Elders and deacons were ordained by the apostles or their delegates Timothy and Titus; but evangelists, pastors and teachers were never so ordained. We must distinguish between gift and local charge. Elders and deacons might possess a special gift or not; it had nothing to do with their local charge. If the reader would understand the subject of ministry, let him study 1 Corinthians 12-14. and Ephesians 4: 8-13. In the former we have first, the base of all true ministry in the church of God, namely, *divine appointment*: "God hath set the members," &c. Secondly, *the motive spring*, "love." Thirdly, The object, "that the church may receive edifying." In Ephesians 4 we have the source of all ministry, a risen and ascended Lord. The design, "To perfect the saints for the work of the ministry." The duration "Till we all come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." In a word, ministry, in all its departments, is entirely a divine institution. It is not of man or by man, but of God. The Master must, in every case, fit, fill and appoint the vessel. There is no authority in scripture for the notion that every man has a right to minister in the church of God. Liberty for men is radicalism and not scripture. Liberty for the Holy Ghost to minister by whom He will is what we are taught in the New Testament. May we learn it!}

But, on the other hand, where there is the divinely gifted teacher, the true, loving, wise, faithful, laborious pastor, watching for souls, weeping over them waiting upon them, like a gentle, tender nurse, able to say to them, "Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord" — where these things are found, there will not be much difficulty in recognising and appreciating them. How do we know a good dentist? Is it by seeing his name on a brass plate? No; but by his work. A man may call himself a dentist ten thousand times over, but if he be only an unskilful operator who would think of employing him?

Thus it is in all human affairs, and thus it is in the matter of ministry. If a man has a gift, he is a minister; if he has not, all the appointment, authority and ordination in the world could not make him a minister of Christ. It may make him a minister of religion; but a minister of religion and a minister of Christ — a minister in Christendom and a minister in the church of God, are two totally different things. All true ministry has its source in God; it rests on divine authority, and its object is to bring the soul into His presence, and link it on to Him. False ministry, on the contrary, has its source in man; it rests on human authority, and its object is to link the soul on to itself. This marks the immense difference between the two. The former leads to God; the latter leads away from Him; that feeds, nourishes and strengthens the new life; this hinders its progress, in every way, and plunges it in doubt

and darkness. In a word, we may say, true ministry is of God, through Him, and to Him. False ministry is of man, through him and to him. The former we prize more than we can say; the latter we reject with all the energy of our moral being. We trust sufficient has been said to satisfy the mind of the reader in reference to the matter of obedience to those whom the Lord may see fit to call to the work of the ministry. We are bound, in every case, to judge by the word of God, and to be assured that it is a divine reality and not a human sham — a positive gift from the Head of the church, and not an empty title conferred by men. In all cases where there is real gift and grace, it is a sweet privilege to obey and submit ourselves, inasmuch as we discern Christ in the person and ministry of His beloved servants.

There is no difficulty, to a spiritual mind, in owning real grace and power. We can easily tell whether a man is seeking, in true love, to feed our souls with the bread of life, and lead us on in the ways of God; or whether he is seeking to exalt himself, and promote his own interests. Those who are living near the Lord can readily discern between true power and hollow assumption. Moreover, we never find Christ's true ministers parading their authority, or vaunting themselves of their office; they do the work and leave it to speak for itself. In the case of the blessed apostle Paul, we and him referring, again and again, to the plain proofs of his ministry — the unquestionable evidence afforded in the conversion and blessing of souls. He could say to the poor misguided Corinthians when, under the influence of some self-exalting pretender, they foolishly called in question his apostleship, "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me....examine yourselves."

This was close, pointed dealing with them. They themselves were the living proofs of his ministry. If his ministry was not of God, what and where were they? But it was of God, and this was his joy, his comfort and his strength. He was "an apostle, not of man, nor by men; but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised him from the dead." He gloried in the source of his ministry; and, as to its character, he had but to appeal to a body of evidence quite sufficient to carry conviction to any right mind. In his case, it could be truly said, it was not the speech, but the power.

Thus it must be, in measure, in every case. We must look for the power. We must have reality. Mere titles are nothing. Men may undertake to confer titles and appoint to offices; but they have no more authority to do so than they have to appoint; admirals in her Majesty's fleet, or generals in her army. If we were to see a man assuming the style and title of an admiral or a general, without her Majesty's commission, we should pronounce him an idiot or a lunatic. This is but a feeble illustration to set forth the folly of men taking upon them the title of ministers of Christ without one atom of spiritual gift, or divine authority.

Shall we be told, we must not judge! We are bound to judge. "Beware of false prophets." How can we beware if we are not to judge? But how are we to judge "By their fruits ye shall know them." Can the Lord's people not tell the difference between a man who comes to them, in the power of the Spirit, gifted by the Head of the church, full of love to their souls, earnestly desiring their true blessing seeking not theirs but them, a holy, gracious, humble, self emptied servant of Christ; and a man who comes with a self-assumed or a humanly conferred title, without a single trace of anything divine or heavenly, either in his ministry or in his life? Of course they can; no one in his senses would think of calling in question a fact so obvious.

But, further, we may ask, what mean those words of the venerable apostle John? "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." How are we to try the spirits, or how are we to discern between the true and the false, if we are not to judge? Again, the same apostle writing to "the elect lady," gives her the following most solemn admonition, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive

him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." Was she not responsible to act on this admonition Assuredly. But how could she, if we are not to judge And what had she to judge! Was it as to whether those who came to her house were ordained, authorised, or licensed by any man or body of men? Nothing of the kind. The one great and all-important question for her was as to the doctrine. If they brought the true, the divine doctrine of Christ the doctrine of Jesus Christ come in the flesh, she was to receive them; if not, she was to shut her door, with a firm hand, against them, no matter who they were, or where they came from. If they had all the credentials that man could bestow upon them, yet if they brought not the truth, she was to reject them with stern decision. This might seem very harsh, very narrow minded, very bigoted; but with this she had nothing whatever to do. She had just to be as broad and as narrow as the truth. Her door and her heart were to be wide enough to admit all who brought Christ, and no wider. Was she to pay compliments at the expense of her Lord? Was she to seek a name for largeness of heart or breadth of mind by receiving to her house and to her table the teachers of a false Christ? The very thought is absolutely horrible.

But, finally, in the second chapter of Revelation, we find the church at Ephesus commended for having tried those who said they were apostles and were not. How could this be if we are not to judge? Is it not most evident to the reader that an utterly false use is made of our Lord's words in Matthew 7: 1, "Judge not that ye be not judged;" and also of the apostle's words in? Corinthians 4: 5, "Therefore judge nothing before the time"! It is impossible that scripture can contradict itself; and, hence, whatever be the true meaning of our Lord's "judge not," or the apostle's "judge nothing," it is perfectly certain that they do not, in the most remote way, interfere with the solemn responsibility of all Christians, to judge the gift, the doctrine, and the life of all who take the place of preachers, teachers and pastors in the church of God.

And, then, if we be asked, as to the meaning of "judge not," and "judge nothing," we believe the words simply forbid our judging motives, or hidden springs of action. With these we have nothing whatever to do. We cannot penetrate below the surface; and, thanks be to God, we are not asked to do so; yea, we are positively forbidden. We cannot read the counsels of the heart; it is the province and prerogative of God alone to do this. But to say that we are not to judge the doctrine, the gift or the manner of life of those who take the place of preachers, teachers and pastors in the church of God, is simply to fly in the face of holy scripture, and to ignore the very instincts of the divine nature implanted in us by the Holy Ghost.

Hence, therefore, we can return, with increased clearness and decision, to our thesis of Christian obedience. It seems perfectly plain that the fullest recognition of all true ministry in the church, and the most gracious submission of ourselves to all those whom our Lord Christ may see fit to raise up as pastors, teachers and guides, in our midst, can never, in the smallest degree, interfere with the grand fundamental principle set forth in Peter's magnificent reply to the council, "We ought to obey God, rather than men."

It will ever be the aim and object of all true ministers of Christ to lead those, to whom they minister, in the true path of obedience to the word of God. The chapter which lies open before us, as indeed the entire book of Deuteronomy, shows us, very plainly, how Moses, that eminent servant of God, ever sought and diligently laboured to press upon the congregation of Israel, the urgent necessity of the most implicit obedience to all the statutes and judgements of God. He did not seek any place of authority for himself. He never lorded it over God's heritage. His one grand theme, from first to last, was obedience. This was the burden of all his discourses — obedience, not to him, but to his and their Lord. He rightly judged that this was the true secret of their happiness, their moral security, their

dignity and their strength. He knew that an obedient people must also, of necessity, be an invincible and innumerable people. No weapon formed against them could prosper, so long as they were governed by the word of God. In a word, he knew and believed that Israel's province was to obey Jehovah; as it was Jehovah's province to bless Israel. It was their one simple business to "hear" — "learn" "keep" — and "do" the revealed will of God; and, so doing, they might count on Him, with all possible confidence, to be their shield, their strength, their safeguard, their refuge, their resource, their all in all. The only true and proper path for the Israel of God, is that narrow path of obedience on which the light of God's approving countenance ever shines; and all who, through grace, tread that path will find Him "a guide, a glory, a defence, to save from every fear."

This, surely, is quite enough. We have nothing to do with consequences. These we may, in simple confidence, leave to Him whose we are and whom we are responsible to serve. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." If we are doing His will, we shall ever find His Name a strong tower. But, on the other hand, if we are not walking in a path of practical righteousness; if we are doing our own will; if we are living in the habitual neglect of the plain word of God, then verily it is utterly vain for us to think that the Name of the Lord will be a strong tower to us; rather would His Name be a reproof to us, leading us to judge our ways, and to return to the path of righteousness from which we have wandered.

Blessed be His Name, His grace will ever meet us, in all its precious fullness and freeness, in the place of self-judgement and confession, however we may have failed and wandered; but this is a totally different thing. We may have to say, with the psalmist, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice; let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." But then, a soul crying to God from the depths, and getting forgiveness, is one thing; and a soul looking to Him in the path of practical righteousness is quite another. We must carefully distinguish between these two things. Confessing our sins and finding pardon must never be confounded with walking uprightly and counting on God. Both are blessedly true; but they are not the same thing.

We shall now proceed with our chapter.

At the second verse, Moses reminds the people of their covenant relationship with Jehovah; He says, "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. The Lord talked with you face to face, in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, (I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to show you the word of the Lord; for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount) saying," &c.

The reader must distinguish, and thoroughly understand the difference between the covenant made at Horeb, and the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They are essentially different. The former was a covenant of works, in which the people undertook to do all that the Lord had spoken. The latter was a covenant of pure grace, in which God pledged Himself with an oath to do all which He promised. Human language would utterly fail us to set forth the immense difference, in every respect, between these two covenants. In their basis, in their character, in their accompaniments, and in their practical result, they are as different as any two things could possibly be. The Horeb covenant rested upon human competency for the fulfilment of its terms; and this one fact is quite sufficient to account for the total failure of the whole thing. The Abrahamic covenant rested upon divine competency for the fulfilment of its terms, and hence the utter impossibility of its failure in a single jot or tittle.

Having, in our "Notes on the Book of Exodus," gone, somewhat fully, into the subject of the law, and endeavoured to set forth the divine object in giving it; and, further, the utter impossibility of any one Setting life or righteousness by keeping it, we must refer the reader to what we have there advanced on this profoundly interesting subject.

It seems strange to one taught exclusively by scripture, that such confusion of thought should prevail amongst professing Christians, in reference to a question so distinctly and definitively settled by the Holy Ghost. Were it merely a question of the divine authority of Exodus 20. or Deuteronomy 5 as inspired portions of the Bible, we should not have a Word to say. We most fully believe that these chapters are as much inspired as John 17 or Romans 8.

But this is not the point. All true Christians receive, with devout thankfulness, the precious statement that, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." And, further, they rejoice in the assurance that "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." And, finally, they believe that the morality of the law is of abiding and universal application. Murder, adultery, theft, false witness, covetousness, are wrong — always wrong — everywhere wrong. To honour our parents is right, always and everywhere right. We read, in Ephesians 4, "Let him that stole, steal no more." and, again, in Eph. 6, we read, "Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."

All this is so divinely plain and settled that discussion is definitively closed. But when we come to look at the law as a ground of relationship with God, we get into an entirely different region of thought. Scripture, in manifold places, and in the clearest Possible manner, teaches as that, as Christians, as children of God, we are not on that ground at all. The Jew was on that ground, but he could not stand there with God. It was death and condemnation. They could not endure that which was commanded. and if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned or thrust through with a dart. And so terrible was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." The Jew found the law to be a bed on which he could not stretch himself, and a covering in which he could not wrap himself.

As to the Gentile, he was never, by any one branch of the divine economy, placed under law. His condition is expressly declared, in the opening of the epistle to the Romans, to be "without law" (*anomos*). "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law," etc. had, "As many as have sinned without law shall perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law."

Here the two classes are brought into sharp and vivid contrast, in the matter of their dispensational position. The Jew, under law; the Gentile, without law. Nothing can be more distinct. The Gentile was placed under government, in the person of Noah; but never under law. Should any one feel disposed to call this in question, let him produce a single line of scripture to prove that God ever placed the Gentiles under the law. Let him search and see. It is of no possible use to argue and reason and object. It is utterly vain to say, "*We think*" this or that. The question is, "What saith the scripture?" If it says that the Gentiles were put under the law, let the passage be produced. We solemnly declare it says nothing of the kind, but the very reverse. It describes the condition and the position of the Gentile as "without law" — "having not the law"

In Acts 10, we see God opening the kingdom of heaven to the Gentile. In Acts 14: 27, we see Him opening "the door of faith" to the Gentile. In Acts 28: 28, we see Him sending His salvation to the Gentile. But we search in vain, from cover to cover of the blessed Book, for a passage in which He places the Gentile under the law.

We would, very earnestly, entreat the Christian reader to give this deeply interesting and important question his calm attention. Let him lay aside all his pre-conceived thoughts, and examine the matter simply in the light of holy scripture. We are quite aware that our statements on this subject will be regarded by thousands as novel, if not actually heretical; but this does not move us, in the smallest degree. It is our one grand desire to be taught absolutely and exclusively by scripture. The opinions, commandments, and doctrines of men have no weight whatever with us. The dogmas of the various schools of divinity must just go for what they are worth. We demand scripture. A single line of inspiration is amply sufficient to settle this question, and close all discussion, for ever. Let us be shown, from the word of God, that the Gentiles were ever put under the law, and we shall, at once, bow; but, inasmuch as we cannot find it there, we reject the notion altogether, and we would have the reader to do the same. The invariable language of scripture, in describing the position of the Jew, is, "under law;" and, in describing the position of the Gentile, is, "without law." This is so obvious that we cannot but marvel how any reader of the Bible can fail to see it.\*

{\*The reader may perhaps feel disposed to inquire, on what ground will the Gentile be judged, if he is not under the law? Romans 1: 20 teaches us distinctly that the testimony of *creation* leaves him without excuse. Then, in Rom. 2: 15, he is taken up on the ground of conscience. "For *when the Gentiles, which have not the law*, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness," &c. Finally, as regards those nations that have become professedly Christian, they will be judged on the ground of their profession.}

If the reader will turn, for a few moments, to Acts 15, he will see how the first attempt to put Gentile converts under the law was met by the apostles and the whole church at Jerusalem. The question was raised at Antioch; and God, in His infinite goodness and wisdom, so ordered that it should not be settled there, but that Paul and Barnabas should go up to Jerusalem and have the matter fully and freely discussed, and definitively settled by the unanimous voice of the twelve apostles, and the whole church.

How we can bless our God for this! We can, at once, see that the decision of a local assembly such as Antioch, even though approved by Paul and Barnabas, would not carry the same weight as that of the twelve apostles assembled in council, at Jerusalem. But the Lord, blessed be His Name, took care that the enemy should be completely confounded; and that the law-teachers of that day, and of every other day, should be distinctly and authoritatively taught that it was not according to His mind that Christians should be put under law, for any object whatsoever.

The subject is so deeply important that we cannot forbear quoting a few passages for the reader. We believe it will refresh both the reader and the writer to refer to the soul-stirring addresses delivered at the most remarkable and interesting council that ever sat.

"And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" How awful! How terribly chilling! What a death knell to ring in the ears of those who had been converted under Paul's splendid address in the synagogue at Antioch! "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that *through this man*" — without circumcision or works of law of any kind whatsoever — "is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and *by Him* all that believe" — irrespective altogether of circumcision — "are justified *from all things*, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses..... And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be Preached to them the next Sabbath."

Such was the glorious message sent to the Gentiles, by the lips of the Apostle Paul — a message

of free, full, immediate and perfect salvation — full remission of sins and perfect justification, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. But, according to the teaching of the "certain men which came down from Judea," all this was insufficient. Christ was not enough, without circumcision and the law of Moses. Poor Gentiles who had never heard of circumcision or the law of Moses, must add to Christ and His glorious salvation the keeping of the whole law.

How must Paul's heart have burned within him to have the beloved Gentile converts brought under such monstrous teaching as this! He saw in it nothing short of the complete surrender of Christianity. If circumcision must be added to the cross of Christ — if the law of Moses must supplement the grace of God, then verily all was gone.

But, blessed for ever be the God of all grace, He caused a noble stand to be made against such deadly teaching. When the enemy came in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord raised up a standard against him (When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem, unto the apostles and elders, about this question. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring" — not the circumcision but — "the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy unto all the brethren."

The brethren were in the current of the mind of Christ, and in sweet communion with the heart of God; and hence they rejoiced to hear of the conversion and salvation of the Gentiles. We may rest assured it would have afforded them no joy to hear of the heavy yoke of circumcision and the law of Moses being put upon the necks of those beloved disciples who had just been brought into the glorious liberty of the Gospel. But to hear of their conversion to God, their salvation by Christ, their being sealed by the Holy Ghost, filled their hearts with a joy which was in lovely harmony with the mind of heaven.

"And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it; was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."

Who made it "needful"? Not God, surely, inasmuch as He had, in His infinite grace, opened the door of faith to them, without circumcision, or any command to keep the law of Moses. No; it was "certain men" who presumed to speak of such things as needful — men who have troubled the church of God, from that day to the present — men "desiring to be teachers of the law; knowing neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." Law teachers never know what is involved in their dark and dismal teaching. They have not the most distant idea of how thoroughly hateful their teaching is to the God of all grace, the Father of mercies.

But thanks be to God, the chapter from which we are now quoting affords the very clearest and most forcible evidence that could be given as to the divine mind on the subject. It proved, beyond all question, that it was not of God to put Gentile believers under the law.

"And the apostles and elders came together, for to consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing" — alas! how soon it began! — "Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear" — not the law of Moses or circumcision, but "the word of the gospel, and believe. And God which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as unto us. *And put no difference between us and them*, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore *why tempt ye God*, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

Mark this, reader. The law had proved an intolerable yoke to those who were under it, that is the Jews; and, further, it was nothing short of tempting God to put that yoke upon the neck of Gentile Christians. Would that all the law-teachers, throughout the length and breadth of Christendom, would but open their eyes to this grand fact! And not only so, but that all the Lord's beloved people everywhere were given to see that it is in positive opposition to the will of God that they should be put under the law, for any object whatsoever. "But," adds the blessed apostle of the circumcision, "we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" — and not by law in any shape or form — "*we shall be saved, even as they.*"

This is uncommonly fine, coming from the lips of the apostle of the circumcision. He does not say, "They shall be saved even as we;" but, "We shall be saved even as they." The Jew is well content to come down from his lofty dispensational position, and be saved after the pattern of the poor uncircumcised Gentile. Surely those noble utterances must have fallen, in stunning force, upon the ears of the law party. They left them, as we say, not a leg to stand upon.

"Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them." The inspiring Spirit has not thought good to tell us what Paul and Barnabas said, on this memorable occasion; and we can see His wisdom in this. It is evidently His object to give prominence to Peter and James as men whose words would, of necessity, have more weight with the law teachers than those of the apostle to the Gentiles and his companion.

"And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me. Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles" — not to convert them all, but to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets;" — here he brings an overwhelming tide of evidence from the Old Testament to bear down upon the Judaisers — "as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and *all the Gentiles*" — without the slightest reference to circumcision, or the law of Moses, but — "upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world. Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God."

Here, then, we have this great question definitively settled, by the Holy Ghost, the twelve apostles, and the whole church; and we cannot but be struck with the fact that, at this most important council, none spoke more emphatically, more distinctly, or more decidedly, than Peter and James — the former, the apostle of the circumcision; and the latter, the one who specially addressed the twelve tribes, and whose position and ministry were calculated to give great weight to his words, in the judgement of all who were still, in any measure, occupying Jewish or legal ground. Both these eminent apostles were clear and decided in their judgement that the Gentile converts were not to be "troubled" or burdened with the law. They proved, in their powerful addresses, that, to place the Gentile Christians under the law, was directly contrary to the word, the will, and the ways of God.

Who can fail to see the marvellous wisdom of God in this? The words of Paul and Barnabas are not recorded. We are simply told that they rehearsed what things God had wrought among the Gentiles. That they should be utterly opposed to putting the Gentiles under the law was only what might be expected. But, to find Peter and James so decided, would carry great weight with all parties. But if the reader would have a clear view of Paul's thoughts on the question of the law, he should study the epistle to the Galatians. There this blessed apostle, under the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost, pours out his

heart, to the Gentile converts, in words of glowing earnestness and commanding power. It is perfectly amazing how any one can read this wonderful epistle, and yet maintain that Christians are under the law, in any way, or for any purpose. Hardly has the apostle got through his brief opening address, when he plunges, with his characteristic energy, into the subject with which his large, loving, though grieved and troubled heart is full to overflowing. "I marvel," he says — and well he might — "that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into" — what The law of Moses! Nay, but "the grace of Christ into a different gospel which is not another;" — (*heteron euaggelion ho ouk estin allo*) — "but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Let all law-teachers ponder these burning words. Do they seem strong and severe? Let us remember that they are the very words of God the Holy Ghost. Yes, reader, God the Holy Ghost hurls His awful anathema at any one who presumes to add the law of Moses to the Gospel of Christ — any one who attempts to place Christians under the law. How is it that men are not afraid, in the face of such words, to contend for the law? Are they not afraid of coming under the solemn curse of God the Holy Ghost?

Some, however, seek to meet this question by telling us that they do not take the law for justification, but as a rule of life. But this is neither reasonable nor intelligent, inasmuch as we may very lawfully inquire who gave us authority to decide as to the use we are to make of the law? We are either under the law or we are not. If we are under it at all, it is not a question of how we take it, but how it takes us.

This makes all the difference. The law knows no such distinctions as those which some theologians contend for. If we are under it, for any object whatsoever, we are under the curse, for it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." To say that I am born again, I am a Christian, will not meet the case at all; for what has the law to do with the question of New Birth, or of Christianity? Nothing whatever. The law is addressed to man, as a responsible being. It demands perfect obedience, and pronounces its curse upon every one who fails to render it.

Moreover, it will not do to say that, though we have failed to keep the law, yet Christ has fulfilled it in our room and stead. The law knows nothing of obedience by proxy. Its language is, "The man that doeth them shall live in them." Nor is it merely on the man who fails to keep the law that the curse is pronounced; but, as if to put the principle in the clearest possible light before us, we read that "as many as are of works of law are under the curse." (See Gr.) That is, as many as take their stand on legal ground — as many as are on that principle — in a word, as many as have to do with works of law, are, of necessity, under the curse. Hence, we may see at a glance, the terrible inconsistency of a Christian's maintaining the idea of being under the law as a rule of life, and yet not being under the curse. It is simply flying in the face of the very plainest statements of holy scripture. Blessed be the God of all grace, the Christian is not under the curse. But why? Is it because the law has lost its power, its majesty, its dignity, its holy stringency? By no means. To say so were to blaspheme the law. To say that any "man" — call him what you please, Christian, Jew, or Heathen — can be under the law, can stand on that ground, and yet not be under the curse, is to say that he perfectly fulfils the law or that the law is abrogated — it is to make it null and void. Who will dare to say this? Woe be to all who do so.

But how comes it to pass that the Christian is not under the curse? Because he is not under the

law. And how has he passed from under the law? Is it by another having fulfilled it in his stead? Nay; we repeat the statement, there is no such idea, throughout the entire legal economy, as obedience by proxy. How is it then? Here it is, in all its moral force, fullness and beauty. "I through law, am dead to law, that I might live to God."

{\*The omission of the article adds immensely to the force, fullness and clearness of the message. It is *dia nomou nomo apethanon*. A wonderful clause, surely. Would that it were better understood! It demolishes a vast mass of human theology. It leaves the law in its own proper sphere; but takes the believer completely from under its power, and out of its range, by death. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God" — which we never could do, if under the law — "For when we were in the flesh," — a correlative term with being under the law — "the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death." Mark the melancholy combination! "Under the law" "In the flesh" — "motions of sins" "Fruit unto death!" Can anything be more strongly marked? But there is another side, thank God, to this question; His own bright and blessed side. Here it is. "But now are *we delivered from the law*." How? Is it by another having fulfilled it for us? Nay; but, "*having died to that [apothanontes en ho]* wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." How perfect and how lovely is the harmony of Romans 7 and Galatians 2. "I through law am dead to law, that I might live unto God."}

Now, if it be true, and the apostle says it is, that we are *dead to law*, how can the law, by any possibility, be a rule of life to us? It proved *only* a rule of death, curse and condemnation to those who were under it those who had received it by the disposition of angels. Can it prove to be ought else to us? Did the law ever produce a single cluster of living fruit, or of the fruits of righteousness, in the history of any son or daughter of Adam? Hear the apostle's reply. "when we were in the flesh" — that is, when we were viewed as men in our fallen nature — "the motions of sins which were by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death." It is very important for the reader to understand the real force of the expression, "in the flesh." It does not, in this passage, mean, "in the body." It simply sets forth the condition of unconverted men and women responsible to keep the law. Now, in this condition, all that was or ever could be produced was "fruit unto death" — "motions of sins." No life, no righteousness, no holiness, nothing for God, nothing right at all.\*

{\*It is needful to bear in mind that, although the Gentile was never, by the dispensational dealings of God, put under the law, yet, in point of fact, all baptised professors take that ground. Hence there is a vast difference between Christendom and the heathen, in reference to the question of the law. Thousands of unconverted people, every week, ask God to incline their hearts to keep the law. Surely, such persons stand on very different ground from the heathen who never heard of the law, and never heard of the Bible.}

But, where are we now as Christians? Hear the reply, "I through law am dead to Law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh" — here it means in the body — "I live" — How? By the law, as a rule of life? Not a hint at such a thing, but "by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

This, and nothing else, is Christianity. Do we understand it? Do we enter into it? Are we in the power of it? There are two distinct evils from which we are completely delivered by the precious death of Christ, namely, legality, on the one hand, and licentiousness, on the other. Instead of those terrible

evils, it introduces us into the holy liberty of grace-liberty to serve God — liberty to "mortify our members which are upon the earth" — liberty to deny (ungodliness and worldly lusts" — liberty to "live soberly, righteously and godly" — liberty to "keep under the body and bring it into subjection."

Yes, beloved Christian reader, let us remember this. Let us deeply ponder the words. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." The old "I" dead — crucified, buried. The new "I," alive in Christ. Let us not mistake this. We know of nothing more awful, nothing more dangerous, than for the old "I" to assume the new ground; or, in other words, the glorious doctrines of Christianity taken up in the flesh, unconverted people talking of being free from the law, and turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. We must confess we would rather, a thousand times, have legality than licentiousness. It is this latter that many of us have to watch against, with all possible earnestness. It is growing around us, with appalling rapidity, and paving the way for that dark and desolating tide of infidelity which shall, ere long roll over the length and breadth of Christendom.

To talk of being free from the law in any way save by being dead to it, and alive to God, is not Christianity, at all, but licentiousness, from which every Pious soul must shrink with holy horror. If we are dead to the law, we are dead to sin also; and hence we are not to do our Own Will, which is only another name for sin; but the will of God, which is true practical holiness.

Further, let us ever bear in mind that if we are dead to the law, we are dead to this present evil world also, and linked with a risen, ascended and glorified Christ, Hence, we are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. To contend for position in the world is to deny that we are dead to the law; for we cannot be alive to the one and dead to the other. The death of Christ has delivered us from the law, from the power of sin, from this present evil world, and from the fear of death. But then all these things hang together, and we cannot go delivered from one without being delivered from all. To assert our freedom from the law, while pursuing a course of carnality, self-indulgence and worldliness, is one of the darkest and deadliest evils of the last days.

The Christian is called to prove, in his daily life, that grace can produce results that law could never reach. It is one of the moral glories of Christianity to enable a man to surrender self and live for others. Law never could do this. It occupied a man with himself. Under its rule, every man had to do the best he could for himself. If he tried to love his neighbour, it was to work out a righteousness for himself. Under grace, all is blessedly and gloriously reversed. Self is set aside as a thing crucified, dead and buried. The old "I" is gone, and the new "I" is before God in all the acceptability and preciousness of Christ. He is our life, our righteousness, our holiness, our object, our model, our all. He is in us and we are in Him; and our daily practical life is to be simply Christ reproduced in us, by the power of the Holy Ghost. Hence, we are not only called to love our neighbour, but our enemy; and this, not to work out a righteousness, for we have become the righteousness of God in Christ; it is simply the outflow of the life which we possess, which is in us; and this life is Christ. A Christian is a man who should live Christ. He is neither a Jew, "under law;" nor a Gentile "without law;" but "a man in Christ," standing in grace, called to the same character of obedience as that which was rendered by the Lord Jesus Himself.

We shall not pursue this subject further here; but we earnestly entreat the Christian reader to study, attentively, the fifteenth chapter of Acts, and the epistle to the Galatians. Let him drink in the blessed teaching of these scriptures; and we feel assured he will arrive at a clear understanding of the great question of the law. He will see that the Christian is not under the law, for any purpose whatsoever; that his life, his righteousness, his holiness are on a different ground or principle altogether; that to place the Christian under law, in any way, is to deny the very foundations of Christianity, and contradict the plainest statements of the word. He will learn, from the third chapter of

Galatians, that to put ourselves under the law is to give up Christ; to give up the Holy Ghost; to give up faith; to give up the promises.

Tremendous consequences! But there they are mainly set forth before our eyes; and truly when we contemplate the state of the professing church, we cannot but see how terribly those consequences are being realised.

May God the Holy Ghost open the eyes of all Christians to the truth of these things! May He lead them to study the scriptures and to submit themselves to their holy authority, in all things. This is the special need of this our day. We do not study scripture sufficiently. We are not governed by it. We do not see the absolute necessity of testing everything by the light of scripture, and rejecting all that will not stand the test. We go on with a quantity of things that have no foundation whatever in the word; yea, that are positively opposed to it.

What must be the end of all this? We tremble to think of it. We know, blessed be God, that our Lord Jesus Christ will soon come, and take His own beloved and blood-bought people home to the prepared place in the Father's house, to be for ever with Himself, in the ineffable blessedness of that bright home. But what of those who shall be left behind? What of that vast mass of baptised worldly profession? These are solemn questions which must be weighed in the immediate presence of God, in order to have the true — the divine answer. Let the reader ponder them there, in all tenderness of heart and teachableness of spirit, and the Holy Ghost will lead him to the true answer.

Having sought to set forth, from various parts of scripture, the glorious truth that believers are not under law, but under grace, we may now pursue our study of this fifth chapter of Deuteronomy. In it we have the ten commandments; but not exactly as we have them in the twentieth chapter of Exodus. There are some characteristic touches which demand the reader's attention.

In Exodus 20 we have history; in Deuteronomy 5 we have not only history but commentary. In the latter, the lawgiver presents moral motives, and makes appeals which would be wholly out of place in the former. In the one, we have naked facts; in the other, facts and comments — facts and their practical application. In a word, there is not the slightest ground for imagining that Deuteronomy 5 is intended to be a literal repetition of Exodus 20; and hence the miserable arguments which infidels ground upon their apparent divergence just crumble into dust beneath our feet. They are simply baseless and utterly contemptible.

Let us, for instance, compare the two scriptures in reference to the subject of the Sabbath. In Exodus 20 we read, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. *For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the Sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.*"

In Deuteronomy 5 we read, Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, *as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee.* Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, *nor thine ox nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.* (Vers. 12-15.)

Now, the reader can see, at a glance, the difference between the two passages. In Exodus 20 the command to keep the Sabbath is grounded on *creation*. In Deuteronomy 5 it is grounded on *redemption* without any allusion to creation, at all. In short, the points of difference arise out of the distinct character of each book, and are perfectly plain to every spiritual mind.

With regard to the institution of the Sabbath we must remember that it rests wholly upon the direct authority of the word of God. Other commandments set forth plain moral duties. Every man knows it to be morally wrong to kill or steal; but, as to the observance of the Sabbath, no one could possibly recognise it as a duty had it not been distinctly appointed by divine authority. Hence its immense importance and interest. Both in our chapter, and in Exodus 20, it stands side by side with all those great moral duties which are universally recognised by the human conscience.

And not only so; but we find, in various other scriptures, that the Sabbath is singled out and presented, with special prominence, as a precious link between Jehovah and Israel; a seal of His covenant with them; and a powerful test of their devotedness to Him. Every one could recognise the moral wrong of theft and murder; only those who loved Jehovah and His word would love and honour His Sabbath.

Thus, in Exodus 16, in connection with the giving of the manna, we read, "And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man; and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, *Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord*: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you, to be kept until the morning..... And Moses said Eat that to day; for to day is *a Sabbath unto the Lord*; to day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass," — so little were they capable of appreciating the high and holy privilege of keeping Jehovah's Sabbath — "that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. and the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws" Their neglect of the Sabbath proved their moral condition to be all wrong-proved them to be astray as to all the commandments and laws of God. The Sabbath was the great touchstone, the measure and gauge of the real state of their hearts toward Jehovah — "See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day." they found rest and food on the holy Sabbath.

Again, at the close of chapter 31, we have a very remarkable passage in proof of the importance and interest attaching to the Sabbath, in the mind of Jehovah. A full description of the tabernacle and its furniture had been given to Moses, and he was about to receive the two tables of testimony from the hand of Jehovah; but, as if to prove the prominent place which the holy Sabbath held in the divine mind, we read, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: *for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations*; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death; for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord; whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, *for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever*; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed." (Ex. 31: 12-17.)

Now, this is a very important passage. It proves, very distinctly, the abiding character of the Sabbath. The terms in which it is spoken of are quite sufficient to show that it was no mere temporary institution, "A sign between me and you, throughout your generations" — "A perpetual covenant" — "a sign for ever."

Let the reader carefully mark these words. They prove, beyond all question, first, that the Sabbath was for Israel. Secondly, that the Sabbath is, in the mind of God, a permanent institution. It is needful to bear these things in mind, in order to avoid all vagueness of thought, and looseness of expression on this deeply interesting subject.

The Sabbath was distinctly and exclusively for the Jewish nation. It is spoken of, emphatically, as a sign between Jehovah and His people Israel. There is not the most remote hint of its being intended for the Gentiles. We shall see, further on, that it is a lovely type of the times of the restitution of all things of which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began; but this, in no wise, touches the fact of its being an exclusively Jewish institution. There is not so much as a single sentence of scripture to show that the Sabbath had any reference whatever to the Gentiles.

Some would teach us that, inasmuch as we read of the Sabbath day, in Genesis 2, it must, of necessity, have a wider range than the Jewish. But let us turn to the passage, and see what it says. "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made."

This is simple enough. There is no mention here of man, at all. We are not told that man rested on the seventh day. Men may infer, conclude or imagine that he did so; but the second of Genesis says nothing about it. And not only so, but we look in vain for any allusion to the Sabbath throughout the entire book of Genesis. The very first notice we have of the Sabbath, in connection with man, is in Exodus 16, a passage already quoted; and there we see, most distinctly, that it was given to Israel, as a people in recognised covenant relationship with Jehovah. That they did not understand or appreciate it is perfectly plain; that they never entered into it is equally plain, according to Psalm 95 and Hebrews 4. But we are now speaking of what it was in the mind of God; and He tells us it was a sign between Him and His people Israel; and a powerful test of their moral condition, and of the state of their heart as to Him. It was not only an integral part of the law as given by Moses to the congregation of Israel, but it is specially referred to and singled out, again and again, as an institution holding a very peculiar place in the mind of God.

Thus, in the book of the prophet Isaiah, we read, "Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil. Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people; neither let the eunuch say, Behold I am a dry tree. For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give in mine house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger," — here, of course, viewed in connection with Israel, as in Numbers 15 and other scriptures — "that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer, their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people."

Again, "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." (Isaiah 58: 13, 14.)

The foregoing quotations are amply sufficient to show the place which the Sabbath holds, in the mind of God. It is needless to multiply passages; but there is just one to which we must refer the reader, in connection with our present subject, namely, Leviticus 23. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, concerning the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts. Six days shall work be done; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein; it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings." (Vers. 1-3.)

Here it stands at the head of all the feasts given in this marvellous chapter in which we have foreshadowed the entire history of God's dealings with His people Israel. The Sabbath is the expression of God's eternal rest into which it is His purpose yet to bring His people, when all their toils and their trials and tribulations shall have passed away — that blessed "Sabbath keeping," (*sabbatisons*) which "remaineth for the people of God." In various ways, He sought to keep this glorious rest before the hearts of His people; the seventh day, the seventh year, the year of jubilee — all these lovely sabbatic seasons were designed to set forth that blessed time when Israel shall be gathered back to their own beloved land, when the Sabbath shall be kept, in all its deep, divine blessedness, as it never has been kept yet.

And this leads us, naturally, to the second point in connection with the Sabbath, namely, its permanency. This is plainly proved by such expressions as, "perpetual" "a Sign for ever" — "throughout your generations." Such words would never be applied to any merely temporary institution. Thus it is, alas! that Israel never really kept the Sabbath according to God; they never understood its meaning, never entered into its blessedness, never drank into its spirit. They made it a badge of their own righteousness; they boasted in it as a national institution, and used it for self-exaltation; but they never celebrated it in communion with God.

We speak of the nation, as a whole. We doubt not there were precious souls who, in secret, enjoyed the Sabbath, and entered into the thoughts of God about it. But, as a nation, Israel never kept the Sabbath according to God. Hear what Isaiah says, "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and *Sabbaths*, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting." (Chap. 1: 13.)

Here we see that the precious and beautiful institution of the Sabbath which God had given as a sign of His covenant with His people, had, in their hands, become a positive abomination, perfectly intolerable to Him. And when we open the pages of the New Testament, we find the leaders and heads of the Jewish people continually at issue with our Lord Jesus Christ, in reference to the Sabbath. Look, for example, at the opening verses of Luke 6. "And it came to pass on the second Sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands. And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath days? And Jesus answering them, said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungered, and they which were with him; how he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the showbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat, but for the priests alone? And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the

Sabbath."

And, again, we read, "It came to pass also on another Sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue, and taught; and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees *watched him*, whether he would heal on the Sabbath day, that they might find an accusation against him." — Only conceive an accusation for healing a poor, afflicted fellow mortal! — "But he knew their thoughts," — yes, He read their hearts, through to their very centre — "and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose, and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the Sabbath day to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he did so; and his hand was restored whole as the other. And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus."

What an insight we have here into the hollowness and worthlessness of man's Sabbath keeping! Those religious guides would rather let the disciples starve than have their Sabbath interfered with. They would allow the man to carry his withered hand to the grave, rather than have him healed on their Sabbath. Alas! alas! it was indeed their Sabbath, and not God's. His rest could never comport with hunger and withered hands. They had never read aright the record of David's act, in eating the showbread. They did not understand that legal institutions must give way in the presence of divine grace meeting human need. Grace rises, in its magnificence, above all legal barriers, and faith rejoices in its lustre; but mere religiousness is offended by the activities of grace and the boldness of faith. The Pharisees did not see that the man with the withered hand was a striking commentary upon the nation's moral condition, a living proof of the fact that they were far away from God. If they were as they ought to be, there would have been no withered hands to heal; but they were not; and hence their Sabbath was an empty formality, a powerless, worthless ordinance, a hideous anomaly, hateful to God, and utterly inconsistent with the condition of man.

Take another instance, in Luke 13. "And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath" — Assuredly, the Sabbath was no day of rest to Him — "And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her, and *immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.*" Beautiful illustration of the work of grace in the soul, and the practical result, in every case. All on whom Christ lays His blessed hands are "immediately made straight," and enabled to glorify God.

But man's Sabbath was touched. "The ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day." He was indignant at the gracious work of healing, though quite indifferent as to the humiliating case of infirmity — and he "said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work; in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." How little this poor hollow religionist knew that he was in the very presence of the Lord of the true Sabbath! How utterly insensible he was to the moral inconsistency of attempting to keep a Sabbath while man's condition called aloud for divine work! "The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite! doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"

What a withering rebuke! What an opening up of the hollowness and utter wretchedness of their whole system of Judaism! Only think of the glaring incongruity of a Sabbath and a daughter of Abraham bound by the cruel hand of Satan, for eighteen years! There is nothing in all this world so

blinding to the mind, so hardening to the heart, so deadening to the conscience, so demoralising to the whole being, as religion without Christ. Its deceiving and degrading power can only be thoroughly judged in the light of the divine presence. For ought that the ruler of the synagogue cared, that poor woman might have gone on to the end of her days, bowed together, and unable to lift up herself. He would have been well content to let her go on as a sad witness of the power of Satan, provided he could keep his Sabbath. His religious indignation was excited, not by the power of Satan as seen in the woman's condition, but by the power of Christ, as seen in her complete deliverance.

But the Lord gave him his answer. "And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed;" — as well they might — "and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him." What a striking contrast! The advocates of a powerless, heartless, worthless religion, unmasked and covered with shame and confusion, on the one hand; and, on the other, all the people rejoicing in the glorious actings of the Son of God who had come into their midst to deliver them from the crushing power of Satan, and fill their hearts with the joy of God's salvation, and their mouths with His praise!

We must now ask the reader to turn to the gospel of John for further illustration of our subject. We earnestly desire that this vexed question of the Sabbath should be thoroughly examined in the light of scripture. We are convinced that there is very much more involved in it than many professing Christians are aware.

At the opening of John 5 we are introduced to a scene strikingly indicative of Israel's condition. We do not here attempt to go fully into the passage; we merely refer to it in connection with the subject before us.

The pool of Bethesda, or "house of mercy" — while it was, undoubtedly, the expression of the mercy of God toward His people, — afforded abundant evidence of the miserable condition of man, in general, and of Israel, in particular. Its five porches were thronged with "a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water." What a sample of the whole human family, and of the nation of Israel! What a striking illustration of their moral and spiritual condition, as viewed from a divine standpoint. "Blind, halt, withered;" such is man's real state, if he only knew it.

But there was one man, in the midst of this impotent throng, so far gone, so feeble and helpless, that the pool of Bethesda could not meet his case. "A certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?" — What grace and power in this question! It went far beyond the utmost stretch of the impotent man's thoughts. He thought only of human help, or of his own ability to get into the pool. He knew not that the speaker was above and beyond the pool, with its occasional movement; beyond angelic ministry, beyond all human help and efforts the possessor of all power in heaven and on earth. "The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man when the water is troubled, to put, me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." What a true picture of all those who are seeking salvation by ordinances! Each one doing the best he could for himself. No care for others. No thought of helping them. "Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and *on the same day was the Sabbath.*"

Here we have man's Sabbath again. It certainly was not God's Sabbath. The miserable multitude gathered round the pool proved that God's full rest had not yet come — that His glorious antitype of the Sabbath had not yet dawned on this sin-stricken earth. When that bright day comes, there will be no blind, halt, and withered folk thronging the porches of the pool of Bethesda. God's Sabbath and human

misery are wholly incompatible.

But it was man's Sabbath. It was no longer the seal of Jehovah's covenant with the seed of Abraham — as it was once, and will be again — but the badge of man's self-righteousness, "The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the Sabbath day; it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed." It was, no doubt, lawful enough for him to lie on that bed, week after week, month after month, year after year, while they were going on with their empty, worthless, hollow attempt at Sabbath keeping. If they had had one ray of spiritual light, they would have seen the flagrant inconsistency of attempting to maintain their traditional notions respecting the Sabbath in the presence of human misery, disease and degradation. But they were utterly blind; and hence when the glorious fruits of Christ's ministry were being displayed, they had the temerity to pronounce them unlawful.

Nor this only; but "therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath day." What a, spectacle! Religious people, yea the leaders and teachers of religion — the guides of the professed people of God, seeking to slay the Lord of the Sabbath because He had made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day!

But mark our Lord's reply. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." This brief but comprehensive statement gives us the root of the whole matter. It opens up to us the real condition of mankind in general, and of Israel in particular; and, in the most affecting manner, presents the grand secret of our Lord's life and ministry. Blessed be His Name, He had not come into this world to rest. How could He rest — how could He keep a Sabbath, in the midst of human need and misery? Ought not that impotent, blind, halt, and withered multitude which thronged the porches of the pool of Bethesda to have taught "the Jews" the folly of their notions about the Sabbath? For what was that multitude but a sample of the condition of the nation of Israel, and of the whole human family? And how could divine love rest in the midst of such a condition of things? Utterly impossible. Love can only be a worker in a scene of sin and sorrow. From the moment of man's fall, the Father had been working. Then the Son appeared to carry on the work. And, now, the Holy Ghost is working. Work, and not rest, is the divine order, in a world like this. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."

The blessed Lord Jesus went about doing good, on the Sabbath day, as well as every other day; and, finally, having accomplished the glorious work of redemption, He spent the Sabbath in the grave, and rose on the first day of the week, as the First-begotten from the dead, and Head of the new creation, in which all things are of God, and to which, we may surely add, the question of "days and months, and times and years" can have no possible application. No one who thoroughly understands the meaning of death and resurrection could sanction, for a moment, the observance of days. The death of Christ put an end to all that order of things; and His resurrection introduces us into another sphere entirely where it is our high privilege to walk in the light and power of those eternal realities which are ours in Christ, and which stand in vivid contrast with the superstitious observances of a carnal and worldly religiousness.

But here we approach a very interesting point in our subject, namely, the difference between the Sabbath and the Lord's day, or first day of the week. These two are often confounded. We frequently hear, from the lips of truly pious people, the phrase, "Christian Sabbath," an expression nowhere to be found in the New Testament. It may be that some who make use of it mean a right thing; but we should not only mean right, but also seek to express ourselves according to the teaching of holy scripture.

We are persuaded that the enemy of God and of His Christ has had a great deal more to do with the conventionalisms of Christendom than many of us are aware; and this it is which makes the matter so very serious. The reader may perhaps feel disposed to pronounce it mere! hair-splitting to find any fault with the term "Christian Sabbath." But he may rest assured it is nothing of the sort; on the

contrary, if he will only calmly examine the matter in the light of the New Testament, he will find that it involves questions not only interesting but also weighty and important. It is a common saying, "There is nothing in a name;" but, in the matter now before us, there is much in a name.

We have already remarked that our Lord spent the Sabbath in the grave. Is not this a telling and deeply significant fact? We cannot doubt it. We read in it, at least, the setting aside of the old condition of things, and the utter impossibility of keeping a Sabbath in a world of sin and death. Love could not rest in a world like this; it could only labour and die. This is the inscription which we read on the tomb where the Lord of the Sabbath lay buried.

But what of the first day of the week? Is not it the Sabbath on a new footing — the Christian Sabbath? It is never so called in the New Testament. There is not so much as a hint of anything of the kind. If we look through the Acts of the Apostles, we shall find the two days spoken of in the most distinct way. On the Sabbath, we find the Jews assembled in their synagogues for the reading of the law and the prophets. On the first day of the week, we find the Christians assembled to break bread. The two days were as distinct as Judaism and Christianity; nor is there so much as a shadow of scripture foundation for the idea that the Sabbath was merged in the first day of the week. Where is there the slightest authority for the assertion that the Sabbath is changed from the seventh day to the eighth, or first day of the week? Surely, if there be any, nothing is easier than to produce it. But there is absolutely none.

And, be it remembered, that the Sabbath is not merely a seventh day, but *the* seventh day. It is well to note this, inasmuch as some entertain the idea that provided a seventh portion of time be given to rest, and the public ordinances of religion, it is quite sufficient, and it does not matter what you call it; and thus different nations and different religious systems have their Sabbath day. But this can never satisfy any one who desires to be taught exclusively by scripture. The Sabbath of Eden was the seventh day. The Sabbath for Israel was the seventh day. But the eighth day leads our thoughts onward into eternity: and, in the New Testament, it is called "the first day of the week" as indicating the beginning of that new order of things of which the cross is the imperishable foundation, and a risen Christ the glorious Head and Centre. To call this day the "Christian Sabbath" is simply to confound things earthly and heavenly. It is to bring the Christian down from his elevated position as associated with a risen and glorified Head in the heavens, and occupy him with the superstitious observance of days, the very thing which made the blessed apostle stand in doubt of the assemblies in Galatia.

In short, the more deeply we ponder the phrase "Christian Sabbath," the more we are convinced that its tendency is, like many other formularies of Christendom, to rob the Christian of all those grand distinctive truths of the New Testament which mark off the church of God from all that went before, and all that is to follow after. The church, though on the earth, is not of this world, even as Christ is not of this world. It is heavenly in its origin, heavenly in its character, heavenly in its principles, walk and hope. It stands between the cross and the glory. The boundaries of its existence on earth are the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down to form it, and the coming of Christ to receive it to Himself.

Nothing can be more strongly marked than this; and, hence, for any one to attempt to enjoin upon the church of God the legal or superstitious observance of "days and months, and times and years," is to falsify the entire Christian position; mar the integrity of divine revelation, and rob the Christian of the place and portion which belong to him, through the infinite grace of God, and the accomplished atonement of Christ.

Does the reader deem this statement unwarrantably strong? If so, let him ponder the following

splendid passage from Paul's Epistle to the Colossians — a passage which ought to be written in letters of gold. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil [or make a prey of] you through *philosophy and vain deceit*" — mark the combination! not very flattering to philosophy — "after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ, For in him dwelleth *all the fulness of the Godhead* [*Theotes*, deity] bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." — What more can we possibly want? In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision *made without hands*, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him *having forgiven you all trespasses*; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

Magnificent victory! A victory gained single handed — gained for us! Universal and eternal homage to His peerless Name! What remains? "Let no man *therefore* judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" What can one who is complete and accepted in a risen and glorified Christ have to do with meats, drinks or holy days? What can philosophy, tradition or human religiousness do for him? What can passing shadows add to one who has grasped, by faith, the eternal substance? Surely nothing; and hence the blessed apostle proceeds, "Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and *not holding the Head*, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Wherefore, *if we be dead with Christ*, from the rudiments of the world, why, *as though living in the world*, are ye subject to ordinances" — such as "touch not;" this "taste not," — that — "handle not" — the other — which all are to perish with the using, after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour, to the satisfying of the flesh." — That is, not giving the measure of honour to the body which is due to it as God's vessel, but puffing up the flesh with religious pride, fed by a hollow and worthless sanctimoniousness. (Col. 2: 6-23.)

We do not dare to offer any apology for this lengthened quotation. An apology for quoting scripture! Far be the thought! It is not possible for any one to understand this marvellous passage and not have a complete settlement, not only of the Sabbath question, but also of that entire system of things with which this question stands connected. The Christian, who understands his position, is done, for ever, with all questions of meats and drinks, days and months and times and years. He knows nothing of holy seasons and holy places. He is dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, and, as such, is delivered from all the ordinances of a traditional religion. He belongs to heaven, where new moons, holy days and Sabbaths have no place. He is in the new creation, where all things are of God; and hence he can see no moral force in such words as "touch not; taste not; handle not." They have no possible application to him. He lives in a region where the clouds, vapours and mists of monasticism and asceticism are never seen. He has given up all the worthless forms of mere fleshly pietism, and got, in exchange, the solid realities of Christian life. His ear has been opened to hear, and his heart to understand the powerful exhortation of the inspired apostle, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. *For ye are dead*, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ,

our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth."

Here we have unfolded before our eyes some of the glories of true, practical, vital Christianity, in striking contrast with all the barren and dreary forms of carnal and worldly religiousness. Christian life does not consist in the observance of certain rules, commandments or traditions of men. It is a divine reality. It is Christ in the heart, and Christ reproduced in the daily life, by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is the new man, formed on the model of Christ Himself, and displaying itself in all the most minute details of our daily history, in the family, in the business, in all our intercourse with our fellow men, in our temper, spirit, style, deportment, all. It is not a matter of mere profession, or of dogma, or of opinion, or of sentiment; it is an unmistakable, living reality. It is the kingdom of God, set up in the heart, asserting its blessed sway over the whole moral being, and shedding its genial influence upon the entire sphere in which we are called to move, from day to day. It is the Christian walking in the blessed footsteps of Him who went about doing good; meeting, so far as in him lies, every form of human need; living not for himself but for others; finding his delight in serving and giving; ready to soothe and sympathise wherever he finds a crushed spirit or a bereaved and desolate heart.

This is Christianity. And oh! how it differs from all the forms in which legality and superstition clothe themselves! How different from the unintelligent and unmeaning observance of days, and months, and times and years, abstaining from meats, forbidding to marry, and such-like! How different from the vapourings of the mystic, the gloom of the ascetic, and the austerities of the monk! How totally different from all these! Yes, reader; and we may add, how different from the unsightly union of high profession and low practice; lofty truths held in the intellect, professed, taught and discussed, and worldliness, self-indulgence, and unsubduedness! The Christianity of the New Testament differs alike from all these things. It is the divine, the heavenly, and the spiritual, displayed amid the human, the earthly and the natural. May it be the holy purpose of the writer and the reader of these lines to be satisfied with nothing short of that morally glorious Christianity revealed in the pages of the New Testament!

It is needless, we trust, to add more on the question of the Sabbath. If the reader has, at all, seized the import of those scriptures which have passed before us, he will have little difficulty in seeing the place which the Sabbath holds, in the dispensational ways of God. He will see that it has direct reference to Israel and the earth — that it was a sign of the covenant between Jehovah and His earthly people, and a powerful test of their moral condition.

Furthermore, he will see that Israel never really kept the Sabbath, never understood its import, never appreciated its value. This was made manifest in the life, ministry and death of our Lord Jesus Christ who performed many of His works of healing on the Sabbath day, and, at the end, spent that day in the tomb.

Finally, he will clearly understand the difference between the Jewish Sabbath and the first day of the week, or the Lord's day; that the latter is never once called the Sabbath, in the New Testament; but, on the contrary, is constantly presented in its own proper distinctness; it is not the Sabbath changed or transferred, but a new day altogether, having its own special basis and its own peculiar range of thought, leaving the Sabbath wholly untouched, as a suspended institution, to be resumed, by-and-by, when the seed of Abraham shall be restored to their own land. (See Ezek 46: 1, 12.)

But we cannot, happily, turn from this interesting subject without a few words on the place assigned, in the New Testament, to the Lord's day, or first day of the week. Though it is not the Sabbath; and though it has nothing to do with holy days, or new moons, or "days and months, and

times and years;" yet it has its own unique place in Christianity, as is evident from manifold passages in the scriptures of the New Testament.

Our Lord rose from the dead, on that day. He met His disciples, again and again, on that day. The apostle and the brethren at Troas came together to break bread on that day. (Acts 20: 7.) The apostle instructs the Corinthians, and all that, in every place, call on the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to lay by their offerings on that day; thus teaching us, distinctly, that the first day of the week was the special day for the Lord's people to assemble for the Lord's Supper, and the worship, communion and ministry connected with that most precious institution. The blessed Apostle John expressly tells us that he was in the Spirit, on that day, and received that marvellous revelation which closes the Divine Volume.\*

{\*Some are of opinion that the expression, "On the Lord's day" ought to be rendered, "Of the day of the Lord," meaning that the apostle was in the spirit of that day when our Lord Christ shall take to Himself His great power and reign. But to this view there are two grave objections. In the first place, the words *te kuriake hemera*, rendered, in Revelation 1: 10, "the Lord's day," are quite distinct from *te hemera kuriou*, in 1 Thessalonians 5: 2; 2 Thessalonians 2: 2; 2 Peter 3: 10, properly rendered, "The day of the Lord." This we consider a very weighty objection, and one quite sufficient to settle the question. But, in addition to this, we have the argument based on the fact that by far the greater portion of the book of Revelation is occupied, not with "the day of the Lord" but with events prior thereto. Hence, therefore, we feel persuaded that "the Lord's day" and "the first day of the week" are identical; and this we deem a very important fact as proving that that day has a very special place in the word of God — a place which every intelligent Christian will thankfully own.}

Thus then, we have a body of scripture evidence before us amply sufficient to prove to every pious mind that the Lord's day must not be reduced to the level of ordinary days. It is, to the true Christian, neither the Jewish Sabbath, on the one hand, nor the Gentile Sunday, on the other; but the Lord's day, on which His people gladly and thankfully assemble round His Table, to keep that precious feast by which they show forth His death, until He come.

Now, it is needless to say that there is not a shade of legal bondage or of superstition connected with the first day of the week. To say so, or to think so, would be to deny the entire circle of truths with which that day stands connected. We have no direct commandment respecting the observance of the day; but the passages already referred to are amply sufficient, for every spiritual mind; and, further, we may say that the instincts of the divine nature would lead every true Christian to honour and love the Lord's day, and to set it apart, in the most reverent manner, for the worship and service of God. The very thought of any one, professing to love Christ, engaging in business, or unnecessary travelling, on the Lord's day, would, in our judgement, be revolting to every pious feeling. We believe it to be a hallowed privilege to retire, as much as possible, from all the distractions of natural things, and to devote the hours of the Lord's day to Himself and to His service.

It will, perhaps be said that the Christian ought to devote every day to the Lord. Most surely; we are the Lord's, in the very fullest and highest sense. All we have and all we are belongs to Him. This we fully, gladly, own. We are called to do everything in His Name, and to His glory. It is our high privilege to buy and sell, eat and drink, yea, to carry on all our business, under His eye and in the fear and love of His holy Name. We should not put our hand to anything, on any day in the week, on which we could not, with the fullest confidence, ask the Lord's blessing.

All this is most fully admitted. Every true Christian joyfully owns it. But, at the same time, we deem it Impossible to read the New Testament and not see that the Lord's day gets a unique place; that it is marked off for us, in the most distinct way; that it has a significance and an importance which

cannot, with justice, be claimed for any other day in the week. Indeed so fully are we convinced of the truth of all this, that, even though it were not the law of England, that the Lord's day should be observed, we should deem it to be both our sacred duty and holy privilege to abstain from all business engagements, save such as were absolutely unavoidable.

Thanks be to God, it is the law of England that the Lord's day should be observed. This is a signal mercy to all who love the day for the Lord's sake. We cannot but own His great goodness in having wrested the day from the covetous grasp of the world, and bestowed it upon His people and His servants to be devoted to His worship and to His work.

What a boon is the Lord's day, with its profound retirement from worldly things! What should we do without it? What a blessed break in upon the week's toil! How refreshing its exercises to the spiritual mind! How precious the assembly round the Lord's Table to remember Him, to show forth His death, and celebrate His praise! How delightful the varied services of the Lord's day, whether those of the evangelist, the pastor, the teacher, the Sunday-school worker, or the tract distributor! What human language can adequately set forth the value and interest of all these things? True it is that the Lord's day is anything but a day of bodily rest to His servants; indeed they are often more fatigued on that day than on any other day of the week. But oh! it is a blessed fatigue; a delightful fatigue; a fatigue which will meet its bright reward in the rest that remains for the people of God.

Once more, then, beloved Christian reader, let us lift up our hearts in a note of praise to our God for the blessed boon of the Lord's day. May He continue it to His church until He come! May He countervail, by His Almighty power, every effort of the infidel and the atheist to remove the barriers which English law has erected around the Lord's day. Truly it will be a sad day for England when those barriers are removed.

It may, perhaps, be said, by some that the Jewish Sabbath is done away, and is, therefore, no longer binding. A large number of professing Christians have taken this ground, and pleaded for the Opening of the parks and places of public recreation on the Sunday. Alas! it is easily seen where such people are drifting to, and what they are seeking. They would set aside the law, in order to procure a licence for fleshly indulgence. They do not understand that the only way in which any one can be free from the law is by being dead to it; and, if dead to the law, we are also of blessed necessity, dead to sin, and dead to the world.

This makes it a different matter altogether. The Christian is, thank God, free from the law; but, if he is, it is not that he may amuse and indulge himself, on the Lord's day, or any other day; but that he may live to God. "I, through law, am dead to law; that I might live unto God." This is Christian ground; and it can only be occupied by those who are truly born of God. The world cannot understand it; neither can they understand the holy privileges and spiritual exercises of the Lord's day.

All this is true; but, at the same time, we are thoroughly convinced that were England to remove the barriers which surround the Lord's day, it would afford a melancholy proof of her abandonment of that profession of religion which has, so long characterised her, as a nation, and of her drifting away in the direction of infidelity and atheism. We must not lose sight of the weighty fact that England has taken the ground of being a Christian nation — a nation professing to be governed by the word of God. She is therefore much more responsible than those nations wrapped in the dark shades of heathenism. We believe that nations, like individuals, will be held responsible for the profession they make; and, hence, those nations which profess and call themselves Christian shall be judged not merely by the light of creation, nor by the law of Moses, but by the full-orbed light of that Christianity which they profess — by all the truth contained within the covers of that blessed book which they possess, and in

which they make their boast. The heathen shall be judged on the ground of creation; the Jew, on the ground of the law; the nominal Christian, on the ground of the truth of Christianity.

Now this grave fact renders the position of England and all other professing Christian nations most serious. God will, most assuredly, deal with them on the ground of their profession. It is of no use to say they do not understand what they profess; for why profess what they do not understand and believe? The fact is they profess to understand and believe; and by this fact they shall be judged. They make their boast in this familiar sentence that "The Bible, and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants."

If this be so, how solemn is the thought of England judged by the standard of an open Bible! "What will be her judgement? — what her end? Let all whom it may concern ponder the appalling answer.

We must, now, turn from the deeply interesting subject of the Sabbath and the Lord's day, and draw this section to a close by quoting for the reader the remarkable paragraph with which our chapter ends. It does not call for any lengthened comment, but we deem it profitable, in these "Notes on Deuteronomy," to furnish the reader with very full quotations from the book itself, in order that he may have before him the very words of the Holy Ghost, without even the trouble of laying aside the volume which he holds in his hand.

Having laid before the people the ten commandments, the law-giver proceeds to remind them of the solemn circumstances which accompanied the giving of the law, together with their own feelings and utterances, on the occasion.

"These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice; and he added no more; and he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me. And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness — for the mountain did burn with fire — that ye came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders; and ye said, Behold, the Lord our God hath showed us his glory, and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire; we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth. Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, then we shall die. For who is there of all flesh that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have and lived? Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee; and *we will hear it, and do it*. And the Lord heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and the Lord said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee; they have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep *all* my commandments *always*, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever! Go say to them, Get you into your tents again; but as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgements, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it. Ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you; ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess."

Here the grand principle of the book of Deuteronomy shines out with uncommon lustre. It is embodied in those touching and forcible words which form the very heart's core of the splendid passage just quoted. "Oh that there were *such an heart in them, that they would fear me*, and keep all

my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!"

Precious words! They set before us, most blessedly, the secret spring of that life which we, as Christians are called to live, from day to day — the life of simple, implicit and unqualified obedience, namely, a heart fearing the Lord — fearing Him, not in a servile spirit, but with all that deep, true, adoring love which the Holy Ghost sheds abroad in our hearts. It is this that delights the heart of our loving Father. His word to us is, "My son, give me thine heart." Where the heart is given, all follows, in lovely moral order. A loving heart finds its very deepest joy in obeying all God's commandments; and nothing is of any value to God but what springs from a loving heart. The heart is the source of all the issues of life; and, hence, when it is governed by the love of God there is a loving response to all His commandments. We love His commandments because we love Him. Every word of His is precious to the heart that loves Him. Every precept, every statute, every judgement, in a word, His whole law is loved, revered, and obeyed, because it has His Name, and His authority attached to it.

The reader will find, in Psalm 119, an uncommonly fine illustration of the special point now before us — a most striking example of one who blessedly answered to the words quoted above; — "Oh that there were *such an heart* in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments *always*." It is the lovely breathing of a soul who found its deep, unfailling, constant delight in the law of God. There are no less than one hundred and seventy allusions to that precious law, under some one title or another. We find scattered along the surface of this marvellous psalm, in rich profusion, such gems as the following.

"Thy word have I *hid* in mine *heart*, that I might not sin against thee." "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches." "I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways." "*I will delight myself* in thy statutes; I will not forget thy word." "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgements at all times." "*Thy testimonies* also are *my delight*, and my counsellors." "*I have stuck* unto Thy testimonies." "Behold, *I have longed* after thy precepts." "*I trust* in thy word." "*I have hoped* in thy judgements." "*I seek*; thy precepts." "*I will delight myself* in thy commandments which *I have loved*." "*I remembered* thy judgements." *Thy statutes* have been *my songs* in the house of my pilgrimage." "I turned *my feet* unto *thy testimonies*." "*I have believed* thy commandments." "*The law of thy mouth* is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." "*I have hoped* in thy word." "*Thy law is my delight*." "*Mine! eyes* fail for thy word." "*All thy commandments* are faithful." "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." "*I will never forget* thy precepts." "*I have sought* thy precepts." "*I will consider* thy testimonies." "Thy commandment is exceeding broad." "O how love I *thy law*; it is *my meditation* all the day." "How sweet are *thy words* unto *my taste*? yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." "*Thy testimonies* have I taken as *an heritage for ever*; for they are *The rejoicing of my heart*." "I Will have respect unto thy statutes *continually*" "I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold." "I esteem *all thy precepts* concerning *all things* to be *right*." "Thy testimonies are wonderful." "I opened my mouth, and panted, for I *longed* for Thy commandments." "Upright are thy judgements." "Thy testimonies..... are righteous, and very faithful." "Thy word is very pure." "Thy law is the truth." "The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting." "All thy commandments are truth." "Thy word is *true from the beginning*; and every one of thy righteous judgements *endureth for ever*: "My heart standeth *in awe of Thy word*." "*I rejoice* at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil." "Great peace have they that love thy law." "*My soul* hath kept *thy testimonies*; and I love them exceedingly." "I have chosen thy precepts." "Thy law is my delight."

Truly it does the heart good, and refreshes the spirit, to transcribe such utterances as the foregoing, many of which are the suited utterances of our Lord Himself, in the days of His flesh. He ever lived upon the word. It was the food of His soul; the authority of His path, the material of His

ministry. By it He vanquished Satan; by it He silenced Sadducees, Pharisees and Herodians. By it He taught His disciples. To it He commended His servants, as He was about to ascend into the heavens.

How important is all this for us! How intensely interesting! How deeply practical! What a place it gives the holy scriptures! For we remember that it is, in very deed, the blessed Volume of inspiration which is brought before us in all those golden sentences culled from Psalm 119. How strengthening, refreshing and encouraging for us to mark the way in which our Lord uses the holy scriptures, at all times, the place He gives them, and the dignity He puts upon them! He appeals to them, on all occasions, as a divine authority, from which there can be no appeal. He, though Himself as God over all, the Author of the Volume, having taken His place as man, on the earth, sets forth, with all possible plainness, what is man's bounden duty and high privilege, namely, to live by the word of God — to bow down, in reverent subjection, to its divine authority.

And have we not here a very complete answer to the oft-raised question of infidelity, "How do we know that the Bible is the word of God?" If indeed we believe in Christ; if we own Him to be the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh, very God and very man, we cannot fail to see the moral force of the fact that this divine Person constantly appeals to the scriptures — to Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms, as to a divine standard. Did He not know them to be the word of God? Undoubtedly. As God, He had given them; as Man, He received them, lived by them, and owned their paramount authority, in all things.

What a weighty fact is here for the professing church! What a withering rebuke to all those so called Christian doctors and writers who have presumed to tamper with the grand fundamental truth of the plenary inspiration of the holy scriptures in general, and of the five books of Moses in particular! How terrible to think of the professed teachers of the church of God daring to designate as spurious, writings which our Lord and Master received and owned as divine!

And yet we are told, and we are expected to believe that things are improving! Alas! alas! it is a miserable delusion. The degrading absurdities of ritualism, and the blasphemous reasonings of infidelity are rapidly increasing around us; and where these influences are not actually dominant, we observe, for the most part, a cold indifference, carnal ease, self indulgence, and worldliness — anything and everything, in short, but the evidence of improvement. If people are not led away by infidelity, on the one hand, or by ritualism, on the other, it is, for the most part, owing to the fact that they are too much occupied with pleasure and gain to think of anything else. And as to the religion of the day, if you subtract money and music, you will have a lamentably trifling balance.

Hence, therefore, it is impossible to shake off the conviction that the combined testimony of observation and experience is directly opposed to the notion that things are improving. Indeed, for any one, in the face of such an array of evidence to the contrary, to cling to such a theory can only be regarded as the fruit of a most unaccountable credulity.

But, perhaps, some may feel disposed to say that we must not judge by the sight of our eyes; we must be hopeful. True, provided only we have a divine warrant for our hopefulness. If a single line of scripture can be produced to prove that the present system of things is to be marked by gradual improvement, religiously, politically, morally, or socially, then, by all means, be hopeful. Yes; hope against hope. A single clause of inspiration is quite sufficient to form the basis of a hope which will lift the heart above the very darkest and most depressing surroundings.

But where is such a clause to be found? Simply, nowhere. The testimony of the Bible, from cover to cover; the distinct teaching of holy scripture, from beginning to end; the voices of prophets and apostles, in unbroken harmony — all, without a single divergent note, go to prove, with a force and

clearness perfectly unanswerable, that the present condition of things, so far from gradually improving, will grow rapidly worse; that ere the bright beams of millennial glory can gladden this groaning earth, the sword of judgement must do its appalling work. To quote the passages, in proof of our assertion, would literally fill a volume; it would simply be to transcribe a large portion of the prophetic scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

This, of course, we do not attempt. There is no need. The reader has his Bible before him. Let him search it diligently. Let him lay aside all his preconceived ideas, all the conventionalisms of Christendom, all the ordinary phraseology of the religious world, all the dogmas of the schools of divinity, and come, with the simplicity of a little child, to the pure fountain of holy scripture, and drink in its heavenly teaching. If he will only do this, he will rise from the study with the clear and settled conviction that the world will, most assuredly, not be converted by the means now in operation — that it is not the gospel of peace but the besom of destruction that shall prepare the earth for glory.

Is it, then, that we deny the good that is being done? Are we insensible to it? Far be the thought! We heartily bless God for every atom of it. We rejoice in every effort put forth to spread the precious gospel of the grace of God; we render thanks for every soul gathered within the blessed circle of God's salvation. We delight to think of eighty-five millions of Bibles scattered over the earth. What human mind can calculate the results of all these, yea, the results of a single copy? We earnestly wish God speed to every true-hearted missionary who goes forth with the glad tidings of salvation, whether into the lanes and court-yards of London, or to the most distant parts of the earth.

But, admitting all this, as we most heartily do, we nevertheless do not believe in the conversion of the world by the means now in operation. Scripture tells us that it is when the divine judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world shall learn righteousness. This one clause of inspiration ought to be sufficient to prove that it is not by the gospel that the world is to be converted, and there are hundreds of clauses which speak the same language and teach the same truth. It is not by grace, but by judgement, that the inhabitants of the world shall learn righteousness.

What then is the object of the gospel? If it be not to convert the world, for what purpose is it preached? The Apostle James, in his address at the memorable council at Jerusalem, gives an answer, direct and conclusive, to the question. He says, "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles." For what? To convert them all? The very reverse: "*To take out of them* a people for his name." Nothing can be more distinct than this. It sets before us that which ought to be the grand object of all missionary effort — that which every divinely sent and divinely taught missionary will keep before his mind, in all his blessed labours. It is "to take out a people for his name."

How important to remember this! How needful to have ever before us a true object, in all our work! Of what possible use can it be to work for a false object? Is it not much better to work with a direct view to what God is doing? Will it cripple the missionary's energies or clip his wings to keep before his eyes the divine purpose in his work? Surely not. Take the case of two missionaries going forth to some distant mission-field; the one has for his object the conversion of the world; the other, the gathering out of a people. Will the latter, by reason of his object, be less devoted, less energetic, less enthusiastic than the former? We cannot believe it; on the contrary, the very fact of his being in the current of the divine mind will impart stability and consistency to his work; and, at the same time, encourage his heart in the face of the difficulties and hindrances which surround him.

But, however this may be, it is perfectly plain that the apostles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ had no such object, in going forth to their work, as the conversion of the world. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but

he that believeth not shall be damned."

This was to the twelve. The world was to be their sphere. The aspect of their message was unto every creature; the application, to him that believeth. It was, pre-eminently, an individual thing. The conversion of the whole world was not to be their object; that will be effected by a different agency altogether, when God's present action by the gospel shall have resulted in the gathering out of a people for the heavens.\* The Holy Ghost came down, on the day of Pentecost, not to convert the world, but to "convict" (*elegxei*) it, or demonstrate its guilt, in having rejected the Son of God.\*\* The effect of His presence was to prove the world guilty; and as to the grand object of His mission, it was to form a body composed of believers from amongst both Jews and Gentiles. With this He has been occupied for the last eighteen hundred years. This is "the mystery" of which the Apostle Paul was made a minister, and which he unfolds, so fully and blessedly, in his epistle to the Ephesians. It is impossible for any one to understand the truth set forth in this marvellous document, and not see that the conversion of the world and the formation of the body of Christ are two totally different things which could not possibly go on together.

{\*We would commend to the reader's attention Psalm 47. It is one of a large class of passages which prove that the blessing of the nations is consequent upon Israel's restoration. "God be merciful unto us [Israel] and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us, that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.... God shall bless us; and *all the ends of the earth* shall fear him." There could not be a more lovely or forcible proof of the fact that it is Israel, and not the church, that will be used for the blessing of the nations.}

{\*\*The application of John 16: 8-11 to the Spirit's work in the individual is, in our judgement, a serious mistake. It refers to the effect of His presence on earth, in reference to the world as a whole. His work in the soul is a precious truth, we need hardly say; but it is not the truth taught in this passage.}

Let the reader ponder the following beautiful passage: "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you-ward; how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men" — not made known in the scriptures of the Old Testament; nor revealed to the Old Testament saints or prophets — "as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets" — that is, to the New Testament prophets — "by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his Promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see, what is the dispensation [*oikonomia*] of the mystery, which *from the beginning of the world* hath been *hid in God*, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." (Eph. 3: 1-10)

Take another passage from the epistle to the Colossians. "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the church; whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to complete the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known

what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus; whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily." (Col. 1: 23-29.)

From these, and numerous other passages, the reader may see the special object of Paul's ministry. Assuredly, he had no such thought in his mind as the conversion of the world. True, he preached the gospel, in all its depth, fullness and power — preached it "from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum" — "preached among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;" but with no thought of converting the world. He knew better. He knew and taught that the world was ripening for judgement — yes, ripening rapidly; that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse;" that, "In the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God had created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."

And, further still, this faithful and divinely inspired witness taught that "in *the last days*" — far in advance of "the latter times" — "perilous [or difficult] times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, *lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." (Compare 1 Tim. 4: 1-3 with 2 Tim. 3: 1-5)

What a picture! It brings us back to the close of the first of Romans, where the same inspired pen portrays for us the dark forms of heathenism; but with this terrible difference that in 2 Timothy it is not heathenism but nominal Christianity — "a form of godliness." And is this to be the end of the present condition of things? Is this the converted world of which we hear so much? Alas! alas! there are false prophets abroad. There are those who cry Peace, peace, when there is no peace. There are those who attempt to daub the crumbling walls of Christendom with untempered mortar.

But it will not do. Judgement is at the door. The professing church has utterly, shamefully failed; she has grievously departed from the word of God, and revolted from the authority of her Lord. There is not a single ray of hope for Christendom. It is the darkest moral blot in the wide universe of God, or on the page of history. The same blessed apostle from whose writings we have already so largely quoted, tells us that the mystery of iniquity doth already work;" hence it has been working now for over eighteen centuries. "Only he that now hindereth will hinder until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the troth, that they might he saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thess. 2: 7-12.)

How awful is the doom of Christendom! Strong delusion! Dark damnation! And all this in the face of the dreams of those false prophets who talk to the people about "the bright side of things." Thank God, there is a bright side for all those who belong to Christ. To them the apostle can speak in bright and cheering accents. "We are bound to give thanks alway to God for yon, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our

Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 2: 13, 14.)

Here we have, most surely, the bright side of things — the bright and blessed hope of the church of (God — the hope of seeing "the bright and morning Star." All rightly instructed Christians are on the look out, not for an improved or a converted world, but for their coming Lord and Saviour who has gone to prepare a place for them in the Father's house; and is coming again to receive them to Himself, that where He is, there they may be also. This is His own sweet promise, which may be fulfilled at any moment. He only waits, as Peter tells us, in long suffering mercy, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But when the last member shall be incorporated, by the Holy Ghost, into the blessed body of Christ, then shall the voice of the archangel and the trump of God summon *all* the redeemed, from the beginning, to meet their descending Lord, in the air, to be for ever with Him.

This is the true and proper hope of the church of God — a hope which He would have ever shining down; into the hearts of all His beloved people, in its purifying and elevating power. Of this blessed hope the enemy has succeeded in robbing a large number of the Lord's people. Indeed, for centuries it was well nigh blotted out from the church's horizon; and it has only been partially recovered within the last fifty years. And alas! how partially! Where do we hear of it, throughout the length and breadth of the professing church? Do the pulpits of Christendom ring with the joyful sound, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh"? Far from it. Even the few beloved servants of Christ who are looking for His coming, hardly dare to preach it, because they fear it would be utterly rejected. And so it would. We are thoroughly persuaded that, in the vast majority of cases, men who should venture to preach the glorious truth that the Lord is coming for His church, would speedily have to vacate their pulpits.

What a solemn and striking proof of Satan's blinding power! He has robbed the church of divinely given hope; and, instead thereof, he has given her a delusion — a lie. Instead of looking out for "The bright and morning Star," he has set her looking for a converted world — a millennium without Christ. He has succeeded in casting such a haze over the future, that the church has completely lost bearings. She does not know where she is. She is like a vessel tossed on the stormy ocean, having neither compass nor rudder, seeing neither sun nor stars. All is darkness and confusion.

And how is this? Simply because the church has lost sight of the pure and precious word of her Lord and has accepted, instead, those bewildering creeds confessions of men which so mar and mutilate the truth of God, that Christians seem utterly at sea as to their proper standing and their proper hope.

And yet they have the Bible in their hands. True but so had the Jews, and yet they rejected the blessed One who is the great theme of the Bible from beginning to end. This was the moral inconsistency with which our Lord charged them, in John "Ye search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me; ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."\*

{\*the word *ereunate* may be either imperative or indicative but the context, we judge, demands the latter. They had scriptures; they were read in their synagogues every day; they professed to believe that in them they had life; they testified of Him; and yet they would not come Him. Here was the flagrant inconsistency. Now if *ereunate* be taken as a command, the whole force of the passage is lost. Need we remind the reader that there are plenty of arguments and inducements leading us to search the scriptures, without appealing to what we believe to be an inaccurate rendering of John 5: 39}

And why was this? Simply because their minds were blinded by religious prejudice. They were under the influence of the doctrines and commandments of men. Hence, although they had the

scriptures, and boasted of having them, they were as ignorant of them, and as little governed by them as the poor dark heathen around them. It is one thing to have the Bible in our hands, in our homes, and in our assemblies, and quite another thing to have the truths of the Bible acting on our hearts and consciences, and shining in our lives.

Take, for instance, the great subject now before us, and which has led us into this very lengthened digression. Can anything be more plainly taught in the New Testament than this, namely, that the end of the present condition of things will be terrible apostasy from the truth, and open rebellion against God and the Lamb? The Gospels, the Epistles and the Revelation all agree in setting forth this most solemn truth, with such distinctness and simplicity that a babe in Christ may see it.

And yet how few comparatively believe it! The vast majority believe the very reverse. They believe that by means of the various agencies now in operation all nations shall be converted. In vain we call attention to our Lord's parables in Matthew 13; the tares, the leaven, and the mustard seed. How do these agree with the idea of a converted world? If the whole world is to be converted by a preached gospel, how is it that tares are found in the field at the end of the age? How is it that there are as many foolish virgins as wise ones, when the Bridegroom comes? If the whole world is to be converted by the gospel, then on whom will "the day of the Lord so come as a thief in the night"? Or what mean those awful words, "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape"? In view of a converted world, what would be the just application, what the moral force of those most solemn words, in the first of Revelation, "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and *all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him*"? Where are all those wailing kindreds to be found, if the whole world is to be converted?

Reader, is it not as clear as a sunbeam that the two things cannot stand, for a moment together. Is it not perfectly plain that the theory of a world converted by the gospel is diametrically opposed to the teaching of the entire New Testament? How is it then that the vast majority of professing Christians persist in holding it? There can be but the one reply, and that is, they do not bow to the authority of scripture. It is most sorrowful and solemn to have to say it; but it is, alas! too true. The Bible is read in Christendom; but the truths of the Bible are not believed — nay, they are persistently rejected. And all this in view of the oft-repeated boast that "the Bible, and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants."

But we shall not pursue this subject further here, much as we feel its weight and importance. We trust the reader may be led by the Spirit of God to feel its deep solemnity. We believe the Lord's people everywhere need to be thoroughly roused to a sense of how entirely the professing church has departed from the authority of scripture. Here, we may rest assured, lies the real cause of all the confusion, all the error, all the evil in our midst. We have departed from the word of the Lord, and from Himself. Until this is seen, felt and owned, we cannot be right. The Lord looks for true repentance, real brokenness of spirit, in His presence. "*To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*"

This always holds good. There is no limit to the blessing, when the soul is in this truly blessed attitude. But it must be a reality. being "poor and contrite; We must be in the condition. It is an individual matter. "*To this man will I look*"

Oh! may the Lord, in His infinite mercy, lead us, every one, into true self judgement, under the action of His word! May our ears be opened to hear His voice! May there be a real turning of our hearts to Himself and to His word! May we turn our backs, in holy decision, once and for ever, upon everything that will not stand the test of scripture! This, we are persuaded, is what our Lord Christ

looks for on the part Of all who belong to Him, amid the terrible and hopeless *debris* of Christendom.

#### Deuteronomy 6

"Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgements, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: that thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee; thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it, that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord."

We have here presented to us that great cardinal truth which the nation of Israel was specially responsible to hold fast and confess, namely, the unity of the Godhead. This truth lay at the very foundation of the Jewish economy. It was the grand centre round which the people were to rally. So long as they maintained this, they were a happy, prosperous, fruitful people; but when it was let go, all was gone. It was their great national bulwark, and that which was to mark them off from all the nations of the east. They were called to confess this glorious truth in the face of an idolatrous world, with "its gods many, and lords many." It was Israel's high privilege and holy responsibility to bear a steady witness to the truth contained in that one weighty sentence, "The Lord our God is one Lord," in marked opposition to the false gods innumerable of the heathen around. Their father Abraham had been called out from the very midst of heathen idolatry, to be a witness to the one true and living God, to trust Him; to walk with Him; to lean on Him; and to obey Him.

If the reader will turn to the last chapter of Joshua, he will find a very striking allusion to this fact, and a very important use made of it, in his closing address to the people. "And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor; and *they served other gods*. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac."

Here, Joshua reminds the people of the fact that their fathers had served other gods — a very solemn and weighty fact, most surely; and one which they ought never to have forgotten, inasmuch as the remembrance of it would have taught them their deep need of watchfulness over themselves, lest, by any means, they should be drawn back into that gross and terrible evil out of which God, in His sovereign grace, and electing love, had called their father Abraham. It would have been their wisdom to consider that the self-same evil in which their fathers had lived, in the olden time, was just the one into which they themselves were likely to fall.

Having presented this fact to the people, Joshua brings before them, with uncommon force and vividness, all the leading events of their history, from the birth of their father Isaac, down to the moment in which he was addressing them; and then sums up with the following telling appeal, "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; *and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt*; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether *the gods which, your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood*, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Mark the repeated allusion to the fact that their fathers had worshipped false gods; and, further,

that the land into which Jehovah had brought them had been polluted, from one end to the other, by the dark abominations of heathen idolatry.

Thus does this faithful servant of the Lord, evidently by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, seek to set before the people their danger of living up the grand central and foundation truth of the One true and living God, and falling back into the worship of idols. He urges upon them the absolute necessity of whole-hearted decision. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." There is nothing like plain, out and out decision for God. It is due to Him always. He had proved Himself to be unmistakably for them, in redeeming them from the bondage of Egypt, bringing them through the wilderness, and planting them in the land of Canaan. Hence, therefore, that they should be wholly for Him was nothing more than their reasonable service.

How deeply Joshua felt all this, for himself, is evident from those very memorable words, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Lovely words! Precious decision! National religion might, and alas! did go to ruin; but personal and family religion could, by the grace of God, be maintained, everywhere, and at all times.

Thank God for this! May we never forget it! "Me and my house" is faith's clear and delightful response to God's "Thou and thy house." Let the condition of the ostensible, professed people of God, at any given time, be what it may, it is the privilege of every true-hearted man of God to adopt and act upon this immortal decision, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

True, it is only by the grace of God, continually supplied, that this holy resolution can be carried out; but, we may rest assured that, where the bent of the heart is to follow the Lord fully, all needed grace will be ministered, day by day; for those encouraging words must ever hold good, "*My* grace is sufficient for *thee*, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Let us now look, for a moment, at the apparent effect of Joshua's soul-stirring appeal to the congregation. It seemed very promising. (The people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods; for the Lord our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed; and the Lord drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the Lord; for he is our God.")

All this sounded very well, and looked very hopeful. They seemed to have a clear sense of the moral basis of Jehovah's claim upon them for implicit obedience. They could accurately recount all His mighty deeds on their behalf, and make very earnest and, no doubt, sincere protestations against idolatry, and promises of obedience to Jehovah, their God.

But it is very evident that Joshua was not particularly sanguine about all this profession, for "He said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good. And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the Lord. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses. Now therefore put away, said he, *the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel.* And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey."

We do not now stop to contemplate the aspect in which Joshua presents God to the congregation

of Israel, inasmuch as our object in referring to the passage is to show the prominent place assigned, in Joshua's address, to the truth of the unity of the Godhead. This was the truth to which Israel was called to bear witness, in view of all the nations of the earth, and in which they were to find their moral safeguard against the ensnaring influences of idolatry.

But alas! this very truth was the one as to which they most speedily and signally failed. The promises, vows, and resolutions made under the powerful influence of Joshua's appeal soon proved to be like the early dew and the morning cloud that passeth away. "The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel. And Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old.... And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers; and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, *and served Baalim*; and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, *and followed* other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and *bowed themselves unto them*, and provoked the Lord to anger. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth." (Judges 2: 7-13)

Reader, how admonitory is all this! How full of solemn warning to us all! The grand, all-important, special and characteristic truth so soon abandoned! The one only true and living God given up for Baal and Ashtaroth! So long as Joshua and the elders lived, their presence and their influence kept Israel from open apostasy. But no sooner were those moral embankments removed than the dark tide of idolatry rolled in and swept away the very foundations of the national faith. Jehovah of Israel was displaced by Baal and Ashtaroth. Human influence is a poor prop, a feeble barrier. We must be sustained by the power of God, else we shall, sooner or later, give way. The faith that stands merely in the wisdom of men, and not in the power of God, must prove a poor, flimsy worthless faith. It will not stand the day of trial; it will not bear the furnace; it will, most assuredly, break down.

It is well to remember this. Second-hand faith will never do. There must be a living link connecting the soul with God. We must have to do with God for ourselves, individually, else we shall give way when the testing time comes. Human example and human influence may be all very good in their place. It was all very well to look at Joshua and the elders, and see how they followed the Lord. It is quite true that, "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend." It is very encouraging to be surrounded by a number of truly devoted hearts; very delightful to be borne along upon the bosom of the tide of collective loyalty to Christ — to His Person and to His cause. But if this be all; if there be not the deep spring of personal faith and personal knowledge; if there be not the divinely formed, and the divinely sustained link of individual relationship and communion, then when the human props are removed; when the tide of human influence ebbs, when general declension sets in, we shall be, in principle, like Israel following the Lord, all the days of Joshua and the elders, and then giving up the confession of His name, and returning to the follies and vanities of this present world—things no better, in reality, than Baal and Ashtaroth.

But, on the other hand, when the heart is thoroughly established in the truth and grace of God; when we can say — as it is the privilege of each true believer to say — "I know whom I have believed; and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day; then, although all should turn aside from the public confession of Christ; although we should find ourselves left without the help of a human countenance, or the support of a human arm, we shall find "the foundation of God" as sure as ever; and the path of obedience as plain before us as though thousands were treading it with holy decision and energy.

We must never lose sight of the fact that it is the divine purpose that the professing church of God should learn deep and holy lessons from the history of Israel. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Nor is it, by any means, necessary, in order to our thus learning from the Old Testament scriptures, that we should occupy ourselves in searching out fanciful analogies, curious theories, or far-fetched illustrations. Many alas! have tried these things, and, instead of finding "comfort" in the scriptures, they have been led away into empty and foolish conceits, if not into deadly errors.

But our business is with the living facts recorded on the page of inspired history. These are to be our study; from these we are to draw our great practical lessons. Take, for example, the weighty and admonitory fact now before us — a fact standing out, in characters deep and broad, on the page of Israel's history from Joshua to Isaiah — the fact of Israel's lamentable departure from that very truth which they were specially called to hold and confess — the truth of the unity of the Godhead. The very first thing they did was to let go this grand and all-important truth, this keystone of the arch, the foundation of the whole edifice, the very heart of their national existence, the living centre of their national polity. They gave it up, and turned back to the idolatry of their fathers on the other side of the flood, and of the heathen nations around them. They abandoned that most glorious and distinctive truth on the maintenance of which their very existence, as a nation, depended. Had they only held fast this truth, they would have been invincible; but, in surrendering it, they surrendered all, and became much worse than the nations around them, inasmuch as they sinned against light and knowledge — sinned, with their eyes open — sinned in the face of the most solemn warnings and earnest entreaties; and, we may add, in the face of the most vehement and oft-repeated promises and protestations of obedience.

Yes, reader, Israel gave up the worship of the One true and living God, Jehovah Elohim, their covenant God; not only their Creator, but their Redeemer; the One who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt; conducted them through the Red Sea; led them through the wilderness; brought them across the Jordan, and planted them, in triumph, in the inheritance which He had promised to Abraham their father. A land flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands." They turned their backs upon Him, and gave themselves up to the worship of false gods. "They provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images."

It seems perfectly wonderful that a people who had seen and known so much of the goodness and loving kindness of God; His mighty acts, His faithfulness, His majesty, His glory, could ever bring themselves to bow down to the stock: of a tree. But so it was. Their whole history, from the days of the calf, at the foot of Mount Sinai, to the day in which Nebuchadnezzar reduced Jerusalem to ruins, is marked by an unconquerable spirit of idolatry. In vain did Jehovah, in His long-suffering mercy and abounding goodness, raise up deliverers for them, to lift them from beneath the terrible consequences of their sin and folly. Again and again, in His inexhaustible mercy and patience, He saved them from the hand of their enemies. He raised up an Othniel, an Ehud, a Barak, a Gideon, a Jephthah, a Samson, those instruments of His mercy and power, those witnesses of His deep and tender love and compassion toward His poor infatuated people. No sooner had each judge passed off the scene, than back the nation plunged into their besetting sin of idolatry.

So also, in the days of the kings. It is the same melancholy, heart-rending story. True, there were bright spots, here and there, some brilliant stars shining out through the deep gloom of the nation's history; we have a David, an Asa, a Jehoshaphat, a Hezekiah, a Josiah — refreshing and blessed exceptions to the dark and dismal rule. But even men like these failed to eradicate from the heart of the nation the pernicious root of idolatry. Even amid the unexampled splendours of Solomon's reign, that root sent forth its bitter shoots, in the monstrous form of high places to Ashtaroth, the goddess of the

Zidonians; Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites; and Chemosh, the abomination of Moab.

Reader, only think of this. Pause for a moment, and contemplate the astounding fact of the writer of the Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs bowing at the shrine of Molech! Only conceive the wisest, the wealthiest and the most glorious of Israel's monarchs, burning incense, and offering sacrifices upon the altar of Chemosh!

Truly, there is something here for us to ponder. It was written for our learning. The reign of Solomon affords one of the most striking and impressive evidences of the fact which is just now engaging our attention, namely, Israel's complete and hopeless apostasy from the grand truth of the unity of the Godhead — their unconquerable spirit of idolatry. The truth which they were specially called out to hold and confess, was the very truth which they, first of all and most persistently, abandoned.

We shall not pursue the dark line of evidence further; neither shall we dwell upon the appalling picture of the nation's judgement, in consequence of their idolatry. They are now in the condition of which the prophet Hosea speaks: "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim." — "The unclean spirit of idolatry has gone out of them," during these "many days," to return, by-and-by, with "seven other spirits more wicked than himself" — the very perfection of spiritual wickedness. And then will come days of unparalleled tribulation upon that long misguided and deeply revolted people - "The time of Jacob's trouble."

But deliverance will come, blessed be God! Bright days are in store for the restored nation — "days of heaven upon earth" — as the same prophet Hosea tells us: "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their King; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." All the promises of God to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David shall be blessedly accomplished; all the brilliant predictions of the prophets, from Isaiah to Malachi, shall be gloriously fulfilled. Yes, both promises and prophecies shall be literally and gloriously made good to restored Israel, in the land of Canaan; for "the scripture cannot be broken." The long, dark, dreary night shall be followed by the brightest day that has ever shone upon this earth; the daughter of Zion shall bask in the bright and blessed beams of "the Sun of Righteousness;" and "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

It would indeed be a most delightful exercise to reproduce upon the pages of this volume those glowing passages from the prophets which speak of Israel's future; but this we cannot attempt; it is not needful; and we have a duty to fulfil which, if not so pleasing to us, or so refreshing to the reader, will, we earnestly hope, prove not less profitable.

The duty is this, to press upon the attention of the reader — and upon the attention of the whole church of God — the practical application of that solemn fact in Israel's history on which we have dwelt at such length — the fact of their having so speedily, and so completely given up the great truth set forth in Deuteronomy 6: 4, "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord."

We may, perhaps, be asked, "What bearing can this fact have upon the church of God?" We believe it has a most solemn bearing; and, further, we believe we should be guilty of a very culpable shirking of our duty to Christ and to His church, if we failed to point it out. We know that all the great facts of Israel's history are full of instruction, full of admonition, full of warning, for us. It is our business, our bounden duty to see that we profit by them — to take heed that we study them aright.

Now, in contemplating the history of the church of God, as a public witness for Christ, on the

earth, we find that, hardly had it been set up, in all the fullness of blessing and privilege which marked the opening of its career, ere it began to slip away from those very truths which it was specially responsible to maintain and confess. Like Adam, in the garden of Eden; like Noah, in the restored earth; like Israel, in Canaan; so the church, as the responsible steward of the mysteries of God, was no sooner set in its place, than it began to totter and fall. It almost immediately began to give up those grand truths which were characteristic of its very existence, and which were to mark off Christianity from all that had gone before. Even under the eyes of the apostles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, errors and evils had begun to work which sapped the very foundations of the church's testimony.

Are we asked for proofs? Alas! we have them, in melancholy abundance. Hear the words of that blessed apostle who shed more tears and heaved more sighs over the ruins of the church than any man that ever lived. "I marvel," he says; and well he might, "that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel: which is not another." "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you" "Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service to them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years;" Christian festivals, so called, very imposing and gratifying to religious nature; but, in the judgement of the apostle, the judgement of the Holy Ghost, it was simply giving up Christianity and going back to the worship of idols. "I am afraid of you," and no wonder, when they could thus so speedily turn away from the grand characteristic truths of a heavenly Christianity, and occupy themselves with superstitious observances. "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." "Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

And all this in the apostle's own day. The departure was even more rapid than in Israel's case; for they served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua; but, in the church's sad and humiliating history, the enemy succeeded, almost immediately, in introducing leaven into the meal, tares among the wheat. Ere the apostles themselves had left the scene, seed was sown which has been bearing its pernicious fruit ever since, and shall continue to bear, till angelic reapers clear the field.

But we must give further proof from scripture. Let us hearken to the same inspired witness, near the close of his ministry, pouring out his heart to his beloved son Timothy, in accents, at once pathetic and solemn. "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me." Again, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and *they shall turn away their ears from the truth*, and shall be turned unto fables."

Here is the testimony of the man who, as a wise master builder, had laid the foundation of the church. And what was his own personal experience? He was, like his blessed Master, left alone, deserted by those who had once gathered round him in the freshness, bloom, and ardour of early days. His large, loving heart was broken by Judaising teachers who sought to overturn the very foundations of Christianity, and to overthrow the faith of God's elect. He wept over the ways of many who, while they made a profession, were, nevertheless, "the enemies of the cross of Christ."

In a word, the Apostle Paul, as he looked forth from his prison at Rome, saw the hopeless wreck and ruin of the professing body. He saw that it would happen to that body, as it had happened to the

ship in which he had made his last voyage — a voyage strikingly significant and illustrative of the church's sad history in this world. But here let us just remind the reader, that we are dealing now only with the question of the church, as a responsible witness for Christ on the earth. This must be distinctly seen, else we shall greatly err in our thoughts on the subject. We must accurately distinguish between the church as the body of Christ, and as His light bearer or witness in the world. In the former character, failure is impossible; in the latter, the ruin is complete and hopeless.

The church, as the body of Christ, united to her living and glorified Head in the heavens, by the presence and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, can never, by any possibility, fail — never be smashed to pieces, like Paul's ship, by the storms and billows of this hostile world. It is as safe as Christ Himself. The Head and the body are one — indissolubly one. No power of earth or hell, men or devils can ever touch the feeblest and most obscure member of that blessed body. All stand before God, all are under His gracious eye, in the fullness, beauty and acceptability of Christ Himself. As is the Head, so are the members — all the members together — each member in particular. All stand in the full eternal results of Christ's finished work on the cross. There is — there can be no question of responsibility here. The Head made Himself responsible for the members. He perfectly met every claim, and discharged every liability. Nothing remains but love — love, deep as the heart of Christ, perfect as His work, unchanging as His throne. Every question that could possibly be raised against any one, or all of the members of the church of God, was raised, gone into, and definitively settled, between God and His Christ, on the cross. All the sins, all the iniquities, all the transgressions, all the guilt of each member in particular, and all the members together — yes all, in the fullest and most absolute way, was laid on Christ and borne by Him God, in His inflexible justice, in His infinite holiness, in His eternal righteousness, dealt with everything that could ever, in any possible manner, stand in the way of the full salvation, perfect blessedness, and everlasting glory of every one of the members of the body of Christ the assembly of God. Every member of the body is permeated by the life of the Head; every stone in the building is animated by the life of the chief corner-stone. All are bound together in the power of a bond which can never, no never, be dissolved.

And, furthermore, let it be distinctly understood that the unity of the body of Christ is absolutely indissoluble. This is a cardinal point which must be tenaciously held, and faithfully confessed. But, obviously, it cannot be held and confessed, unless it is understood and believed; and, judging from the expressions which one sometimes hears, in speaking on the subject, it is very questionable indeed if people, so expressing themselves, have ever grasped, in a divine way, the glorious truth of the unity of the body of Christ — a unity maintained, on earth, by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

Thus, for example, we sometimes hear people speak of "rending the body of Christ." It is a complete mistake. Such a thing is utterly impossible. The Reformers were accused of rending the body of Christ, when they turned their backs upon the Romish system. What a gross misconception! It simply amounted to the monstrous assumption that a vast mass of moral evil, doctrinal error, ecclesiastical corruption, and debasing superstition was to be owned as the body of Christ! How could any one, with the New Testament in his hand, regard the so-called church of Rome, with its numberless and nameless abominations, as the body of Christ? How could any one, possessing the very faintest idea of the true church of God, ever think of bestowing that title upon the darkest mass of wickedness, the greatest masterpiece of Satan the world has ever beheld?

No, reader; we must never confound the ecclesiastical systems of this world — ancient, medieval, or modern, Greek, Latin, Anglican, National or Popular, Established or Dissenting — with the true church of God, the body of Christ. There is not, beneath the canopy of heaven, this day, nor ever was, a religious system, call it what you please, possessing the very smallest claim to be called, "The church

of God," or "The body of Christ." And, as a consequence, it can never be, rightly or intelligently, called schism, or rending the body of Christ, to separate from such systems; nay, on the contrary, it is the bounden duty of every one who would faithfully maintain and confess the truth of the unity of the body, to separate with the most unqualified decision, from everything falsely calling itself a church. It can only be viewed as schism to separate from those who are, unmistakably and unquestionably, gathered on the ground of the assembly of God.

No body of Christians can now lay claim to the title of the body of Christ, or church of God. The members of that body are scattered everywhere they are to be found in all the various religious organisations of the day, save such as deny the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot admit the idea that any true Christian could continue to frequent a place where his Lord is blasphemed. But, although no body of Christians can lay claim to the title of the assembly of God, all Christians are responsible to be gathered on the ground of that assembly, and on no other.

And if we be asked, "How are we to know — where are we to find this ground?" We reply, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." "If any man *will do* his will, he shall know of the doctrine." "*There is "a path"* — thanks be to God for it, though — "no fowl knoweth, and the vulture's eye hath not seen it. The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it." Nature's keenest vision cannot see this path, nor its greatest strength tread it. Where is it then? Here it is, "*Unto man* — to the reader and to the writer, to each, to all 'he said, Behold, *the fear of the Lord*, that is wisdom; and *to depart from evil* is understanding." (Job 28.) But there is another expression which we not infrequently hear from persons from whom we might expect more intelligence, namely, cutting off the members of the body of Christ."\* This too, blessed be God, is impossible. Not a single member of the body of Christ can ever be severed from the Head, or ever disturbed from the place into which he has been incorporated by the Holy Ghost, in pursuance of the eternal purpose of God, and in virtue of the accomplished atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. The divine Three in One are pledged for the eternal security of the very feeblest member of the body; and for the maintenance of the indissoluble unity of the whole.

{\*The expression, "cutting off the members of Christ's body" is generally applied in cases of discipline. But it is quite a misapplication. The discipline of the assembly can never touch the unity of the body. A member of the body may so fail in morals or err in doctrine, as to call for the action of the assembly, in putting him away from the Table; but that has nothing to do with his place in the body, The two things are perfectly distinct. }

In a word, then, it is as true, today, as it was when the inspired apostle penned the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians, that "There is one body," of which Christ is Head, of which the Holy Ghost is the formative power; and of which all true believers are members. This body has been on earth, since the day of Pentecost, is on earth now, and shall continue on earth until that moment, so rapidly approaching, when Christ shall come and take it to His Father's house. It is the same body, with a continual succession of members, just as we speak of a certain regiment of her Majesty's army having been at Waterloo, and now quartered at Aldershot, though not a man in the regiment of today appeared at the memorable battle of 1815.

Does the reader feel any difficulty as to all this? It may be that he finds it hard, in the present broken and scattered condition of the members, to believe and confess the unbroken unity of the whole. He may feel disposed, perhaps, to limit the application of Ephesians 4: 4, to the day in which the apostle penned the words, when Christians were manifestly one; and when there was no such thing thought of as being a member of this church or a member of that church; because all believers were

members of *the* one church.\*

{\*The unity of the church may be compared to a chain thrown across a river; we see it at each side, but it dips in the middle. But though it dips, it is not broken; though we do not see the union in the middle, we believe it is there all the same. The church was seen in its unity on the day of Pentecost, and it will be seen in its unity in the glory; and although we do not see it now, we nevertheless believe it most surely.

And, be it remembered, that the unity of the body is a great practical, formative truth; and one very weighty practical deduction from it is that the state and walk of each member affect the whole body. "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." A member of what? Some local assembly? Nay; but a member of the body. We must not make the body of Christ a matter of geography.

"But," we may be asked, "are we affected by what we do not see or know?" Assuredly. Are we to limit the grand truth of the unity of the body with all its practical consequences, to the measure of our personal knowledge and experience? Far be the thought. It is the presence of the Holy Ghost that unites the members of the body to the Head and to one another; and hence it is that the walk and ways of each affect all. Even in Israel's case, where it was not a corporate but a national unity, when Achan sinned, it was said, "Israel hath sinned;" and the whole congregation suffered a humiliating defeat on account of a sin of which they were ignorant.

It is perfectly marvellous how little the Lord's people seem to understand the glorious truth of the unity of the body, and the practical consequences flowing from it.}

In reply, we must protest against the very idea of limiting the word of God. What possible right have we to single out one clause from Ephesians 4: 4-6 and say it only applied to the days of the apostles? If one clause is to be so limited, why not all? Are there not still, "one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all"? Will any question this? Surely not. Well then it follows that there is as surely one body as there is one Spirit, one Lord, one God. All are intimately bound up together, and you cannot touch one without touching all. We have no more right to deny the existence of the one body than we have to deny the existence of God, inasmuch as the self-same passage that declares to us the one, declares to us the other also.

But some will, doubtless, inquire, "Where is this one body to be seen? Is it not an absurdity to speak of such a thing, in the face of the almost numberless denominations of Christendom?" Our answer is this, We are not going to surrender the truth of God because man has so signally failed to carry it out. Did not Israel utterly fail to maintain, confess and carry out, the truth of the unity of the Godhead? And was that glorious truth, in the smallest degree, touched by their failure? Was it not as true that there was one God, though there were as many idolatrous altars as streets in Jerusalem, and every housetop sent up a cloud of incense to the queen of heaven, as when Moses sounded forth in the ears of the whole congregation, those sublime words, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord"? Blessed be God, His truth does not depend upon the faithless, foolish ways of men. It stands in its own divine integrity; it shines in its own heavenly, undimmed lustre, spite of the grossest human failure. Were it not so, what should we do? whither should we turn? or what would become of us? In fact, it comes to this, if we were only to believe the measure of truth which we see practically carried out in the ways of men, we might give up in despair, and be of all men most miserable.

But how is the truth of the one body to be practically carried out? By refusing to own any other principle of Christian fellowship — any other ground of meeting. All true believers should meet on the simple ground of membership of the body of Christ; and on no other. They should assemble, on the first day of the week, round the Lord's Table, and break bread, as members of the one body, as we read in 1

Corinthians 10, "For we, being many, are one loaf, one body; for we are all partakers of that one loaf." This is as true, and as practical, today, as it was when the apostle addressed the assembly at Corinth. True, there were divisions; at Corinth as there are divisions in Christendom; but that did not, in any wise, touch the truth of God. The apostle rebuked the divisions — pronounced them carnal. He had no sympathy with the poor low idea which one sometimes hears advocated, that divisions are good things as superinducing emulation. He believed they were very bad things — the fruit of the flesh, the work of Satan.

Neither — we feel persuaded — would the apostle have accepted the popular illustration that divisions in the church are like so many regiments, with different facings, all fighting under the same commander-in-chief. It would not hold good for a moment; indeed, it has no application whatever, but rather gives a flat contradiction to that distinct and emphatic statement, "There is one body."

Reader, this is a most glorious truth. Let us ponder it deeply. Let us look at Christendom in the light of it. Let us judge our own position and ways by it. Are we acting on it? Do we give expression to it, at the Lord's Table, every Lord's day? Be assured it is our sacred duty and high privilege so to do. Say not there are difficulties of all sorts; many stumbling-blocks in the way; much to dishearten us in the conduct of those who profess to meet on this very ground of which we speak.

All this is, alas! but too true. We must be quite prepared for it. The devil will leave no stone unturned to cast dust in our eyes so that we may not see God's blessed way for His people. But we must not give heed to his suggestions or be snared by his devices. There always have been, and there always will be difficulties in the way of carrying out the precious truth of God; and perhaps one of the greatest difficulties is found in the inconsistent conduct of those who profess to act upon it.

But then we must ever distinguish between the truth and those who profess it; between the ground and the conduct of those who occupy it. Of course, they ought to harmonise; but they do not; and hence we are imperatively called to judge the conduct by the ground, not the ground by the conduct. If we saw a man farming on a principle which we knew to be thoroughly sound, but he was a bad farmer, what should we do? Of course, we should reject his mode of working, but hold the principle all the same.

Not otherwise is it, in reference to the truth now before us. There were heresies at Corinth, schisms, errors, evils, of all sorts. What then? Was the truth of God to be surrendered as a myth, as something wholly impracticable? Was it all to be given up? Were the Corinthians to meet on some other principle? Were they to organise themselves on some new ground? Were they to gather round some fresh centre? No, thank God! His truth was not to be surrendered, for a moment, although Corinth was split up into ten thousand sects, and its horizon darkened by ten thousand heresies. The body of Christ was one; and the apostle simply displays in their view the banner with this blessed inscription, "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

Now these words were addressed, not merely "unto the church at Corinth," but also "to all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Hence, the truth of the one body is abiding and universal. Every true Christian is bound to recognise it, and to act on it; and every assembly of Christians, wherever convened, should be the local expression of this grand and all-important truth.

Some might, perhaps, feel disposed to ask how it could be said to any one assembly, "Ye are the body of Christ"? Were there not saints at Ephesus, Colosse and Philippi? No doubt? and had the apostle been addressing them on the same subject, he could have said to them likewise, "Ye are the body of Christ," inasmuch as they were the local expression of the body; and not only so, but, in addressing

them, he had before his mind all saints, to the end of the church's earthly career.

But we must bear in mind that the apostle could not possibly address such words to any human organisation, ancient or modern. No; nor if all such organisations, call them what you please, were amalgamated into one, could he speak of it as "the body of Christ." That body, let it be distinctly understood, consists of all true believers on the face of the earth. That they are not gathered on that only divine ground, is their serious loss, and their Lord's dishonour. The precious truth holds good, all the same — "There is one body;" and this is the divine standard by which to measure every ecclesiastical association and every religious system under the sun.

We deem it needful to go somewhat fully into the divine side of the question of the church, in order to guard the truth of God from the results of misapprehension; and also that the reader may clearly understand that, in speaking of the utter failure and ruin of the church, we are looking at the human side of the subject. To this latter, we must return for a moment.

It is impossible to read the New Testament, with a calm and unprejudiced mind, and not see that the church, as a responsible witness for Christ on the earth, has, most signally and shamefully, failed. To quote all the passages in proof of this statement would, literally, fill a small volume. But, let us glance at the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation where the church is seen under judgement. We have, in these solemn chapters, what we may call a divine church history. Seven assemblies are taken up, as illustrative of the various phases of the church's history, from the day in which it was set up, in responsibility, on the earth, until it shall be spued out of the Lord's mouth, as something utterly intolerable. If we do not see that these two chapters are prophetic, as well as historic, we shall deprive ourselves of a vast field of most valuable instruction. For ourselves, we can only assure the reader that no human language could adequately set forth what we have gathered from Revelation 2 and 3, in their prophetic aspect.

However, we are only referring to them now as the last of a series of scripture proofs of our present thesis. Take the address to Ephesus, the self-same church to which the Apostle Paul wrote his marvellous epistle, opening up, so blessedly, the heavenly side of things, God's eternal purpose respecting the church — the position and portion of the church, as accepted in Christ, and blessed with all spiritual blessings, in the heavenlies in Him. No failure here. No thought of such a thing. No possibility of it. All is in God's hands here. The counsel is His; the work His. It is His grace, His glory, His mighty power, His good pleasure; and all founded upon the blood of Christ. There is no question of responsibility here. The church was "dead in trespasses and sins" but Christ died for her; He placed Himself judicially where she was morally; and God, in His sovereign grace, entered the scene and raised up Christ from the dead, and the church in Him glorious fact! Here all is sure and settled. It is the church in the heavenlies, *in* Christ, not the church on earth *for* Christ. It is *the body "accepted,"* not *the candlestick judged*. If we do not see both sides of this great question, we have much to learn.

But there is the earthly side, as well as the heavenly; the human as well as the divine; the candlestick as well as the body. Hence it is that in the judicial address, in Revelation 2, we read such solemn words as these, "*I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love.*"

How very distinct! Nothing like this in Ephesians; nothing against the body, nothing against the bride; but there is something against the candlestick. The light had, even already, become dim. Hardly had it been lighted, ere the snuffers were needed.

Thus, at the very outset, symptoms of decline showed themselves, unmistakably, to the penetrating eye of Him who walked amongst the seven golden candlesticks; and when we reach the close, and contemplate the last phase of the church's condition — the last stage of its earthly history, as

illustrated by the assembly, at Laodicea, there is not a single redeeming feature. The case is almost hopeless. The Lord is outside the door. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." It is not, here, as at Ephesus, "I have somewhat against thee." The whole condition is bad, The whole professing body is about to be given up. "I will spue thee out of my mouth." He still lingers, blessed be His Name, for He is ever slow to leave the place of mercy, or enter the place of judgement. It reminds us of the departure of the glory, in the opening of Ezekiel. It moved, with a slow and measured pace, loath to leave the house, the people and the land. "Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory." "Then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims." And, finally, "The glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city. (Ezek 10: 4, 18; 11: 23.)

This is deeply affecting. How striking the contrast between this slow departure of the glory and its speedy entrance, in the day of Solomon's dedication of the house, in 2 Chronicles 7: 1. Jehovah was quick to enter His abode, in the midst of His people; slow to leave it. He was, to speak after the manner of men, forced away by the sins and hopeless impenitence of His infatuated people.

So also, with the church. We see, in the second of Acts, His rapid entrance into His spiritual house. He came, like a rushing mighty wind, to fill the house with His glory. But, in the third of Revelation, see His attitude. He is outside. Yes; but He is knocking. He lingers, not indeed with any hope of corporate restoration; but if haply "any man would hear his voice and open the door." The fact of His being outside, shows what the church is. The fact of His knocking, shows what He is.

Christian reader, see that you thoroughly understand this whole subject. It is of the very last importance that you should. We are surrounded, on all sides, with false notions as to the present condition and future destiny of the professing church. We must fling these all behind our backs, with holy decision, and listen, with circumcised ear, and reverent mind, to the teaching of holy scripture. That teaching is as clear as noon-day. The professing church is a hopeless ruin, and judgement is at the door. Read the epistle of Jude; read 2 Peter 2 and 3. read 2 Timothy. Just lay aside this volume, and look closely into those solemn scriptures, and we feel persuaded you will rise from the study with the deep and thorough conviction that there is nothing whatever before Christendom but the unmitigated wrath of Almighty God. Its doom is set forth in that brief but solemn sentence in Romans 11, "Thou also shalt be cut off."

Yes; such is the language of scripture. "Cut off" — "spued out." The professing church has utterly failed as Christ's witness on the earth. As with Israel, so with the church, the very truth which she was responsible to maintain and confess she has faithlessly surrendered. Hardly had the canon of New Testament scripture closed, hardly had the first set of labourers left the field, ere gross darkness set in, and settled down upon the whole professing body. Turn where you will, range through the ponderous tomes of "the fathers" as they are called, and you will not find a trace of those grand characteristic truths of our glorious Christianity. All, all was shamefully abandoned. As Israel, in Canaan, abandoned Jehovah for Baal and Ashtaroth, so the church abandoned the pure and precious truth of God for puerile fables and deadly errors. The rapid departure is perfectly astounding; but it was just as the Apostle Paul forewarned the elders of Ephesus. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20)

How truly deplorable! The holy apostles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, almost immediately succeeded by "grievous wolves," and teachers of perverse things. The whole church plunged into thick darkness. The lamp of divine revelation almost hidden from view. Ecclesiastical corruption, in every form; priestly domination with all its terrible accompaniments. In short, the history of the church — the history of Christendom is the most appalling record ever penned.

True it is, thanks be to God, He left not Himself without a witness. Here and there, from time to time, just as in Israel of old, He raised up one and another to speak for Him. Even amid the deepest gloom of the middle ages, an occasional star appears upon the horizon. The Waldenses and others were enabled, by the grace of God, to hold fast His word and to confess the Name of Jesus in the face of Rome's dark and terrible tyranny, and diabolical cruelty.

Then came that gracious season, in the sixteenth century, when God raised up Luther and his beloved and honoured fellow-labourers, to preach the great truth of justification by faith, and to give the precious volume of God to the people, in their own tongue wherein they were born. It is not within the compass of human language to set forth the blessing of that memorable time. Thousands heard the glad tidings of salvation — heard, believed, and were saved. Thousands who had long groaned beneath the intolerable weight of Romish superstition, hailed, with Profound thankfulness, the heavenly message. Thousands flocked, with intense delight, to draw water from those wells of inspiration which had been stopped for ages by papal ignorance and intolerance. The blessed lamp of divine revelation, so long hidden by the enemy's hand, was permitted to cast its rays athwart the gloom, and thousands rejoiced in its heavenly light.

But while we heartily bless God for all the glorious results of what is commonly called the Reformation, in the sixteenth century, we should make a very grave mistake indeed were we to imagine that it was anything approaching to a restoration of the church to its original condition. Far — very far from it. Luther and his companions, if we are to judge from their writings — precious writings, many of them — never grasped the divine idea of the church as the body of Christ. They did not understand the unity of the body; the presence of the Holy Ghost in the assembly, as well as His indwelling in the individual believer. They never reached the grand truth of ministry in the church, "its nature, source, power and responsibility." They never got beyond the idea of human authority as the basis of ministry. They were silent as to the specific hope of the church, namely, the coming of Christ for His people — the bright and morning Star They failed to seize the proper scope of prophecy, and proved themselves incompetent rightly to divide the word of truth.

Let us not be misunderstood. We love the memory of the Reformers. Their names are familiar household words amongst us. They were dear, devoted, earnest, blessed servants of Christ. Would that we had their like amongst us, in this day of revived popery, and rampant infidelity. We would yield to none in our love and esteem for Luther, Melancthon, Farel, Latimer and Knox. They were truly bright and shining lights in their day; and thousands — yea millions will thank God, throughout eternity, that they ever lived and preached and wrote. And not only so, but, looked at in their private life and public ministry, they put to shame many of those who have been favoured with a range of truth for which we look in vain in the voluminous writings of the Reformers.

But, admitting all this, as we most freely and gratefully do, we are nevertheless convinced that those beloved and honoured servants of Christ failed to seize and therefore failed to preach and teach many of the special and characteristic truths of Christianity; at least, we have failed to find these truths in their writings. They preached the precious truth of justification by faith; they gave the holy scriptures to the people; they trampled under foot much of the rubbish of Romish superstition.

All this they did, by the grace of God; and for all this we bow our heads in deep thankfulness and Praise to the Father of mercies. But Protestantism is not Christianity; nor are the so-called churches of the Reformation, whether National or Dissenting, the church of God. Far from it. We look back over the course of eighteen centuries, and, spite of the occasional revivals, spite of the brilliant lights which, at various times, have shone upon the church's horizon — lights which appeared all the brighter in contrast with the deep gloom that surrounded them — spite of the many gracious visitations of God's Spirit, both in Europe and America, during the past and present century — spite of all these things, for which we most heartily bless God, we return, with decision to the statement already advanced, that the professing church is a hopeless wreck; that Christendom is rapidly hastening down the inclined plane, to the blackness of darkness for ever; that those highly favoured lands, where much evangelical truth has been preached; where Bibles have been circulated in millions, and gospel tracts in billions, shall yet be covered with thick darkness — given over to strong delusion to believe a lie!

And then? — Ah! what then? *A converted world?* Nay, but a *judged church*. The true saints of God, scattered throughout Christendom — all the true members of the body of Christ, will be caught up to meet their coming Lord — the dead saints raised, the living changed? in a moment, and all taken up together to be for ever with the Lord. Then the mystery will rise to a head in the person of the man of sin — the lawless one, the Antichrist. The Lord Jesus shall come, and all His saints with Him, to execute judgement on the beast, or revived Roman empire, and the false prophet, or Antichrist — the former in the West, the latter in the East.

This will be a summary act of direct warrior judgement, without any judicial process whatever, inasmuch as both the beast and false prophet shall be found in open rebellion and blasphemous opposition to God and the Lamb. Then comes the sessional judgement of the living nations, as recorded in Matthew 25: 31-46.

Thus, all evil having been put down, Christ shall reign, in righteousness and peace, for a thousand years — a bright and blessed time, the true Sabbath for Israel and the whole earth — a period marked by the grand facts, Satan bound, and Christ reigning Glorious facts! The very reference to them causes the heart to overflow in praise and thanksgiving. What will the reality be?

But Satan shall be loosed from his thousand years' captivity, and allowed to make one more effort against God and His Christ. "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.\* And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." (Rev. 20: 7, 10.)

{\*The reader must distinguish between the Gog and Magog of Revelation 20 and those of Ezekiel 38 & 39. The former are post-millennial; the latter, pre-millennial.}

This will be Satan's last effort, issuing in his eternal perdition. Then we have the judgement of the dead, "small and great" — the sessional judgement of all those who shall have died in their sins, from the days of Cain down to the last apostate from millennial glory. Tremendous scene! No heart can conceive, no tongue, no pen, set forth its awful solemnity.

Finally, we have unfolded to the vision of our souls the everlasting state, the new heaven and the new earth wherein righteousness shall dwell, throughout the golden ages of eternity.

Such is the order of events, as set forth, with all possible clearness, on the pages of inspiration. We have given a brief summary of them in connection with the line of truth on which we have been dwelling — a line, as we are fully aware, by no means popular; but we dare not withhold it on that account. Our business is to declare the whole counsel of God, not to seek popularity. We do not expect the truth of God to be popular in Christendom; so far from this, we have been seeking to prove that just as Israel abandoned the truth which they were responsible to maintain, so the professing church has let slip all those great truths which characterise the Christianity of the New Testament. And we may assure the reader that our one object in pursuing this line of argument is to arouse the hearts of all true Christians to a sense of the value of those truths, and of their responsibility not only to receive them, but to seek a fuller realisation and a bolder confession of them. We long to see a band of men raised up, in these closing hours of the church's earthly history, who shall go forth, in true spiritual power, and proclaim, with unction and energy — the long-forgotten truths of the gospel of God. May God, in His great mercy to His people, raise up such and send them forth. May the Lord Jesus knock louder and louder, at the door, so that many may hear and open to Him, according to the desire of His loving heart, and taste the blessedness of deep personal communion with Himself, while waiting for His coming.

Blessed be God, there is no limit whatever to the blessing of the individual soul who hears Christ's voice and opens the door; and what is true of one is true of hundreds or thousands. Only let us be real, and simple, and true, feeling and owning our utter feebleness, and nothingness; laying aside all assumption and empty pretension; not seeking to be anything, or to set up anything; but holding fast Christ's word, and not denying His Name; finding our happy place at His feet, our satisfying portion in Himself, and our real delight in serving Him in any little way. Thus we shall get on harmoniously, lovingly, and happily together, finding our common centre in Christ, and our common object in seeking to further His cause and promote His glory. Oh! that it were thus with all the Lord's beloved people, in this our day; we should then have a very different tale to tell, and present a very different aspect to the world around. May the Lord revive His work!

It may perhaps seem to the reader that we have wandered a long way from Deuteronomy 6; but we must remind him, once for all, that it is not merely what each chapter contains that demands our attention, but also what it suggests. And further, we may add that, in sitting down to write, from time to time, it is our one desire to be led by God's Spirit into the very line of truth which may be suited to the need of all our readers. If only the beloved flock of Christ be fed, instructed and comforted, we care not whether it be by well connected notes or broken fragments.

We shall now proceed with our chapter.

Moses, having laid down the grand foundation truth contained in the fourth verse, "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord," proceeds to press upon the congregation their sacred duty in respect to this blessed One. It was not merely that there was a God, but He was *their* God. He had deigned to link Himself with them, in covenant relationship. He had redeemed them, borne them on eagles' wings, and brought them unto Himself, in order that they might be to Him a people, and that He might be their God.

Blessed fact! Blessed relationship! But Israel had to be reminded of the conduct suited to such a relationship — conduct which could only flow from a loving heart. "Thou shalt love the Lord *thy* God with *all thy heart*, and with *all thy soul*, and with *all thy might*." Here lies the secret of all true practical religion. Without this all is valueless to God. "My son, give me thine heart." where the heart is given, all will be right. The heart may be compared to the regulator of a watch which acts on the hair-spring, and the hair-spring acts on the mainspring, and the main-spring acts on the hands, as they move round

the dial. If your watch goes wrong, it will not do merely to alter the hands, you must touch the regulator. God looks for real heart-work, blessed be His Name! His word to us is, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."

How we ought to bless Him for such touching words! They do so reveal His own loving heart to us. Assuredly, He loved us in deed and in truth; and He cannot be satisfied with anything else, whether in our ways with Him or our ways one with another All must flow straight from the heart.

"And these words which I command thee this day, shall be *in thine heart*" — at the very source of all the issues of life. This is peculiarly precious. Whatever is in the heart comes out through the lips, and in the life, How important then, to have the heart full of the word of God, so full that we shall have no room for the vanities and follies of this present evil world. Thus shall our conversation be always with grace, seasoned with salt. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Hence we can judge of what is in the heart by what cometh out of the mouth. The tongue is the organ of the heart the organ of the man. "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." When the heart is really governed by the word of God, the whole character reveals the blessed result. It must be so, inasmuch as the heart is the main-spring of our entire moral condition; it lies at the centre of all those moral influences which govern our personal history and shape our practical career.

In every part of the divine volume, we see how much importance God attaches to the attitude and state of the heart, with respect to Him or to His word, which is one and the same thing. when the heart is true to Him, all is sure to come right; but, on the other hand, we shall find that, where the heart grows cold and careless as to God and His truth, there will, sooner or later, be open departure from the path of truth and righteousness. There is, therefore, much force and value in the exhortation addressed by Barnabas to the converts at Antioch: "He exhorted them all, that with *purpose of heart* they would cleave unto the Lord."

How needful, then, now, always! This "purpose of heart" is most precious to God. It is what we may venture to call the grand moral regulator, It imparts a lovely earnestness to the Christian character which is greatly to be coveted by all of us. It is a divine antidote against coldness, deadness and formality, all of which are so hateful to God. The outward life may be very correct, and the creed may be very orthodox; but if the earnest purpose of heart be lacking — the affectionate cleaving of the whole moral being to God and His Christ, all is utterly worthless.

It is through the heart that the Holy Ghost instructs us. Hence, the apostle prayed for the saints at Ephesus that, "The eyes of their *heart* [*kardias*, not *dianoias*] might be enlightened" And again, "That Christ may dwell in your *heart* by faith."

Thus we see how all scripture is in perfect harmony with the exhortation recorded in our chapter, "And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart." How near this would have kept them to their covenant God! How safe, too, from all evil, and specially from the abominable evil of idolatry — their national sin, their terrible besetment! If Jehovah's precious words had only found their right place in the heart, there would have been little fear of Baal, Chemosh or Ashtoreth. In a word, all the idols of the heathen would have found their right place, and been estimated as their true value, if only the word of Jehovah had been allowed to dwell in Israel's heart.

And be it specially noted here how beautifully characteristic all this is of the book of Deuteronomy. It is not so much a question of keeping up a certain order of religious observances, the offering of sacrifices or attention to rites and ceremonies. All these things, no doubt, had their place, but they are, by no means, the prominent or paramount thing in Deuteronomy. No; THE WORD is the

all-important matter here. It is *Jehovah's word in Israel's heart*.

The reader must seize this fact, if he really desires to possess the key to the lovely book of Deuteronomy. It is not a book of ceremonial; it is a book of moral and affectionate obedience. It teaches, in almost every section, that invaluable lesson, that the heart that loves, prizes and honours the word of God is ready for every act of obedience, whether it be the offering of a sacrifice or the observance of a day. It might so happen that an Israelite would find himself in a place, and under circumstances in which a rigid adherence to rites and ceremonies would be impossible; but he never could be in a place or in circumstances in which he could not love, reverence and obey the word of God. Let him go where he would; let him be carried, as a captive exile, to the ends of the earth, nothing could rob him of the high privilege of uttering and acting on those blessed words,

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

Precious words! They contain in their brief compass, the great principle of the book of Deuteronomy; and we may add, the great principle of the divine life, at all times, and in all places. It can never lose its moral force and value. It always holds good. It was true in the days of the patriarchs; true for Israel in the land; true for Israel scattered to the ends of the earth; true for the church as a whole; true for each individual believer, amid the church's hopeless ruins. In a word, obedience is always the creature's holy duty and exalted privilege — simple, unhesitating, unqualified obedience to the word of the Lord. This is an unspeakable mercy for which we may well praise our God, day and night. He has given us His word, blessed be His Name, and He exhorts us to let that word dwell in us richly — dwell in our hearts, and assert its holy sway over our entire course and character.

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."

All this is perfectly beautiful. The word of God hidden in the heart; flowing out, in loving instruction, to the children, and in holy conversation, in the bosom of the family; shining out in all the activities of daily life, so that all who came inside the gates or entered the house might see that the word of God was the standard for each, for all, and in everything.

Thus it was to be with Israel of old; and surely thus it ought to be with Christians now. But is it so? Are our children thus taught? Is it our constant aim to present the word of God, in all its heavenly attractiveness, to their young hearts? Do they see it shining out in our daily life? Do they see its influence upon our habits, our temper, our family intercourse, our business transactions? This is what we understand by binding the word as a sign upon the hands, having it as a frontlet between the eyes, writing it upon the door posts, and upon the gates.

Reader, is it thus with us? It is of little use attempting to teach our children the word of God, if our lives are not governed by that word. We do not believe in making the blessed word of God a mere school book for our children; to do so is to turn a delightful privilege into a wearisome drudgery. Our children should see that we live in the very atmosphere of scripture; that it forms the material of our conversation when we sit in the bosom of the family, in our moments of relaxation.

Alas! how little is this the case! Have we not to be deeply humbled, in the presence of God, when we reflect upon the general character and tone of our conversation at table, and in the family circle? How little there is of Deuteronomy 6: 7! How much of "foolish talking and jesting which are not

convenient!" How much evil speaking of our brethren, our neighbours, our fellow-labourers! How much idle gossip! How much worthless small talk!

And from what does all this proceed? Simply from the state of the heart. The word of God, the commandments and sayings of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, are not dwelling in our hearts; and hence they are not welling up and flowing out in living streams of grace and edification.

Will any one say that Christians do not need to consider these things? If so, let him ponder the following wholesome words, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." And again, "Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Eph. 4: 29; 5: 18-20.)

These words were addressed to the saints at Ephesus; and, most assuredly, we should apply our hearts diligently to them. We are little aware, perhaps, of how deeply and constantly we fail in maintaining the habit of spiritual conversation. It is specially in the bosom of the family, and in our ordinary intercourse, that this failure is most manifest. Hence our need of those words of exhortation which we have just penned. It is evident the Holy Spirit foresaw the need, and graciously anticipated it. Hear what He says "to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colosse." — "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Col. 3.)

Lovely picture of ordinary Christian life! It is but a fuller and higher development of what we have in our chapter, where the Israelite is seen in the midst of his family, with the word of God flowing forth from his heart, in loving instruction to his children — seen, in his daily life, in all his intercourse at home and abroad, under the hallowed influence of Jehovah's words.

Beloved Christian reader, do we not long to see more of all this in our midst? Is it not, at times, very sorrowful and very humbling to mark the style of conversation that obtains in the midst of our family circles? Should we not sometimes blush if we could see our conversation reproduced in print? What is the remedy? Here it is — a heart filled with the peace of Christ, the word of Christ, Christ Himself. Nothing else will do. We must begin with the heart, and where that is thoroughly pre-occupied with heavenly things we shall make very short work with all attempts at evil speaking, foolish talking and jesting.

"And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, and houses full of all good things which thou filledst not, and wells digged which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten, and be full; then beware lest thou forget the Lord which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." (Vers. 10-12.)

Amid all the blessing, the mercies and the privileges of the land of Canaan, they were to remember that gracious and faithful One who had redeemed them out of the land of bondage. They were to remember, too, that all these things were His free gift. The land, with all that it contained, was bestowed upon them in virtue of His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Cities built and houses furnished, flowing wells, fruitful vineyards and olive yards, all ready to their hand, the free gift of sovereign grace and covenant mercy. All they had to do was to take possession, in simple faith; and to keep ever in the remembrance of the thoughts of their hearts the bounteous Giver of it all. They were to

think of Him, and find in His redeeming love the true motive spring of a life of loving obedience. Wherever they turned their eyes they beheld the tokens of His great goodness, the rich fruit of His marvellous love. Every city, every house, every well, every vine, olive and fig tree spoke to their hearts of Jehovah's abounding grace, and furnished a substantial proof of His infallible faithfulness to His promise.

"Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you. (For the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you,) lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth."

There are two great motives set before the congregation, in our chapter, namely, "love" in verse 5; and "fear," in verse 13. These are found all through scripture; and their importance, in guiding the life and forming the character, cannot possibly be too highly estimated. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." We are exhorted to be in the fear of the Lord all the day." It is a grand moral safeguard against all evil. Unto man He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

The blessed Book abounds in passages setting forth, in every possible form, the immense importance of the fear of God. "How," says Joseph, "can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" The man who walks habitually in the fear of God is preserved from every form of moral pravity. The abiding realisation of the divine presence must prove an effectual shelter from every temptation? How often do we find the presence of some very holy and spiritual person a wholesome check upon levity and folly; and if such be the moral influence of a fellow mortal, how much more powerful would be the realised presence of God!

Christian reader, let us give our serious attention to this weighty matter. Let us seek to live in the consciousness that we are in the immediate presence of God. Thus shall we be preserved from a thousand forms of evil to which we are exposed from day to day, and to which, alas! we are pre-disposed. The remembrance that the eye of God rests upon us, would exert a far more powerful influence upon our life and conversation than the presence of all the saints upon earth, and all the angels in heaven. We could not speak falsely; we could not utter with our lips what we do not feel in the heart; we could not talk folly; we could not speak evil of our brother or our neighbour; we could not speak unkindly of any one, if only we felt ourselves in the presence of God. In a word, the holy fear of the Lord, of which scripture speaks so much, would act as a most blessed restraint upon evil thoughts, evil words, evil ways, evil in every shape and form.

Moreover, it would tend to make us very real and genuine, in all our sayings and doings. There is a sad amount of sham and nonsense about us. We frequently say a great deal more than we feel. We are not honest. We do not speak, every man, truth with our neighbour. We give expression to sentiments which are not the genuine utterance of the heart. We act the hypocrite, one with another.

All these things afford melancholy proof of how little we live, move and have our being in the presence of God. If we could only bear in mind that God hears us and sees us — hears our every word, and sees our every thought, our every way, how differently we should carry ourselves! What holy watchfulness we should maintain over our thoughts, our tempers, and our tongues! What purity of heart and mind! What truth and uprightness in all our intercourse with our fellows! What reality and simplicity in our deportment? What happy freedom from all affectation, assumption, and pretension! What deliverance from every form of self-occupation! Oh, to live ever in the deep sense of the divine presence! To walk in the fear of the Lord, all the day long?

And then to prove the "vast constraining influence" of His love! To be led out in all the holy activities which that love would ever suggest! To find our delight in doing good! To taste the spiritual luxury of making hearts glad? To be continually meditating plans of usefulness! To live close by the fountain of divine love, so that we must be streams of refreshing in the midst of this thirsty scene — rays of light amid the moral gloom around us! "The love of Christ," says the blessed apostle, "constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

How morally lovely is all this! Would that it were more fully realised and faithfully exhibited amongst us! May the fear and love of God be continually in our hearts, in all their blessed power, and formative influence, that thus our daily life may shine to His praise, and the real profit, comfort and blessing of all who come in contact with us whether in private or in public! God, in His infinite mercy, grant it, for Christ's sake!

The sixteenth verse of our chapter demands our special attention. Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted him in Massah." These words were quoted by our blessed Lord when tempted by Satan to cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple. "Then the devil taketh him up into the, holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."

This is a very remarkable passage. It proves how Satan can quote scripture when it suits his purpose. But he omits a most important clause — "To keep thee in all thy ways." Now, it formed no part of the ways of Christ to cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple. It was not the path of duty. He had no command from God to do any such thing; and hence He refused to do it. He had no need to tempt God — to put Him to the test. He had, as a man, the most perfect confidence in God — the fullest assurance of His protection.

Moreover, He was not going to abandon the path of duty, in order to prove God's care of Him; and herein He teaches us a most valuable lesson. We can always count on God's protecting hand, when we are treading the path of duty. But, if we are walking in a self-chosen path; if we are seeking our own pleasure, or our own interest, our own ends or objects, then, to talk of counting on God would be simply wicked presumption.

No doubt, our God is very merciful, very gracious, and His tender mercy is over us, even when we wander off the path of duty; but this is another thing altogether, and it leaves wholly untouched the statement that we can only count on divine protection when our feet are in the pathway of duty. If a Christian goes out boating for his amusement; or if he goes clambering over the Alps merely for sightseeing, has he any right to believe that God will take care of him? Let conscience give the answer. If God calls us to cross a stormy lake, to preach the gospel; if He summons us to cross the Alps on some special service for Him, then, assuredly, we can commit ourselves to His mighty hand to protect us from all evil. The grand point for all of us is to be found in the holy path of duty. It may be narrow, rough and lonely; but it is a path overshadowed by the wings of the Almighty and illumined by the light of His approving countenance.

Ere turning from the subject suggested by verse 16, we would briefly notice the very interesting and instructive fact, that our Lord, in His reply to Satan, takes no notice whatever of his misquotation of Psalm 91: 11. Let us carefully note this fact, and seek to bear it in mind. In place of saying to the enemy, "You have left out a most important clause of the passage which you undertake to quote," He

simply quotes another passage, as authority for His own conduct. Thus He vanquished the tempter; and thus He left us a blessed example.

It is worthy of our special notice that the Lord Jesus Christ did not overcome Satan, in virtue of His divine power. Had He done so, it could not be an example for us. But when we see Him, as a man, using the word as His only weapon, and thus gaining a glorious victory, our hearts are encouraged and comforted; and not only so, but we learn a most precious lesson as to how we, in our sphere and measure, are to stand in the conflict. The man, Christ Jesus, overcame by simple dependence upon God, and obedience to His word.

Blessed fact! A fact full of comfort and consolation for us. Satan could do nothing with one who would only act by divine authority, and by the power of the Spirit. Jesus never did His own will, though, as we know, blessed be His holy Name, His will was absolutely perfect. He came down from heaven, as He Himself tells us, in John 6, not to do His own will, but the will of the Father that sent Him. He was a perfect servant, from first to last. His rule of action was the word of God; His power of action, the Holy Ghost; His only motive for action, the will of God; hence the prince of this world had nothing in Him. Satan could not, by all his subtle wiles, draw Him out of the path of obedience, or out of the place of dependence.

Christian reader, let us consider these things. Let us deeply ponder them. Let us remember that our blessed Lord and Master left us an example that we should follow His steps. Oh! may we follow them diligently during the little while that yet remains! May we, by the gracious ministry of the Holy Ghost, enter more fully into the great fact that we are called to walk even as Jesus walked. He is our great Exemplar, in all things. Let us study Him more profoundly, so that we may reproduce Him more faithfully!

We shall now close this lengthened section by quoting for the reader the last paragraph of the chapter on which we have been dwelling; it is a passage of singular fullness, depth and power, and strikingly characteristic of the entire book of Deuteronomy.

"Ye shall *diligently* keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his testimonies, and His statutes, which he hath commanded thee. And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers; to cast out all thine enemies from before thee, as the Lord hath spoken. And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgements, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes; and he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us."

How prominently is the word of God kept before the soul, in every page and every paragraph of this book! It is the one great subject on the heart and in all the discourses of the revered law-giver. It is His one aim to exalt the word of God, in all its aspects, whether in the form of testimonies, commandments, statutes or judgements; and to set forth the moral importance, yea, the urgent necessity of whole-hearted, earnest, diligent obedience, on the part of the people. "Ye shall *diligently* keep the commandments of the Lord your God" And again, "Thou shalt do that which is *right* and *good* in the

sight of the Lord."

All this is morally lovely. We have here unfolded before our eyes those eternal principles which no change of dispensation, no change of scene, place or circumstances can ever touch, "That which is right and good" must ever be of universal and abiding application. It reminds us of the words of the Apostle John to his beloved friend Gaius, "Beloved, follow not that which is evil; but that which is good." The assembly might be in a very low condition; there might be very much to try the heart and depress the spirit of Gaius; Diotrephes might be carrying himself most unbecomingly and unwarrantably toward the beloved and venerable apostle and others; all this might be true, and much more, yea, the whole professing body might go wrong. What then? What remained for Gaius to do? Simply to follow that which was right and good; to open his heart and his hand and his house to every one who brought *the truth*; to seek to help on the cause of Christ, in every right way.

This was the business of Gaius in his day; and this is the business of every true lover of Christ, at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances. We may not have many to join us; we may perhaps find ourselves, at times, almost alone; but we are still to follow what is good, cost what it may. We are to *depart* from iniquity — *purge* ourselves from dishonourable vessels — *flee* youthful lusts — *turn away* from powerless professors. And what then? "Follow righteousness, faith, love, peace" — How? In isolation? Nay. I may find myself alone in any given place for a time; but there can be no such thing as isolation, so long as the body of Christ is on earth, and that will be till He comes for us. Hence we never expect to see the day in which we cannot find a few that call on the Lord out of a pure heart; whoever they are, and wherever they are, it is our bounden duty to find them; and, having found them, to walk with them in holy fellowship, until the end"

{P.S. — We must reserve the remaining chapters of Deuteronomy for another volume. May the Lord be graciously pleased to grant His rich blessing upon our meditation thus far! May He clothe these pages with the power of the Holy Ghost, and make them to be a direct message from Himself to the hearts of His people throughout the whole world! May He also grant spiritual power to unfold the truth contained in the remaining sections of this most profound, comprehensive and suggestive book!

We earnestly beseech the Christian reader to join us in prayer as to all this, remembering those most precious words, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my Father which is in heaven" C. H. M.}

#### Deuteronomy 7

When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee,... seven nations greater and mightier than thou. And when the Lord thy God shall delivered them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them"

In reading the record of God's dealings with the nations, in connection with His people Israel, we are reminded of the opening words of Psalm 101 "I will sing of mercy and of judgement." We see the display of mercy to His people, in pursuance of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and we see also the execution of judgement upon the nations, in consequence of their evil ways. In the former, we see divine sovereignty; in the latter, divine justice; in both, divine glory shines out. All the ways of God, whether in mercy or in judgement, speak His praise, and shall call forth the homage of His people for ever. "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of nations.\* Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for Thy judgements are made manifest." (Rev. 15: 3, 4.)

{\*"Nations" is read by most editors. Christ is not called the "king of saints."}

This is the true spirit in which to contemplate the ways of God in government. Some persons, allowing themselves to be influenced by a morbid feeling and false sentimentality, rather than by an enlightened judgement, find difficulty in the directions given to Israel in reference to the Canaanites, in the opening of our chapter. It seems to them inconsistent with a benevolent Being to command His People to smite their fellow-creatures, and to show them no mercy. They cannot understand how a merciful God could commission His people to slay women and children with the edge of the sword.

It is very plain that such persons could not adopt the language of Revelation 15: 3, 4. They are not prepared to say, "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of nations." They cannot justify God in all His ways; nay, they are actually sitting in judgement upon Him. They presume to measure the actings of divine government by the standard of their own shallow thoughts — to scan the infinite by the finite. In short, they measure God by themselves.

This is a fatal mistake. We are not competent to form a judgement upon the ways of God, and hence it is the very height of presumption for poor, ignorant, short-sighted mortals to attempt to do so. We read in the seventh chapter of Luke, that "Wisdom is justified of all her children." Let us remember this, and hush all our sinful reasonings. "Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."

Is the reader, at all, troubled with difficulties on this subject? If so, we should much like to quote a very fine passage which may help him. "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.... To him *that smote Egypt in their first-born*; for his mercy endureth for ever; and brought out Israel from among them; for his mercy endureth for ever; with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm; for his mercy endureth for ever. To him which divided the Red Sea into parts; for his mercy endureth for ever. And made Israel to pass through the midst of it; for his mercy endureth for; but *overthrew Pharaoh and his host* in the Red Sea; for his mercy endureth for ever. To him which *smote great kings*; for his mercy endureth for ever; and *slew famous kings*; for his mercy endureth for ever; Sihon, king of the Amorites; for his mercy endureth ever; and Og, the king of Bashan; for his mercy for ever. And gave their land for an heritage; for his mercy endureth for ever; even an unto Israel his servant; for his mercy for ever." (Ps. 136.)

Here we see that the smiting of Egypt's first-born, and the deliverance of Israel; the passage through the Red Sea and the utter destruction of Pharaoh's host; the slaughter of the Canaanites and giving their lands to Israel — all alike illustrated the everlasting mercy of Jehovah.\* Thus it was; thus it is; and thus it shall be. All must redound to the glory of God. Let us remember this, and fling to the winds all our silly reasonings and ignorant arguments. It is our privilege to justify God in all His ways, to bow our heads, in holy worship, in view of His unsearchable judgements, and rest in the calm assurance that all God's ways are right. We do not understand them all; this would be impossible. The finite cannot grasp the infinite. This is where so many go wrong. They reason upon the actings of God's government, not considering that those actings lie as far beyond the range of human reason as the Creator is beyond the creature. What human mind can unravel the profound mysteries of divine providence? Can we account for the fact of a city full of human beings, men, women, and children, in one hour, plunged beneath a tide of burning lava? Utterly impossible; and yet this is but one fact of thousands that stand recorded on the page of human history, all lying far beyond the grasp of the most gigantic intellect. Go through the lanes, alleys, wynds, closes and courtyards of our cities and towns; see the thousands of human beings that throng these places, living in squalid misery, poverty, wretchedness and moral degradation. Can we account for all this? Can we tell why God permits it? Are

we called upon to do so? Is it not perfectly plain to the reader that it is no part of our business to discuss such questions? And if we, in our ignorance and stupid folly, set about reasoning and speculating upon the inscrutable mysteries of the divine government, what can we expect but utter bewilderment, if not positive infidelity?

{\*Very many Christians find considerable difficulty in interpreting and applying the language of a large number of the Psalms which call for judgement upon the wicked. Such language would, of course, be quite unsuitable for Christians now, inasmuch as we are taught to love our enemies, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us.

But we must remember that what would be wholly out of place for the church of God, a heavenly people, under grace, was, and will yet be perfectly consistent for Israel, an earthly people, under government. No intelligent Christian could think for a moment of calling down vengeance upon his enemies or upon the wicked. It would be grossly inconsistent. We are called to be the living exponents of the grace of God to the world — to walk in the footsteps of the meek and lowly Jesus — to suffer for righteousness — not to resist evil. God is now dealing in long-suffering mercy with the world. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." This is to be our model. We are in this, to be "perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect." For a Christian to deal with the world on the principle of righteous judgement, would be to misrepresent his heavenly Father and falsify his profession.

But, by-and-by, when the church shall have left the scene, God will deal with the world in righteousness; He will judge the nations for their treatment of His people Israel.

We do not attempt to quote passages, but merely call the reader's attention to the principle, in order to enable him to understand the just application of the prophetic Psalms. }

The foregoing line of thought will enable the reader to understand the opening lines of our chapter. The Canaanites were to receive no mercy at the hands of Israel. Their iniquities had reached the culminating point, and nothing remained but the stern execution of divine judgement. "Thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them; neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods, so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire."

Such were the instructions given by Jehovah to His people. They were clear and explicit. No mercy for the Canaanites, no covenant with them, no union, no fellowship of any kind; unsparing judgement, intense separation.

We know, alas! how soon, and how completely Israel failed to carry out these instructions. Hardly had they planted their foot upon the land of Canaan ere they made a covenant with the Gibeonites. Even Joshua himself fell into the snare. The tattered garments and mouldy bread of those wily people beguiled the princes of the congregation, and caused them to act in direct opposition to the plain commandment of God. Had they been governed by the authority of the word, they would have been preserved from the grave error of making a league with people who ought to have been utterly destroyed. But they judged by the sight of their eyes, and had to reap the consequences.\*

{\*It is, at once, instructive and admonitory to see that the garments, the mouldy bread, and the plausible words of the Gibeonites did what the walls of Jericho could not do. Satan's *wiles* are more to

be dreaded than his *power*. "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." The more deeply we ponder the various parts of the whole armour of God, the more clearly we shall see that they are ranged under these two heads, obedience and dependence. The soul that is really governed by the authority of the word, and wholly dependent upon the power of the it, is fully equipped for the conflict. It was thus the Man Christ Jesus vanquished the enemy. The devil could do nothing with a man who was perfectly obedient and perfectly dependent. May we study, in this, as in all beside, our great Exemplar!.

Implicit obedience is the grand moral safeguard against the wiles of the enemy. No doubt the story of the Gibeonites was very plausible, and their whole Appearance gave a show of truth to their statements; but none of these things should have had the slightest moral weight with Joshua and the princes; nor would they, if they had but remembered the word of the Lord. But they failed in this. They reasoned on what they saw, instead of obeying what they had heard. Reason is no guide for the people of God; we must be, absolutely and completely, guided and governed by the word of God.

This is a privilege of the very highest order, and it lies within the reach of the simplest and most Unlettered child of God. The Father's word, the Father's voice, the Father's eye, can guide the youngest, feeblest child in His family. All we need is the lowly and obedient heart. It does not demand great intellectual power or cleverness; if it did, what would become of the vast majority of Christians? If it were only the educated, the deep-thinking and the far-seeing that were capable of meeting the wiles of the adversary, then verily most of us might give up in despair.

But, thanks be to God, it is not so; indeed, on the contrary, we find, in looking through the history of the people of God, in all ages, that human wisdom, human learning, human cleverness, if not kept in their right place, have proved a positive snare, and rendered their possessors only the more efficient tools in the enemy's hand. By whom have most, if not all of the heresies been introduced which have disturbed the church of God, from age to age? Not by the simple, and the unlearned, but by the educated and the intellectual. And, in the passage to which we have just referred, in the book of Joshua, who was it that made a covenant with the Gibeonites? The common people Nay, but the princes of the congregation. No doubt, all were involved in the mischief; but it was the Princes that led the way. the heads and leaders of the assembly fell into the snare of the devil through neglect of the plain word of God.

"Thou shalt make no covenant with them." Could ought be plainer than this a Could tattered garments, old shoes and mouldy bread alter the meaning of the divine command, or do away with the urgent necessity for strict obedience on the part of the congregation? Assuredly not. Nothing can ever afford a warrant for lowering, the breadth of a hair, the standard of obedience to the word of God If there are difficulties in the way, if perplexing circumstances come before us, if things crop up for which we are not prepared, and as to which we are unable to form a judgement, what are we to do? Reason? Jump to conclusions? Act on our own, or on any human judgement? Most certainly not. What then? Wait on God; wait patiently, humbly, believingly; and He will assuredly counsel and guide. "The meek will he guide in judgement; and the meek will he teach his way. Had Joshua and the princes acted thus, they never would have made a league with the Gibeonites; and if the reader acts thus, he will be delivered from every evil work and preserved unto the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In verse 6 of our chapter Moses sets before the people the moral ground of the line of action which they were to adopt in reference to the Canaanites — the rigid separation and the unsparing judgement. "*For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to*

be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth."

The principle here laid down is of the very weightiest character. Why were the people to maintain the most marked separation from the Canaanites? Why were they to refuse, with firm decision, to make any covenant, or form any matrimonial alliance with them? Why were they to demolish their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves? Simply because they were a holy people. And who had constituted them a holy people? Jehovah. He had chosen them and set His love upon them; He had redeemed them, and separated them to Himself; and hence it was His province and prerogative to prescribe what they were to be, and how they were to act. "Be ye holy, for I am holy.

It was not, by any means, on the principle of "Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou." This is manifest, from what follows. "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." (Vs. 7, 8.)

Seasonable words these for Israel! Most healthful and needful! They were to remember that they owed all their dignity, all their privileges, all their blessings, not to ought in themselves, their own goodness or their own greatness, but simply to the fact of Jehovah's having identified Himself with them, in His infinite goodness and sovereign grace, and in virtue of His covenant with their fathers — "a covenant ordered in all things and sure." This, while it furnished a divine antidote against self-complacency and self-confidence, formed the solid basis of their happiness and their moral security. All rested upon the eternal stability of the grace of God, and therefore human boasting was excluded. "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad."

It is the settled purpose of God that "no flesh shall glory in his presence." All human pretension must be set aside. He will hide pride from man. Israel had to be taught to remember their origin, and their true condition — "bondmen in Egypt" — "fewest of all people" — no room for pride or boasting. They were, in no wise, better than the nations around them; and therefore, if called to account for their high elevation and moral greatness, they had simply to trace it all up to the free love of God, and His faithfulness to His oath. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." (Ps. 115: 1.)

"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: He will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face." (Vers. 9, 10.)

We have two weighty facts set before us here; one, full of rich consolation and comfort to every true lover of God; the other fraught with deep solemnity every hater of God. All who really love God and His commandments may count on His infallible faithfulness and tender mercy, at all times and under circumstances. "*All things work together* for good them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." If, through infinite grace, we have the love of God in our hearts, and His fear before our eyes, we may move on with good courage and joyful confidence, assured that all shall be well—must be well. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

This is a grand eternal truth — a truth for Israel, a truth for the church. Dispensations make no difference as to this. Whether we study Deuteronomy 7, or 1 John 3, we learn the same great practical

truth, that God delights in those who fear Him and love Him, and keep His commandments.

Is there ought of the legal element in this? Not a tinge. Love and legality have nothing in common; they are as far removed as the poles. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous." The spirit and genius, the ground and character of our obedience all go to prove it the very reverse of legality. It is our deep and settled Conviction that those persons, who are ever ready to cry out, "Legal! Legal!" whenever obedience is pressed upon them, are sadly and grossly mistaken. If indeed it were taught that we must earn by our obedience the high position and relationship of children of God, then verily the solemn charge of legality might justly be urged. But to bestow such an epithet on Christian obedience, is, we repeat, a serious moral mistake. Obedience could never precede sonship; but sonship should ever be followed by obedience.

And while we are on this subject, we must call the attention of the reader to a passage or two of New Testament scripture as to which there is a want of clearness in many minds. In Matthew 5, we read, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour; and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the sons (*huiioi*) of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.... Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Vers. 43-48.)

This passage might, in the judgement of some, seem to teach that the relationship of children can be attained by a certain line of action; but it is not so. It is a question of moral conformity or suitability to the character and ways of our Father. We sometimes hear, in every-day life, the saying, "You would not be your father's son if you were to act in such a way." It is as though our Lord had said, "If you want to be the sons of your heavenly Father, you must act in grace to all; for that is what He is doing."

Again, in 2 Corinthians 6. we read, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean; and I will receive you; and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Here, it is not a question of the secret relationship of children, formed by a divine operation, but the public acknowledgment of the position of *sons* (*huiious*) as the result of our separation from evil.\*

{\*Speaking in a general way, the word *teknon*, Child is a term of endearment; *huios*, Son of moral dignity, *pais*, is either a child or a servant; *nepios*, a babe.}

It will be well for the reader to seize this important distinction. It is of great practical value. We do not become children by separation from the world, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.:" "As many as received him, to them gave he power [or authority, *exousia*] to become children (*tekna*) of God, to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (Gal. 3: 26; John 1: 12, 13.) "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." (James 1: 18.) We become children by new birth which, thanks be to God, is a divine operation, from first to last. What had we to do with our natural birth? And what have we to do with our spiritual birth? Clearly nothing.

But then we must remember that God can only identify Himself with, and publicly acknowledge those who, through grace, seek to walk in a way worthy Of Him — a way befitting the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. If our ways are unlike Him, if we are mixed up with all sorts of wrong things, if we are unequally yoked together with unbelievers, how- can we expect God to own us as His sons? We read, in Hebrews 11 of those who "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the

earth," and who "declared plainly that they sought a country;" and of them we are told that "*God was not ashamed* to be called their God." He could publicly identify Himself with them, and acknowledge them. He could own them as His.

Reader, let us seriously apply our hearts to the consideration of this great practical question. Let us look, seriously and honestly, to our ways. Let us, in truthfulness and uprightness of heart, inquire whether we are "unequally yoked together with unbelievers," on any ground, or for any object whatever. If so, let us give earnest heed to the words, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing." It may be that the carrying out of this holy commandment will expose us to the charge of bigotry, narrowness and intolerance; it may mean the aspect of pharisaic pride and self-complacency. We may be told, we are not to judge, or set ourselves up to be holier or better than other people.

To all this line of argument, we have the one simple, conclusive answer, namely, God's plain command. He tells us to be separate, to come out, to touch not the unclean; and all this in order to His receiving us, and acknowledging us as His sons and daughters. This ought to be quite sufficient for us. Let people think or say what they will of us, let them call us what they please; God will settle the matter with them, sooner or later; our duty is to separate ourselves from unbelievers, if we would be received and owned of God. If believers are mixed up with unbelievers, how are they to be known or distinguished as the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty?

But we may perhaps be asked, "How are we to know who are unbelievers? All profess to be Christians; all take the ground of belonging to Christ; we are not surrounded by ignorant heathen or unbelieving Jews; how then are we to judge? It was plain enough in the early days of Christianity, when the apostle wrote his epistle to the assembly at Corinth; then the line of demarcation was as clear as a sunbeam; there were the three distinct classes, 'The Jew, the Gentile, and the church of God; but now all is changed; we live in a Christian land, under a Christian government, we are surrounded, on all hands, by Christians, and therefore 2 Cor 6 cannot apply to us; it was all very well when the church was in its infancy, having just emerged from Judaism, on the one hand, and heathenism, on the other; but to think of applying such a principle, at this advanced stage of the church's history, is wholly out of the question.

To all who take this ground, we would put a very plain question: Is it true that the church has reached a stage of her history in which the New Testament is no longer her guide and authority? Have we got beyond the range of holy scripture? If so, what are we to do? Whither are we to turn for guidance? If we admit, for a moment, that 2 Corinthians 6 does not apply to Christians now, what warrant have we for appropriating to ourselves any portion of the New Testament?

The fact is, scripture is designed for the church of God, as a whole, and for each member of that church, in particular; and hence, as long as the church is on earth, so long will the scripture apply. To question this is to offer a flat contradiction to the words of the inspired apostle when he tells us that the holy scriptures are able to make us "*wise unto salvation*," that is "wise" right onward to the day of glory, for such is the blessed force of the word "salvation," in 2 Timothy 3: 15.

We want no new light, no fresh revelation; we have "*all truth*," within the covers of our precious Bible. Thank God for it! We do not want science or philosophy to make us wise. All true science and all sound philosophy will leave untouched the testimony of holy scripture; they cannot add to it; but they will not contradict it. When infidels talk to us about "progress," "development," "the light of science," we fall back, in holy confidence and tranquility, upon those precious words, "all truth," "wise unto salvation." It is blessedly impossible to get beyond these. What can be added to "all truth"? What more

do we or can we want than to be made wise right onward to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ?

And further, let us remember that there is no change whatever in the relative position of the church and the world. It is as true today, as it was eighteen hundred and fifty years ago, when our Lord uttered the words, that His people are not of the world, even as He Himself is not of the world. (John 17.) The world is the world still. It may, in some places, have changed its dress, but not its true character, spirit and principles. Hence therefore it is as wrong, today for Christians to be "unequally yoked together with unbelievers" as it was when Paul penned his epistle to the church at Corinth. We cannot get over this. We cannot set aside our responsibility in this matter. It will not, by any means, meet the case to say, "We must not judge." We are bound to judge. If we refuse to judge, we refuse to obey, and what is this but positive rebellion? God says, "Come out from among them and be separate; If we reply, we cannot judge," where are we? The fact is we are absolutely commanded to judge. Do ye not judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth." (1 Cor. 5: 12, 13.)

But we shall not pursue this line of argument any further. We trust the reader is one who fully owns the direct application to himself of the passage which we have just quoted. It is as plain as it is pointed; it calls upon all God's people to come out and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing. This is what God requires of His people, in order to His owning them as His; and surely it ought to be the deep and earnest desire of our hearts to respond to His gracious will in this matter, utterly regardless of the world's thoughts respecting us. Some of us are as much afraid of being thought narrow and bigoted; but oh! how little it imports to a truly devoted heart what men think of us! Human thoughts perish in an hour. When we are manifested before the judgement-seat of Christ, when we stand in the full blaze of the Glory, what will it matter to us whether men considered us narrow or broad, bigoted or liberal? and what should it matter to us now? Not the weight of a feather. Our one grand object should be so to act, so to carry ourselves as to be "acceptable" to Him who has made us "accepted." May it be so with the writer and the reader, and with every member of the body of Christ!

Let us now turn, for a moment, to the weighty and very solemn truth presented to us in verse 10 of our chapter. "He will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face." If the lovers of God are comforted, in verse 9 and most blessedly encouraged to keep His commandments; the haters of God are called to hearken to a warning note in verse 10.

There is a time coming when God will deal personally — face to face, with His enemies. How awful the thought that any one should be a hater of God — a hater of that One who is said to be and who is "Light" and "Love;" the very fountain of goodness, the Author and Giver of every good and perfect gift, the Father of lights; the One whose liberal hand supplies the need of every living thing, who hears the cry of the young raven, and quenches the thirst of the wild ass; the infinitely good, the only wise, the perfectly holy God, the Lord of all power and might the creator of the ends of the earth, and the One who has power to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Only think, reader, of any one being a hater of such a One as God; and we know that all who are not lovers must be haters. People may not see this; very few would be disposed to own themselves to be absolute haters of God; but there is no neutral ground in this great question; we must either be for or against; and, in point of fact, people are not slow in showing their colours. It often happens that the heart's deep seated enmity to God comes out in hatred to His people, to His word, His worship, His service. How frequently do we hear such expressions as, "I hate religious people" — "I hate all cant" — "I hate preachers." The truth is, it is God Himself that is hated. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; and this enmity comes out in reference to every one and everything connected with God, There lies deep down in every unconverted heart the

most positive enmity to God. Every man, in his natural state, hates God.

Now, God declares, in Deuteronomy 7: 10, that "He will not be slack to him that hateth him; he will repay him to his face." This is a most solemn truth, and one which ought to be more pressed upon the attention of all whom it may concern. Men do not like to hear it; many affect and profess not to believe it. They would fain persuade themselves and persuade others also that God is too good, too kind, too merciful, too benevolent to deal in stern judgement with His creatures. They forget that God's ways in government are as perfect as His ways in grace. They imagine that the government of God will pass over or deal lightly with evil and evil doers.

This is a most miserable and fatal mistake, and men will find it to be so to their heavy and eternal cost. True it is, blessed be God, He can, in His rich sovereign grace and mercy, forgive us our sins, blot out our transgressions, cancel our guilt, justify us perfectly, and fill our hearts with the spirit of adoption. But this is another thing altogether. This is grace reigning, through righteousness, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. It is God, in His wondrous love, providing righteousness for the poor, guilty, hell-deserving sinner who knows and feels and owns that he has no righteousness of his own, and never could have it. God, in the marvellous love of His heart, has provided a means whereby He can be just and the justifier of every poor broken-hearted bankrupt sinner that simply believes in Jesus.

But how, we may ask, was all this done? was it by passing over sin, as though it were nothing? Was it by relaxing the claims of the divine government, lowering the standard of divine holiness, or touching in the most remote way, the dignity, stringency and majesty of the Law? No; thanks and praise to redeeming love, it was the very reverse. Never was there or could there be a more terrible expression of God's eternal hatred of sin, or of His unflinching purpose to condemn it utterly and punish it eternally; never was there or could there be a more glorious vindication of the divine government, a more perfect maintenance of the standard of divine holiness, truth and righteousness; never was the law more gloriously vindicated or more thoroughly established, than by that most glorious scheme of redemption planned, executed and revealed by the Eternal Three in One planned by the Father, executed by the Son, and revealed by the Holy Ghost.

If we would have a just sense of the awful reality of the government of God, His wrath against sin and the true character of His holiness, we must gaze at the cross; we must hearken to that bitter cry that issued from the heart of the Son of God and broke through the dark shadows of Calvary, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Never had such a question been asked before; never has such a question been asked since; and never shall — never can such a question be asked again. Whether we consider the One who asked it, the One of whom it was asked, or the answer, we must see that the question stands absolutely alone in the annals of eternity. The cross is the measure of God's hatred of sin, as it is the measure of His love to the sinner. It is the imperishable foundation of the throne of grace, the divinely righteous ground on which God can pardon our sins, and constitute us perfectly righteous in a risen and glorified Christ.

But then if men despise all this, and persist in their hatred of God, and yet talk of His being too good and too kind to punish evil doers, how will it be with them? "He that obeyeth not (*apeithon*) the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him." (John 3: 36). \* Can it be possible — can we believe, for a moment, that a just God should execute judgement upon His only-begotten Son, His well-beloved, His eternal delight, because He was bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, and yet allow impenitent sinners to escape? Had Jesus, the spotless, holy, perfect Man — the only perfect man that ever trod this earth — had He to suffer for sins, the just for the unjust, and shall evil doers, unbelievers and haters of God be saved and blessed and taken to heaven? And all this forsooth because

God is too kind and too good to punish sinners in hell for ever! Did it cost God the giving up, the forsaking and the bruising of His beloved Son in order to save His people *from their sins*, and shall ungodly sinners, despisers and rebels, be saved *in their sins*? Did the Lord Jesus Christ die for nothing? Did Jehovah put Him to grief and hide His face from Him when there was no necessity? Why the awful horrors of Calvary? why the three hours' darkness? why that bitter cry, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Why all this, if sinners can get to heaven without it? Why all this inconceivable sorrow and suffering for our blessed Lord, if God is too kind, and too gracious, and too tender to send sinners to hell?

{\*John 3: 36 is a passage of immense weight and importance. It not only sets forth the great truth that all who believe in the Son of God are the privileged possessors of eternal life, but it also cuts up by the roots two leading heresies of the day, namely, universalism and annihilationism. The universalist professes to believe that, ultimately, all shall be restored and blessed. Not so, says our passage; for those who obey not the Son, "shall not see life."

The annihilationist professes to believe that all who are out of Christ shall perish like the beasts. Not so, for "the wrath of God *abideth*" upon the disobedient. Abiding wrath and annihilation are wholly incompatible. It is utterly impossible to reconcile them.

It is interesting and instructive to notice the difference between the Greek words *ho pisteuon* — "he that believeth" — and — *ho apeithon* — "he that obeyeth not." They give us the two sides of the subject of faith.}

What egregious folly! What will not men believe, provided it be not the truth of God? The poor dark human mind will affect to believe the most monstrous absurdity in order to get a plea for rejecting the plain teaching of holy scripture. The very thing which men would never think of attributing to a good human government they do not hesitate to attribute to the government of the only wise, the only true, the only just God. What should we think of a government that could not or would not punish evil doers? Would we like to live under it? What should we think of the government of England if, because her Majesty is so kind, so gracious, so tender hearted, she could not allow criminals to be punished as the law directs? Who would care to live in England?

Reader, do you not see how that one verse, which is now before us, demolishes completely all the theories and arguments which men in their folly and ignorance have advanced on the subject of the divine government? "The Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God which ....repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them; he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face."

Oh! that men would hearken to the word of God! That they would be warned by its dear, emphatic and solemn statements as to coming wrath, judgement and eternal punishment! That, instead of seeking to persuade themselves and others that there is no hell, no deathless worm and unquenchable fire, no eternal torment, they would listen to the warning voice and, ere it be too late, flee for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel. Truly this would be their wisdom. God declares that He will repay those that hate Him. How awful the thought of this repayment! Who can meet it? The government of God is perfect; and because it is so, it is utterly impossible that it can allow evil to pass unjudged. Nothing can be plainer than this. All scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, sets it forth in terms so clear and forcible as to render it the very height of folly for men to argue against it. How much better and wiser and safer to flee from the wrath to come than to deny that it is coming, and that when it does come it will be eternal in its duration. It is utterly vain for any one to attempt to reason in opposition to the truth of God. Every word of God shall stand for ever. We see the actings of His

government in reference to His people Israel, and in reference to Christians now. Did He pass over evil in His people of old? Nay; on the contrary, He visited them continually with His chastening rod, and this, too, just because they were His people, as He said to them by His prophet Amos, "Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. (Amos 3: 1, 2.)

We have the same weighty principle set forth in the first Epistle of Peter, in its application to Christians now. "For the time is come that *judgement must begin*, at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (Chap. 4: 17, 18.)

God chastens His own, just because they are His own, and that they may not be condemned with the world. (1 Cor. 11) The children of this world are allowed to go on their way: but their day is coming — a dark and heavy day — a day of judgement and unmitigated wrath. Men may question and argue and reason, but scripture is distinct and emphatic. "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained." The great day of reckoning is at hand when God will repay every man to his face.

It is truly edifying to mark the way in which Moses, that beloved and honoured servant of God, led assuredly by the Spirit of God, pressed the grand and solemn realities of the divine government upon the conscience of the congregation. Hear how he pleads and exhorts. "Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgements, which I command thee this day, to do them. Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgements, and keep, and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers. And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee; he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou shalt be blessed above all people; there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. And the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee. And thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them; neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that will be a snare unto thee." (Vers. 11-16.)

What a powerful appeal! How affecting! Mark the two groups of words. Israel was to "hearken," "keep" and "do." Jehovah was to "love," "bless," and "multiply." Alas! alas! Israel failed, sadly, shamefully failed, under law and under government; and hence, instead of the love and the blessing and the multiplying, there has been judgement, curse, barrenness, dispersion, desolation.

But, blessed be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, if Israel has failed under *law* and *government*, He has not failed in His rich and precious sovereign *grace* and *mercy*. He will keep the covenant and the mercy He sware unto their fathers. Not one jot or tittle of His covenant promise shall ever fail. He make all good by-and-by. He will fulfil to the very letter all His gracious promises. Though He cannot do this on the ground of Israel's obedience, He can and will do it through the blood of the ever-lasting covenant, the precious blood of Jesus, His eternal Son — all homage to His peerless Name!

Yes reader, the God of Israel cannot suffer one of His precious Promises to fall to the ground. What would become of us if He could? What security, what rest, what peace could we have, if Jehovah's covenant with Abraham were to fail in any single point? True it is that Israel has forfeited all

claim. If it be a question of fleshly descent, Ishmael and Esau have a prior claim. If it be a question of legal obedience, the golden calf and the broken tables tell their melancholy tale. If it be a question of government on the ground of the Moab covenant, they have not a single plea to urge.

But God will be God, spite of Israel's lamentable unfaithfulness. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" and hence "All Israel shall be saved." God will most assuredly make good His oath to Abraham, spite of all the wreck and ruin of Abraham's seed. We must steadfastly hold to this, in the face of every opposing thought, feeling or opinion. Israel shall be restored, and blessed, and multiplied in their own beloved and holy land. They shall take down their harps from the willows and, beneath the peaceful shade of their own vines and fig-trees, chant the high praises of their loving Saviour and God throughout that bright millennial Sabbath which lies before them. Such is the unvarying testimony of scripture, from beginning to end, which must be maintained in its integrity, and made good in every particular, to the glory of God, and on the ground of His everlasting covenant.

But we must return to our chapter, the closing verses of which demand our special attention. It is very touching and beautiful to mark the way in which Moses seeks to encourage the heart of the people in reference to the dreaded nations of Canaan. He enters into, and anticipates their very inmost thoughts and feelings.

"If thou shalt say *in thine heart*, These nations are more than I; how can I dispossess them". Thou shalt not be afraid of them; but shalt well remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt; the great temptations which thine eyes saw, and the signs, and the wonders, and the mighty hand, and the stretched out arm, whereby the Lord thy God brought thee out: so shall the Lord thy God do unto all the people of whom thou art afraid. Moreover, the Lord thy God will send the hornet among them, until they that are left, and hide themselves from thee, be destroyed. Thou shalt not be affrighted at them; for *the Lord thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible*. And the Lord thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee. But the Lord thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed. And he shall deliver their kings into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven: there shall no man be able to stand before thee, until thou have destroyed them. The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire, thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein; for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God. Neither shalt thou bring *an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it*; but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing." (Vers. 17-26.)

The grand remedy for all unbelieving fears is simply to fix the eye upon the living God: thus the heart is raised above the difficulties whatever they may be. It is of no possible use to deny that there are difficulties and opposing influences of all sorts. This will not minister comfort and encouragement to the sinking heart. Some people affect a certain style of speaking of trials and difficulties which just goes to prove, not their practical knowledge of God, but their profound ignorance of the stern realities of life. They would fain persuade as that we ought not to feel the trials, sorrows and difficulties of the way. They might as well tell us that we ought not to have a head on our shoulders or a heart in our bosom. Such persons know not how to comfort those that are cast down. They are mere visionary theorists, wholly unfit to deal with souls passing through conflict or grappling with the actual facts of our daily history.

How did Moses seek to encourage the hearts of his brethren?" "Be not affrighted," he says; but why? Was it that there were no enemies, no difficulties, no dangers? No, but "the Lord thy God is

among you, a mighty God and terrible. Here is the true comfort and encouragement; the enemies were there but God is the sure resource. Thus it was that Jehoshaphat, in his time of trial and pressure, sought to encourage himself and his brethren. "O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do; but *our eyes are upon Thee.*"

Here lies the precious secret. The eyes are upon God. His power is brought in, and this settles everything;. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Moses meets, by his precious ministry, the rising fears in the heart of Israel, "These nations are more than I." Yes, but they are not more than the "mighty and terrible God." What nations could stand before Him? He had a solemn controversy with those nations because of their terrible sins; their iniquity was full; the reckoning time had come, and the God of Israel was going to drive them out before His people.

Hence, therefore, Israel had no need to fear the power of the enemy. Jehovah would see to that. But there was something far more to be dreaded than the enemy's power, and that was the ensnaring influence of their idolatry. "The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire." "What!" the heart might say, "are we to destroy the gold and silver that adorn these images? Might not that be turned to some good account? Is it not a pity to destroy what is so very valuable in itself? It is all right to burn the images, but why not spare the gold and silver?"

Ah! it is just thus the poor heart is prone to reason. Thus, oft-times we deceive ourselves when called to judge and abandon what is evil. We persuade ourselves of the rightness of making some reserve; we imagine we can pick and choose and make some distinction. We are prepared to give up some of the evil, but not all. We are ready to burn the wood of the idol, but spare the gold and silver.

Fatal delusion! "Thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, *lest thou be snared therein*; for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God" All must be given up, all destroyed. To retain an atom of the accursed thing is to fall into the snare of the devil, and link ourselves with that which, however highly esteemed among men, is an abomination in the sight of God.

And let us mark and ponder the closing verses of our chapter. To bring an abomination into the house is to become like it! How very solemn! Do we fully understand it? The man who brought an abomination into his house became a cursed thing like it!

Reader, may the Lord keep our hearts separated from all evil, and true and loyal to Himself!