

Numbers 17 - 36, Section 3 of 3.

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Numbers 17 & Numbers 18

These two chapters form a distinct section in which we have presented to us the source, the responsibilities, and the privileges of priesthood. Priesthood is a divine institution. "No man taketh this honour unto Himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." This is made manifest, in a most striking manner, in chapter 17. "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod according to the house of their fathers, of all their princes according to the house of their fathers twelve rods: write thou every man's name upon his rod. And thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi: for one rod shall be for the head of the house of their fathers. And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you. And it shall come to pass, that the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you. And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, and every one of their princes gave him a rod apiece, for each prince one, according to their father's houses, even twelve rods: and the rod of Aaron was among their rods." Verses 1-6.

What matchless wisdom shines in this arrangement! How completely is the matter taken out of man's hands and placed where alone it ought to be, namely, in the hands of the living God! It was not to be a man appointing himself, or a man appointing his fellow; But God appointing the man of His own selection. In a word, the question was to be definitively settled by God Himself, so that all murmurings might be silenced for ever, and no one be able again to charge God's high priest with taking too much upon him. the human will had nothing whatever to do with this solemn matter. The twelve rods, all in a like condition, were laid up before the Lord; man retired and left God to act. There was no room, no opportunity, because there was no occasion, for human management. In the profound retirement of the sanctuary, far away from all man's thinkings, was the grand question of priesthood settled by divine decision; and, being thus settled, it could never again be raised.

"And Moses laid up the rods before the Lord in the tabernacle of witness. And it came to pass that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds." striking and beautiful figure of Him who was "declared to be the Son of God with power by resurrection from the dead!" The twelve rods were all alike lifeless; but God, the living God, entered the scene, and, by that power peculiar to Himself, infused life into Aaron's rod, and brought it forth to view, bearing upon it the fragrant fruits of resurrection.

Who could gainsay this? The rationalist may sneer at it, and raise a thousand questions. Faith gazes on that fruit-bearing rod, and sees in it a lovely figure of the new creation in the which all things are of God. Infidelity may argue on the ground of the apparent impossibility of a dry stick budding, blossoming, and bearing fruit in the course of one night. But to whom does it appear impossible? To the infidel — the rationalist — the sceptic. and why? Because he always shuts out God. Let us remember this. *Infidelity invariably shuts out God*. Its reasonings are carried on and its conclusions reached in midnight darkness. There is not so much as a single ray of true light in the whole of that sphere in which infidelity operates. It excludes the only source of light, and leaves the soul wrapped in the shades and deep gloom of a darkness that may be felt.

It is well for the young reader to pause here, and deeply ponder this solemn fact. Let him calmly and seriously reflect on this special feature of infidelity-rationalism — or scepticism. It begins, continues, and ends with shutting out God. It would approach the mystery of Aaron's budding, blossoming, fruit bearing rod with a godless, audacious "*How?*" This is the infidel's great argument. He can raise ten thousand questions; but never settle one. He will teach you how to doubt, but never how to believe. He will lead you to doubt everything; but gives you nothing to believe.

Such, beloved reader, is infidelity. It is of Satan who ever has been, is, and will be, the great question raiser. Wherever you trace Satan, you will always find him raising questions. He fills the heart with all sorts of "ifs" and "hows," and thus plunges the soul in thick darkness. If he can only succeed in raising a question, he has gained his point. But he is perfectly powerless with a simple soul that just believes that God Is, and God HAS SPOKEN. Here is faith's noble answer to the infidel's questions — its divine solution of all the infidel's difficulties. Faith always brings in the very One that infidelity always shuts out. It thinks with God; infidelity thinks without Him.

Hence, then, we would say to the Christian reader, and specially to the young Christian, never admit questions when God has spoken. If you do, Satan will have you under his foot in a moment. Your only security against him is found in that one impregnable, immortal sentence, "It is written." It will never do to argue with him on the ground of experience, of feeling, or of observation; it must be absolutely and exclusively on the ground of this — that God is, and that God has spoken. Satan can make no hand of this weighty argument at all. It is invincible. Everything else he can shiver to pieces; but this confounds him and puts him to flight at once.

We see this very strikingly illustrated in the temptation of our Lord. the enemy, according to His usual way, approached the blessed One *with a question* — "*If thou be the Son of God.*" How did the Lord answer Him? Did He say, "I know I am the Son of God — I have had a testimony from the opened heavens, and from the descending and anointing Spirit — I feel, and believe, and realise that I am the Son of God?" No; such was not His mode of answering the tempter. How then? "*It is written.*" Such was the thrice repeated answer of the obedient and dependent Man; and such must be the answer of every one who will overcome the tempter.

Thus, in reference to Aaron's budding rod, if any inquire, "How can such a thing be? It is contrary to the laws of nature; and how could God reverse the established principles of natural philosophy?" Faith's reply is sublimely simple. God can do as He pleases. The One who called worlds into existence, could make a rod to bud, blossom, and bear fruit in a moment. Bring God in, and all is simple and plain as possible. Leave God out, and All is plunged in hopeless confusion. The attempt to tie up — we speak with reverence — the Almighty Creator of the vast universe, by certain laws of nature, or certain principles of natural philosophy, is nothing short of impious blasphemy. It is almost worse than denying His existence altogether. It is hard to say which is the worse, the atheist who says there is no God, or the rationalist who maintains that He cannot do as He pleases.

We feel the immense importance of being able to see the real roots of all the plausible theories which are afloat at the present moment. The mind of man is busy forming systems, drawing conclusions, and reasoning in such a manner as virtually to exclude the testimony of holy scripture altogether, and to shut out God from His own creation. Our young people must be solemnly warned as to this. They must be taught the immense difference between the facts of science, and the conclusions of scientific men. A fact is a fact wherever you meet it, whether in geology, astronomy, or any other department of science; but men's reasonings, conclusions, and systems are another thing altogether. Now, scripture will never touch the facts of science; but the reasonings of scientific man are constantly

found in collision with scripture. Alas! alas! for such men! And when such is the case we must, with plain decision, denounce such reasonings altogether, and exclaim with the apostle, "Let God be true, and every man a liar."

Gladly would we dwell upon this point though it be a digression, for we deeply feel its seriousness. But we must, for the present, be content with solemnly urging upon the reader the necessity of giving to holy scripture the supreme place in his heart and mind. We must bow down, with absolute submission, to the authority of, not "Thus saith the Church" — "Thus say the fathers" — "Thus say the doctors;" but "*Thus saith the Lord*" "*It is written.*" This is our *only* security against the rising tide of infidelity which threatens to sweep away the foundations of religious thought and feeling throughout the length and breadth of Christendom. None will escape save those who are taught and governed by the word of the Lord. May God increase the number of such!

We shall now proceed with our chapter.

"and Moses brought out all the rods from before the Lord unto all the children of Israel: and they looked, and took every man his rod. And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not. and Moses did so: as the Lord commanded Him, so did he." Verses 9-11.

Thus the question was divinely settled. Priesthood is founded upon that precious grace of God which brings life out of death. This is the source of priesthood. It could be of no possible use for man to take any one of the eleven dead rods and make it the badge of the priestly office. All the human authority under the sun could not infuse life into a dead stick, or make that stick the channel of blessing to souls. And so of all the eleven rods put together; there was not so much as a single bud or blossom throughout the whole. But where there were precious evidences of quickening power — refreshing traces of divine life and blessing — fragrant fruits of efficacious grace — there and there alone was to be found the source of that priestly ministry which could carry not only a needy but murmuring and rebellious people through the wilderness.

And here we may naturally inquire, "What about Moses' rod? Why was it not amongst the twelve?" The reason is blessedly simple. Moses rod was the expression of power and authority. Aaron's rod was the lovely expression of that grace that quickens the dead, and calls those things that be not as though they were. Now, mere power or authority could not conduct the congregation through the wilderness. Power could crush the rebel; authority might strike the sinner; but only mercy and grace could avail for an assembly of needy, helpless, sinful men, women, and children. The grace that could bring almonds out on a dead stick, could bring Israel through the wilderness. It was only in connection with Aaron's budding rod that Jehovah could say, "Thou shalt *quite* take away the murmurings of the children of Israel from me, that they die not." The rod of *authority* could take away *the murmurers*; but the rod of *grace* could take away the *murmurs*.

The reader may refer, with interest and profit, to a passage in the opening of Hebrews 9. in connection with the subject of Aaron's rod. The apostle, in speaking of the ark of the covenant, says, "wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant." This was in the wilderness. The rod and the manna were the provisions of divine grace for Israel's desert wanderings and desert need. But, when we turn to 1 Kings 8: 9, we read, "There! was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt." The wilderness wanderings were over, the glory of Solomon's day was sending forth its beams over the land, and hence the budding rod and the pot of manna are omitted, and nothing remains save that law of God, which

was the foundation of His righteous government in the midst of His people.

Now, in this we have an illustration, not only of the divine accuracy of scripture, as a whole but also of the special character and object of the Book of Numbers. Aaron's rod was in the ark during its wilderness wanderings. Precious fact! Let the reader seek to lay hold of its deep and blessed significance. Let him ponder the difference between the rod of Moses and the rod of Aaron. We have seen the former doing its characteristic work in other days and amid other scenes. we have seen the land of Egypt trembling beneath the heavy strokes of that rod. Plague after plague fell upon that devoted scene, in answer to that outstretched rod. We have seen the waters of the sea divided in answer to that rod. In short, the rod of Moses was a rod of power, a rod of authority. But it could not avail to hush the murmurings of the children of Israel; nor yet to bring the people through the desert. Grace alone could do that; and we have the expression of pure grace — free, sovereign grace — in the budding of Aaron's rod.

Nothing can be more forcible, nothing more lovely. That dry, dead stick was the apt figure of Israel's condition, and indeed of the condition of every one of us by nature. There was no sap, no life, no power. One might well say, "What good can ever come of it?" none whatever, had not grace come in and displayed its quickening power. So was it with Israel, in the wilderness; and so is it with us now. How were they to be led along from day to day? How were they to be sustained in all their weakness and need? How were they to be borne with in all their sin and folly? The answer is found in Aaron's budding rod. If the dry dead stick was the expression of nature's barren and worthless condition; the buds, blossoms, and fruit set forth that living and life-giving grace and power of God on which was based the priestly ministry that alone could bear the congregation through the wilderness. Grace alone could answer the ten thousand necessities of the militant host. Power could not suffice. authority could not avail. Priesthood alone could supply what was needed; and this priesthood was instituted on the foundation of that efficacious grace which could bring fruit out of a dry rod.

Thus it was as to priesthood of old; and thus it is as to ministry now. All ministry in the Church of God is the fruit of divine grace — the gift of Christ, the Church's Head. There is no other source of ministry whatsoever. From apostles down to the very lowest gifts, all proceed from Christ. The grand root principle of all ministry is embodied in those words of Paul to the Galatians in which he speaks of himself as "An apostle, not of man, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead." Galatians 1: 1.

Here, be it noted, is the sublime source from whence all ministry emanates. It is not of man, or by man, in any shape or form. Man may take up dry sticks and shape and fashion them according to His own will; and he may ordain and appoint, and call them by certain high-sounding, official titles. But of what use is it? We may justly say, They are only dry, dead sticks.

"Where is there a single cluster of fruit Where is there a single blossom? Nay., where is there one solitary bud? "Even one bud will suffice to prove that there is something divine. But in the absence of this there can be no living ministry in the Church of God: It is the gift of Christ and that alone that makes a man a minister. Without this it is an empty assumption for any one to set himself up, or be set up by others to be a minister.

Does the reader thoroughly own this great principle? Is it as clear as a sunbeam to his soul? has he any difficulty respecting it? If so, we entreat him to seek to divest his mind of all preconceived thoughts, from what source soever derived; let will rise above the hazy mists of traditional religion; let him take the New Testament, and study as in the immediate presence of God, 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Corinthians 14; and also Ephesians 4: 7-18. In these passages he will find the whole subject of ministry

unfolded; and from them he will learn that all true ministry, whether it be apostles, prophets, teachers, pastors, or evangelists, all is of God — all flows down from Christ the exalted Head of the Church. If a man be not possessed of a *bona fide* gift from Christ he is not a minister. Every member of the body has a work to do. the edification of the body is promoted by the proper action of all the members, whether prominent or obscure, "comely" or "uncomely." In short, all ministry is from God, and not from man; it is by God, and not by man. There is no such thing in scripture as a humanly ordained ministry. All is of God.

We must not confound ministerial gifts with office or local charge. We find the apostles, or their delegates, ordaining elders and appointing deacons; But this was quite a distinct thing from ministerial gifts. 'Those elders and deacons might possess and exercise some specific gift in the body; the apostle did not ordain them to exercise such gift, but only to fulfil the local charge. The spiritual gift was from the Head of the Church, and was independent of the local charge altogether.

It is most necessary to be clear as to the distinction between gift and local charge. There is the utmost confusion of the two things throughout the entire professing church,, and the consequence is that ministry is not understood. The members of the body of Christ do not understand their place or their functions. Human election, or human authority in some shape or another, is deemed essential to the exercise of ministry in the Church. But there is really no such thing in scripture. If there be, nothing is easier than to produce it. We ask the reader to find a single line, from cover to cover of the New Testament in which a human call, human appointment, or human authority, has anything whatsoever to do with the exercise of ministry in its very fullest range. We boldly assert there is no such thing.* Ah, no; blessed be God, ministry in His Church is "not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead." "*God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him.*" (1 Cor. 12: 18) "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. wherefore He saith, When he ascended up on High, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.....and he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith. and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Ephesians 4: 7-13.

{*Even in the matter of appointing deacons, in Acts 6, we see it was an apostolic act. "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom *we may appoint* over this business." "The brethren were allowed to select the men, inasmuch as it was their money that was in question. But the *appointment* was divine. And this, be it remembered, had reference merely to the business of deacons who were to manage the Church's temporal affairs. But as regards the work of evangelists, pastors, and teachers, it is wholly independent of human choice and human authority, and rests simply upon the gift of Christ, Ephesians 4: 11.}

Here all the grades of ministerial gift are placed on one and the same ground, from apostles down to evangelists and teachers. They are All given by the Head of the Church and, when bestowed, they render the possessors responsible, at once, to the head in heaven, and to the members on earth. The idea of any possessor of a positive gift from God waiting for human authority, is as great an insult to the divine majesty as if Aaron had gone with his blooming rod in his hand, to be ordained to the priesthood by some of his fellows. Aaron knew better. He was called of God, and that was quite enough for him. and so now, all who possess a divine gift are Called of God to the ministry, and they need nothing more save to wait on their ministry, and cultivate their gift.

Need we add that it is vain for men to set up to be ministers unless they really do possess the gift? A man may fancy he has a gift, and it may be only a vain conceit of his own mind. It is quite as bad, if not worse, for one man to go to work on the strength of his own foolish imagination, as for another to go on the strength of the unwarrantable authority of his fellows. What we contend for is this — ministry is of God as to its source, power, and responsibility. We do not think that this statement will be called in question by any who are disposed to be taught exclusively by scripture. Every minister, whatever be his gift, should be able, in his measure, to say, "God has put me into the ministry." But for a man to use this language without possessing any gift, is, to say the least of it, worse than worthless. The people of God can easily tell where there is real spiritual gift. Power is sure to be felt. But if men pretend to gift or power without the reality, their folly shall speedily be manifest to all. All pretenders are sure to find their true level, sooner or later.

Thus much as to ministry and priesthood. The source of each is divine. The true foundation of each lies in the budding rod. Let this be ever borne in mind. Aaron could say, "God put me into the priesthood;" and if challenged for his proof, he could point to the fruit-bearing rod. Paul could say, "God put me into the ministry;" and when challenged for his proof, could point to the thousands of living seals to his work. Thus it must ever be in principle, whatever be the measure. Ministry must not be merely in word or in tongue; but in deed and in truth. God will not know the speech, But the power.

But, ere we turn from this subject, we deem it most necessary to impress upon the reader the importance of distinguishing between ministry and priesthood. The sin of Korah consisted in this, that, not content with being a minister, he aimed at being a priest; and the sin of Christendom is of the same character. Instead of allowing ministry to rest upon its own proper New Testament basis, to exhibit its proper characteristics, and discharge its proper functions, it is exalted into a priesthood, a sacerdotal caste, the members of which are distinguished from their brethren by their style of dress and certain titles. There is no foundation whatsoever for these things in the New Testament. According to the plain teaching of that blessed book, all believers are priests. Thus, in Peter we read, "But *ye* [not merely the apostles, but all believers] are a chosen generation, a *royal priesthood*." (1 Peter 2: 9) so also in Revelation "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and *priests* unto God and his Father." (1 Peter 1: 5, 6) God, in pursuance of the truth set forth in the foregoing passages, we find the Apostle Paul, by the Holy Ghost, exhorting the Hebrew believers to draw nigh, and enter with boldness into the very holiest of all. (Heb. 10: 19-22) And further on he says, "By him therefore [i.e., Jesus let us *offer The sacrifice* of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. But to do good, and to communicate, forget not: for with *such sacrifices* God is well pleased." Hebrews 13: 15, 16.

How marvellous it must have appeared to Jewish saints — to those trained amid the institutions of the Mosaic economy, to be exhorted to enter into a place to which the very highest functionary in Israel could only approach once a year, and that but for a moment! And there to be told that they were to offer sacrifice, that they were to discharge the peculiar functions of the priesthood. All this was wonderful. But thus it is, if we are to be taught by scripture, and not by the commandments, the doctrines, and the traditions of men. All Christians are priests. They are not all apostles, prophets, teachers, pastors, or evangelists; but they are all priests. The very feeblest member of the Church was as much a priest as Peter, Paul, James, or John. We speak not of capacity or spiritual power, but of the position which all occupy in virtue of the blood of Christ. There is no such thing in the New Testament as a certain class of men, a certain privileged caste, brought into a higher or nearer position than their brethren. All this is flatly opposed to Christianity — a bold traversing of all the precepts of the word of God, and the special teachings of our blessed Lord and Master.

Let no one suppose that these things are unimportant. Far from it. They affect the very foundations of Christianity. We have only to open our eyes and look around us in order to see the practical results of this confounding of ministry and priesthood. And we may rest assured that the moment is rapidly approaching when these results will all assume a far more awful character, and bring down the very heaviest judgements from the living God. We have not yet seen the full antitype of "the gainsaying of Core;" but it will soon be manifested: and we solemnly warn the Christian reader to take heed how he lends his sanction to the serious error of mixing up two things so entirely distinct as ministry and priesthood. We would exhort him to take this whole subject up in the light of scripture. We want him to submit to the authority of God's word, and to abandon everything that is not founded thereon. It matters not what it is; it may be a time-honoured institution; an expedient arrangement; a decent ceremony supported by tradition, and countenanced by thousands of the very best of men. It matters not. If the thing has no foundation in holy scripture, it is an error, and an evil, and a snare of the devil, to entice our souls, and lead us away from the simplicity that is in Christ. For example, if we are taught that there is, in the Church of God, a sacerdotal caste, a class of men, more holy, more elevated, nearer to God, than their brethren — than ordinary Christians; what is this but Judaism revived and tacked on to Christian forms? And what must be the effect of this, but to rob the children of God of their proper privileges as such, and to put them at a distance from Him, and place them under bondage?

We shall not pursue this subject any further just now. Enough, we trust, has been suggested to lead the reflecting reader to follow it up for himself. We only add, and that with special emphasis, let him follow it up only in that light of scripture. Let him resolve, by the grace of God, to lay aside everything which rests not upon the solid and sacred basis of the written word. Thus, and thus alone, can he be preserved from every form of error, and led to a sound conclusion on this most important and interesting question.

The closing lines of chapter 17 furnish a remarkable illustration of how quickly the human mind passes from one extreme to another. "The children of Israel spake unto Moses, saying, Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish. Whosoever cometh anything near unto the tabernacle of the Lord shall die: shall we be consumed with dying?" In the preceding chapter, we see bold presumption in the very presence of the majesty of Jehovah, where there should have been profound humility. Here, in the presence of divine grace and its provisions, we observe legal fear and distrust. Thus it is ever. Mere nature neither understands holiness nor grace. At one moment we hearken to such accents as these, "*All* the congregation are holy;" and the next moment, the word is, "Behold we die, we perish, we all perish." The carnal mind presumes where it ought to retire; it distrusts where it ought to confide.

However, all this becomes the occasion, through the goodness of God, of unfolding to us, in a very full and blessed manner, the holy responsibility as well as the precious privileges of the priesthood. How gracious it is — how like our God, to turn His people's mistakes into an occasion of furnishing deeper instruction as to His ways! It is His Prerogative, blessed be His name, to bring good out of evil; to make the eater yield meat, and the strong, sweetness. Thus "the gainsaying of Core" gives occasion for the copious volume of instruction furnished by Aaron's rod; and the closing lines of chapter 17 call forth an elaborate statement of the functions of Aaron's priesthood. To this latter we shall now proceed to direct the reader's attention.

"And the Lord said unto Aaron, Thou and thy sons, and thy father's house with thee, shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary; and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood. All thy brethren also of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of thy father, bring them with thee, that they may be joined unto thee, and minister unto thee: but thou and thy sons with thee shall minister before the tabernacle of witness. And they shall keep thy charge, and the charge of all the tabernacle: only they

shall not come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar, that neither they, nor ye also, die. And they shall be joined unto thee, and beep the charge of the tabernacle of the congregation, for all the service of the tabernacle: and a stranger shall not come nigh unto you. and ye shall keep the charge of the sanctuary, and the charge of the altar: *that there be no wrath any more upon the children of Israel.* And I, behold, I have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel: to you they are given as a gift for the Lord, to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. Therefore thou and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest's office for every thing of the altar, and within the veil; and ye shall serve: I have given your priest's office unto you as a service of gift: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death." Num. 18: 1-7.

Here we have a divine answer to the question raised by the children of Israel, " Shall we be consumed with dying?" "No," says the God of all grace and mercy. And why not? Because "Aaron and his sons with him shall keep the charge of the sanctuary, and the charge of the altar; that There be no wrath any more upon the children of Israel." Thus the people are taught that in that very priesthood which had been so despised and spoken against, they were to find their security.

But we have to notice particularly that Aaron's sons, and his father's house are associated with him in His high and holy privileges and responsibilities. the Levites were given as a gift to Aaron, to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. They were to serve under Aaron, the head of the priestly house. This teaches us a fine lesson, and one much needed by Christians at the present moment. We all want to bear in mind that service, to be intelligent and acceptable, must be rendered in subjection to priestly authority and guidance. "And thy brethren also of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of thy father, bring thou with thee, that they may be *joined unto thee*, and *minister unto thee.*" This stamped its distinct character upon the entire range of Levite service. The whole tribe of workers were associated with and subject to the great high priest. All was under his immediate control and guidance. So must it be now, in reference to all God's workers. All Christian service must be rendered in fellowship with our great High Priest, and in holy subjection to His authority. It is of no value otherwise. There may be a great deal of work done, there may be a great deal of activity; but if Christ be not the immediate object before the heart, if His guidance and authority be not fully owned, the work must go for nothing.

But, on the other hand, the smallest act of service the meanest work done under the eye of Christ, done with direct reference to Him, has its value in God's estimation, and shall, most assuredly, receive its due reward. This is truly encouraging, and consolatory to the heart of every earnest worker. The Levites had to work under Aaron. Christians have to work under Christ. We are responsible to Him. It is very well and very beautiful to walk in fellowship with our dear fellow-workmen, and to be subject one to another, in the fear of the Lord. Nothing is further from our thoughts that to foster or countenance a spirit of haughty independence, or that temper of soul which would hinder our genial and hearty co-operation with our brethren in every good work. All the Levites were "joined unto Aaron," in their work, and therefore they were joined one to another. Hence, they had to work together. If a Levite had turned his back upon his brethren, he would have turned his back upon Aaron. We may imagine a Levite, taking offence at something or other in the conduct of his fellows, and saying to Himself, "I cannot get on with my brethren. I must walk alone. I can serve God, and work under Aaron; but I must beep aloof from my brethren inasmuch as I find it impossible to agree with them as to the mode of working." But we can easily see through the fallacy of all this. For a Levite to adopt such a line of action would have produced nothing but confusion. All were called to work together, how varied soever their work might be.

Still, be it ever borne in mind, their work did vary and, moreover, each was called to work under

Aaron. There was individual responsibility with the most harmonious corporate action. We certainly desire, in every possible way, to promote unity in action; but this must never be suffered to trench upon the domain of personal service, or to interfere with the direct reference of the individual workman to his Lord. the Church of God affords a very extensive platform to the Lord's workers. There is ample space thereon for all sorts of labourers. We must not attempt to reduce all to a dead level, or cramp the varied energies of Christ's servants by confining them to certain old ruts of our own formation. This will never do. We must, all of us diligently seek to combine the most cordial unanimity with the greatest possible variety in action. Both will be healthfully promoted by each and all remembering that we are called to serve together under Christ.

Here lies the grand secret. *Together, under Christ!* May we bear this in mind. It will help us to recognise and appreciate another's line of work though it may differ from our own; and, on the other hand, it will preserve us from an overweening sense of our own department of service, inasmuch as we shall see that we are, one and all, but co-workers in the one wide field; and that the great object before the Master's heart can only be attained by each worker pursuing his own special line, and pursuing it in happy fellowship with all.

There is a pernicious tendency in some minds to depreciate every line of work save their own. This must be carefully guarded against. If all were to pursue the same line, where were that lovely variety which characterises the Lord's work and workmen in the world? Nor is it merely a question of the line of work, but actually of the peculiar style of each workman. You may find two evangelists, each marked by an intense desire for the salvation of souls, each preaching, substantially, the same truth; and yet there may be the greatest possible variety in the mode in which each one seeks to gain the self-same object. We should be prepared for this. Indeed we should fully expect it. And the same holds good in reference to every other branch of Christian service. We should strongly suspect the ground occupied by a Christian assembly if there were not ample space allowed for every branch and style of Christian service — for every line of work capable of being taken up in individual responsibility to the great Head of the priestly house. We ought to do nothing which we cannot do under Christ, and in fellowship with Him. And all that can be done in fellowship With Christ can surely be done in fellowship with those who are walking with Him.

Thus much as to the special manner in which the Levites are introduced in our chapter, in connection with Aaron and his sons. To these latter we shall now turn for a few moments, and meditate on the rich provision made for them, in the goodness of God, as well as the solemn functions devolving upon them, in their priestly place.

"And the Lord spake unto Aaron, Behold, I also have given thee the charge of mine heave-offerings of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel; unto thee have I given them, *by reason of the anointing*, and to thy sons, by an ordinance for ever. This shall be thine of the most holy things, reserved from the fire: every oblation of theirs, every meat-offering of theirs; and every sin-offering of theirs, and every trespass offering of theirs, which they shall render unto me, shall be most holy for thee and for thy sons. In the most holy place shalt thou eat it; *every male* shall eat it: it shall be holy unto thee." Verses 8-10.

Here we have a type of the people of God looked at in another aspect. They are here presented, not as workers, but as worshippers; not as Levites, but as priests. all believers — all Christians — all the children of God, are priests. There is, according to the teaching of the New Testament, no such thing as a priest upon earth, save in the sense in which all believers are priests. A special priestly caste — a certain class of men set apart as priests, is a thing not only unknown in Christianity, but most

positively hostile to the spirit and principles thereof. We have already referred to this subject, and quoted the various passages of scripture bearing upon it. We have a great High Priest who has passed into the heavens, for if He were on earth He should not be a priest. (Compare Heb. 4: 14 and 8: 4 "Our Lord sprang Out Of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood." Hence, therefore, a sacrificing priest on the earth is a direct denial of the truth of scripture, and a complete setting aside of the glorious fact on which Christianity is based, namely, accomplished redemption. If there is any need of spriest now, to offer sacrifice for sins, then, most assuredly, redemption is not an accomplished fact. But scripture, in hundreds of places, declares that it is, and therefore we need no more offering for sin. "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, *not made with hands*, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, *having obtained eternal redemption.*" (Heb. 9: 11, 12) So also, in Heb. 10 we read, "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." And again, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin."

This settles the great question as to priesthood and sacrifice for sin. Christians cannot be too clear or decided in reference to it. It lies at the very foundation of true Christianity, and demands the deep and serious attention of all who desire to walk in the clear light of a full salvation, and to occupy the true Christian position. There is a strong tendency towards Judaism — a vigorous effort to engraft Christian forms upon the old Jewish stem. This is nothing new; But, just now, the enemy seems peculiarly busy. We can perceive a great leaning towards Romanism, throughout the length and breadth of Christendom; and in nothing is the leaning more strikingly apparent than in the institutions of a special priestly order in the Church of God. We believe it to be a thoroughly antichristian institution. It is the denial of the common priesthood of all believers. If a certain set of men are ordained to occupy a place of peculiar nearness and sanctity, then where are the great mass of Christians to stand?

This is the question. It is precisely here that the great importance and gravity of this whole subject are made apparent. Let not the reader suppose that we are contending for some peculiar theory of any particular class or sect of Christians. Nothing is further from our thoughts. It is because we are convinced that the very foundations of the Christian faith are involved in this question of priesthood that we urge its consideration upon all with whom we have to do. We believe it will invariably be found that in proportion as Christians become clear and settled on the divine ground of accomplished redemption, they get further and further away from the Romanism and Judaism of an order of priests in the Church of God. And, on the other hand, where souls are not clear, not settled, not spiritual; where there is legality, carnality and worldliness, there you will find a hankering after a humanly appointed priesthood. Nor is it difficult to see the reason of this. If a man is not himself in a fit state to draw nigh to God, it will be a relief to him to employ another to draw nigh for him. And, most certainly, no man is in a fit state to draw nigh to a holy God who does not know that his sins are forgiven — has not got a perfectly purged conscience — is in a dark, doubting, legal state of soul. In order to come boldly into the holiest of all, we must know what the blood of Christ has done for us; we must know that we ourselves are made priests to God; and that, in virtue of the atoning death of Christ, we are brought so near to God that it is impossible for any order of men to come between. "He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us priests unto God and his Father." (Rev. 1) "But ye are a chosen generation, *a royal priesthood*, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." and again, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, *an holy priesthood*, to offer up *spiritual sacrifices*, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2: 5, 9) "By him therefore let us offer the *sacrifice of praise* to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to

communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Hebrews 13: 15, 16.

Here we have the two great branches of spiritual sacrifice which, as priests, we are privileged to offer, namely, praise to God, doing good to men. The very youngest, the most inexperienced, the most unlettered Christian is capable of understanding these things. Who is there in all the family of God — in all the priestly household of our divine High Priest, who cannot, with his *heart*, say, "The Lord be praised" And who cannot, with his *hand*, do good to His fellow? And this is priestly worship, and priestly service — the common worship and service of all true Christians. True, the measure of spiritual power may vary; But all the children of God are constituted priests, one as much as another.

Now in Numbers 18 we are presented with a very full statement of the provision made for Aaron and his house; and, in that provision, a type of the spiritual portion of the Christian priesthood. And surely we cannot read the record without seeing what a royal portion is ours. "Every oblation of theirs, every meat offering of theirs, and every sin offering of theirs, and every trespass offering of theirs, which they shall render unto me, shall be most holy for thee and for *thy sons*. *In the Most holy place* shalt thou eat it; *every male* shall eat it: it shall be holy unto thee."

It demands a very large measure of spiritual capacity to enter into the depth and meaning of this marvellous passage. To eat the sin offering, or the trespass offering is, in figure, to make another's sin or trespass one's own. This is very holy work. It is not every one who can, in spirit, identify himself with the sin of his brother. To do so in fact, in the way of atonement, is, we need hardly say, wholly out of question. There was but one who could do this; and He — adored for ever be His name! — has done it perfectly.

But there is such a thing as making my brother's sin my own, and bearing it in spirit before God, as though it were my own. This is shadowed forth by Aaron's sons eating the sin offering, in the most holy place. It was only the *sons* who did so. "Every *male* shall eat it.* It was the very highest order of priestly service. "in the most holy place shalt thou eat it." We need to be very near to Christ in order to enter into the spiritual meaning and application of all this. It is a wonderfully blessed and holy exercise; and it can only be known in the immediate presence of God. How little we really know of this the heart can testify. Our tendency is, when a brother has sinned, to sit in judgement upon him; to take the place of a severe censor, to look upon his sin as a something with which we have nothing whatever to do. This is to fail sadly in our priestly functions. It is refusing to eat the sin offering in the most holy place. It is a most precious fruit of grace to be able so to identify oneself with an erring brother as to make his sin one's own — to bear it in spirit before God. This truly is a very high order of priestly service, and demands a large measure of the spirit and mind of Christ. It is only the spiritual who really enter into this; and alas! how few of us are truly spiritual! "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, *ye which are spiritual* restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." (Gal. 6: 1, 2) May the Lord give us grace to fulfil this blessed "law!" How unlike it is to everything in us! How it rebukes our harshness and selfishness! Oh! to be more like Christ in this as in All beside!

{*As a general principle, the "son" presents the divine idea; the "daughter," the human apprehension thereof: the male" sets forth the thing as God gives it; the "female" as we realise and exhibit it.}

But there was another order of priestly privilege, not so high as that which we have been considering. "And this is thine: the heave offering of their *gift*, with all the wave offerings of the children of Israel: I have given them unto thee, and to thy sons, and to the *daughters* with thee, by a statute for ever: *every one that is clean* in thy house shall eat of it." Verse 11.

The daughters of Aaron were not to eat of the sin offerings or the trespass offerings. They were provided for according to the utmost limit of their capacity; but there were certain functions which they could not discharge — certain privileges which lay beyond their range — certain responsibilities too weighty for them to sustain. It is far easier to have fellowship with another in the presentation of a thank offering than it is to make his sin our own. This matter demands a measure of priestly energy which finds its type in Aaron's "sons," not in his "daughters." We must be prepared for those varied measures amongst the members of the priestly household. we are all blessed be God, on the same ground; we all stand in the same title; we are all in the same relationship; but our capabilities vary; and while we should all aim at the very highest standard of priestly service, and the very highest measure of priestly capacity, it is of no possible use to pretend to what we do not possess.

One thing, however, is clearly taught in verse 11 and that is, we must be "clean" in order to enjoy any priestly privilege, or eat of any priestly food — clean, through the precious blood of Christ applied to our conscience — clean, through the application of the word, by the Spirit, to our habits, associations, and ways. When thus clean, whatever be our capacity, we have the richest provision made for our souls, through the precious grace of God. Hearken to the following Words: "*All the best* of the oil, and *all the best* of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the Lord, them have I given thee. And whatsoever is *first ripe* in the land, which they shall bring unto the Lord, shall be thine; *every one who is clean* in thy house shall eat of it." Verses 12, 13.*

{*Let the reader consider what the moral effect must be of taking the above passage literally and applying it to a certain priestly class in the Church of God: Take it typically and spiritually, and you have a striking and beautiful figure of the spiritual food provided for all the members of the priestly family, which is, in one word Christ in all His preciousness and fullness.}

Here, assuredly, we have a princely portion provided for those who are made priests unto God. They were to have the very best, and the very first of everything which the Lord's land produced. There was "The wine which maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart." Psalm 104: 15.

What a figure have we, in all this, of our portion in Christ! The olive, the grape, and the finest of the wheat were pressed and bruised, in order to feed and gladden the priests of God; and the blessed Antitype of all these has, in infinite grace, been bruised and crushed in death, in order that by His flesh and blood, He might minister life, strength, and gladness to His household. He, the precious corn of wheat, fell into the ground and died, that we might live; and the juices of the living vine were pressed to till that cup of salvation of which we drink, now, and shall drink for ever, in the presence of our God.

What, therefore, remains? What do we want, save an enlarged capacity to enjoy the fullness and blessedness of our portion in a crucified, risen, and glorified Saviour? We may well say, "We have all and abound." God has given us all that even He could give — the very best He had. He has given us His own portion. He has called us to sit down with Himself, in holy, happy fellowship, and feast upon the fatted calf. He has caused our ears to hear, and our hearts, in some small degree, to enter into these most marvellous words, "let us eat and be merry."

How wonderful to think that nothing could satisfy the heart and mind of God but to gather His people round Himself and feed them with that in which He Himself delights! "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ." (1 John 1) What more could even the love of God do for us than this? And for whom has He done it? For those who were dead in trespasses and sins — for aliens, enemies, guilty rebels — for dogs of the Gentiles — for those who were far from Him, having no hope, and without God in the world — for those who, had we our deserts, should lie now burning in

the eternal flames of hell. Oh! what wondrous grace! What profound depths of sovereign mercy! And, we must add, what a divinely precious atoning sacrifice, to bring poor self-destroyed, guilty, hell-deserving sinners into such ineffable blessedness! — to pluck us as brands from everlasting burnings, and make us priests to God! — to take away all our "filthy garments" from us, and cleanse, clothe, and crown us, in His own presence, and to His own praise! May we praise Him! May our hearts and lives praise Him! May we know how to enjoy our priestly place and portion, and to wear our mitre well! We can do nothing better than praise God — nothing higher than to present to Him, by Jesus Christ, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name. This shall be our everlasting employment in that bright and blessed world to which we are hastening, and where we shall soon be, to dwell for ever with Him who has loved us and given Himself for us — our own blessed Saviour God — to go no more out for evermore.

In verses 14-19 of our chapter we have instruction as to "the firstborn of man and beast." We may remark that man is placed on a level with the unclean beast. Both had to be redeemed. The unclean beast was unfit for God; and so was man, unless redeemed by blood. The clean animal was not to be redeemed. It was fit for God's use, and was given to be the food of the entire priestly household — sons and daughters alike. In this we have a type of Christ in whom God can find His perfect delight the full joy of His heart - the only object, throughout the wide universe, in which He could find perfect rest and satisfaction. And — wondrous thought — He has given Him to us, His priestly household, to be our food, our light, our joy, our all in all for ever.*

{*For further remarks on the subject presented to Numbers 18: 14-19, the reader is referred to "Notes on Exodus," chapter 13 we are anxious to avoid, as much as possible any repetition of what has been gone into in previous volume.}

"Jesus, of thee we ne'er would tire:

The new and living food

Can satisfy our heart's desire,

And life is in thy blood.'

The reader will notice, in this chapter, as elsewhere, that every fresh subject is introduced by the words, "And the Lord spake unto Moses," or "unto Aaron." Thus, from verses 20-32, we are taught that the priests and Levites — God's worshippers and workers, were to have no inheritance among the children of Israel, but were to be absolutely shut up to God Himself, for the supply of all their need. Most blessed position. Nothing can be more lovely than the picture here presented. The children of Israel were to bring their offerings, and lay them down at the feet of Jehovah, and He, in His infinite grace, commanded His workers to pick up these precious offerings — the fruit of His people's devotedness — and feed upon them, in His own blessed presence, with thankful hearts. Thus the circle of blessing went round. God ministered to all the wants of His people; His people were privileged to have the rich fruits of His bounty with the priests and Levites; and these latter were permitted to taste the rare and exquisite pleasure of giving back to God of that which had flown from Him to them.

All this is divine. It is a striking figure of that which we should look for in the Church of God now. As we have already remarked, God's people are presented, in this book, under three distinct phases, namely, as warriors, workers, and worshippers; and in all three they are viewed as in the attitude of the most absolute dependence upon the living God. In our warfare, in our work, and in our worship, we are *shut up to God*. Precious fact. "All our springs are in Him." What more do we want? Shall we turn to man or to this world for relief or resource? God forbid! Nay, rather let it be our one

grand object to prove, in our entire history, in every phase of our character, and in every department of our work, that God is enough for our hearts.

It is truly deplorable, to find God's people, and Christ's servants, looking to the world for support, and trembling at the thought of that support being withheld. Only let us try to imagine the Church of God, in the days of Paul, relying upon the Roman government for the support of its bishops, teachers, and evangelists. Ah! no, dear reader; the Church looked to its divine Head in the heavens, and to the divine Spirit upon earth, for all its need. Why should it be otherwise now? The world is the world still; and the Church is not of the world, and should not look for the world's gold and silver. God will take care of His people and of His servants, if they will only trust Him. We may depend upon it, God's gift is far better for the Church than the government gift — no comparison in the estimation of a spiritual mind.

May all the saints of God, and all the servants of Christ, in every place, apply their hearts, earnestly, to the consideration of these things! And may we have grace to confess, practically, in the face of a godless, Christless, infidel world, that the living God is amply sufficient for our every need, not only while passing through the narrow archway of time, but also for the boundless ocean of eternity. God grant it for Christ's sake!

Numbers 19.

One of the most important sections of the book of Numbers now lies open before us, presenting for our consideration the deeply interesting and instructive ordinance of "The red Heifer." A thoughtful student of scripture would naturally feel disposed to inquire why it is that we get this type in Numbers and not in Leviticus. In the first seven chapters of the latter book, we have a very elaborate statement of the doctrine of sacrifice; and yet we have no allusion whatever to the red heifer. Why is this? What are we to learn from the fact that this beautiful ordinance is presented in the Book of Numbers and nowhere else? We believe it furnishes another striking illustration of the distinctive character of Our book. The red heifer is, pre-eminently, a wilderness type. It was God's provision for defilements by the way, and it prefigures the death of Christ as a purification for sin, to meet our need in passing through a defiling world, home to our eternal rest above. It is a most instructive figure, and unfolds most precious and needed truth. May the holy Ghost, who has penned the record, be graciously pleased to expound and apply it to our souls!

"And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, Saying, This is the ordinance of the law which the Lord hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke." Verses 1, 2.

When, with the eye of Faith, we gaze upon the Lord Jesus, we not only see Him to be the spotless One, in His own holy Person, but also One who never bore the yoke of sin. The Holy Ghost is ever the jealous guardian of the person of Christ, and He delights to present Him to the soul in all His excellency and preciousness. Hence it is that every type and every shadow, designed to set Him forth, exhibits the same careful guardianship. Thus, in the red heifer, we are taught that, not only was our blessed Saviour, as to His human nature, intrinsically and inherently pure and spotless, but that, as to His birth and relationships, He stood perfectly clear from every mark and trace of sin. No yoke of sin ever came upon His sacred neck. When He speaks of "my yoke" (Matt. 11: 29), it was the yoke of implicit subjection to the Father's will, in all things. This was the only yoke He ever wore; and this yoke was never off, for one moment, during the entire of His spotless and perfect career — from the manger, where He lay a helpless babe, to the cross, where He expired as a victim.

But He wore no yoke of sin. Let this be distinctly understood. He went to the cross to expiate our

sins, to lay the groundwork of our perfect purification from all sin; but He did this as One who had never, at any time during His blessed life, worn the yoke of sin. He was "without sin;" and, as such, was perfectly fitted to do the great and glorious work of expiation. To think of him as bearing the yoke of sin in His life, would be to think of him as unfit to atone for it in His death. "wherein is no blemish, and whereon never came yoke." It is quite as needful to remember and weigh the force of the word "whereon," as of the word "wherein." Both expressions are designed by the holy Ghost to get forth the perfection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who was not only internally spotless, but also externally free from every trace of sin. Neither in His Person, nor yet in His relationships, was He, in anywise, obnoxious to the claims of sin or death. He — adored for ever be His name! — entered into all the reality of our circumstances and condition; but in Him was no sin, and on Him no yoke of sin.

"Touched with a Sympathy within,
He knows our feeble frame;
He knows what sore temptations mean,
For He has felt the same.
"But spotless, undefiled, and pure,
The great Redeemer stood,
while Satan's fiery darts He bore,
And did resist to blood."

"And ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face." Verse 3.

The thoughtful reader of scripture will not pass over any expression, how trivial soever it may seem to be. Such an one will ever bear in mind that the book which lies open before him is from God, and therefore perfect — perfect as a whole — perfect in all its parts. Every little word is pregnant with meaning. Each little point, feature, and circumstance contains some spiritual teaching for the soul. No doubt, infidels and rationalists altogether fail in seizing this weighty fact, and, as a consequence, when they approach the divine volume, they make the saddest havoc. They see flaws where the spiritual student sees only gems. They see incongruities and contradictions where the devout, self distrusting, Spirit-taught disciple beholds divine harmonies and moral glories.

This is only what we might expect; and it is well to remember it now-a-days. "God is His own interpreter," in scripture, as well as in providence; and if we wait on Him, He will assuredly make it plain. But, as in providence, "Blind unbelief is sure to err, and scan His ways in vain," so in scripture, it is sure to err, and scan His lines in vain. And the devout poet might have gone farther; for, most surely, unbelief will not only scan God's ways and God's word in vain, but turn both the one and the other into an occasion of making a blasphemous attack upon God Himself, upon His nature, and upon His character, as well as upon the revelation which He has been pleased to give us. The infidel would rudely smash the lamp of inspiration, quench its heavenly light, and involve us all in the deep gloom and moral darkness which entrap His own misguided mind.

We have been led into the foregoing train of thought while meditating upon the third verse of our chapter. We are exceedingly desirous to cultivate the habit of profound and careful study of holy scripture. It is of immense importance. To say or to think that there is so much as a single clause, or a single expression, from cover to cover of the inspired volume, unworthy of our prayerful meditation, is

to imply that God the Holy Ghost has thought it worth His while to write what we do not think it worth our while to study. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." (2 Tim. 3: 16) This commands our reverence. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning." (Rom 15: 4) This awakens our personal interest. the former of these quotations proves that scripture comes *from God*; the latter proves that it comes *to us*. That and this, taken together, bind us to God by the divine link of holy scripture — a link which the devil, in this our day, is doing his very utmost to snap; and that, too, by means of agents of acknowledged moral worth and intellectual power. The devil does not select an ignorant or immoral man to make his grand and special attacks upon the Bible, for he knows full well that the former could not speak, and the latter would not get a hearing. But he craftily takes up some amiable, benevolent, and popular person — some one of blameless morals — a laborious student, a profound scholar, a deep and original thinker. Thus he throws dust in the eyes of the simple, the unlearned, and the unwary.

Christian reader, we pray you to remember this. If we can deepen in your soul the sense of the unspeakable value of your Bible; if we can warn you off from the dangerous rocks and quicksands of rationalism and infidelity; if we are made the means of stablishing and strengthening you in the assurance that when you are hanging over the sacred page of scripture, you are drinking at a fountain every drop of which has flowed into it From the very bosom of God Himself; if we can reach all or any of these results, we shall not regret the digression from our chapter, to which we now return.

"And ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and *one shall slay her before his face.*" We have, in the priest and the victim, a joint type of the Person of Christ. He was, at once, the Victim and the Priest. But He did not enter upon His priestly functions until His work as a victim was accomplished. This will explain the expression in the last clause of the third verse, *one shall slay her before his face.*" The death of Christ was accomplished on earth, and could not, therefore, be represented as the act of priesthood. Heaven, not earth, is the sphere of His priestly service. The apostle, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, expressly declares, as the sum of a most elaborate and amazing piece of argument, that "we have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every High priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. *For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest,* seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law." (Heb. 8: 1-4) "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, the figures of the true *But into heaven itself,* now to appear in the presence of God for us." (Heb. 9: 11, 12, 24) "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever *sat down on the right hand of God*" Heb. 10: 12.

From all these passages, taken in connection with Numbers 19: 3, we learn two things, namely, that the death of Christ is not presented as the proper, ordinary act of priesthood; and, further, that heaven, not earth, is the sphere of His priestly ministry. There is nothing new in these statements; others have advanced them repeatedly; But it is important to notice everything tending to illustrate the divine perfection and precision of Holy scripture. It is deeply interesting to find a truth, which shines brightly in the pages of the New Testament, wrapped up in some ordinance or ceremony of Old Testament times. Such discoveries are ever welcome to the intelligent reader of the word. The truth, no doubt, is the same wherever it is found; but when it bursts upon us, with meridian brightness in the New Testament scriptures, and is divinely shadowed forth in the Old, we not only have the truth

established, but the unity of the volume illustrated and enforced.

But we must not pass over, unnoticed, the place where the death of the victim was accomplished. "That he may bring her forth without the camp." As has already been remarked, the priest and the victim are identified, and form a joint type of Christ; But it is added, "one shall slay her before his face," simply because the death of Christ could not be represented as the act of priesthood. What marvellous accuracy! And yet it is not marvellous, for what else should we look for in a book every line of which is from God Himself? Had it been said, "He shall slay her," then Numbers 19 would be at variance with the Epistle to the Hebrews. But no; the harmonies of the volume shine forth among its brightest glories. May we have grace to discern and appreciate them!

Jesus, then, suffered without the gate. "wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." (Heb. 13: 12) He took the outside place, and His voice falls on the ear from thence. Do we listen to it? Do we understand it? Should we not consider more seriously the place where Jesus died? Are we to rest satisfied with reaping the benefits of Christ's death, without seeking fellowship with Him in His rejection? God forbid! "Let us *go forth* therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach* There is immense power in these words. They should rouse our whole moral being to seek more complete identification with a rejected Saviour. Shall we see Him die outside, while we reap the benefits of His death and remain within? Shall we seek a home, and a place, and a name, and a portion, in that world from which our Lord and Master is an outcast? shall we aim at getting on in a world which could not tolerate that blessed One to whom we owe our present and everlasting felicity Shall we aspire after honour, position, and wealth, where our Master found only a manger, a cross, a borrowed grave? May the language of our *hearts* be, "Far be the *thought!* and may the language of our *lives* be, "Far be the *thing!*" May we, by the grace of God, yield a more hearty response to the Spirit's call to "*Go forth*"

{*The camp, in the above passage. refers primarily to Judaism; but it has a very pointed moral application to every system of religion set up by man, and governed by the spirit and principles of this present evil world.]

Christian reader, let us never forget that, when we look at the death of Christ, we see two things, namely, the death of a victim, and the death of a martyr — a victim for sin, a martyr for righteousness — a victim, under the hand of God, a martyr, under the hand of man. He suffered for sin, that we might never suffer. Blessed be His name for evermore! But then, His martyr sufferings, His sufferings for righteousness under the hand of man, these we may know. "For unto you *it is given*, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to *suffer* for his sake." (Phil. 1: 29) It is a positive *gift* to be allowed to suffer with Christ. Do we esteem it?

In contemplating the death of Christ, as typified by the ordinance of the red heifer, we see not only the complete putting away of sin, but also the judgement of this present evil world. "He gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." (Gal 1: 4) Here the two things are put together by God; and, most surely, they should never be separated by us. We have the judgement of sin, root and branch; and the judgement of this world. The former should give perfect repose to the exercised conscience; while the latter should deliver the heart from the ensnaring influence of the world, in all its multiplied forms. That purges the conscience from all sense of guilt; this snaps the link which binds the heart and the world together.

Now, it is most needful for the reader to understand and enter experimentally into the connection existing between these two things. It is quite possible to miss this grand link, even while holding and contending for a vast amount of evangelical truth and it may be confidently affirmed that where this

link is missing, there must be a very serious defect in the Christian character. We frequently meet with earnest souls who have been brought under the convicting and awakening power of the Holy Spirit, But who have not yet known, for the ease of their troubled consciences, the full value of the atoning death of Christ, as putting away, for ever, all their sins, and bringing them nigh to God, without a stain upon the soul, or a sting in the conscience. If this be the present actual condition of the reader, he would need to consider the first clause of the verse just quoted. "He gave himself for our sins." This is a most blessed statement for a troubled soul. It settles the whole question of sin. If it be true that Christ gave Himself for my sins, what remains for me but to rejoice in the precious fact that my sins are all gone. The One who took my place, who stood charged with my sins, who suffered in my room and stead, is now at the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honour. This is enough. My sins are all gone for ever. If they were not, *He* could not be where He now is. The crown of glory which wreathes His blessed brow is the proof that my sins are perfectly atoned for, and therefore perfect peace is my portion — a peace as perfect as the work of Christ can make it.

But then, let us never forget that the very same work that has for ever put away our sins has delivered us from this present evil world. The two things go together. Christ has not only delivered me from the consequences of my sins, but also from the present power of sin, and from the claims and influences of that thing which scripture calls "the world." All this, however, will come more fully out as we proceed with our chapter.

"And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with His finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times." Here we have the solid groundwork of all real purification. we know that, in the type before us, it is only, as the inspired apostle tells us, a question of "sanctifying to me purifying of the flesh." (Heb. 9: 13) But we have to look beyond the type to the antitype — beyond the shadow to the substance. In the sevenfold sprinkling of the blood of the red heifer, before the tabernacle of the congregation, we have a figure of the perfect presentation of the blood of Christ to God, as the only ground of the meeting-place between God and the conscience. The number "seven," as has frequently been observed, is expressive of perfection; and, in the figure before us, we see the perfection attaching to the death of Christ, as an atonement for sin, presented to, and accepted by God. All rests upon this divine ground. The blood has been shed, and presented to a holy God, as a perfect atonement for sin. This, when simply received by faith, must relieve the conscience from all sense of guilt and all fear of condemnation. There is nothing before God save the perfection of the atoning work of Christ. Sin has been judged and our sins put away. They have been completely obliterated by the precious blood of Christ. To believe this is to enter into perfect repose of conscience.

And here let the reader carefully note that there is no further allusion to the sprinkling of blood throughout the entire of this singularly interesting chapter. This is precisely in keeping with the doctrine of Hebrews 9, 10. It is but another illustration of the divine harmony of the Volume. The sacrifice of Christ, being divinely perfect, needs not to be repeated. Its efficacy is divine and eternal. "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and *the ashes of an heifer*, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Heb. 9: 11-14.) Observe the force of these two words, "*once*" and "*eternal*." See how they set forth the completeness and divine efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. The blood was shed once and for ever. To think of a repetition of that great work would be to deny its everlasting and all-sufficient value, and reduce it to the level of the

blood of bulls and goats.

But, further," It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor yet *that He should offer Himself often*, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then *must He often have suffered* since the foundation of the world; but now, once in the end of the world hath he appeared to *put away sin* by the sacrifice of himself." Sin therefore, has been put away. It cannot be put away, and, at the same time, be on the believer's conscience. This is plain. It must either be admitted that the believer's sins are blotted out, and his conscience perfectly purged, or that Christ must die over again. But this latter is not only needless, but wholly out of the question; for, as the apostle goes on to say, "As it is appointed unto men *once* to die, but after this the judgement; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation."

There is something most marvellous in the patient elaborateness with which the Holy Ghost argues out this entire subject. He expounds, illustrates, and enforces the great doctrine of the completeness of the sacrifice in such a way, as to carry conviction to the soul, and relieve the conscience of its heavy burden. Such is the exceeding grace of God that He can not only accomplish the work of eternal redemption for us, But, in the most patient and painstaking manner, has argued and reasoned, and proved the whole point in question, so as not to leave one hair's breadth of ground on which to base an objection. Let us hearken to His further powerful reasonings, and may the Spirit apply them in power to the heart of the anxious reader.

"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto *perfect*. For then would they not have *ceased to be offered*? because that the worshippers once purged should have had *no more conscience of sins*. But in these sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." But that which the blood of bulls could never do, the blood of Jesus has for ever done. This makes all the difference. All the blood that ever flowed around Israel's altars — the millions of sacrifices, offered according to the requirements of the Mosaic ritual — could not blot out one stain from the conscience, or justify a sin-hating God in receiving a sinner to Himself. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." "Wherefore when he cometh into the world he saith, sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once*." Mark the contrast. God had no pleasure in the endless round of sacrifices under the law. They did not please Him. They left wholly unaccomplished that which He had in His loving heart to do for His people, namely, to rid them completely of sin's heavy load, and bring them unto Himself, in perfect peace of conscience and liberty of heart. This, Jesus, by the one offering of His blessed body, did. He did the will of God; and, blessed for ever be His name, He has not to do His work over again. We may refuse to believe that the work is done — refuse to commit our souls to its efficacy — to enter into the rest which it is calculated to impart — to enjoy the holy liberty of spirit which it is fitted to yield; but there stands the work in its own imperishable virtue; and there, too, stand the Spirit's arguments respecting that work, in their own unanswerable force and clearness; and neither Satan's dark suggestions, nor our own unbelieving reasonings can ever touch either the one or the other. They

may, and alas! they do, most sadly interfere with our soul's enjoyment of the truth; but the truth itself remains ever the same.

"And every priest *standeth daily* ministering, and *offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins*; but this man, after he had offered *one sacrifice* for sins, *for ever sat down* on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by *one offering* He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." It is due to the blood of Christ that it should impart eternal perfection; and, we may surely add, it is due to it likewise that our souls should taste that perfection. No one need ever imagine that he is doing honour to the work of Christ, or to the Spirit's testimony respecting that work, when he refuses to accept that perfect remission of sins which is proclaimed to him through the blood of the cross. It is no sign of true piety, or of pure religion, to deny what the grace of God has done for us in Christ, and what the record of the eternal Spirit has presented to our souls on the page of inspiration.

Christian reader, anxious inquirer, does it not seem strange that, when the word of God presents to our view Christ seated at the right hand of God, in virtue of accomplished redemption, we should be, virtually, in no wise better off than those who had merely a human priest standing daily ministering, and offering the same round of sacrifices? We have a divine Priest who has sat down for ever. They had a merely human priest, who could never, in his official capacity, sit down at all; and yet are we, in the state of the mind, in the apprehension of the soul, in the actual condition of the conscience, in no respect better off than they? Can it be possible that, with a perfect work to rest upon, our souls should never know perfect rest? The Holy Ghost, as we have seen in these various quotations taken from the epistle to the Hebrews, has left nothing unsaid to satisfy our souls as to the question of the complete putting away of sin by the precious blood of Christ. Why then should you not, this moment, enjoy full, settled peace of conscience? Has the blood of Jesus done nothing more for you than the blood of a bullock did for a Jewish worshipper?

It may be, however, that the reader is ready to say, in reply to all that we have been seeking to urge upon him, "I do not, in the least, doubt the efficacy of the blood of Jesus. I believe it cleanseth from all sin. I believe, most thoroughly, that all who simply put their trust in that blood are perfectly safe, and will be eternally happy. My difficulty does not lie here at all. What troubles me is, not the efficacy of the blood, in which I fully believe, but *my own personal interest in that blood*, of which I have no satisfactory evidence. This is the secret of all my trouble. The doctrine of the blood is as clear as a sunbeam; but the question of my interest therein is involved in hopeless obscurity."

Now if this be at all the embodiment of the reader's feelings on this momentous subject, it only proves the necessity of his deeply pondering the fourth verse of the nineteenth of Numbers. There he will see that the true basis of all purification is found in this, that the blood of atonement has been presented to God, and accepted by Him. This is a most precious truth, but one little understood. It is of all importance that the really anxious soul should have a clear view of the subject of atonement. It is so natural to us all to be occupied with our thoughts and feelings about the blood of Christ, rather than with the blood itself, and with God's thoughts respecting it. If the blood has been perfectly presented to God, if He has accepted it, if He has glorified Himself in the putting away of sin, then what remains for the divinely exercised conscience but to find perfect repose in that which has met all the claims of God, harmonised His attributes, and laid the foundations of that marvellous platform whereon a sin-hating God and a poor sin-destroyed sinner can meet? Why introduce the question of my interest in the blood of Christ, as though that work were not complete without anything of mine, call it what you will, my interest, my feelings, my experience, my appreciation, my appropriation, my anything? Why not rest in Christ alone? This would be really having an interest in Him. But the very moment the heart gets

occupied with the question of its own interest — the moment the eye is withdrawn from that divine object which the word of God and the Holy Ghost present — then spiritual darkness and perplexity must ensue; and the soul, instead of rejoicing in the perfection of the work of Christ, is tormented by looking at its own poor, imperfect feelings.

"The atoning work is done,
The Victim's blood is shed;
And Jesus now is gone,
His people's cause to plead.
He stands in heaven their Great High Priest,
And bears their names upon His breast."

Here, blessed be God, we have the stable groundwork of "purification for sin," and of perfect peace for the conscience. "The atoning work is done." All is finished. the great Antitype of the red heifer has been slain. He gave himself up to death, under the wrath and judgement of a righteous God, that all who simply put their trust in Him might know, in the deep secret of their own souls, divine purification and perfect Peace. We are purified as to the conscience, not by our thoughts about the blood, but by the blood itself. We must insist upon this. God Himself has made out our title for us, and that title is found in the blood *alone*. Oh! that most precious blood of Jesus that speaks profound peace to every troubled soul that will simply lean upon its eternal efficacy. Why, we may ask, is it that the blessed doctrine of the blood is so little understood and appreciated? Why will people persist in looking to anything else, or in mingling anything else with it? May the Holy Ghost lead the anxious reader, as he reads these lines, to stay his heart and conscience upon the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

Having thus endeavoured to present to the reader the precious truth unfolded to us in the *death* of the red heifer, we shall now ask him to meditate, for a few moments, upon the *burning* of the heifer. We have looked at the *blood*, let us now gaze upon the *ashes*. In the former, we have the sacrificial death of Christ, as the only purification for sin. In the latter, we have the remembrance of that death applied to the heart by the Spirit, through the word, in order to remove any defilement contracted in our walk from day to day. This gives great completeness and beauty to this most interesting type. God has not only made provision for past sins, but also for present defilement, so that we may be ever before him in all the value and merit of the perfect work of Christ. He would have us treading the courts of His sanctuary, the holy precincts of His presence," Clean every whit.' And not only does He Himself see as thus; But, blessed for ever be His name, He would have us thus in our own inward self-consciousness. He would give us, by His Spirit, through the word, the deep inward sense of cleanness in His sight, so that the current of our communion with Him may flow on without a ripple and without a curve. "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. (1 John 1) But if we fail to walk in the light — if we forget, and, in our forgetfulness, touch the unclean thing, how is our communion to be restored? Only by the removal of the defilement. But how is this to be effected? By the application to Our hearts and consciences of the precious truth of the death of Christ. The Holy Ghost produces self-judgement, and brings to our remembrance the precious truth that Christ suffered death for that defilement which we so lightly and indifferently contract. It is not a fresh sprinkling of the blood of Christ — a thing unknown in scripture; but the remembrance of His death brought home, in fresh power, to the contrite heart, by the ministry of the Holy Ghost.

"And one shall burn the heifer in his sight..... And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop,

and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer.....And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin."

It is the purpose of God that His children should be purified from all iniquity, and that they should walk in separation from this present evil world, where all is death and defilement. this separation is effected by the action of the word on the heart, by the power of the Holy Ghost. "Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." (Gal. 1: 4) And again, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might *redeem* us from all iniquity, and *purify* unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus 2: 13, 14.

It is remarkable how constantly the Spirit of God presents, in intimate connection, the full relief of the conscience from all sense of guilt, and the deliverance of the heart from the moral influence of this present evil world. Now, it should be our care, beloved Christian reader, to maintain the integrity of this connection. Of course, it is only by the gracious energy of the Holy Ghost that we can do so; but we ought to seek earnestly to understand and practically carry out the blessed link of connection between the death of Christ as an atonement for sin, and as the moral power of separation from this world. Many of the people of God never get beyond the former, if they even get that length. Many seem to be quite satisfied with the Knowledge of the forgiveness of sins through the atoning work of Christ, while, at the same time, they fail to realise deadness to the world in virtue of the death of Christ, and their identification with Him therein.

Now, when we stand and gaze upon the burning of the red heifer, in Numbers 19 — when we examine that mystic heap of ashes, what do we find? It may be said, in reply, "We find our sins there." True, thanks be to God, and to the Son of His love, we do indeed find our sins, our iniquities, our trespasses, our deep crimson guilt, all reduced to ashes. But is there nothing more? Can we not, by a careful analysis, discover more? Unquestionably. We find nature there, in every stage of its existence — from the highest to the lowest point in its history. Moreover, we find all the glory of this world there. the cedar and the hyssop represent nature in its widest extremes; and, in giving its extremes, they take in all that lies between. "Solomon spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall."

"Scarlet" is viewed, by those who have carefully examined scripture on the point, as the type or expression of human splendour, worldly grandeur, the glory of this world, the glory of man. Hence, therefore, we see in the burning of the heifer, the end of all worldly greatness, human glory, and the complete setting aside of the flesh, with all its belongings. This renders the burning of the heifer deeply significant. It shadows forth a truth too little known, and, when known, too readily forgotten — a truth embodied in these memorable words of the apostle, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, Whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

We are all far too prone to accept the cross as the ground of escape from all the consequences of our sins, and of full acceptance with God, and, at the same time, refuse it as the ground of our complete separation from the world. True it is, thanks and praise be to our God, the solid ground of our deliverance from guilt and consequent condemnation; but it is more than this. It has severed us, for ever, from all that pertains to this world, through which we are passing. Are my sins put away Yes; blessed be the God of all grace! according to what? According to the perfection of Christ's atoning sacrifice as estimated by God Himself. Well then, such, precisely, is the measure of our deliverance

from this present evil world — from its fashions, its maxims, its habits, its principles. The believer has absolutely nothing in common with this world, in so far as he enters into the spirit and power of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. That cross has dislodged him from everything here below, and made him a pilgrim and a stranger in this world. The truly devoted heart sees the dark shadow of the cross looming over all the glitter and glare, the pomp and fashion of this world. Paul saw this, and the sight of it caused him to esteem the world, in its very highest aspect, in its most attractive forms, in its brightest glories, as dross.

Such was the estimate formed of this world by one who had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. "The world is crucified unto me," said he, "and I unto the world." Such was Paul, and such should every Christian be — a stranger on earth, a citizen of heaven, and this, not merely in sentiment or theory, but in downright fact and reality; for, as surely as our deliverance from hell is more than a mere sentiment or theory, so surely is our separation from this present evil age. The one is as positive and as real as the other.

But here let us ask, Why is not this great practical truth more pressed home upon the hearts of evangelical Christians at the present moment? Why are we so slow to urge upon one another the separating power of the cross of Christ? If my heart loves Jesus, I shall not seek a place, a portion, or a name where He found only a malefactor's cross. This, dear reader, is the simple way to look at the matter. Do you really love Christ? Has your heart been touched and attracted by His wondrous love to you? If so, remember that He was cast out by this world. Yes, Jesus was, and still is, an outcast from this world. There is no change. The world is the world still; and be it remembered, that one of Satan's special devices is to lead people to accept salvation from Christ, while, at the same time, they refuse to be identified with Him in His rejection — to avail themselves of the atoning work of the cross, while abiding comfortably in the world that is stained with the guilt of nailing Christ thereto. In other words, he leads people to think and to say that the offence of the cross has ceased; that the world of the nineteenth century is totally different from the world of the first; that if the Lord Jesus were on earth now He would meet with very different treatment from that which He received then; that it is not now a pagan world, but a Christian one, and this makes a material and a fundamental difference; that now it is quite right for a Christian to accept of citizenship in this world, to have a name, a place, and a portion here, seeing it is not the same world at all, as that which nailed the Son of God to Calvary's cursed tree.

Now we feel it incumbent on us to press upon all who read these lines that this is, in very deed, a lie of the arch-enemy of souls. The world is not changed. It may have changed its dress, But it has not changed its nature, its spirit, its principles. It hates Jesus as cordially as when the cry went forth, "Away with him! Crucify him!" There is really no change. If only we try the world by the same grand test, we shall find it to be the same evil, God-hating, Christ-rejecting world as ever. And what is that test? Christ crucified. May this solemn truth be engraved on our hearts! May we realise and manifest its formative power! May it detach us more completely from all that belongs to the world! May we be enabled to understand more fully the truth presented in the ashes of the red heifer! Then shall our separation from the world, and our dedication to Christ, be more intense and real. The Lord, in His exceeding goodness, grant that thus it may be, with all His people, in this day of hollow, worldly, half-and-half profession!

Let us now consider, for a moment, how the ashes were to be applied.

"He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify Himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean; but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean. Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from

Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him."

It is a solemn thing to have to do with God — to walk with Him, from day to day, in the midst of a defiled and defiling scene. He cannot tolerate any uncleanness upon those with whom He deigns to walk, and in whom He dwells. He can pardon and blot out; He can heal, cleanse, and restore; but He cannot sanction unjudged evil, or suffer it upon His people. It would be a denial of His very name and nature were He to do so. This, while deeply solemn, is truly blessed. It is our joy to have to do with One whose presence demands and secures holiness. We are passing through a world in which we are surrounded with defiling influences. True, defilement is not now contracted by touching "a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave." These things were, as we know, types of things moral and spiritual with which we are in danger of coming in contact every day and every hour. We doubt not but those who have much to do with the things of this world are most painfully sensible of the immense difficulty of escaping with unsoiled hands. Hence the need of holy diligence in all our habits and associations, lest we contract defilement, and interrupt our communion with God. He must have us in a condition worthy of Himself. "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

But the anxious reader, whose whole soul breathes after holiness, may eagerly inquire, "What, then, are we to do, if it be true that we are thus surrounded, on all hands, with defiling influences, and if we are so prone to contract that defilement? Furthermore, if it is impossible to have fellowship with God, with unclean hands and a condemning conscience, What are we to do?" First of all, then, we should say, be watchful. Wait much and earnestly on God. He is faithful and gracious — a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God — a liberal and an unupbraiding Giver. "He giveth more grace." This is, positively, a blank cheque which faith can fill up to any amount. Is it the real purpose of your soul to get on, to advance in the divine life, to grow in personal holiness? Then beware how you continue, for a single hour, in contact with what soils your hands and wounds your conscience, grieves the Holy Ghost, and mars your communion. Be decided. Be whole-hearted. Give up, at once, the unclean thing, whatever it be, habit, or association, or anything else. Cost what it may, give it up. Entail what loss it may, abandon it. No worldly gain, no earthly advantage, could compensate for the loss of a pure conscience, an uncondemning heart, and the light of your Father's countenance. Are you not convinced of this? If so, seek grace to carry out your conviction.

But it may be further asked, "What is to be done when defilement is actually contracted? How is the defilement to be removed?" Hear the reply in the figurative language of Numbers 19. "And for an unclean person, they shall take of the *ashes* of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel. And a clean person shall take hyssop and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave. And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day; and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe Himself in water, and shall be clean at even."

The reader will remark that, in the twelfth and eighteenth verses, there is a double action set forth. There is the action of the third day, and the action of the seventh day. Both were essentially necessary to remove the ceremonial defilement caused by contact with the varied forms of death above specified. Now, what did this double action typify? What is it that, in our spiritual history, answers thereto? we believe it to be this. When we, through lack of watchfulness and spiritual energy, touch the unclean thing and get defiled, we may be ignorant of it; but God knows all about it. He cares for us, and is looking after us; not, blessed be His name, as an angry judge, or stern censor, but as a loving father, who will never impute anything to us, because it was all, long ago, imputed to the One who died in our

stead. But, though He will never impute it to us, He will make us feel it deeply and keenly. He will be a faithful reprove of the unclean thing; and He can reprove all the more powerfully simply because He will never reckon it against us. The holy Spirit brings our sin to remembrance, and this causes unutterable anguish of heart. This anguish may continue for some time. It may be moments, days, months, or years. We once met with a young Christian, who was rendered miserable, for three years, by having gone with some worldly friends on an excursion. This convicting operation of the holy Ghost we believe to be shadowed forth by the action of the third day. He first brings our sin to remembrance; and then He graciously brings to our remembrance, and applies to our souls, through the written word, the value of the death of Christ as that which has already met the defilement which we so easily contract. This answers to the action of the seventh day — removes the defilement and restores our communion.

And, be it carefully remembered, that we can never get rid of defilement in any other way. We may seek to forget, to slur over, to heal the wound slightly, to make little of the matter, to let time obliterate it from the tablet of memory. It will never do. Nay, it is most dangerous work. There are few things more disastrous than trifling with conscience or the claims of holiness. And it is as foolish as it is dangerous; for God has, in His grace, made full provision for the removal of the uncleanness which His holiness detects and condemns. But the uncleanness must be removed, else communion is impossible. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." the suspension of a believers communion is what answers to the cutting off of a member from the congregation of Israel. The Christian can never be cut off from Christ; but his communion can be interrupted by a single sinful thought, and that sinful thought must be judged and confessed, and the soil of it removed, ere the communion can be restored. It is well to remember this. It is a serious thing to trifle with sin. We may rest assured we cannot possibly have fellowship with God and walk in defilement. To think so, is to blaspheme the very name, the very nature, the very throne and majesty of God. No, dear reader, we must keep a clean conscience, and maintain the holiness of God, else we shall, very soon, make shipwreck of faith and break down altogether. May the Lord keep us walking softly and tenderly, watchfully and prayerfully, until we have laid aside our bodies of sin and death, and entered upon that bright and blessed world above, where sin, death, and defilement are unknown.

In studying the ordinances and ceremonies of the Levitical economy, nothing is more striking than the jealous care with which the God of Israel watched over His people, in order that they might be preserved from every defiling influence. By day and by night, awake and asleep, at home and abroad, in the bosom of the family and in the solitary walk, His eyes were upon them. He looked after their food, their raiment, their domestic habits and arrangements. He carefully instructed them as to what they might and what they might not eat; what they might and what they might not wear. He even set forth, distinctly, His mind as to the very touching and handling of things. In short, He surrounded them with barriers amply sufficient, had they only attended to them, to resist the whole tide of defilement to which they were exposed on every side.

In all this, we read, in unmistakable characters, the holiness of God; but we read also, as distinctly, the grace of God. If divine holiness could not suffer defilement upon the people, divine grace made ample provision for the removal thereof. This provision is set forth in our chapter under two forms, namely, the blood of atonement, and the water of separation. Precious provision! a provision illustrating, at once, the holiness and the grace of God. Did we not know the ample provisions of divine grace, the lofty claims of divine holiness would be perfectly overwhelming; but being assured of the former, we can heartily rejoice in the latter. Could we desire to see the standard of divine holiness lowered a single hair's breadth? Far be the thought. How could we, or why should we, seeing that

divine grace has fully provided what divine holiness demands? An Israelite of old might shudder as he hearkened to such words as these, "He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days." and again, "Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel." Such words might indeed terrify his heart. He might feel led to exclaim, "What am I to do? How can I ever get on? It seems perfectly impossible for me to escape defilement." But, then, what of the ashes of the burnt heifer? What of the water of separation? What could these mean? They set forth the memorial of the sacrificial death of Christ, applied to the heart by the power of the Spirit of God. "He shall purify himself with it the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean; but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean." If we contract defilement, even though it be through negligence, that defilement must be removed, ere our communion can be restored. But we cannot get rid of the soil by any effort of our own. It can only be by the use of God's gracious provision, even the water of purification. An Israelite could no more remove by his own efforts the defilement caused by the touch of a dead body, than he could have broken Pharaoh's yoke, or delivered himself from the lash of Pharaoh's taskmasters.

And let the reader observe that it was not a question of offering a fresh sacrifice, nor yet of a fresh application of the blood. It is of special importance that this should be distinctly seen and understood. The death of Christ cannot be repeated. "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him, For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, He liveth unto God." We stand, by the grace of God, in the full credit and value of the death of Christ; But, inasmuch as we are surrounded, on all sides, by temptations and snares; and as we have, within us, such capabilities and tendencies; and, further, seeing we have a powerful adversary who is ever on the watch to ensnare us, and lead us off the path of truth and purity, we could not get on for a single moment, were it not for the gracious way in which our God has provided for all our exigencies, in the precious death and all-prevailing advocacy of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not merely that the blood of Jesus Christ has washed away all our sins, and reconciled us to a Holy God, but "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." "He ever liveth to make intercession for us," and "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." He is ever in the presence of God for us. He represents us there, and maintains us in the divine integrity of the place and relationship in which His atoning death has set us. Our case can never, by any possibility, fall through, in the hands of such an Advocate. He must cease to live, ere the very feeblest of His saints can perish. We are identified with Him and He with us.

Now, then, Christian reader, what should be the practical effect of all this grace upon our hearts and lives? when we think of the death, and of the burning — of the blood, and of the ashes — of the atoning sacrifice, and the interceding Priest and Advocate, what influence should it exert upon our souls? How should it act upon our consciences? Should it lead us to think little of sin! Should it cause us to walk carelessly and indifferently? Should it have the effect of making us as light and frivolous in our ways? Alas! for the heart that can think so. We may rest assured of this, that the man who can draw a plea, from the rich provisions of divine grace, for lightness of conduct or levity of spirit, knows very little, if indeed he knows anything at all, of the true nature or proper influence of grace and its provisions. Could we imagine, for a moment, that the ashes of the heifer or the water of separation would have had the effect of making an Israelite careless as to his walk? Assuredly not. On the contrary, the very fact of such careful provision being made, by the goodness of God, against defilement, would make him feel what a serious thing it was to contract it. Such, at least, would be the proper effect of the provisions of divine grace. The heap of ashes, laid up in a clean place, gave forth a double testimony; it testified of the goodness of God; and it testified of the hatefulness of sin. It

declared that God could not suffer uncleanness upon His people; but it declared also that He had provided the means of removing it. It is utterly impossible that the blessed doctrine of the sprinkled blood, of the ashes, and of the water of separation, can be understood and enjoyed, without its producing a holy horror of sin in all its defiling forms. And we may further assert that no one who has ever felt the anguish of a defiled conscience could lightly contract defilement. A pure conscience is far too precious a treasure to be lightly parted with; and a defiled conscience is far too heavy a burden to be lightly taken up. But, blessed be the God of all grace, He has met all our need, in His own perfect way; and, He has met it, too, not to make us careless, but to make us watchful. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." But then he adds, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the whole world." 1 John.

But we must draw this section to a close, and shall merely add a word on the closing verses of our chapter. "And it shall be a perpetual statute unto them, that he that sprinkleth the water of separation shall wash his clothes; and he that toucheth the water of separation shall be unclean until even. and whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean, and the soul that toucheth it shall be unclean until even." (Num. 19: 21, 22) In verse 18, we are taught that it needed a clean person to sprinkle the unclean; and in verse 21, we are taught that the act of sprinkling another defiled oneself.

Putting both these together, we learn, as another has said, "That any one who has to do with the sin of another, though it be in the way of duty, to cleanse it, is defiled; not as the guilty person, it is true, but we cannot touch sin without being defiled." And we learn also that, in order to lead another into the enjoyment of the cleansing virtue of Christ's work, I must be in the enjoyment of that cleansing work myself. It is well to remember this. Those who applied the water of separation to others had to use that water for themselves. May our souls enter into this! May we ever abide in the sense of the perfect cleanness into which the death of Christ introduces us, and in which His priestly work maintains us! And oh! let us never forget that *contact with evil defiles*. It was so under the Mosaic economy, and it is so now.

Numbers 20

"Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin, in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there." Verse 1.

The chapter which now opens before us furnishes a very remarkable record of wilderness life and experience. In it, we see Moses, the servant of God, passing through some of the most trying scenes of his eventful life. First of all, Miriam dies. The one whose voice was heard, amid the brilliant scenes of Exodus 15 chanting a hymn of victory, passes away, and her ashes are deposited in the wilderness of Kadesh. The timbrel is laid aside. The voice of song is hushed in the silence of death. She can no longer lead in the dance. She had sung sweetly, in her day; she had, very blessedly, seized the key note of that magnificent song of praise sung on the resurrection side of the Red Sea. Her charms embodied the great central truth of redemption. "Sing ye to the Lord. for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." This was, truly, a lofty strain. It was the suited utterance for the joyous occasion.

But now the prophetess passes off the scene, and the voice of melody is exchanged for the voice of murmuring. Wilderness life is becoming irksome. The trials of the desert put nature to the test; they bring out what is in the heart. Forty years' toil and travail make a great change in people. It is very rare indeed to find a case in which the verdure and freshness of spiritual life are kept up, much less augmented, throughout all the stages of Christian life and warfare. It ought not to be such a rarity. It

ought to be the very reverse, inasmuch as it is in the actual details, the stern realities of our path through this world, that we prove what God is. He, blessed be His name, takes occasion from the very trials of the way to make Himself known to us in all the sweetness and tenderness of love that knows no change. His loving kindness and tender mercy never fail. Nothing can exhaust those springs which are in the living God. He will be what He is, spite of all our naughtiness. God will be God, let man prove himself ever so faithless and faulty.

This is our comfort, our joy, and the source of our strength. We have to do with the living God. What a reality! Come what may, He will prove Himself equal to every emergency — amply sufficient "for exigence of every hour." His patient grace can bear with our manifold infirmities, failures, and shortcomings; and His strength is made perfect in our utter weakness. His faithfulness never fails. His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. Friends fail or pass away. Links of fond friendship are snapped in this cold, heartless world. Fellow-labourers part company. Miriams and Aarons die; but God remaineth. Here lies the deep secret of all true and solid blessedness. If we have the hand and the heart of the living God with us, we need not fear. If we can say, "The Lord is my shepherd," we can, assuredly add, "we shall not want."

Still there are the scenes of sorrow and trial in the desert; and we have to go through them. Thus it was with Israel, in the chapter before us. They were called to meet the keen blasts of the wilderness, and they met them with accents of impatience and discontent. "And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! And why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us unto this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink." Verses 2-5.

This was a deeply trying moment to the spirit of Moses. We can form no conception of what it must have been to encounter six hundred thousand murmurers, and to be obliged to listen to their bitter invectives, and to hear himself charged with all the misfortunes which their own unbelief had conjured up before them. All this was no ordinary trial of patience; and, most assuredly, we need not marvel if that dear and honoured servant found the occasion too much for him. "And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them." Verse 6.

It is deeply touching to find Moses, again and again, on his face before God. It was a sweet relief, to make his escape from a tumultuous host, and betake himself to the only One whose resources were adequate to meet such an occasion. "They fell upon their faces: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them." They do not appear, on this occasion, to have attempted any reply to the people; "they went from the presence of the assembly" and cast themselves upon the living God. They could not possibly have done better. Who But the God of all grace could meet the ten thousand necessities of wilderness life? Well had Moses said, at the very beginning, "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." Assuredly, he was right and wise in so expressing himself. The divine presence was the only answer to the demand of such a congregation. But that presence was an all-sufficient answer. God's treasury is absolutely inexhaustible. He can never fail a trusting heart. Let us remember this. God delights to be used. He never grows weary of ministering to the need of His people. If this were ever kept in the remembrance of the thoughts of our hearts, we should hear less of the accents of impatience and discontent, and more of the sweet language of thankfulness and praise. But, as we have had frequent occasion to remark, desert life tests every one. it proves what is in us; and, thanks be to God, it

brings out what is in *Him* for us.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. and Moses took *the* rod from before the Lord as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock; and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with *his* rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly; and the congregation drank, and their beasts also." Verse 7-11.

Two objects, in the foregoing quotation, demand the readers attention, namely, "The Rock," and "The Rod." They both present Christ, most blessedly, to the soul; but in two distinct aspects. In 1 Corinthians 10: 4, we read, "They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." This is Plain and positive. It leaves no room whatever for the exercise of the imagination. "That Rock was Christ" — Christ smitten for us.

Then, as regards "the rod," we must remember that it was not the rod of Moses — the rod of authority — the rod of power. This would not suit the occasion before us. It had done its work. It had smitten the rock once, and that was enough. This we learn from Exodus 17, where we read, "The Lord said unto Moses, go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and *thy* rod, *wherewith thou smotest the river* (see Ex. 7: 20), take in thine hand and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel."

Here we have a type of Christ smitten for us, by the hand of God, in judgement. The reader will note the expression, "Thy rod wherewith thou smotest the river." Why the river? Why should this particular stroke of the rod be referred to? Exodus 7: 20 furnishes the reply. "And be (Moses) lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river *were turned to blood.*" It was the rod which turned the water into blood that was to smite "that Rock which was Christ" in order that streams of life and refreshment might flow for us.

Now, this smiting could only take place once. It is never to be repeated. "Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin *once*: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." (Rom. 6: 9, 10) "But now *once* in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.....so Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many." (Heb. 9: 26, 27) "For Christ also hath *once* suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." 1 Peter 3: 18.

There can be no repetition of the death of Christ; and hence Moses was wrong in smiting the rock twice with *his* rod — wrong in smiting it at all. He was commanded to take "*the rod*, Aaron's rod — the priestly rod, and speak to the rock. The atoning work is done, and now our great High Priest has passed into the heavens, there to appear in the presence of God for us, and the streams of spiritual refreshment flow to us, on the ground of accomplished redemption, and in connection with Christ's priestly ministry, of which Aaron's budding rod is the exquisite figure.

Hence, then, it was a grave mistake for Moses to smite the rock a second time — a mistake to use his rod in the matter at all. To have smitten with Aaron's rod would, as we can easily understand, have spoiled its lovely blossom. A word would have sufficed, in connection with the rod of priesthood — the rod of grace. Moses failed to see this — failed to glorify God. He spoke unadvisedly with his lips; and

as a consequence he was prohibited going over Jordan. His rod could not take the people over — for what could mere authority do with a murmuring host — and he was not suffered to go over himself because he failed to sanctify Jehovah in the eyes of the congregation.

But Jehovah took care of His own glory. He sanctified Himself before the people; and, notwithstanding their rebellious murmurings, and Moses' sad mistake and failure, the congregation of the Lord received a gushing stream from the smitten rock.

Nor was this all. It was not merely that grace triumphed in furnishing Israel's murmuring hosts with drink; but even in reference to Moses himself, it shines out most brilliantly, as we may see in Deuteronomy 34. It was grace that brought Moses to the top of Pisgah and showed him the land of Canaan from thence. It was grace that led Jehovah to provide a grave for His servant and bury him therein. It was better to see the land of Canaan, in company with God, than to enter it in company with Israel. And yet we must not forget that Moses was prevented entering the land because of the unadvised speaking. God, in government, kept Moses out of Canaan. God, in grace, brought Moses up to Pisgah. These two facts, in the history of Moses, illustrate, very forcibly, the distinction between grace and government — a subject of the deepest interest, and of great practical value. Grace pardons and blesses; but government takes its course. Let us ever remember this. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." This principle runs through all the ways of God in government, and nothing can be more solemn; nevertheless "grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." All praise to Him who is at once, the fountain and the channel of this grace!

From verses 14-20 of our chapter, we have the correspondence between Moses and the king of Edom. It is instructive and interesting to notice the style of each, and to compare it with the history given in Genesis 32, 33. Esau had a serious grudge against Jacob; and albeit, through the direct interposition of God, he was not suffered to touch a hair of his brother's head, still, on the other hand, Israel must not meddle with Esau's possessions. Jacob had supplanted Esau; and Israel must not molest Edom. "Command thou the people, saying, Ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir; and they shall be afraid of you: take ye good heed unto yourselves therefore. Meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth, because I have given mount Seir unto Esau for a possession. Ye shall buy meat of them for money, that ye may eat; and ye shall also buy water of them for money, that ye may drink. (Deut. 2: 4-6.) Thus we see that the same God who would not suffer Esau to touch Jacob, in Genesis 33, now will not suffer Israel to touch Edom, in Numbers 20.

The closing paragraph of Numbers 20 is deeply touching. We shall not quote it, but the reader should refer to it, and compare it carefully with the scene in Exodus 4: 1-17. Moses had deemed Aaron's companionship indispensable; but he afterwards found him to be a sore thorn in his side, and here he is compelled to strip him of his robes and see him gathered to his fathers. All this is very admonitory, in whatever way we view it, whether as regards Moses or Aaron. We have already referred to this instructive piece of history, and therefore we shall not dwell upon it here; but may the good Lord engrave its solemn lesson deeply upon the tablets of our hearts!

Numbers 21

This chapter brings prominently before us the familiar and beautiful ordinance of the brazen Serpent — that great evangelical type. "And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth

this light bread." Verses 4, 5.

Alas! alas! it is the same sad story, over and over again — "The murmurs of the wilderness." It was all well enough to escape out of Egypt, when the terrific judgements of God were falling upon it in rapid succession. At such a moment, there was but little attraction in the flesh pots, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic, when they stood connected with the heavy plagues sent forth from the hand of an offended God. But now the plagues are forgotten, and the flesh pots alone remembered. "Would to God we had died at the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full."

What language! man would rather sit by the flesh pots, in a land of death and darkness, than walk with God through the wilderness, and eat bread from heaven. The Lord Himself had brought His glory down into connection with the very sand of the desert, because His redeemed were there. He had come down to bear withal their provocation — to "suffer their manners in the wilderness." All this grace and exceeding condescension might well have called forth in them a spirit of grateful and humble subjection. But no; the very earliest appearance of trial was sufficient to elicit from them the cry, "Would to God we had died in the land of Egypt!"

However, they were very speedily made to taste the bitter fruits of their murmuring spirit. "The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died." (Ver. 6) The serpent was the source of their discontent; and their condition, when bitten of the serpents, was well calculated to reveal to them the true *character* of their discontent. If the Lord's people will not walk happily and contentedly with Him, they must taste the power of the serpent — alas! a terrible power, in whatever way it may be experienced.

The serpents' bite brought Israel to a sense of their sin. "Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee: pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us." Verse 7.

Here, then, was the moment for divine grace to display itself. Man's need has ever been the occasion for the display of God's grace and mercy. The moment Israel could say, "We have sinned," there was no further hindrance. God could act, and this was enough. When Israel murmured, the serpents' bite was the answer. When Israel confessed, God's grace was the answer. In the one case, the serpent was the instrument of their wretchedness; in the other, it was the instrument of their restoration and blessing. "And the Lord said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten. when he looketh upon it, shall live." (Ver. 8.) the very image of that which had done the mischief was set up to be the channel through which divine grace might flow down, in rich abundance, to poor wounded sinners. Striking and beautiful type of Christ on the cross!

It is a very common error to view the Lord Jesus rather as the averter of God's wrath, than as the channel of His love. That He endured the wrath of God against sin is most precious true. But there is more than this. He has come down into this wretched world to die upon the cursed tree, in order that, by dying, He might open up the everlasting springs of the love of God to the heart of poor rebellious man. This makes a vast difference in the presentation of God's nature and character to the sinner, which is of the very last importance. Nothing can ever bring a sinner back to a state of true happiness and holiness, but his being fully established in the faith and enjoyment of the love of God. The very first effort of the serpent, when, in the garden of Eden, he assailed the creature, was to shake his confidence in the kindness and love of God, and thus produce discontent with the place in which God had set him. Man's fall was the result — the immediate result of his doubting the love of God. Man's recovery must

flow from his belief of that love; and it is the Son of God himself who says, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him Should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3: 16.

Now, it is in close connection with the foregoing statement that our Lord expressly teaches that He was the Antitype of the brazen serpent. As the Son of God sent forth from the Father, He was, most assuredly, the gift and expression of God's love to a perishing world. But He was also to be lifted up upon the cross in atonement for sin, for *only* thus could divine love meet the necessities of the dying sinner. "As Moses lilted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." The whole human family have felt the serpent's deadly sting; but the God of all grace has found a remedy in the One who was lifted up on the cursed tree; and now, by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, He calls on all those who feel themselves bitten, to look to Jesus for life and peace. Christ is God's great ordinance, and through Him a full, free, present, and eternal salvation is proclaimed to the sinner — a salvation so complete, so well based, so consistent with all the attributes of the divine character and all the claims of the throne of God, that Satan cannot raise a single question about it. Resurrection is the divine vindication of the work of the cross, and the glory of Him who died thereon, so that the believer may enjoy the most profound repose in reference to sin. God is well pleased in Jesus; and, inasmuch as He views all believers in Him, He is well pleased in them also.

And, be it noted, faith is the instrument whereby the sinner lays hold of Christ's salvation. The wounded Israelite had simply to look and live — look, not at Himself — not at his wounds — not at others around him But, directly and exclusively, to God's remedy. If he refused or neglected to look to that, there was nothing for him but death. He was called to fix his earnest gaze upon God's remedy, which was so placed that all might see it. There was no possible use in looking anywhere else, for the word was, "*Every one* that is bitten, *when* he looketh upon it shall live." The bitten Israelite was shut up to the brazen serpent; for the brazen serpent was God's exclusive remedy for the bitten Israelite. To look anywhere else was to get nothing; to look at God's provision was to get life.

Thus it is now. The sinner is called simply to look to Jesus. He is not told to look to ordinances — to look to churches — to look to men or angels. There is no help in any of these, and therefore he is not called to look to them, but exclusively to Jesus, whose death and resurrection form the eternal foundation of the believer's pence and hope. God assures him that "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." This should fully satisfy the heart and conscience. God is satisfied, and so ought we to be. To raise doubt is to deny the record of God. If an Israelite had said, "How do I know that looking to that serpent of brass will restore me?" or if he had begun to dwell upon the greatness and hopeless nature of his malady, and to reason upon the apparent uselessness of looking up to God's ordinance; in short, if anything, no matter what, had prevented his looking to the brazen serpent, it would have involved a positive rejection of God, and death would have been the inevitable result.

Thus, in the case of the sinner, the moment he is enabled to cast a look of faith to Jesus, his sins vanish. The blood of Jesus, like a mighty cleansing stream, flows over his conscience, washes away every stain, and leaves him without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; and all this, too, in the very light of the holiness of God, where not one speck of sin can be tolerated.

But, ere closing our meditation on the brazen serpent, it may be well just to observe what we may call the intense individuality which marked the bitten Israelite's look at the serpent. Each one had to look for himself. No-one could look for another. It was a personal question. No one could be saved by

proxy. There was life in a look; but the look must be given. There needed to be a personal link — direct individual contact with God's remedy.

Thus it was then, and thus it is now. We must have to do with Jesus for ourselves. The Church cannot save us — no order of priests or ministers can save us. There must be the personal link with the Saviour, else there is no life. "It came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten *any man*, when he beheld the serpent of brass "lived." This was God's order then; and this is His order now, for "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." Let us remember the two little words "*as*" and "*so*," for they apply to every particular in the type and the antitype. Faith is an individual thing; repentance is an individual thing; salvation is an individual thing. Let us never forget this. True, there is, in Christianity, union and communion; but we must have to do with Christ for ourselves, and we must walk with God for We can neither get life nor live by the faith of another. There is, we repeat with emphasis, an intense individuality in every stage of the Christian's life and practical career.

We shall not dwell further upon the familiar type of "The serpent of brass;" but we pray God to enable the reader to meditate upon it for himself, and to make a direct personal application of the precious truth unfolded in one of the most striking figures of Old Testament times. May he be led to gaze, with a more profound and soul-subduing faith, upon the cross, and to drink into his inmost soul the precious mystery there presented. May he not be satisfied with merely getting life by a look at that cross, but seek to enter, more and more, into its deep and marvellous meaning, and thus be more devotedly knit to Him who, when there was no other way of escape possible, did Voluntarily surrender Himself to be bruised on that cursed tree for us and for our salvation.

We shall close our remarks on Numbers 21 by calling the reader's attention to verses 16-18. "And from thence they went to Beer: that is the well whereof the Lord spake unto Moses, Gather the people together and I will give them water. Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it. The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves."

This is a remarkable passage coming in at such a moment and in such a connection. The murmurings are hushed — the people are nearing the borders of the promised land — the effects of the serpents' bite have passed away, and now, without any rod, without any smiting, the people are supplied with refreshment. What though the Amorites, Moabites, and Ammonites are about them; What though the power of Sihon stands in the way; God can open a well for His people and give them a song in spite of all. Oh! what a God is our God! How blessed it is to trace His acts and ways with His people in all these wilderness scenes! May we learn to trust Him more implicitly, and to walk with Him, from day to day, in holy and happy subjection! This is the true path of peace and blessing.

Numbers 22 — Numbers 24.

These three chapters form a distinct section of our book — a truly marvellous section, abounding in rich and varied instruction. In it we have presented to us, first, the covetous prophet; and, secondly, His sublime prophecies. There is something peculiarly awful in the case of Balaam. He evidently loved money — no uncommon love, alas! in our own day. Balak's gold and silver proved a very tempting bait to the wretched man — a bait too tempting to be resisted. Satan knew his man, and the price at which he could be purchased.

If Balaam's heart had been right with God, he would have made very short work with Balak's message; indeed it would not have cost him a moment's consideration to send a reply. But Balaam's heart was all wrong, and we see him, in chapter 22 in the melancholy condition of one acted upon by

conflicting feelings. His heart was bent upon going, because it was bent upon the silver and gold; But, at the same time, there was a sort of reference to God — an appearance of religiousness put on as a cloak to cover his covetous practices. He longed for the money; but he would fain lay hold of it after a religious fashion. Miserable man! most miserable! His name stands on the page of inspiration as the expression of one very dark and awful stage of man's downward history. "Woe unto them," says Jude, "for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily *after the error of Balaam for reward* and perished in the gainsaying of Core." Peter, too, presents Balaam as a prominent figure in one of the very darkest pictures of fallen humanity — a model on which some of the vilest characters are formed. He speaks of those "having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls; an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, *who loved the wages of unrighteousness*; but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet." 2 Peter 2: 14-16.

These passages are solemnly conclusive as to the true character and spirit of Balaam. His heart was set upon money — "he loved the wages of unrighteousness," and his history has been written by the pen of the Holy Ghost, as an awful warning to all professors to beware of covetousness which is idolatry. We shall not dwell further upon the sad story. The reader may pause for a few moments, and gaze upon the picture presented in Numbers 22. He may study the two prominent figures, the crafty king, and the covetous self-willed prophet; and we doubt not he will rise up from the study with a deepened sense of the evil of covetousness, the great moral danger of setting the heart's affections upon this world's riches, and the deep blessedness of having the fear of God before our eyes.

We shall now proceed to examine those marvellous prophecies delivered by Balaam in the audience of Balak, king of the Moabites.

It is profoundly interesting to witness the scene enacted on the high places of Baal, to mark the grand question at stake, to listen to the speakers, to be admitted behind the scenes on such a momentous occasion. How little did Israel know or imagine what was going on between Jehovah and the enemy. It may be they were murmuring in their tents at the very moment in the which God was setting forth their perfection by the tongue of the covetous prophet. Balak would fain have Israel cursed; But, Blessed Be God, He will not suffer any one to curse His people. He may have to deal with them Himself, in secret, about many things; but He will not suffer another to move his tongue against them. He may have to expose them to themselves; but He will not allow a stranger to expose them.

This is a point of deepest interest. The great question is not so much what the enemy may think of God's people, or what they may think about themselves, or what they may think of one another. the real — the All-important question is, What does God think about them? He knows exactly all that concerns them; all that they are; all that they have done; all that is in them. Everything stands clearly revealed to His all penetrating eye. The deepest secrets of the heart, of the nature, and of the life, are all known to him. Neither angels, men, nor devils know us as God knows us. God knows us perfectly; and it is with Him we have to do, and we can say, in the triumphant language of the apostle, "If God be for us, who can be against us? (Rom. 8) God sees us, thinks of us, speaks about us, acts towards us, according to what He Himself has made us, and wrought for us — according to the perfection of His own work. "Beholders many faults may find;" but, as regards our standing, our God sees us only in the comeliness of Christ; we are perfect in Him. When God looks at His people, He beholds in them His own workmanship; and it is to the glory of His holy name, and to the praise of His salvation, that not a blemish should be seen on those who are His — those whom He, in sovereign grace, has made His own. His character, His name, His glory, and the perfection of His work are all involved in the standing

of those with whom He has linked Himself.

Hence, therefore, the moment any enemy or accuser enters the scene, Jehovah places Himself in front to receive and answer the accusation; and His answer is always founded, not upon what His people are in themselves, but upon what He has made them through the perfection of His own work. His glory is linked with them, and, in vindicating them, He maintains His own glory. He places himself between them and every accusing tongue. His glory demands that they should be presented in all the comeliness which He has put upon them. If the enemy comes to curse and accuse, Jehovah answers him by pouring forth the rich current of His everlasting complacency in those whom He has chosen for Himself, and whom He has made fit to be in His presence for ever.

All this is strikingly illustrated in the third chapter of the prophet Zechariah. There, too, the enemy presents himself to resist the representative of the people of God. How does God answer him? Simply by cleansing, clothing, and crowning the one whom Satan would fain curse and accuse, so that Satan has not a word to say. He is silenced for ever. The filthy garments are gone, and he that was a brand is become a mitred priest — he who was only fit for the flames of hell is now fitted to walk up and down in the courts of the Lord.

So also when we turn to the Book of Canticles we see the same thing. There the Bridegroom, in contemplating the bride, declares to her, "Thou art *all fair*; my love; there is *no spot* in thee." (Cant. 4: 7) She, in speaking of herself, can only exclaim "*I am black*." (Cant. 1: 5, 6) So also in John 13 the Lord Jesus looks at His disciples, and pronounces them "Clean every whit;" although, in a few hours afterwards, one of them was to curse and swear that he did not know Him. So vast is the difference between what we are in ourselves and what we are in Christ — between our positive standing and our possible state.

Should this glorious truth as to the perfection of our standing make us careless as to our practical state? Far away be the monstrous thought! Nay, the knowledge of our absolutely settled and perfect position in Christ is the very thing which the Holy Ghost makes use of in order to raise the standard of practice. Harken to those powerful words from the pen 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," &c. (Col. 1 - 5.) We must never measure the standing by the state, but always judge the state by the standing. To lower the standing because of the state, is to give the death-blow to all progress in practical Christianity.

The foregoing line of truth is most forcibly illustrated in Balaam's four parables. To speak after the manner of men, we never should have had such a glorious view of Israel, as seen in "The vision of the Almighty" — "from the top of the rocks" — by one "having his eyes open," had not Balak sought to curse them. Jehovah, blessed be His name, can, very speedily, open a man's eyes to the true state of the case, in reference to the standing of His people, and His judgement respecting them. He claims the privilege of setting forth *His* thoughts about them. Balak and Balaam with "all the princes of Moab" may assemble to hear Israel cursed and defied; they may "build seven altars," and "offer a bullock and a lamb on every altar;" Balak's silver and gold may glitter under the covetous gaze of the false prophet; but act all the powers of earth and hell, men and devils combined, in their dark and terrible array, can evoke a single breath of curse or accusation against the Israel of God. As well might the enemy have sought to point out a flaw in that fair creation which God had pronounced "very good," as to fasten an accusation upon the redeemed of the Lord. Oh! no; they shine in all the comeliness which He has put

upon them, and all that is needed, in order to see them thus, is to mount to "the top of the rocks" — to have "the eyes open" to look at them from His point of view, so that we may see them in "the vision of the Almighty."

Having thus taken a general survey of the contents of these remarkable chapters, we shall briefly glance at each of the four parables in particular. We shall find a distinct point in each — a distinct feature in the character and condition of the people, as seen in "The vision of the Almighty."

In the first of Balaam's wonderful parables, we have the marked separation of God's people from all the nations, most distinctly set forth. "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."*

{*Poor, wretched Balaam! miserable man! He would fain die the death of the righteous. Many there are who would say the same; but they forget that the way" to die the death of the righteous" is to possess and exhibit the life of the righteous. Many — alas! how many — would like to die the death who do not live the life. Many would like to possess Balak's silver and gold, and yet be enrolled amongst the Israel of God. Vain thought! Fatal delusion! We cannot serve God and Mammon. }

Here we have Israel singled out, and partitioned off to be a separated and peculiar people — a people who, according to the divine thought concerning them, were never, at any time, on any ground, or for any object whatsoever, to be mingled with or reckoned amongst the nations. "The people shall dwell *alone*." This is distinct and emphatic. It is true of the literal seed of Abraham, and true Of all believers now. Immense practical results flow out of this great principle. God's people are to be separated unto Him, not on the ground of being better than others, but simply on the ground of what God is, and of what He would ever have His people to be. We shall not pursue this point further just now; but the reader would do well to examine it thoroughly in the light of the divine word. "*The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.*" Numbers 23: 8, 9.

But if Jehovah, in His sovereign grace, is pleased to link Himself with a people; if He calls them out to be a separate people, in the world — to "dwell alone," and shine for Him in the midst of those who are still "sitting in darkness and the shadow of death," He can only have them in such a condition as suits Himself. He must make them such as He would have them to be — such as shall be to the praise of His great and glorious name. Hence, in the second parable, the prophet is made to tell out, not merely the negative, but the positive condition of the people. "And he took up his parable and said, rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor: God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless; and *he hath blessed*; and I *cannot* reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, *What hath God wrought* [not what hath Israel wrought?] Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain." Num. 23: 18-24.

Here we find ourselves on truly elevated ground, and on ground as solid as it is elevated. This is, in truth "The top of the rocks" — the pure air and wide range of "the hills," where the people of God

are seen only in "the vision of the Almighty" — seen as He sees them, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing — all their deformities hidden from view — all His comeliness seen upon them.

In this very sublime parable, Israel's blessedness and security are made to depend, not on themselves, but upon the truth and faithfulness of Jehovah. "God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent." This places Israel upon safe ground. God must be true to Himself. Is there any power that can possibly prevent Him from fulfilling His word and oath? Surely not. "*He hath blessed*; and I cannot reverse it." God will not, and Satan can not reverse the blessing.

Thus all is settled. "It is ordered in all things and sure." In the previous parable, it was, "God hath not cursed." Here it is, "He hath blessed." There is very manifest advance. As Balak conducts the money-loving prophet from place to place, Jehovah takes occasion to bring out fresh features of beauty in His people, and fresh points of security in their position. Thus it is not merely that they are a separated people dwelling alone; but they are a justified people, having the Lord their God *with* them, and the shout of a king *among* them. "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." The enemy may say, "There is iniquity and perverseness there all the while." Yes, but who can make Jehovah behold it, when He Himself has been pleased to blot it all out as a thick cloud for His name's sake? If He has cast it behind His back, who can bring it before His face "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" God sees His people so thoroughly delivered from all that could be against them, that He can take up His abode in their midst, and cause His voice to be heard amongst them.

Well, therefore may we exclaim "What hath God wrought" It is not "What hath Israel wrought!" Balak and Balaam would have found plenty to do in the way of cursing, had Israel's work been in question. The Lord be praised, it is on what He hath wrought that His people stand, and their foundation is as stable as the throne of God. "If God be for us, who can be against us" If God stands right between us and every foe, what have we to *fear*? If He undertakes, on our behalf, to answer every accuser, then, assuredly, perfect peace is our portion.

However, the king of Moab still fondly hoped and sedulously sought to gain his end. And, doubtless, Balaam did the same, for they were leagued together against the Israel of God, thus reminding us forcibly of the beast and the false prophet, who are yet to arise and play an awfully solemn part in connection with Israel's future, as presented on the apocalyptic page.

"And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments [what a dreadful disclosure is here] but he set his face toward the wilderness. And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in His tents, according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came upon him. And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, *and the man whose eyes are open* hath said, he hath said, which heard *the words of God*, which saw *the vision, of the Almighty*, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath, as it were, the strength of an unicorn: he shall *eat up the nations* his enemies [terrible announcement for Balak!] and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." Numbers 24: 1-9.

"Higher and higher yet" is surely the motto here. we may well shout "Excelsior," as we mount up

to the top of the rocks, and hearken to those brilliant utterances which the false prophet was forced to give out. It was better and better for Israel — worse and worse for Balak. He had to stand by and not only hear Israel "blessed," but hear himself "cursed" for seeking to curse them.

But let us particularly notice the rich grace that shines in this third parable. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" If one had gone down to examine those tents and tabernacles, In "the vision" of man they might have appeared "Black as the tents of Kedar." But, looked at in "the vision of the Almighty," they were "goodly," and whoever did not see them thus needed to have "*his eyes opened*" If I am looking at the people of God "from the top of the rocks," I shall see them as God sees them, and that is as clothed with all the comeliness of Christ — complete in Him — accepted in the Beloved. This is what will enable me to get on with them, to work with them, to have fellowship with them, to rise above their points and angles, blots and blemishes, failures and infirmities.* If I do not contemplate them from this lofty — this divine ground, I shall be sure to fix my eye on some little flaw or other, which will completely mar my communion, and alienate my affections.

{*The statement in the text does not, by any means, touch the question of discipline in the house of God. We are bound to judge moral evil and doctrinal error. 1 Cor. 5: 12, 13.}

In Israel's case, we shall see, in the very next chapter, what terrible evil they fell into. Did this alter Jehovah's judgement? Surely not. "He is not the son of men that he should repent." He judged and chastened them for their evil, because He is holy, and can never sanction, in His people, anything that is contrary to His nature. But He could never reverse His judgement respecting them. He knew all about them. He knew what they were and what they would do; but yet He said, "I have not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither have I seen perverseness in Israel. How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" Was this making light of their evil? The thought were blasphemy. He could chasten them for their sins; but the moment an enemy comes forth to curse or accuse, He stands in front of His people and says, "I see no iniquity" — "How goodly are their tents"

Reader, dost thou think that such views of divine grace will minister to a spirit of Antinomianism? Far Be the thought! we may rest assured we are never further away from the region of that terrible evil than when we are breathing the pure and holy atmosphere of "the top of the rocks" — that high ground from whence God's people are viewed, not as they are in themselves, but as they are in Christ — not according to the thoughts of man, but according to the thoughts of God. And, furthermore, we may say that the only true and effectual mode of raising the standard of moral conduct is to abide in the faith of this most precious and tranquillising truth, that God sees us perfect in Christ.

But we must take one more glance at our third parable. Not only are Israel's tents seen to be goodly in the eyes of Jehovah, but the people themselves are presented to us as abiding fast by those ancient sources of grace and living ministry which are found in God. "As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters." How exquisite! How perfectly beautiful! And only to think that we are indebted to the godless confederacy between Balak and Balaam for those sublime utterances!

But there is more than this. Not only is Israel seen drinking at those everlasting well-springs of grace and salvation, But, as must ever be the case, as a channel of blessing to others. "He shall pour the water out of his buckets." It is the fixed purpose of God that Israel's twelve tribes shall yet be a medium of rich blessing to all the ends of the earth. This we learn from such scriptures as Ezekiel 47 and Zechariah 14, on which we do not now attempt to dwell; we merely refer to them as showing the marvellous fullness and beauty of these glorious parables. The reader may meditate, with much spiritual profit, upon these and kindred scriptures; but let him carefully guard against the fatal system

falsely called spiritualising, Which, in fact, consists mainly in applying to the professing church all the special blessings of the house of Israel, while, to the latter, are left only the curses of a broken law. We may rest assured that God will not sanction any such system as this. Israel is beloved for the fathers' sakes; and "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Romans 11.

We shall close this section by a brief reference to Balaam's last parable. Balak, having beard such a glowing testimony to Israel's future, and the overthrow of all their enemies, was not only sorely disappointed, but greatly enraged; "And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together: and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour; [?] But, lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour. and Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold [the very thing his poor heart craved intensely,] I *cannot* go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the Lord saith, that will I speak. And now, behold, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee what *this people* shall do to *thy people* in the latter days. [This was coming to close quarters.] And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: he hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: [tremendous fact for Balaam!] there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth." Verse 10-17.

This gives great completeness to the subject of these parables. The top-stone is here laid on the magnificent superstructure. It is, in good truth, grace and glory. In the first parable we see the absolute separation of the people; in the second, their perfect justification; in the third, their moral beauty and fruitfulness; and, now, in the fourth, we stand on the very summit of the hills — on the loftiest crag of the rocks, and survey the wide plains of glory in all their length and breadth, stretching away into a boundless future. We see the Lion of the tribe of Judah crouching; we hear his roar; we see Him seizing upon all his enemies, and crushing them to atoms. The Star of Jacob rises to set no more. The true David ascends the throne of His father, Israel is pre-eminent in the earth, and all his enemies are covered with shame and everlasting contempt.

It is impossible to conceive anything more magnificent than these parables; and they are all the more remarkable as coming at the very close of Israel's desert wanderings, during which they had given such ample proof of what they were — of what materials they were made — and what their capabilities and tendencies were. But God was above all, and nothing changeth His affection. Whom He loves, and as He loves, He loves to the end; and hence the league between the typical "beast and false prophet" proved abortive. Israel was blessed of God and not to be cursed of any. "And Balaam rose up, and went, and returned to his place: and Balak also went his way."

Numbers 25.

Here a new scene opens upon our view. We have been on the top of Pisgah, hearkening to God's testimony respecting Israel, and there all was bright and fair, without a cloud, without a spot. But now we find ourselves in the plains of Moab, and all is changed. There, we had to do with God and His thoughts. Here, we have to do with the people and their joys. What a contrast! It reminds us of the opening and the close of 2 Corinthians 12. In the former, we have the *positive standing* of the Christian; in the latter, the *possible state* into which he may fall if not watchful. That shows us "a man in Christ"

capable of being caught up into paradise, at any moment. This shows us saints of God capable of plunging into all manner of sin and folly.

Thus it is with Israel, as seen from "The top of the rocks," in "The vision of the almighty," and Israel as seen in the plains of Moab. In the one case, we have their perfect standing; in the other, their imperfect state. Balaam's parables give us God's estimate of the former; the javelin of Phinehas, His judgement upon the latter. God will never reverse His decision as to what His people are as to standing; but he must judge and chasten them when their ways comport not with that standing. It is His gracious will that their state should correspond with their standing. But here is, alas! where failure comes in. Nature is allowed to act in various ways, and our God is constrained to take down the rod of discipline, in order that the evil thing which we have suffered to manifest itself may be crushed and subdued.

Thus it is in Numbers 25. Balaam, having failed in his attempt to curse Israel, succeeds in seducing them, his wives, to commit sin, hoping whereby to gain his end. "And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. and the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel." (Ver. 3, 4.) Then we have the striking record of the zeal and faithfulness of Phinehas: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous For My sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel." Verse 10-13.

God's glory and Israel's good were the objects that ruled the conduct of the faithful Phinehas on this occasion. It was a critical moment. He felt there was a demand for the most stern action. It was no time for false tenderness. There are moments in the history of God's people in the which tenderness to man becomes unfaithfulness to God; and it is of the utmost importance to be able to discern such moments. The prompt acting of Phinehas saved the whole congregation, glorified Jehovah in the midst of His people, and completely frustrated the enemy's design. Balaam fell among the judged Midianites; but Phinehas became the possessor of an everlasting priesthood.

Thus much as to the solemn instruction contained in this brief section of our book, May we profit by it. May God's Spirit give us such an abiding sense of the perfection of our standing in Christ, that our practical ways may be more in accordance with it!

Numbers 26

This, though one of the longest chapters in our book, does not call for much in the way of remark or exposition. In it we have the record of the second numbering of the people, as they were about to enter upon the promised land. How sad to think that, out of the six hundred thousand men of war which were numbered, at the first, only two remain — Joshua and Caleb! All the rest lay mouldering in the dust, buried beneath the sand of the desert, all passed away. The two men of simple faith remained to have their faith rewarded. As for the men of unbelief, the inspired apostle tells us "Their carcasses fell in the wilderness."

How solemn! How full of instruction and admonition for us! Unbelief kept the first generation from entering the land of Canaan, and caused them to die in the wilderness. This is the fact on which the Holy Ghost grounds one of the most searching warnings and exhortations anywhere to be found in the compass of the inspired volume. Let us hear it! "Whereforetake heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily

while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; while it is said, To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, Whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard." Hebrews 3: 7 — Hebrews 4: 1, 2.

Here lies the great practical secret. The word of God mixed with faith. Precious mixture! the only thing that can really profit any one. We may hear a great deal; we may talk a great deal; we may profess a great deal; but we may rest assured that the measure of real spiritual power — power to surmount difficulties — power to overcome the world — power to get on — power to possess ourselves of all that God has bestowed upon us — the measure of this power is simply the measure in which God's word is mixed with faith. That word is settled for ever in Heaven; and if it is fixed in our hearts, by faith, there is a divine link connecting us with heaven and all that belongs to it; and, in proportion as our hearts are thus livingly linked with heaven and the Christ who is there, shall we be practically separated from this present world, and lifted above its influence. Faith takes possession of all that God has given. It enters into that within the veil; it endures as seeing Him who is invisible; it occupies itself with the unseen and eternal, not with the seen and the temporal. Men think possession sure; faith knows nothing sure but God and His word. Faith takes God's word and locks it up in the very innermost chamber of the heart, and there it remains as hid treasure — the only thing that deserves to be called treasure. The happy possessor of this treasure is rendered thoroughly independent of the world. He may be poor as regards the riches of this perishing scene; but if only he is rich in faith, he is the possessor of untold wealth — "durable riches and righteousness" — "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

Reader, these are not the pencillings of fancy — the mere visions of the imagination. No; they are substantial verities — divine realities, which you may now enjoy in all their preciousness. If you will only take God at His word — only believe what He says because he says it — for this is faith — then verily you have this treasure, which renders its possessor entirely Independent of this scene where men live only by the sight of their eyes. The men of this world speak of "*the positive*" and "*the real*," meaning thereby what they can see and experience; in other words, the things of time and sense — the tangible — the palpable. Faith knows nothing positive, nothing real, but the word of the living God.

Now it was the lack of this blessed faith that kept Israel out of Canaan, and caused six hundred thousand carcasses to fall in the wilderness. And it is the lack of this faith that keeps thousands of God's people in bondage and darkness, when they ought to be walking in liberty and light — that keeps them in depression and gloom, when they ought to be walking in the joy and strength of God's full salvation — that keeps them in fear of judgement, when they ought to be walking in the hope of glory — that keeps them in doubt as to whether they shall escape the sword of the destroyer in Egypt, when they ought to be feasting on the old corn of the land of Canaan.

Oh! that God's people would consider these things in the secret of His presence and in the light of His word! Then indeed they would better know and more fully appreciate the fair inheritance which faith finds in the eternal word of God — they would more clearly apprehend the things which are freely given to us of God in the Son Of His love. May the Lord send out His light and His truth, and lead His people into the fullness of their portion in Christ, so that they may take their true place, and yield a true

testimony for Him, while waiting for His glorious advent.

Numbers 27.

The conduct of the daughters of Zelophehad, as recorded in the opening section of this chapter, presents a striking and beautiful contrast to the unbelief on which we have just been commenting. They, most assuredly, belonged not to the generation of those who are ever ready to abandon divine ground, lower the divine standard, and forego the privileges conferred by divine grace. No; those five noble women had no sympathy with such. They were determined, through grace, to plant the foot of faith on the very highest ground, and, with holy yet bold decision, to make their own of that which God had given. Let us read the refreshing record.

"Then came the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph: and these are the names of his daughters, Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah, and they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the Lord, in the company of Korah; but died in his own sin, and had no sons. Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family because he hath no son? Give unto us, therefore, a Possession among the brethren of our father." Verses 1-4.

This is uncommonly fine. It does the heart good to read such words as these at a time like the present, when so little is made of the proper standing and portion of God's people, and when so many are content to go on from day to day, and year to year, without caring even to inquire into the things which are freely given to them of God. Nothing is more sad than to see the carelessness, the utter indifference, with which many professing Christians treat such great and all important questions as the standing, walk, and hope of the believer and the Church of God. It is not, by any means, our purpose to go into these questions here. We have done so repeatedly in the other volumes of the series of "Notes." We merely desire to call the reader's attention to the fact, that it is at once sinning against our own rich mercies, and dishonouring the Lord, when we! evince a spirit of indifferentism in reference to any one point of divine revelation as to the position and portion of the Church, or of the individual believer. If God in the aboundings of His grace, has been pleased to bestow upon us precious privileges, as Christians, ought we not to seek earnestly to know what these privileges are? Ought we not to seek to make them our own, in the artless simplicity of faith? Is it treating our God and His revelation worthily, to be indifferent as to whether we are servants or sons — as to whether we have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us or not — as to whether we are under law or under grace — whether ours is a heavenly or an earthly calling?

Surely not. If there be one thing plainer than another in scripture, it is this, that God delights in those who appreciate and enjoy the provision of His love — those who find their joy is Himself. The inspired volume teems with evidence on this point. Look at the case now before as in our chapter. Here were those daughters of Joseph — for such we must call them — bereaved of their father — helpless and desolate, as viewed from nature's standpoint. Death had snapped the apparent link which connected them with the proper inheritance of God's people. What then? Were they content to give up? — to fold their arms, in cold indifference? Was it nothing to them whether or not they were to have a place and a portion with the Israel of God? Ah! no, reader; these illustrious women exhibit something totally different from all this — something which we may well study and seek to imitate — something which, we are bold to say, refreshed the heart of God. They were sure there was a portion for them in the land of promise, of which neither death nor anything that happened in the wilderness could ever deprive

them. "Why should the name of our father be done away from among his people because he hath no son?" Could death — could failure of male issue—could anything — frustrate the goodness of God? Impossible. "Give unto us: therefore, a possession among the brethren of our father."

Noble words! words that went right up to the throne and to the heart of the God of Israel. It was a most powerful testimony delivered in the ears of the whole congregation. Moses was taken aback. Here was something beyond the range of the Lawgiver. Moses was a servant, and a blessed and honoured servant too. But, again and again, in the course of this marvellous Book of Numbers, this wilderness volume, questions arise with which he is unable to deal, as for example, the defiled men in chapter 9, and the daughters of Zelophehad in the section before us.

"And Moses brought their cause before the Lord. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, *The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them.*" Verses 5-7.

Here was a glorious triumph, in the presence of the whole assembly. A bold and simple faith is always sure to be rewarded. It glorifies God, and God honours it. Need we travel from section to section, and from page to page of the holy volume to prove this? Need we turn to the Abrahams, the Hannahs, the Deborahs, the Rahabs, the Ruths of Old Testament times? or to the Marys, the Elizabeths, the centurions, and the Syro-phoenicians of The New Testament times? Wherever we turn, we learn the same great practical truth that God delights in a bold and simple faith — a faith that artlessly seizes and tenaciously holds all that He has given — that positively refuses, even in the very face of nature's weakness and death, to surrender a single hair's breadth of the divinely given inheritance. What though Zelophehad's bones lay mouldering in the dust of the wilderness; what though no male issue appeared to sustain his name? faith could rise above all these things, and count on God's faithfulness to make good all that His word had promised.

"The daughters of Zelophehad speak right." They always do so. Their words are words of faith, and, as such, are always right in the judgement of God, it is a terrible thing to limit "the Holy One of Israel." He delights to be trusted and used. It is utterly impossible for faith to overdraw its account in God's bank. God could no more disappoint faith than He could deny Himself. He can never say to faith, "You have miscalculated; you take too lofty — too bold a stand; so lower down, and lessen your expectations." Ah! no; the only thing in all this world that truly delights and refreshes the heart of God is the faith that can simply trust him; and we may rest assured of this, that the faith that can trust Him is also the faith that can love Him, and serve Him, and praise Him.

Hence, then, we are deeply indebted to the daughters of Zelophehad. They teach us a lesson of inestimable value. And more than this, their acting gave occasion to the unfolding of a fresh truth which was to form the basis of a divine rule for all future generations. The Lord commanded Moses, saying, "If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter."

Here we have a great principle laid down, in reference to the question of inheritance, of which, humanly speaking, we should have heard nothing had it not been for the faith and faithful conduct of these remarkable women. If they had listened to the voice of timidity and unbelief — if they had refused to come forward, before the whole congregation in the assertion of the claims of Faith; then, not only would they have lost their own inheritance and blessing, but all future daughters of Israel, in a like position, would have been deprived of their portion likewise. Whereas, on the contrary, by acting in the precious energy of faith, they preserved their inheritance; they got the blessing; they received testimony from God; their names shine on the page of inspiration; and their conduct furnished, by

divine authority, a precedent for all future generations.

Thus much as to the marvellous results of faith. But then we must remember that there is moral danger arising out of the very dignity and elevation which faith confers on those who, through grace, are enabled to exercise it; and this danger must be carefully guarded against. This is strikingly illustrated in the further history of the daughters of Zelophehad, as recorded in the last chapter of our book. "And the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, came near, and spake before Moses, and before the princes, the chief fathers of The children of Israel: and they said, The Lord commanded my lord to give the land for an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel: and my lord was commanded by the Lord to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother unto his daughters. And if they be married to any of the sons, of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then shall their inheritance be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and shall be put to the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they were received: so shall it be taken from the lot of our inheritance. And when the jubilee of the children of Israel shall be, then shall their inheritance be put unto the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall their inheritance be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers. And Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the Lord, saying, "The tribe of the sons of Joseph hath said well." Numbers 36: 1-5.

The "fathers" of the house of Joseph must be heard as well as the "daughters." The faith of the latter was most lovely; but there was just a danger lest, in the elevation to which that faith had raised them, they might forget the claims of others, and remove the landmarks which guarded the inheritance of their fathers. This had to be thought of and provided for. It was natural to suppose what the daughters of Zelophehad. would marry; and moreover it was possible they might form an alliance outside the boundaries of their tribe; and thus in the year of jubilee — that grand adjusting institution instead of adjustment, there would be confusion, and a permanent breach in the inheritance of Manasseh. This would never do; and therefore the wisdom of those ancient fathers is very apparent. we need to be guarded on every side, in order that the integrity of faith and the testimony may be duly maintained. We are not to carry things with a high hand and a strong will, though we have ever such strong faith, but be ever ready to yield ourselves to the adjusting power of the whole truth of God.

"This is the thing which the Lord doth command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, Let them marry to whom they think best, only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry; so shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe; for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers..... Even as the Lord commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad; for they [the five daughters] were married unto their father's brothers' sons. And they were married into the families of the sons of Manasseh, the son of Joseph; and their inheritance remained in the tribe of the family of their father." Verses 6-12.

Thus all is settled. The activities of faith are governed by the truth of God, and individual claims are adjusted in harmony with the true interests of all; while, at the same time, the glory of God is so fully maintained, that at the time of the jubilee, instead of any confusion in the landmarks of Israel, the integrity of the inheritance is secured according to the divine grant.

Nothing can be more instructive than this entire history of the daughters of Zelophehad. May we really profit by it!

The closing paragraph of our chapter is full of deep solemnity. The governmental dealings of God are displayed before our eyes in a manner eminently calculated to impress the heart. "The Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim and see the land which I have given unto the children

of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered. For ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes: that is the water of Meribah in Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin." verses 12-14.

Moses must not go over Jordan. It is not only that he cannot officially bring the people over, but he cannot even go himself. Such was the enactment of the government of God. But, on the other hand, we see grace shining out, with uncommon lustre, in the fact that Moses is conducted, by God's own hand, to the top of Pisgah, and from thence he sees the land of promise, in all its magnificence, not merely as Israel afterwards possessed it, but as God had originally given it.

Now, this was the fruit of grace, and it comes out more fully in the close of Deuteronomy, where we are also told that God buried His dear servant. This is wonderful. Indeed there is nothing like it in the history of the saints of God. we do not dwell upon this subject here, having done so elsewhere;* but it is full of the deepest interest. Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips, and for that he was forbidden to cross the Jordan. This was God in government. But Moses was taken up to Pisgah, there, in company with Jehovah, to get a full view of the inheritance; and then Jehovah made a grave for His servant and buried him therein. This was God in *grace* — marvellous, matchless grace! grace that has ever made the eater yield meat and the strong sweetness. How precious to be the subjects of such grace! May our souls rejoice in it more and more, in the eternal fountain whence it emanates, and in the channel through which it flows!

{*See an article entitled "Grace and Government" in "Things New and Old," Vol., 4. p. 111. G, Morrish, 20, Paternoster Square.}

We shall close this section by a brief reference to the lovely unselfishness of Moses in the matter of appointing a successor. That blessed man of God was ever characterised by a most exquisite spirit of self-surrender — that rare and admirable grace. we never find him seeking his own things; on the contrary, again and again, when opportunity was afforded him of building up his own fame and fortune, he proved, very distinctly, that the glory of God and the good of His people so occupied and filled his heart that there was no room for a single selfish consideration.

Thus it is in the closing scene of our chapter. When Moses hears that he is not to go over Jordan, instead of being occupied in regrets as to himself, he only thinks of the interests of the congregation. "And Moses spake unto the Lord saying, Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd."

Whet unselfish breathings are here How grateful they must have proved to the heart of that One who so loved and cared for His People! Provided that Israel's need were met Moses was content. If only the work was done he cared not who did it. self, his interest, and his destinies, he could calmly leave all in the hand of God. He would take care of him, but oh! his loving heart yearns over the beloved people of God; and the very moment he sees Joshua ordained as their leader, he is ready to depart and be at rest forever. Blessed servant! Happy man! Would there were even a few amongst us characterised, in some small degree, by his excellent spirit of self-abnegation, and jealous care for God's glory and His people's good. But alas! alas! we have to repeat, with deepening emphasis, the words of the apostle, "All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's." O Lord, stir up all our hearts to desire a more earnest consecration of ourselves, in spirit, soul, and body, to thy blessed service! May we, in good truth, learn to live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us — who

came from heaven to earth about our sins; and is gone back from earth to heaven about our infirmities; and who is coming again for our eternal salvation and glory.

Numbers 28 — Numbers 29

These two chapters must be read together; they form a distinct section of our book — a section pregnant with interest and instruction. The second verse of chapter 28 gives us a condensed statement of the contents of the entire section. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, My offering, and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season."

In these words the reader is furnished with a key with which to unlock the whole of this portion of the Book of Numbers. It is as distinct and simple as possible. "My offering" "My bread" "My sacrifices," "A sweet savour unto Me." All this is strongly marked. We may learn here, without an effort, that the grand leading thought is Christ to Godward. It is not so much Christ as meeting our need — though surely He does most blessedly meet that — as Christ feeding and delighting the heart of God. It is God's bread — a truly wonderful expression, and one little thought of or understood. we are all sadly prone to look at Christ merely as the procuring cause of our salvation, the One through whom we are forgiven and saved from hell, the channel through which all blessing flows to us He is all this, blessed for ever be His Name. He is the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree He died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God He saves us from our sins, from their present power, and from their future consequences.

All this is true; and, consequently, throughout the whole of the two chapters which lie open before us, and in each distinct paragraph, we have the sin offering introduced. (See Num. 28: 15, 22, 30; Num. 29: 5, 11, 16, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 38) Thirteen times over is mention made of the sin offering of atonement; and yet, for all that, it remains true and obvious that sin or atonement for sin is not, by any means, the great prominent subject. There is no mention of it in the verse which we have quoted for the reader, although that verse plainly gives a summary of the contents of the two chapters; nor is there any allusion to it until we reach the fifteenth verse.

Need we say that the sin offering is essential inasmuch as man is in question, and man is a sinner? It would be impossible to treat of the subject of man's approach to God, his worship, or his communion, without introducing the atoning death of Christ as the necessary foundation. This the whole heart confesses with supreme delight. The mystery of Christ's precious sacrifice shall be the wellspring of our souls throughout the everlasting ages.

But shall we be deemed Socinian in our thoughts if we assert that there is something in Christ and in His precious death beyond the bearing of our sins and the meeting of our necessities? We trust not. Can any one read Numbers 28 and 29 and not see this? Look at one simple fact which might strike the mind of a child. There are seventy-one verses in the entire section; and, out of these, thirteen allude to the sin offering, and the remaining fifty-eight are occupied with sweet savour offerings.

In a word then, the special theme here is God's delight in Christ. Morning and evening, day by day, week after week, from one new moon to another, from the opening to the close of the year, it is Christ in His fragrance and preciousness to Godward. True it is thanks be to God, and to Jesus Christ His Son — our sin is atoned for, judged, and put away for ever — our trespasses forgiven and guilt cancelled. But above and beyond this, the heart of God is fed, refreshed, and delighted by Christ. What was the morning and evening lamb? Was it a sin offering or a burnt offering? Hear the reply in God's own words: "And thou shalt say unto them, This is the offering made by fire which ye shall offer unto the Lord; two lambs of the first year without spot day by day, for a *continual burnt offering*. The one

lamb shalt thou offer in the morning, and the other lamb shalt thou offer at even; and a tenth part of an ephah of flour for a meat offering, mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil. It is a continual burnt offering, which was ordained in Mount Sinai, for a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the Lord."

Again; what were the two lambs for the Sabbath? a sin offering or a burnt offering? "This is *the burnt offering* of every Sabbath." It was to be double, because the Sabbath was a type of the rest that remaineth for God's people, when there will be a two fold appreciation of Christ. But the character of the offering is as plain as possible. It was Christ to Godward. This is the special point in the burnt offering. The Sin offering is Christ to usward. In this, it is a question of the hatefulness of sin; in that, it is a question of the preciousness and excellency of Christ.

So also, at the beginnings of their months (ver. 11), in the feast of the Passover and unleavened bread (ver. 16-25), in the feast of firstfruits (ver. 26-31), in the feast of trumpets (Num. 29: 1-6), in the feast of tabernacles (ver. 7-38). In a word, throughout the entire range of feasts, the leading idea is Christ as a sweet savour. The sin offering is never lacking; but the sweet savour offerings get *the* prominent place, as is evident to the most cursory reader. We do not think it possible for any one to read this remarkable portion of scripture and not observe the contrast between the place of the sin offering and that of the burnt offering. The former is only spoken of as "one kid of the goats," whereas the latter comes before us in the form of "fourteen lambs," "thirteen bullocks" and such like. Such is the large place which the sweet savour offerings get in this scripture.

But why dwell upon this? Why insist upon it? Simply to show to the Christian reader the true character of the worship God looks for, and in which He delights. God delights in Christ; and it should be our constant aim, to present to God that in which He delights. Christ should ever be the material of our worship; and He will be, in proportion as we are led by the Spirit of God. How often, alas! it is otherwise with us the heart call tell. Both in the assembly and in the closet, how often is the tone low, and the spirit dull and heavy. We are occupied with self instead of with Christ; and the Holy Ghost, instead of being able to do His own proper work, which is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, is obliged to occupy us with ourselves, in self-judgement, because our ways have not been right.

All this is to be deeply deplored. It demands our serious attention both as assemblies and as individuals—in our public reunions and in our private devotions. Why is the tone of our public meetings frequently so low? Why such feebleness, such barrenness, such wandering? Why are the hymns and prayers so wide of the mark? Why is there so little that really deserves the name of worship? Why is there such restlessness and aimless activity? Why is there so little in our midst to refresh the heart of God? so little that He can really speak of as "*His* bread, for *His* sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto him?" We are occupied with self and its surroundings — our wants, our weakness, our trials and difficulties; and we leave God without the bread of His sacrifice. We actually rob Him of His due, and of that which His loving heart desires.

Is it that we can ignore our trials, our difficulties, and our wants? No; but we can commit them to Him. He tells us to cast all our care upon Him, in the sweet and tranquillising assurance that He careth for us. He invites us to cast our burdens upon Him, in the assurance that He will sustain us. He is mindful of us. Is not this enough! Ought we not to be sufficiently at leisure from ourselves, when we assemble in His presence, to be able to present to Him something besides our own things? He has provided for us. He has made all right for us. Our sins and Our sorrows have all been divinely met. And most surely we cannot suppose that such things are the food of God's sacrifice. He has made them His

care, blessed be His name; but they cannot be said to be His food.

Christian reader, ought we not to think of these things — think of them, in reference both to the assembly and the closet? — for the same remarks apply both to the one and the other. Ought we not to cultivate such a condition of soul as would enable us to present to God that which He is pleased to call "His bread?" The truth is we want more entire and habitual occupation of heart with Christ as a sweet savour to God. It is not that we should value the sin offering less; far be the thought! But let us remember that there is something more in our precious Lord Jesus Christ than the pardon of our sins and the salvation of our souls. What do the burnt offering, the meat offering, and the drink offering set forth? Christ as a sweet savour—Christ the food of God's offering — the joy of His heart. Need we say it is one and the same Christ? Need we insist upon it that it is the same One who was made a curse for us that is a sweet savour to God? Surely, surely every Christian owns this. But are we not prone to confine our thoughts of Christ to what *He did for us*, to the virtual exclusion of what *He is to God*? It is this we have to mourn over and judge — this we must seek to have corrected; and we cannot but think that a careful study of Numbers 28, 29 would prove a very excellent corrective. May God, by His Spirit, use it to this end!

Having, in our "Notes on Leviticus," offered to the reader What God has given to us in the way of light on the sacrifices and feasts, we do not feel led to dwell upon them here. That little volume can be had of the publisher, and the reader will find in chapters 1 - 8 and chapter 33 what may interest and help him in reference to the subjects treated of in the two chapters on which we have been dwelling.

Numbers 30.

This brief section has what we may term a dispensational bearing. It applies specially to Israel, and treats of the question of vows and bonds. The man and the woman stand in marked contrast, in relation to this subject. "If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth." Verse 2.

In reference to the woman, the case was different. "If a woman also vow a vow unto the Lord, and bind herself by a bond, being in her fathers house in her youth; and her father hear her vow, and her bond wherewith she hath bound her soul, and her father shall hold his peace at her: then all her vows shall stand, and every word wherewith she hath bound her soul shall stand. But if her father disallow her in the day that he heareth; not any of Her vows, or of her bonds wherewith she hath bound her soul, shall stand: and the Lord shall forgive her, because her father disallowed her." (Ver. 3-5) The same thing applied in the case of a wife. Her husband could either confirm or disannul all her vows and bonds.

Such was the law with regard to vows. There was no relief for the man. He was bound to go right through with whatever had proceeded out of his mouth. Whatever he undertook to do, he was solemnly and irreversibly held to it. There was no back door, as we say — no way of getting out of it.

Now we know who, in perfect grace, took this position, and voluntarily bound himself to accomplish the will of God, whatever that will might be. We know who it is that says, "I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people." "The man Christ Jesus," who, having taken the vows upon Him, discharged them perfectly to the glory of God, and the eternal blessing of His people. There was no escape for Him. We hear Him exclaiming, in the deep anguish of His soul, in the garden of Gethsemane, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But it was not possible. He had undertaken the work of man's salvation, and He had to go through the deep and dark waters of death, judgement, and wrath; and perfectly meet all the consequences of man's condition. He had a baptism to

be baptised with, and was straitened until it was accomplished. In other words, He had to die in order that, by death, He might open the pent-up flood gates, and allow the mighty tide of divine and everlasting love to flow down to His people. All praise and adoration be to His peerless name for ever!

Thus much as to the man and his vows and bonds. In the case of the woman, whether as the daughter or the wife, we have the nation of Israel, and that in two ways, namely, under government and under grace; Looked at from a governmental point of view, Jehovah, who is at once the Father and the Husband, has held his peace at her, so that her vows and bonds are allowed to stand; and she is, to this day, suffering the consequences, and made to feel the force of those words, "Better that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay."

But, on the other hand, as viewed from the blessed standpoint of grace, the Father and the Husband has taken all upon Himself, so that she shall be forgiven and brought into the fullness of blessing by and by, not on the ground of accomplished vows and ratified bonds, but on the ground of sovereign grace and mercy, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. How precious to find Christ everywhere! He is the centre and foundation, the beginning and the end, of all the ways of God. May our hearts be ever filled with him! May our lips and lives speak His praise! May we, constrained by His love, live to His glory all our days upon earth, and then go home to be with Himself for ever, to go no more out!

We have here given what we believe to be the primary thought of this chapter. That it may be applied, in a secondary way, to individuals, we do not, by any means, question; and further, that, like all scripture, it has been written for our learning, we most thankfully own. It must ever be the delight of the devout Christian to study all the wars of God, whether in grace or government — His ways with Israel — His ways with the Church — His ways with all — His ways with each. Oh! to pursue this study with an enlarged heart and an enlightened understanding!

Numbers 31

We have here the closing scene of Moses' *official* life; as in Deuteronomy 34 we have the closing scene of his *personal* history. "and the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites; afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people. And Moses spake unto the People, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the Lord of Midian. Of every tribe a thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel, shall ye send to the war. So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and *Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest*, to the war, *with the holy instruments*, and the trumpets to blow in his hand. And they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses; and they slew all the males Verses 3-7.

This is a very remarkable passage. The Lord says to Moses, "*Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites.*" And Moses says to Israel, "*Avenge the Lord of Midian.*" The people had been ensnared by the wiles of the daughters of Midian, through the evil influence of Balaam the son of Peor; and they are now called upon to clear themselves thoroughly from all the defilement which, through want of watchfulness, they had contracted. The sword is to be brought upon the Midianites; and all the spoil is to be made to pass either through the fire of judgement or through the water of purification. Not one jot or tittle of the evil thing is to be suffered to pass unjudged.

Now, this war was what we may call abnormal. By right, the people ought not to have had any occasion to encounter it at all. It was not one of the wars of Canaan. It was simply the result of their own unfaithfulness — the fruit of their own unhallowed commerce with the uncircumcised. Hence,

although Joshua, the son of Nun, had been duly appointed to succeed Moses, as leader of the congregation, we find no mention whatever of him in connection with this war. On the contrary, it is to Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, that the conduct of this expedition is committed; and he enters upon it" with the holy instruments and the trumpets."

All this is strongly marked. *The priest* is the prominent person; and *the Holy instruments*, the prominent instrumentality. It is a question of wiping away the stain caused by their unholy association with the enemy; and therefore, instead of a general officer with sword and spear, it is a priest with holy instruments that appears in the foreground. True, the sword is here; but it is not the prominent thing. It is the priest with the vessels of the sanctuary; and that priest the selfsame man who first executed judgement upon that very evil which has here to be avenged.

The moral of all this is, at once, plain and practical. The Midianites furnish a type of that peculiar kind of influence which the world exerts over the hearts of the people of God — the fascinating and ensnaring power of the world used by Satan to hinder our entrance upon our proper heavenly portion. Israel should have had nothing to do with these Midianites; but having, in an evil hour — an unguarded moment — been betrayed into association with them, nothing remains but war and utter extermination.

So with us, as Christians. Our proper business is to pass through the world, as pilgrims and strangers; having nothing to do with it, save to be the patient witnesses of the grace of Christ, and thus shine as lights in the midst of the surrounding moral gloom. But, alas! we fail to maintain this rigid separation; we suffer ourselves to be betrayed into alliance with the world, and, in consequence, we get involved in trouble and conflict which does not properly belong to us at all. War with Midian formed no part of Israel's proper work. They had to thank themselves for it. But God is gracious; and hence, through a special application of priestly ministry, they were enabled, not only to conquer the Midianites, but to carry away much spoil. God, in His infinite goodness, brings good out of evil. He will cause the eater to yield meat, and the strong sweetness. His grace shines out, with exceeding brightness, in the scene before us, inasmuch as He actually deigns to accept a portion of the spoils taken from the Midianites. But the evil had to be thoroughly judged. "Every male" had to be put to death — all in whom there was the energy of the evil had to be completely exterminated; and finally the fire of judgement and the water of purification had to do their work on the spoil, ere God or His people could touch an atom of it.

What holy lessons are here! May we apply our hearts to them! May we be enabled to pursue a path of more intense separation, and to press on our heavenly road as those whose portion and whose home is on high! God, in His mercy grant it?

Numbers 32.

The fact recorded in this chapter has given rise to considerable discussion. Various have been the opinions advanced in reference to the conduct of the two tribes and a half. Were they right or were they wrong in choosing their inheritance on the wilderness side of Jordan! This is the question. Was their acting in this matter, the expression of power or of weakness? How are we to form a sound judgement in this case?

In the first place, where was Israel's proper portion — their divinely destined inheritance? Most surely, on the other side of Jordan, in the land of Canaan. Well, then, ought not this fact to have sufficed? would or could a really true heart — a heart that thought, and felt, and judged with God — have entertained the idea of selecting a portion other than that which God had allotted and bestowed Impossible. Hence, then, we need not to go further, in order to have a divine judgement on this subject. It was a mistake, a failure, a stopping short of the divine mark, on the part of Reuben and Gad, and the

half tribe of Manasseh, to choose any boundary line short of the river Jordan. They were governed, in their conduct, by worldly and selfish considerations — by the sight of their eyes — by carnal motives. They surveyed "the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead," and they estimated it entirely according to their own interests, and without any reference to the judgement and will of God. Had they been simply looking to God, the question of settling down short of the river Jordan would never have been raised at all.

But when people are not simple, not true-hearted, they get into circumstances which give rise to all sorts of questions. It is a great matter to be enabled, by Divine grace, to pursue a line of action, and to tread a path so unequivocal as that no question can be raised. It is our holy and happy privilege so to carry ourselves as that no complication may ever arise. The secret of so doing is to walk with God, and thus to have our conduct wholly governed by His word.

But that Reuben and Gad were not thus governed, is manifest from the entire history. They were half-and-half men; men of mixed principles; mere borderers; men that sought their own things, and not the things of God. Had these latter engrossed their hearts, nothing would have induced them to take up their position short of the true boundary line.

It is very evident that Moses had no sympathy with their proposal. It was a judgement upon his conduct that he was not allowed to go over. His heart was in the promised land; and he longed to go thither in person. How could he then approve of the conduct of men who were not only prepared, but actually desirous, to take up their abode somewhere else? Faith can never be satisfied with anything short of the true position and portion of God's people. A single eye can only see — a faithful heart only desire — the inheritance given of God.

Hence, therefore, Moses at once condemned the proposition of Reuben and Gad. True, he afterwards relaxed his judgement and gave his consent. Their promise to cross the Jordan, ready armed, before their brethren, drew from Moses a kind of assent. It seemed an extraordinary manifestation of unselfishness and energy to leave all their loved ones behind, and cross the Jordan, only to fight for their brethren. But where had they left those loved ones? They had left them short of the divine mark. They had deprived them of a place and a portion in the true land of promise — that inheritance of the which God had spoken to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. and for what? Just to get good pasture for their cattle. For an object like this did the two tribes and a half abandon their place within the true limits of the Israel of God.

And now let us look at the consequences of this line of action. Let the reader turn to Joshua 22. Here we have the first sorrowful effect of the equivocal conduct of Reuben and Gad. They must needs build an altar — "a great altar to see to" lest in time to come their brethren might disown them. What does all this prove? It proves that they were all wrong in taking up their position on this side of Jordan. And only mark the effect upon the whole assembly — the disturbing, alarming effect of this altar. At the first blush, it wore the aspect of actual rebellion. "and when the children of Israel heard of it, *the whole congregation of the children of Israel* gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up to war against them. And *the children of Israel* sent unto *the children of Reuben*, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh,* into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and with him ten princes, of each chief house a prince throughout all the tribes of Israel; and each one was an head of the house of their fathers among the thousands of Israel. And they came unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, unto the land of Gilead, and they spake with them, saying, Thus saith *the whole congregation of the Lord* [Did not the two and a half belong to it?] what trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this

day from following the Lord, in that ye have builded you an altar, that ye might rebel this day against the Lord? Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord, but that ye must turn away this day from following the Lord and it will be, seeing ye rebel to-day against the Lord, that to-morrow he will be wroth with the whole congregation of Israel. Notwithstanding, if the land of *your possession* be unclean, then pass ye over unto *the land of the possession of the Lord*, wherein the Lord's tabernacle dwelleth, [what burning words] and take possession among us: but rebel not against the Lord, nor rebel against us, in building you an altar beside the altar of the Lord our God." Joshua 22: 12-19.

{*As though the two tribes and a half were actually detached from the nation of Israel.}

Now all this serious misunderstanding, all this trouble and alarm, was the result of failure on the part of Reuben and Gad. True, they are able to explain themselves and satisfy their brethren, in reference to the altar. But then there would have been no need of the altar, no demand for explanation, no cause of alarm, had they not taken up an equivocal position.

Here was the source of all the mischief; and it is important for the Christian reader to seize this point with clearness, and to deduce from it the great practical lesson which it is designed to teach. It can hardly be questioned, by any thoughtful, spiritually minded person who fully weighs all the evidence in the case, that the two tribes and a half were wrong in stopping short of the Jordan, in taking up their position. This seems to us unquestionable, seen on the ground of what has already come before us; and if further proof were needed, it is furnished by the fact that they were the very first to fall into the enemy's hands. See 1 Kings 22: 3.

But it may be that the reader is disposed to ask, "What has all this to say to us? Has this piece of history any voice, any instruction for us" unquestionably. It sounds in our ears, with accents of deep solemnity, "Beware of falling short of your proper position — your proper portion — of being content with the things which belong to this world — of taking any stand short of death and resurrection — the true, the spiritual Jordan."*

{*No doubt there are many sincere Christians who do not see the heavenly calling and position of the Church — who do not enter into the special character of truth taught in the Epistle to the Ephesians — who are, nevertheless, according to their light, earnest, devoted, and true-hearted; but we feel persuaded that such persons lose incalculable blessing in their own souls, and fall very short of the true Christian testimony.}

Such, we conceive, is the teaching of this portion of our book. It is a grand point to be whole-hearted, decided, and unequivocal in taking our stand for Christ. Serious damage is done to the cause of God and the testimony of Christ, by those who profess to be Christians denying their heavenly calling and character, and acting as though they were citizens of this world. This is a powerful engine in the hands of Satan. An undecided, half-and-half Christian is more inconsistent than an open out-and-out worldling or infidel. The unreality of professors is more injurious by far to the cause of God than all the forms of moral pravity put together. This may seem a strong statement; but it is too true. Christian professors who are only mere borderers — men of mixed principles — persons of doubtful deportment — these are the men who most seriously damage the blessed cause, and promote the designs of the enemy of Christ. What we want, just now, is a band of whole-hearted, thorough-going, unmistakable witnesses for Jesus Christ — men who shall declare plainly that they seek a country — earnest, unworldly men.

These are the men for the present crisis. What can be more deplorable, more saddening and discouraging, than to find those who make a lofty profession, who talk loudly of death and resurrection,

who boast of their high doctrines and heavenly privileges, but whose walk and ways give the lie to their words? they love the world and the things of the world. They love money and are eager to grasp and hoard as much as possible.

Beloved Christian reader, let us see to these things. Let us honestly judge Ourselves as in the very presence of God, and put away from us everything, no matter what, that tends to hinder the complete devotion of ourselves in spirit and soul and body to him who loved us and gave Himself for us. May we, to use the language of Joshua 22 so carry ourselves as not to need any altar to see to, nor anything to declare where we belong to, where we worship, whose we are and whom we serve. Thus shall everything about us be transparent and unquestionable, our testimony shall be distinct, and the sound of our trumpet certain. Our peace, too, shall flow like an even river, and the entire bent of our course and character shall be to the praise of Him whose name is called upon us. May the good Lord stir up the hearts of His people, in this day of hateful indifferentism, lukewarmness, and easy-going profession, to more genuine self-surrender, true consecration to the cause of Christ, and unshaken faith in the living God. Will the reader join us in pleading for all this?

Numbers 33, Numbers 34.

The first of these sections gives us a wonderfully minute description of the desert wanderings of the people of God. It is impossible to read it without being deeply moved by the tender love and care of God so signally displayed throughout the whole. To think of His deigning to keep such a record of the journeyings of His poor people, from the moment they marched out of Egypt until they crossed the Jordan — from the land of death and darkness to the land flowing with milk and honey. "He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing." He went before them, every step of the way; He travelled over every stage of the wilderness; in all their afflictions He was afflicted. He took care of them like a tender nurse. He suffered not their garments to wax old, or their feet to swell, for these forty years; and here He retraces the entire way by which His hand had led them, carefully noting down each successive stage of that marvellous pilgrimage, and every spot in the desert at which they had halted. What a journey! What a travelling companion!

It is very consolatory to the heart of the poor, weary pilgrim to be assured that every stage of his wilderness journey is marked out by the infinite love and unerring wisdom of God. He is leading His people by a right way, home to Himself; and there is not a single circumstance in their lot, or a single ingredient in their cup, which is not carefully ordered by Himself, with direct reference to their present profit and their everlasting felicity. Let it only be our care to walk with Him, day by day, in simple confidence, casting all our care upon Him, and leaving ourselves and all our belongings absolutely in His hands. This is the true source of peace and blessedness, all the journey through. And then, when our desert wanderings are over — when the last stage of the wilderness has been trodden, He will take us home to be with Himself for ever.

"There with what joy reviewing
Past conflicts, dangers, fears-
Thy hand our foes subduing,
And drying all our tears-
Our hearts with rapture burning,
The path we shall retrace,

where now our souls are learning,
The riches of Thy grace."

Numbers 34 gives the boundaries of the inheritance, as drawn by the hand of Jehovah. The selfsame hand which had guided their wanderings here fixes the bounds of their habitation. Alas! they never took possession of the land as given of God. He gave them the whole land, and gave it for ever. They took but a part, and that for a time. But, blessed be God, the moment is approaching when the seed of Abraham shall enter upon the full and everlasting possession Of that fair inheritance, from which they are for the present excluded. Jehovah will assuredly accomplish all His promises, and lead His people into all the blessings secured to them in the everlasting covenant — that covenant which has been ratified by the blood of the Lamb. Not one jot or tittle. shall fail of all that He has spoken. His promises are all Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. All praise to the father, and unto the Son, and to the holy Spirit!

Numbers 35.

The opening lines of this most interesting chapter set before us the gracious provision which Jehovah made for His servants the Levites. Each of the tribes of Israel was privileged — that we say not bound — to furnish the Levites with a certain number of cities with their suburbs, according to their ability. "All the cities which ye shall give to the Levites shall be forty and eight cities: them shall ye give with their suburbs. And the cities which ye shall give shall be of the possession of the children of Israel: from them that have many ye shall give many; But from them that have few ye shall give few: every one shall give of his cities unto the Levites, according to his inheritance which he inheriteth." Verses 7, 8.

The Lord's servants were wholly cast upon Him for their portion. They had no inheritance or possession saving himself. Blessed inheritance! Precious portion! None like it, in the judgement of faith. Blessed are all those who can truly say to the Lord, "Thou art the portion of my cup, and the lot of my inheritance." God took care of His dependent servants, and permitted the whole congregation of Israel to taste the hallowed privilege — for such it most assuredly was — of being co-workers with Him in providing for those who had willingly devoted themselves to His work, abandoning all besides.

Thus, then, we learn that, out of the twelve tribes of Israel, forty and eight cities, with their suburbs, were to be given over to the Levites; and out of these again, the Levites had the privilege of furnishing six cities to be a refuge for the poor manslayer. Most lovely provision! Lovely in its origin! Lovely in its object!

The cities of refuge were situated, three on the eastern and three on the western side of Jordan. whether Reuben and Gad were right or wrong in settling east of that significant boundary, God in His mercy would not leave the slayer without a refuge from the avenger of blood. On the contrary, like Himself, He ordained that those cities which were designed as a merciful provision for the slayer should be so situated that wherever there was need of a shelter that shelter might be near at hand. There was always a city within reach of any who might be exposed to the sword of the avenger. This was worthy of our God. If any slayer happened to fall into the hands of the avenger of blood, it was not for want of a refuge near at hand, but because he had failed to avail himself of it. All necessary provision was made; the cities were named, and well defined, and publicly known. Everything was made as plain, as simple, and as easy as possible. Such was God's gracious way.

No doubt, the slayer was responsible to put forth all his energy to reach the sacred precincts; and, no doubt, he would. It is not at all likely that any one would be so blind or so infatuated as to fold his

arms, in cool indifference, and say, "If I am fated to escape, I shall escape, my efforts are not needed. If I am not fated to escape, I cannot escape, my efforts are of no use." We cannot fancy a manslayer using such silly language, or being guilty of such blind fatality as this. He knew too well that if the avenger could but lay his hand upon him, all such notions would be of small account. There was but the one thing to be done, and that was to escape for his life — to flee from impending judgement to find his safe abode within the gates of the city of refuge. Once there, he could breathe freely. No evil could overtake him there. The moment He crossed the threshold of the gate, he was as safe as God's provision could make him. If a hair of his head could be touched, within the bounds of the city, it could but be a dishonour and a reproach upon the ordinance of God. True, he had to keep close. He dared not venture outside the gate. Within, he was perfectly safe. Without, he was thoroughly exposed. He could not even visit his friends. He was an exile from his Father's house. He was a prisoner of hope. Absent from the home of his heart's affections, he waited for the death of the high priest, which was to set him perfectly free and restore him, once more, to his inheritance and to his people.

Now, we believe that this beautiful ordinance had special reference to Israel. They have killed the Prince of life; but the question is, As which are they viewed by God, as the murderer or as the slayer? If the former, there is no refuge, no hope. No murderer could be sheltered within the city of refuge. Here is the law of the case, as stated in Joshua 20, "The Lord also spake unto Joshua, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses: that the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them. And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; *because he smote his neighbour unwittingly*, and hated him not beforetime, And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgement, and until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled." Vv 1-6.

But with respect to the murderer; the law was rigid and unbending "The murderer shall surely be put to death. The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him." Numbers 35.

Israel, then, through the marvellous grace of God, will be treated as a slayer and not as a murderer. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." These potent words ascended to the ear and to the heart of the God of Israel. They were heard and answered; nor are we to suppose that the answer was exhausted in its application on the day of Pentecost. No; it still holds good, and its efficacy will be illustrated in the future history of the house of Israel. That people are now under God's keeping. They are exiles from the land and the home of their fathers. But the time is coming when they shall be restored to their own land, not by the death of the high priest — blessed be His deathless name! He can never die — but He will leave His present position, and come forth, in a new character, as the Royal Priest, to sit upon His throne. Then shall the exile return to his long-lost home, and his forfeited inheritance. But not till then, else it would be ignoring the fact that they killed the Prince of life, which were impossible. The manslayer must remain out of his possession until the appointed time; but he is not to be treated as a murderer, because he did it unwittingly. "I obtained mercy" — says the Apostle Paul, speaking as a pattern to Israel because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." "And now, brethren," says Peter, "I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers."

These passages, together with the precious intercession of the slain One, do, in the most distinct

manner, place Israel on the ground of the manslayer, and not on the ground of the murderer. God has provided a refuge and a shelter for His much-loved people, and in due time they shall return to their long-lost dwellings, in that land which Jehovah gave as a gift to Abraham his friend for ever.

Such we believe to be the true interpretation of the ordinance of the city of refuge. Were we to view it as bearing upon the case of a sinner taking refuge in Christ, it could only be in a very exceptional way, inasmuch as we should find ourselves surrounded, on all hands, by points of contrast rather than by points of similarity. For in the first place, the manslayer, in the city of refuge, was not exempt from judgement, as we learn from Joshua 20: 6. But for the believer in Jesus there is and can be no judgement, for the simplest of all reasons, that Christ has borne the judgement instead.

Again, there was a possibility of the slayer's falling into the hands of the avenger, if he ventured outside the gates of the city. The believer in Jesus can never perish; he is as safe as the Saviour himself.

Finally, as regards the slayer, it was a question of temporal safety and life in this world. As regards the believer in Jesus, it is a question of eternal salvation and life everlasting in the world to come. In fact, in almost every particular, it is striking contrast rather than similarity.

One grand point there is common to both, and that is, the point of exposure to imminent danger and the urgent need of fleeing for refuge. If it would have been wild folly on the part of the slayer to linger or hesitate for a moment, until he found himself safely lodged in the city of refuge, it is surely still wilder folly, yea, the very height of madness, on the part of the sinner, to linger or hesitate in coming to Christ. The avenger might perhaps fail to lay hold on the slayer even though he were not in the city; But judgement must overtake the sinner out of Christ. There is no possibility of escape, if there is the thickness of a gold leaf between the soul and Christ. Solemn thought! May it have its due weight in the heart of the reader who is yet in his sins! May he find no rest — not one moment's rest, until he has fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before him in the gospel. Judgement impends, certain, solemn judgement. It is not only that the avenger may come, but judgement must come upon all who are out of Christ.

Oh! unconverted, thoughtless, careless reader — should this volume fall into the hands of such — hear the warning voice! Flee for thy life! Tarry not, we entreat thee! Delay is madness. Every moment is precious. You know not the hour in the which you may be cut down, and consigned to that place in the which a single ray of hope, not even the faintest glimmer, can ever visit you — the place of eternal night, eternal woe, eternal torment — the place of a deathless worm and an unquenchable flame. Beloved friend, do let us entreat thee, in these few closing lines of our volume, to come now, just as thou art, to Jesus, who stands with open arms and loving heart, ready to receive thee, to shelter, to save, and to bless, according to all the love of His heart, and the perfect efficacy of His name and His sacrifice. May God the Holy Spirit, by His own resistless energy, lead thee, just now, to come. "Come unto me," says the loving Lord and Saviour, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Precious words! May they fall, with divine power, upon many a weary heart!

Here we close our meditations upon this marvellous section of the volume of God;* and, in doing so, we are impressed with a profound sense of the depth and richness of the mine to which we have sought to conduct the reader, and also of the excessive feebleness and poverty of the suggestions which we have been enabled to offer. However, our confidence is in the living God, that He will, by His Holy Spirit, lead the heart and mind of the Christian reader into the enjoyment of His own precious truth, and thus fit him, more and more, for His service in these last evil days, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be magnified, and His truth maintained in living power. May God, in His abounding mercy, grant this, for Jesus Christ's sake!

{*Chapter 36 has been referred to in our meditation on chapter 17}

C. H. M.