

## **Genesis 1 - 15**, Section 1 of 2.

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I cannot suffer this **Fourth Edition** to go forth, without an expression of heartfelt thankfulness to the Lord for His goodness in making use of such a feeble instrumentality, for the profit of souls, and the spread of His own simple truth.

It is an unspeakable privilege to be permitted, in any small degree, to minister to the souls of those who are so precious to Christ. "Lovest thou me? Feed my sheep." Such were the touching words of the departing Shepherd; and, assuredly, when they fall powerfully upon the heart, they must rouse all the energies of one's moral being to carry out, in every possible way the gracious desire breathed therein. To gather and to feed the lambs and sheep of the flock of Christ, are the most exalted services in which any one can be engaged. Not a single honest effort put forth for the achievement of such noble ends, will be forgotten in that day "when the Chief Shepherd shall appear."

May God the Holy Ghost fill the heart, anoint the lips, and consecrate the pen of every servant of Christ, so that streams of pure and living truth may flow, in every direction, for the refreshment of all those who are on their way to glory.

Dublin, May, 1861.

### **Genesis 1**

There is something peculiarly striking in the manner in which the Holy Ghost opens this sublime book. He introduces us, at once, to God, in the essential fullness of His Being, and the solitariness of His acting. All prefatory matter is omitted. It is to God we are brought. We hear Him, as it were, breaking earth's silence, and shining in upon earth's darkness, for the purpose of developing a sphere in which He might display His eternal power And Godhead.

There is nothing here on which idle curiosity may feed — nothing on which the poor, human mind may speculate. There is the sublimity and reality of DIVINE TRUTH, in its moral power to act on the heart, and on the understanding. It could never come within the range of the Spirit of God to gratify idle curiosity, by the presentation of curious theories. Geologists may explore the bowels of the earth, and draw forth from thence materials from which to add to, and, in some instances, to contradict, the divine record. They may speculate upon fossil remains; but the disciple hangs, with sacred delight, over the page of inspiration. He reads, believes, and worships. In this spirit may we pursue our study of the profound book which now lies open before us. May we know what it is to "enquire in the temple" May our investigations of the precious contents of holy scripture be ever prosecuted in the true spirit of worship.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The first sentence in the divine canon sets us in the presence of Him who is the infinite source of all true blessedness. There is no elaborate argument in proof of the existence of God. The Holy Ghost could not enter upon anything of the kind. God reveals Himself. He makes Himself known by His works. The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork." "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord." "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty." None but an infidel or an atheist would seek an argument in proof of the Being of One who, by the word of His mouth, called worlds into existence, and declared Himself the All wise, the Almighty, and the everlasting God. Who but "God" could "create" anything. "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth

out their host by number; he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth." (Isa. 40: 26) "The gods of the heathen are idols, but the Lord made the heavens." In the Book of Job 38-41 we have an appeal of the very grandest description, on the part of Jehovah Himself, to the work of creation, as an unanswerable argument in proof of His infinite superiority; and this appeal, while it sets before the understanding the most vivid and convincing demonstration of God's omnipotence, touches the heart, also, by its amazing condescension. The majesty and the love, the power and the tenderness, are all divine.

"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Here was, in good truth, a scene in which God alone could act. Man, in the pride of his heart, has since proved himself but too ready to interfere with God in other and far higher spheres of action; but, in the scene before us, man had no place until, indeed, he became, like all the rest, the subject of creative power. God was alone in creation. He looked forth from His eternal dwelling-place of light upon the wild waste, and there beheld the sphere in which His wondrous plans and counsels were yet to be unfolded and brought out — where the Eternal Son was yet to live, and labour, and testify, and bleed, and die, in order to display, in the view of wondering worlds, the glorious perfections of the Godhead. All was darkness and chaos; but God is the God of light and order. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." Darkness and confusion cannot live in His presence, whether we look at it in a physical, moral, intellectual, or spiritual point of view.

"The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." He sat brooding over the Scene of His future operations. A dark scene, truly; and one in which there was ample room for the God of light and life to act. He alone could enlighten the darkness, cause life to spring up, substitute order for chaos, open an expanse between the waters, where life might display itself without fear of death. These were operations worthy of God.

"God said, Let there be light: and there was light." How simple! And yet how Godlike! "He spake, and it was done. He commanded, and it stood fast." Infidelity may ask, "How? where? when?" The answer is, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." (Heb. 11: 3) This satisfies the teachable spirit. Philosophy may smile contemptuously at this, and pronounce it rude ignorance, or blind credulity, suitable enough for an age of semi-barbarism, but quite unworthy of men living in an enlightened age of the world's history, when the museum and the telescope have put us in possession of facts of which the inspired penman knew nothing. What wisdom? What learning? Yea, rather, what folly! What nonsense! What total inability to grasp the scope and design of sacred scripture? It, assuredly, is not God's object to make us astronomers or geologists; or to occupy us with details which the microscope or the telescope lays before every school-boy. His object is to lead us into His presence, as worshippers, with hearts and understandings taught and duly governed by His holy Word. But this would never do for the so-called philosopher, who, despising what he terms the vulgar and narrow-minded prejudices of the devout disciple of the Word, boldly seizes his telescope, and therewith scans the distant heavens, or travels into the deep recesses of earth in search of strata, formations, and fossils — all of which, according to his account, greatly improve, if they do not flatly contradict, the inspired narrative.

With such "oppositions of science, falsely so called," we have nothing to do. We believe that all true discoveries, whether "in the heavens above, in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth," will harmonise with that which is written in the word of God; and if they do not thus harmonise, they are perfectly contemptible in the judgement of every true lover of scripture. This gives great rest to the heart in a day like the present, so productive of learned speculations and high-sounding theories, which,

alas in too many instances, savour of rationalism and positive infidelity. It is most needful to have the heart thoroughly established as to the fullness, the authority, the completeness, the majesty, the plenary inspiration of the sacred volume. This will be found to be the only effectual safeguard against the rationalism of Germany and the superstition of Rome. Accurate acquaintance with, and profound subjection to, the Word, are the great *desiderata* of the present moment. May the Lord, in His great grace, abundantly increase, in our midst, both the one and the other.

"And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night." Here we have the two great symbols so largely employed throughout the Word. The presence of light makes the day; the absence thereof makes the night Thus it is in the history of souls. There are "the sons of light" and "the sons of darkness." This is a most marked and solemn distinction. All upon whom the light of Life has shone — all who have been effectually visited by "the dayspring from on high" — all who have received the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ — all such, whoever and wherever they may be, belong to the first class, are "the sons of light, and the sons of the day."

On the other hand, all who are still in nature's darkness, nature's blindness, nature's unbelief — all who have not yet received into their hearts, by faith, the cheering beams of the Sun of righteousness, all such are still wrapped in the shades of spiritual night, are "the sons of darkness," "the sons of the night."

Reader, pause and ask yourself, in the presence of the Searcher of hearts, to which of these two classes do you, at this moment, belong. That you belong to either the one or the other is beyond all question. You may be poor, despised, unlettered; but if, through grace, there is a link connecting you with the Son of God, "the light of the world," then you are, in very deed, a son of the day, and destined, ere long, to shine in that celestial sphere, that region of glory, of which "the slain Lamb" will be the central sun, for ever. This is not your own doing. It is the result of the counsel and operation of God Himself, who has given you light and life, joy and peace, in Jesus, and His accomplished sacrifice. But if you are a total stranger to the hallowed action and influence of divine light, if your eyes have not been opened to behold any beauty in the Son of God, then, though you had all the learning of a Newton, though you were enriched with all the treasures of human philosophy, though you had drunk in with avidity all the streams of human science, though your name were adorned with all the learned titles which the schools and universities of this world could bestow, yet are you "a Son Of the night," "a son of darkness;" and, if you die in your present condition, you will be involved in the blackness and horror of an eternal night. Do not, therefore, my friend, read another page, until you have fully satisfied yourself as to whether you belong to the "day" or the "night."

The next point on which I would dwell is the creation of lights. "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years. And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also."

The sun is the great centre of light, and the centre of our system. Round him the lesser orbs revolve. From him, too, they derive their light. Hence, he may, very legitimately, be viewed as an apt symbol of Him who is soon to arise, with healing in His wings, to gladden the hearts of those that fear the Lord. The aptness and beauty of the symbol would fully appear to one who, having spent the night in watching, beholds the rising sun gilding, with his bright beams, the eastern sky. The mists and shades of night are all dispersed, and the whole creation seems to hail the returning orb of light. Thus will it

be, by and by, when the Son of righteousness arises. The shadows of night shall flee away, and the whole creation shall be gladdened by the dawning of "a morning without clouds," the opening of a bright and never-ending day of glory.

The moon, being in herself opaque, derives all her light from the sun. She always reflects the sun's light, save when earth and its influences intervene.\* No sooner has the sun sunk beneath our horizon than the moon presents herself to receive his beams and reflect them back upon a dark world, or should she be visible during the day, she always exhibits a pale light, the necessary result of appearing in the presence of superior brightness. True it is, as has been remarked, the world sometimes intervenes; dark clouds, thick mists, and chilling vapours, too, arise from earth's surface, and hide from our view her silvery light.

{\*It is an interesting fact that the moon, as viewed through a powerful telescope, presents the appearance of one vast ruin of nature.}

Now, as the sun is a beautiful and an appropriate symbol of Christ, so the moon strikingly reminds us of the Church. The fountain of her light is hidden from view. The world seeth Him not, but she sees Him; and she is responsible to reflect His beams upon a benighted world. The world has no other way in which to learn anything of Christ but by the Church. "Ye," says the inspired apostle, "are our epistle,...known and read of all men." And again, "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ." (2 Cor. 3: 2, 3.)

What a responsible place! How earnestly should she watch against everything that would hinder the reflection of the heavenly light of Christ, in all her ways! But how is she to reflect this light? By allowing it to shine upon her, in its undimmed brightness. If the Church only walked in the light of Christ, she would, assuredly, reflect His light; and this would ever keep her in her proper position. The light of the moon is not her own. So is it with the Church. She is not called to set herself before the world. She is a simple debtor to reflect the light which she herself receives. She is bound to study, with holy diligence, the path which He trod, while down here; and by the energy of the Holy Ghost, who dwells in her, to follow in that path. But, alas! earth with its mists, its clouds, and its vapours, intervenes, and hides the light and blots the epistle. The world can see but little of the traits of Christ's character in those who call themselves by His name; yea, in many instances, they exhibit an humbling contrast, rather than a resemblance. May we study Christ more prayerfully, that so we may copy Him more faithfully.

The stars are distant lights. They shine in other spheres, and have little connection with this system, save that their twinkling can be seen. "One star differeth from another star in glory." Thus will it be in the coming kingdom of the Son. He will shine forth in living and everlasting lustre. His body, the Church, will faithfully reflect His beams on all around; while saints individually shall shine in those spheres which a righteous Judge shall allot to them, as a reward of service during the dark night of His absence. This thought should animate us to a more ardent and vigorous pursuit after conformity to our absent Lord. (see Luke 19: 12-19.)

The lower orders of creation are next introduced. The sea and the earth are made to team with life. Some may feel warranted in regarding the operations of each successive day, as foreshadowing the various dispensations, and their great characteristic principles of action. I would only remark, as to this, that there is great need, when handling the word in this way, to watch, with holy jealousy, the working of imagination; and also to pay strict attention to the general analogy of scripture, else we may make sad mistakes. I do not feel at liberty to enter upon such a line of interpretation; I shall therefore confine myself to what I believe to be the plain sense of the sacred text.

We shall now consider man's place, as set over the works of God's hands. All having been set in order, one was needed to take the headship. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he *them*. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." My reader will observe the change from "him" to "them." We are not presented with the actual fact of the formation of the woman, until the next chapter; though here we find God blessing "them" and giving "them" jointly the place of universal government. All the inferior orders of creation were set under their joint dominion. Eve received all her blessings in Adam. In him, too, she got her dignity. Though not yet called into actual existence, she was, in the purpose of God, looked at as part of the man. "In thy book were all my members written, which, in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."

Thus it is with the Church — the bride of the Second Man. She was viewed from all eternity in Christ, her Head and Lord; as we read in the first chapter of Ephesians, "According as He hath chosen us in him, *before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Before a single member of the Church had yet breathed the breath of life, all were, in God's eternal mind, predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son." The counsels of God render the Church necessary to complete the mystic man. Hence the Church is called "the fullness [*pleroma*] of Him that filleth all in all." This is an amazing title, and it develops much of the dignity, importance, and glory of the Church.]

It is too common to view redemption as bearing merely upon the blessedness and security of individual souls. This is entirely too low a view to take of the matter. That all which pertains, in any way, to the individual is, in the fullest manner, secured, is, blessed be God, most true. This is the least part of redemption. But that Christ's glory is involved in, and connected with, the Church's existence, is a truth of far more dignity, depth, and power. If I am entitled, on the authority of Holy Scripture, to regard myself as a constituent part of that which is actually needful to Christ, I can no longer entertain a doubt as to whether there is the fullest provision for all my personal necessities. And is not the Church thus needful to Christ? Yes, truly. "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." And, again, "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man; neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.... Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman. neither the woman without the man in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God." (1 Cor. 11: 8-12) Hence, it is no longer the mere question whether God can save a poor, helpless sinner — whether He can blot out his sins, and receive him in the power of divine righteousness. God has said, "it is not good that the man should be alone." He left not "the first man" without "an help meet;" neither would He leave the "Second." As, in the case of the former, there would have been a blank in the creation without Eve, so stupendous thought! — in the case of the latter, there would be a blank in the new creation without the Bride, the Church.

Let us, now, look at the manner in which Eve was brought into being, though, in so doing, we shall have to anticipate part of the contents of the next chapter. Throughout all the orders of creation there was not found an help meet for Adam. "A deep sleep" must fall on him, and a partner be formed, out of himself, to share his dominion and his blessedness. "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, builded\* he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man." (Gen. 2: 21-23.)

{\*The Hebrew word which is rendered "builded" in the margin the LXX. render by οικοδομεσεν]. A reference to the original of Eph. 2: 20, 22 will show the reader that the words rendered "built" and "builded together" are inflexions of the same verb.}

Looking at Adam and Eve as a type of Christ and the Church, as scripture fully warrants us to do, we see how that the death of Christ needed to be an accomplished fact, ere the Church could be set up; though, in the purpose of God, she was looked at, and chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world. There is, however, a vast difference between the secret purpose of God and the revelation and accomplishment thereof. Before the divine purpose could be actualised in reference to the constituent parts of the Church, it was necessary that the Son should be rejected and crucified — that He should take His seat on high — that He should send down the Holy Ghost to baptise believers into one body. It is not that souls were not quickened and saved, previous to the death of Christ. They assuredly were. Adam was saved, and thousands of others, from age to age, in virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, though that sacrifice was not yet accomplished. But the salvation of individual souls is one thing; and the formation of the Church, as a distinctive thing, by the Holy Ghost, is quite another.

This distinction is not sufficiently attended to; and even where it is in theory maintained, it is accompanied with but little of those practical results which might naturally be expected to flow from a truth so stupendous. The Church's unique place her special relationship to "the Second Man, the Lord from heaven" her distinctive privileges and dignities — all these things would, if entered into by the power of the Holy Ghost, produce the richest, the rarest, and the most fragrant fruits. (See Eph. 5: 23-32.)

When we look at the type before us, we may form some idea of the results which ought to follow from the understanding of the Church's position and relationship. What affection did not Eve owe to Adam? What nearness she enjoyed! What intimacy of communion! What full participation in all his thoughts! In all his dignity, and in all his glory, she was entirely one. He did not rule over, but with her. He was Lord of the whole creation, and she was one with him. Yea, as has already been remarked, she was looked at, and blessed in him. "The man" was the object; and as to "the woman," she was needful to him, and therefore she was brought into being. Nothing can be more profoundly interesting as a type. Man first set up, and the woman viewed in, and then formed out of him—all this forms a type of the most striking and instructive character. Not that a doctrine can ever be founded upon a type, but when we find the doctrine fully and clearly laid down in other parts of the Word, we are then prepared to understand, appreciate, and admire the type.

Psalm 8 furnishes a fine view of man set over the work of God's hands: "when I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained: what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea." Here man is looked at, without any distinctive mention of the woman; and this is quite in character, for the woman is looked at *in* the man.

There is no direct revelation of the mystery of the Church, in any part of the Old Testament. The apostle expressly says, "in other ages it was not made known to the sons of men us it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets (of the New Testament) by the Spirit." (Eph. 3: 1-11) Hence, in the

Psalm just quoted, we have only "the man" presented to us; but we know that the man and the woman are looked at under one head. All this will find its full anti type in the ages to come. Then shall the True Man, the Lord from heaven, take His seat on the throne, and, in companionship with His bride, the Church, rule over a restored creation. His Church is quickened out of the grave of Christ, is Part "of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." He the Head and she the body, making one Man, as we read in the fourth chapter of Ephesians.

"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." The Church, being thus part of Christ, will occupy a place, in the glory, quite unique. There was no other creature so near to Adam as Eve, because no other creature was part of himself. So, in reference to the Church, she will hold the very nearest place to Christ, in His coming glory.

Nor is it merely what the Church will be that commands our admiration; but what the Church is. She is now the body of which Christ is the Head; she is now the temple of which God is the Inhabitant. Oh what manner of people ought we to be? If such is the present, such the future dignity of that of which we, through God's grace, form a part, surely a holy, a devoted, a separated, an elevated walk is what becomes us.

May the Holy Ghost unfold these things, more fully and powerfully, to our hearts, that so we may have a deeper sense of the conduct and character which are worthy of the high vocation wherewith we are called. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope, of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1: 18-23.)

## **Genesis 2**

The chapter introduces to our notice two prominent subjects, namely, "the seventh day" and "the river." The first of these demands special attention.

There are few subjects on which so much misunderstanding and contradiction prevails as the doctrine of "the Sabbath." Not that there is the slightest foundation for either the one or the other; for the whole subject is laid down in the word, in the simplest possible manner. The distinct commandment, to "keep holy the Sabbath day" will come before us, the Lord permitting, in our meditations on the book of Exodus. In the chapter now before us, there is no command given to man, whatever; but simply the record that, "God rested on the seventh day." "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." There is no commandment given to man, here. We are simply told that God enjoyed His rest, because all was done, so far as the mere creation was concerned. There was nothing more to be done, and, therefore, the One who had, during six days, been working, ceased to work, and enjoyed His rest. All was complete; all was very good; all was just as He Himself had made it; and He rested in it. "The morning stars sang together; and all the sons of God shouted for joy." The work of creation was ended, and God was celebrating a Sabbath.

And, be it observed, that this is the true character of a Sabbath. This is the only Sabbath which God ever celebrated, so far as the inspired record instructs us. After this, we read of God's commanding man to keep the Sabbath, and man utterly failing so to do; but we never read again the words, "God rested;" on the contrary, the word is, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." (John 5: 17) The Sabbath, in the strict and proper sense of the term, could only be celebrated when there really was nothing to be done. It could only be celebrated amid an undefiled creation — a creation on which no spot of sin could be discerned. God can have no rest where there is sin; and one has only to look around him in order to learn the total impossibility of God's enjoying a rest in creation now. The thorn and the thistle, together with the ten thousand other melancholy and humiliating fruits of a groaning creation, rise before us, and declare that God must be at work and not at rest. Could God rest in the midst of thorns and briers? Could He rest amid the sighs and tears, the groans and sorrows, the sickness and death, the degradation and guilt of a ruined world? Could God sit down, as it were, and celebrate a Sabbath in the midst of such circumstances?

Whatever answer may be given to these questions, the word of God teaches us that God has had no Sabbath, as yet, save the one which the 2nd of Genesis records. "The seventh day," and none other, was the Sabbath. It showed forth the completeness of creation work; but creation work is marred, and the seventh day rest interrupted; and thus, from the fall to the incarnation, God was working; from the incarnation to the cross, God the Son was working; and from Pentecost until now, God the Holy Ghost has been working.

Assuredly, Christ had no Sabbath when He was upon this earth. True, He finished His work — blessedly, gloriously finished it but where did He spend the Sabbath day? *In the tomb!* Yes, my reader, the Lord Christ. God manifest in the flesh, the Lord of the Sabbath, the Maker and Sustainer of heaven and earth, spent the seventh day in the dark and silent tomb. Has this no voice for us? Does it convey no teaching? Could the Son of God lie in the grave on the seventh day, if that day were to be spent in rest and peace; and in the full sense that nothing remained to be done? impossible! We want no farther proof of the impossibility of celebrating a Sabbath than that which is afforded at the grave of Jesus. We may stand beside that grave amazed to find it occupied by such an one on the seventh day; but, oh! the reason is obvious. Man is a fallen, ruined, guilty creature. His long career of guilt has ended in crucifying the Lord of glory; and not only crucifying Him, but placing a great stone at the mouth of the tomb, to prevent, if possible, His leaving it.

And what was man doing while the Son of God was in the grave? He was observing the Sabbath day! What a thought! Christ in His grave to repair a broken Sabbath, and yet man attempting to keep, the Sabbath as though it were not broken at all! It was man's Sabbath, and not God's. It was a Sabbath without Christ — an empty, powerless, worthless, because Christless and Godless, form.

But some will say, "the day has been changed, while all the principles belonging to it remain the same." I do not believe that scripture furnishes any foundation for such an idea. Where is the divine warrant for such a statement? Surely if there is scripture authority, nothing can be easier than to produce it. But the fact is, there is none; on the contrary, the distinction is most fully maintained in the New Testament. Take one remarkable passage, in proof: "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week." (Matt. 28: 1) There is, evidently, no mention here of the seventh day being changed to the first day; nor yet of any transfer of the Sabbath from the one to the other. The first day of the week is not the Sabbath changed, but altogether a new day. It is the first day of a new period, and not the last day of an old. The seventh day stands connected with earth and earthly rest; the first day of the week, on the contrary, introduces us to heaven and heavenly rest.

This makes a vast difference in the principle; and when we look at the matter in a practical point of view, the difference is most material. If I celebrate the seventh day, it marks me as an earthly man, inasmuch as that day is, clearly, the rest of earth — creation rest; but if I am taught by the Word and Spirit of God to understand the meaning of the first day of the week, I shall at once apprehend its immediate connection with that new and heavenly order of things, of which the death and resurrection of Christ form the everlasting foundation. The seventh day appertained to Israel and to earth. The first day of the week appertains to the Church and to heaven. Further, Israel was *commanded* to observe the Sabbath day; the Church is *privileged* to enjoy the first day of the week. The former was the *test* of Israel's moral condition; the latter is the significant *proof* of the Church's eternal acceptance. That made manifest what Israel *could do* for God; this perfectly declares what God *has done* for us.

It is quite impossible to over-estimate the value and importance of the Lord's day, (*e kuriake emera*,) as the first day of the week is termed, in the first chapter of the Apocalypse. Being the day on which Christ rose from the dead, it sets forth, not the completion of creation, but the full and glorious triumph of redemption. Nor should we regard the celebration of the first day of the week as a matter of bondage, or as a yoke put on the neck of a Christian. It is his delight to celebrate that happy day. Hence we find that the first day of the week was pre-eminently the day on which the early Christians came together to break bread; and at that period of the Church's history, the distinction between the Sabbath and the first day of the week was fully maintained. The Jews celebrated the former, by assembling in their synagogues, to read "the law and the prophets;" the Christians celebrated the latter, by assembling to break bread. There is not so much as a single passage of scripture in which the first day of the week is called the Sabbath day; whereas there is the most abundant proof of their entire distinctness.

Why, therefore, contend for that which has no foundation in the Word? Love, honour, and celebrate the Lord's day as much as possible; seek, like the apostle, to be "in the spirit" thereon; let your retirement from secular matters be as profound as ever you can make it; but while you do all this, call it by its proper name; give it its proper place; understand its proper principles; attach to it its proper characteristics; and, above all, do not bind down the Christian, as with an iron rule, to observe the seventh day, when it is his high and holy privilege to observe the first. Do not bring him down from heaven, where he can rest, to a cursed and bloodstained earth, where he cannot. Do not ask him to keep a day which his Master spent in the tomb, instead of that blessed day on which He left it. (see, carefully, Matt. 28: 1-6; Mark 16: 1-2; Luke 24: 1; John 20: 1, 19, 26; Acts 20: 7; 1 Cor. 16: 2; Rev. 1: 10; Acts 13: 14; Acts 17: 2; Col. 2: 16.)

But let it not be supposed that we lose sight of the important fact that the Sabbath will again be celebrated, in the land of Israel, and over the whole creation. It assuredly will. "There remaineth a rest (*sabbatismos*) for the people of God." (Heb. 4: 9) When the Son of Abraham, Son of David, and Son of man, shall assume his position of government over the whole earth, there will be a glorious Sabbath rest which sin shall never interrupt. But now, He is rejected, and all who know and love Him are called to take their place with Him in His rejection; they are called to "go forth to Him without the camp, bearing his reproach." (Heb. 13: 13) If earth could keep a Sabbath, there would be no reproach; but the very fact of the professing church's seeking to make the first day of the week the Sabbath, reveals a deep principle. It is but the effort to get back to an earthly standing, and to an earthly code of morals.

Many may not see this. Many true Christians may, most conscientiously, observe the Sabbath day, as such; and we are bound to honour their consciences, though we are perfectly warranted in asking them to furnish a scriptural basis for their conscientious convictions. We would not stumble or wound their conscience, but we would seek to instruct it. However, we are not now occupied with conscience or its convictions, but only with the principle which lies at the root of what may be termed the Sabbath

question; and I would only put the question to the Christian reader, which is more consonant with the entire scope and spirit of the New Testament, the celebration of the seventh day or Sabbath, or the celebration of the first day of the week or the Lord's day?\*

{\*This subject will, if the Lord permit, come before us again in Exodus 20; but I would, here, observe, that very much of the offence and misunderstanding connected with the important subject of the Sabbath, may be justly traced to the inconsiderate and injudicious conduct of some who, in their zeal for what they termed Christian liberty, in reference to the Sabbath, rather lose sight of the claims of honest consciences and also of the place which the Lord's day occupies in the New Testament. Some have been known to enter upon their weekly avocations, simply to show their liberty, and thus they caused much needless offence. Such acting could never have been suggested by the Spirit of Christ. If I am ever so clear and free, in my own mind, I should respect the consciences of my brethren: and, moreover, I do not believe that those who so carry themselves, really understand the true and precious privileges connected with the Lord's day. We should only be too thankful to be rid of all secular occupation and distraction, to think of having recourse to them, for the purpose of showing our liberty. The good providence of our God has so arranged for His people throughout the British Empire, that they can, without pecuniary loss, enjoy the rest of the Lord's day, inasmuch as all are obliged to abstain from business. This must be regarded, by every well-regulated mind, as a mercy; for, if it were not thus ordered, we know how man's covetous heart would, if possible, rob the Christian of the sweet privilege of attending the assembly, on the Lord's day. And who can tell what would be the deadening effect of uninterrupted engagement with this world's traffic? Those Christians who, from Monday morning to Saturday night, breathe the dense atmosphere of the mart, the market, and the manufactory, can form some idea of it.

It cannot be regarded as a Good sign to find men introducing measures for the public profanation of the Lord's day. It, assuredly, marks the progress of infidelity and French influence.

But there are some who teach that the expression *e kuriake emera*, which is rightly enough translated, "the Lord's day," refers to "the day of the Lord" and that the exiled apostle found himself carried forward, as it were, into the Spirit of the day of the Lord. I do not believe the original would bear such an interpretation; and, besides, we have in 1 Thess. 5: 2, and 2 Peter 3: 10, the exact words, "the day of the Lord," the original of which is quite different from the expression above referred to, being not *e kuriake emera*, but *e emera kurion*. This entirely settles the matter, so far as the mere criticism is concerned; and as to interpretation, it is plain that by far the greater portion of the Apocalypse is occupied, not with "the day of the Lord" but with events prior thereto.}

We shall now consider the connection between the Sabbath, and the river flowing out of Eden. There is much interest in this. It is the first notice we get of "the river of God" which is, here, introduced in connection with God's rest. When God was resting in His works, the whole world felt the blessing and refreshment thereof. It was impossible for God to keep a Sabbath, and earth not to feel its sacred influence. But alas, the streams which flowed forth from Eden—the scene of earthly rest — were speedily interrupted, because the rest of creation was marred by sin.

Yet, blessed be God, sin did not put a stop to His activities but only gave them a new sphere; and wherever He is seen acting, the river is seen flowing. Thus when we find Him, with a strong hand, and an outstretched arm, conducting His ransomed hosts across sterile sand of the desert, there we see the stream flowing forth, not from Eden, but from the smitten Rock — apt and beautiful expression of the ground on which sovereign grace ministers to the need of sinners! This was redemption and not merely creation. "That rock was Christ," Christ smitten to meet His people's need. The smitten rock was

connected with Jehovah's place in the Tabernacle; and truly there was moral beauty in the connection. God dwelling in curtains, and Israel drinking from a smitten rock, had a voice for every opened ear, and a deep lesson for every circumcised heart. (Ex. 17: 6)

Passing onward, in the history of God's ways, we find the river flowing in another channel. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood, and saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7: 37, 38.) Here, then, we find the river emanating from another source, and flowing through another channel; though, in one sense, the source of the river was ever the same, being God Himself; but, then, it was God, known in a new relationship and upon a new principle. Thus in the passage just quoted, the Lord Jesus was taking His place, in spirit, outside of the whole existing order of things, and presenting Himself as the source of the river of living water, of which river the person of the believer was to be the channel. Eden, of old, was constituted a debtor to the whole earth, to send forth the fertilising streams. And in the desert, the rock, when smitten, became a debtor to Israel's thirsty hosts. Just so, now, every one who believes in Jesus, is a debtor to the scene around him, to allow the streams of refreshment to flow forth from him.

The Christian should regard himself as the channel, through which the manifold grace of Christ may flow out to a needy world; and the more freely he communicates, the more freely will he receive, "for there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty." This places the believer in a place of sweetest privilege, and, at the same time, of the most solemn responsibility. He is called to be the constant witness and exhibitor of the grace of Him on whom He believes.

Now, the more he enters into the privilege, the more will he answer the responsibility. If he is habitually feeding upon Christ, he cannot avoid exhibiting Him. The more the Holy Spirit keeps the Christian's eyes fixed on Jesus, the more will his heart be occupied with His adorable Person, and his life and character bear unequivocal testimony to His grace. Faith is, at once, the power of ministry, the power of testimony, and the power of worship. If we are not living "by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us" we shall neither be effectual servants, faithful witnesses, nor true worshippers. We may be doing a great deal, but it will not be service to Christ. We may be saying a great deal, but it will not be testimony for Christ. We may exhibit a great deal of piety and devotion, but it will not be spiritual and true worship.

Finally, we have the river of God, presented to us in the last chapter of the Apocalypse.\* "And he showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." This is the last place in which we find river. Its source can never again be touched — its channel never again interrupted. "The throne of God" is expressive of eternal stability; and the presence of the Lamb marks it as based upon the immediate ground of accomplished redemption. It is not God's throne in creation, nor in providence; but in redemption. When I see the Lamb, I know its connection with me as a sinner. "The throne of God," as such, would but deter me; but when God reveals Himself in the Person of the Lamb, the heart is attracted, and the conscience tranquillised.

{\*Compare also Ezek. 47: 1-12; Zech 14: 8.}

The blood of the Lamb cleanses the conscience from every speck and stain of sin, and sets it, in perfect freedom in the presence of a holiness which cannot tolerate sin. In the cross, all the claims of divine holiness were perfectly answered; so that the more I understand the latter, the more I appreciate the former. The higher our estimate of holiness, the higher will be our estimate of the work of the cross.

"Grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Hence the Psalmist calls on the saints to give thanks at the remembrance of God's holiness. This is a precious fruit of a perfect redemption. Before ever a sinner can give thanks at the remembrance of God's holiness, he must look at it by faith, from the resurrection side of the cross.

Having thus traced the river, from Genesis to Revelation, we shall briefly look at Adam's position in Eden. We have seen him as a type of Christ; but he is not merely to be viewed typically, but personally; not merely as absolutely shadowing forth "the second man, the Lord from heaven," but also as standing in the place of personal responsibility. In the midst of the fair scene of creation, the Lord God set up a testimony, and this testimony was also a test for the creature. It spoke of *death* in the midst of *life*. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Strange, solemn sound. Yet, it was a needed sound. Adam's life was suspended upon his strict obedience. The link which connected him with the Lord God\* was obedience, based on implicit confidence in the One, who had set him in his position of dignity — confidence in His truth — confidence in His love. He could obey only while he confided. We shall see the truth and force of this, more fully, when we come to examine the next chapter.

{\*My reader will observe the change in the second chapter from the expression "God" to Lord God." There is much importance in the distinction. When God is seen acting in relation with man, He takes the title Lord God," — (Jehovah Elohim;) but until man appears on the scene, the word "Lord": is not used. I shall just point out three out of many passages in which the distinction is very strikingly presented. "And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God (Elohim) had commanded him; and the Lord (Jehovah) shut him in (Gen. 7: 16) Elohim was going to destroy the world which He had made; but Jehovah took care of the man with whom He stood in relation. Again, "that all the earth may know that there is a God (Elohim) in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord (Jehovah) saveth," &c. (1 Sam. 17: 46, 47) All the earth was to recognise the presence of Elohim; but Israel was called to recognise the actings of Jehovah, with whom they stood in relation. Lastly, "Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord (Jehovah) helped him; and God (Elohim) moved them to depart from him." (2 Chr. 18: 31) Jehovah took care of His poor erring servant; but Elohim, though unknown, acted upon the hearts of the uncircumcised Syrians.}

I would here suggest to my reader the remarkable contrast between the testimony set up in Eden, and which is set up now. Then, when all around was *life*, God spoke of *death*; now, on the contrary, when all around is death, God speaks of *life*: then the word "in the day thou eatest thou shalt *die*;" now the word is, "believe and *live*." And, as in Eden, the enemy sought to make void God's testimony, as to the result of eating the fruit, so now, he seeks to make God's testimony as to the result of believing the gospel. God had said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely *die*. But the serpent said, Ye shall not surely *die*." And now, when God's word plainly declares that "he that believeth on the *hath* everlasting *life*," (John 3: 16) the same serpent seeks to persuade people that they have not everlasting life, nor should they presume to think of such a thing, until they have, first, *done, felt, and experienced* all manner of things.

My beloved reader, if you have not yet heartily believed the divine record, let me beseech you to allow "the voice of the Lord" to prevail above the hiss of the serpent. "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (John 5: 24)

### **Genesis 3**

This section of our book sets before us the breaking up of the whole scene on which we have

been dwelling. It abounds in very weighty principles; and has, very justly, been, in all ages, resorted to as a most fruitful theme for those who desired to set forth the truth as to man's ruin and God's remedy. The serpent enters, with a bold question as to divine revelation — terrible model and forerunner of all infidel questions since raised by those who have, alas! too faithfully served the serpent's cause in the world questions which are only to be met by the supreme authority and. divine majesty of Holy Scripture.

"Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" This was Satan's crafty enquiry; and had the word of God been dwelling richly in Eve's heart, her answer might have been direct, simple, and conclusive. The true way in which to meet Satan's questions and suggestions, is to treat them as his, and repel them by the word. To let them near the heart, for a moment, is to lose the only power by which to answer them. The devil did not openly present himself and say, "I am the devil, the enemy of God, and I am come to traduce Him, and ruin you." This would not be serpent-like; and, yet, he really did all this, *by raising questions* in the mind of the creature. To admit the question, "hath God said?" when I know that God has spoken, is positive infidelity; and the very fact of my admitting It, proves my total incapacity to meet it. Hence, in Eve's case, the form of her reply evidenced the fact that she had admitted to her heart serpent's crafty enquiry. Instead of adhering strictly to the exact words of God, she, in her reply, actually adds thereto.

Now, either to add to, or take from, God's word, proves very clearly, that His word is not dwelling in my heart, or governing my conscience. If a man is finding his enjoyment in obedience, if it is his meat and his drink, if he is living by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of Jehovah, he will, assuredly, be acquainted with, and fully alive to, His word. He could not be indifferent to it. The Lord Jesus, in His conflict with Satan, accurately applied the word, because He lived upon it, and esteemed it more than His necessary food. He could not misquote or misapply the word, neither could He be indifferent about it. Not so Eve. She added to what God had said. His command was simple enough, "Thou shalt not eat of it." To this Eve adds her own words, "neither shall ye touch it." These were Eve's words, and not God's. He had said nothing about touching; so that whether her misquotation proceeded from ignorance, or indifference, or a desire to represent God in an arbitrary light, or from all three together, it is plain that she was entirely off the true ground of simple confidence in, and subjection to, God's holy word. "By the words of thy mouth, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer."

Nothing can possess more commanding interest than the way in which the word is everywhere put forward throughout the sacred canon, together with the immense importance of strict obedience thereto. Obedience is due from us to God's word, simply because it is His word. To raise a question, when He has spoken, is blasphemy. We are in the place of the creature. He is the Creator; He may, therefore, justly claim obedience from us. The infidel may call this "blind obedience;" but the Christian calls it intelligent obedience, inasmuch as it is based upon the knowledge that it is God's word to which he is obedient. If a man had not God's word, he might well be said to be in blindness and darkness, for there is not so much as a single ray of divine light, within or around us, but what emanates from God's pure and eternal word. ALL that we want to know is that God has spoken, and then obedience becomes the very highest order of intelligent acting. When the soul gets up to God, it has reached the very highest source of authority. No man, nor body of men, can claim obedience to their word, because it is theirs ; and hence the claims of the Church of Rome are arrogant and impious. In her claiming obedience, she usurps the prerogative of God; and all who yield it, rob God of His right. She presumes to place herself between God and the conscience; and who can do this with impunity? When God speaks, man is bound to obey. Happy is he if he does so. Woe be to him if he does not. Infidelity may question if God has spoken; superstition may place human authority between my conscience and what

God has spoken; by both I like I am effectually robbed of the word, and, as a consequence, of the deep blessedness of obedience.

There is blessing in every act of obedience; but the moment the soul hesitates, the enemy has the advantage; he will, assuredly, use it, to thrust the soul further and further from God. Thus, in the chapter before us, the question, "Hath God said?" was followed up, "Ye shall not surely die." That is to say, there was first the question raised, as to whether God had spoken, and then followed the open contradiction of what God had said. This solemn fact is abundantly sufficient to show how dangerous it is to admit near the heart a question as to divine revelation, in its fullness and integrity. A refined rationalism is very near akin to bold infidelity; and the infidelity that dares to judge God's Word is not far from the atheism that denies His existence. Eve would never have stood by to hear God contradicted, if she had not previously fallen into looseness and indifference as to His word. She, too, had her "phases of Faith," or, to speak more correctly, her phases of Infidelity: she suffered God to be contradicted by a creature, simply because? His word had lost its proper authority over her heart, her conscience, and her understanding.

This furnishes a most solemn warning to all who are in danger of being ensnared by an unhallowed rationalism. There is no true security, save in a profound faith in the plenary inspiration and supreme authority of "ALL SCRIPTURE." The soul that is endowed with this has a triumphant answer to every objector, whether he issue from Rome or Germany. "There is nothing new under the sun." The self-same evil which is now corrupting the very springs of religious thought and feeling, throughout the fairest portion of the continent of Europe, was that which laid Eve's heart in ruins, in the garden of Eden. The first step in her downward course was her hearkening to the question, "Hath God said." And then, onward she went, from stage to stage, until, at length, she bowed before the serpent, and owned him as her god, and the fountain of truth. Yes, my reader, the serpent displaced God, and the serpent's lie God's truth. Thus it was with fallen man; and thus it is with fallen man's posterity. God's word has no place in the heart of the unregenerated man; but the lie of the serpent has. Let the formation of man's heart be examined, and it will be found that there is a place therein for Satan's lie, but none whatever for the truth of God. Hence the force of the word to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again."

But, it is important to observe the mode in which the serpent sought to shake Eve's confidence in God's troth, and thus bring her under the power of infidel "*reason*." It was by shaking her confidence in God's love. He sought to shake her confidence in what God had said by showing that the testimony was not founded in love. "For," said he, "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil." (Ver. 6.) In other words, "There is positive advantage connected with the eating of that fruit of which God is seeking to deprive you; why, therefore, should you believe God's testimony? you cannot place confidence in one who, manifestly, does not love you, for, if He loved you, why should He prohibit your enjoying a positive privilege?"

Eve's security against the influence of all this reasoning, would have been simple repose in the infinite goodness of God. She should have said to the serpent, "I have the fullest confidence in God's goodness, therefore, I deem it impossible that He could withhold any real good from me. If that fruit were good for me, I should surely have it; but the fact of being forbidden by God proves that I would be no better, but much worse off by the eating of it. I am convinced of God's love and I am convinced of God's truth, and I believe, too, that you are an evil one come to draw my heart away from the fountain of goodness and truth. Get thee behind me, Satan." This would have been a noble reply. But it was not given. Her confidence in truth and love gave way, and all was lost; and so we find that there is just as little place in the heart of fallen for God's love, as there is for God's truth. The heart of man is a stranger to both the one and the other, until renewed by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Now, it is deeply interesting to turn from Satan's lie in reference to the truth and love of God, to the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, who came from the bosom of the Father in order to reveal what He really is. "Grace and truth" — the very things which man lost, in his fall — "came by Jesus Christ." (John 1: 17) He was "the faithful witness" of what God was. (Rev. 1: 5) Truth reveals God as He is; but this truth is connected with the revelation of perfect grace; and thus the sinner finds, to his, unspeakable joy, that the revelation of what God is, instead of being his destruction, becomes the basis of his eternal salvation. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (John 17: 3.) I cannot know God and not have life. The loss of the knowledge of God was death; but the knowledge of God is life. This, necessarily, makes life a thing entirely outside of ourselves, and dependent upon what God is. Let me arrive at what amount of self-knowledge I may, it is not said that "this is life eternal, to know themselves;" though, no doubt, the knowledge of God and the knowledge of self-will go very much together; still, "eternal life" is connected with the former, and not with the latter. To know God as He is, is life; and "all who know not God" shall be "punished with everlasting destruction from His presence."

It is of the utmost importance to see that what really stamps man's character and condition is his ignorance or knowledge of God. This it is that marks his character here, and fixes his destiny hereafter. Is he evil in his thoughts, evil in his words, evil in his actions? It is all the result of his being ignorant of God. On the other hand, is he pure in thought, holy in conversation, gracious in action? It is but the practical result of his knowledge of God. So also as to the future. To know God is the solid ground of endless bliss — everlasting glory. To know Him not is "everlasting destruction." Thus the knowledge of God is everything. It quickens the soul, purifies the heart, tranquillises the conscience, elevates the affections, sanctifies the entire character and conduct.

Need we wonder, therefore, that Satan's grand design was to rob the creature of the true knowledge of the only true God? He misrepresented the blessed God: he said He was not kind. This was the secret spring of all the mischief. It matters not what shape sin has since taken it matters not through what channel it has flowed, under what head it has ranged itself, or in what garb it has clothed itself; it is all to be traced to this one thing, namely, ignorance of God. The most refined cultivated moralist, the most devout religionist, the benevolent philanthropist, if ignorant of God, is as far from life and true holiness, as the publican and harlot. The prodigal was just as much a sinner, as positively awry from the Father, when he had crossed the threshold, as when he was feeding swine in the far country. (Luke 15: 13-15.) So, in Eve's case. The moment she took herself out of the hands of God, out of the position of absolute dependence upon, and subjection to, His word, she abandoned herself to the government of sense, as used of Satan for her entire overthrow.

The sixth verse presents three things; namely, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life:" which three, as the apostle states, comprehend "all that is in the world." These things necessarily took the lead, when God was shut out. If I do not abide in the happy assurance of God's love and truth, His grace and faithfulness, I shall surrender myself to the government of some one, or it may be all, of the above principles; and this is only another name for the government of Satan. There is, strictly speaking, no such thing as man's free-will. If man be self-governed, he is really governed by Satan; and if not, he is governed by God.

Now, the three great agencies by which Satan works are "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." These are the things presented by Satan to the Lord Jesus, in the temptation. He began by tempting the Second Man to take Himself out of the position of absolute dependence upon God. "Command these stones that they be made bread" He asked Him to do this, not, as in the case of the first man, to make Himself what He was not, but to prove what He was. Then followed the offer of

the kingdoms of the world, with all their Glory. And, finally, conducting Him to a pinnacle of the temple, he tempted Him to give Himself, suddenly and miraculously, to the Admiration of the assembled people below. (Comp. Matt. 4: 1-11 with Luke 4: 1-13.) The plain design of each temptation was to induce the Blessed One to step from the position of entire dependence upon God, and perfect subjection to His will. But all in vain. "it is written," was the unvarying reply of the only dependent, self-emptied, perfect man. Others might undertake to manage for themselves; none but God should manage for Him.

What an example for the faithful, under all their circumstances! Jesus kept close to scripture, and thus conquered; without any other weapon, save the sword of the Spirit, He stood in the conflict, and gained a glorious triumph. What a contrast with the first Adam! The one had everything to plead for God; the other had everything to plead against Him. The garden, with all its delights, in the one case; the wilderness, with all its privations, in the other: confidence in Satan, in the one case; confidence in God in the other: complete defeat in the one case; complete victory in the other. Blessed for ever be the God of all grace, who has laid our help on One so mighty to conquer — mighty to save!

Let us now inquire how far Adam and Eve realised the serpent's promised advantage. This inquiry will lead us to a deeply important point in connection with the fall of man. The Lord God had so ordered it, that in and by the fall, man should get, what previously, he had not, and that was, a conscience, a knowledge of both good and evil. This, man, evidently, could not have had before. He could not have known ought about evil, inasmuch as evil was not there to be known. He was in a state of innocence, which is a state of ignorance of evil. Man got a conscience in, and by, fall; and we find that the very first effect of conscience was to make him a coward. Satan had utterly deceived the woman. He had said, "your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil! But he had left out a material part of the truth, that they should know good, without the power to do it; and that they should know evil, without the power to avoid it. Their very attempt to elevate themselves in the scale of moral existence, involved the lose of true elevation. They became degraded, powerless, Satan-enslaved, conscience-smitten, terrified, creatures. "The eyes of them both were opened," no doubt; but alas! to what a sight! It was only to discover their own nakedness. They opened their eyes upon their own condition, which was "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." "They knew that they were naked" — sad fruit of the tree of knowledge! It was not any fresh knowledge of divine excellence they had attained, no fresh beam of divine light from the pure and eternal fountain thereof — alas! no; the very earliest result of their disobedient effort after knowledge, was the discovery, that they were naked.

Now, it is well to understand this; well, too, to know how conscience works, — to see that it can only make cowards of us, as being the consciousness of what we are. Many are astray as to this; they think that conscience will bring us to God. Did it operate thus, in the case of Adam and Eve? Assuredly not, nor will it, in the case of any sinner. How could it? How could the sense of what *I am* ever bring me to God, if not accompanied by the faith of what *God is*? Impossible; it will produce shame, self-reproach, remorse, anguish. It may, also, give birth to certain efforts, on my part, to remedy the condition which it discloses; but these very efforts, so far from drawing us to God, rather act as a blind to hide Him from our view. Thus, in the case of Adam and Eve, the discovery of their nakedness was followed by an effort of their own to cover it. "They sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves aprons." This is the first record we have of man's attempt to remedy, by his own device, his condition; and the attentive consideration thereof will afford us not a little instruction as to the real character of human religiousness in all ages. In the first place we see, not only in Adam's case, but in every case, that man's effort to remedy his condition is based upon the sense of his nakedness. He is, confessedly,

naked, and all his works are the result of his being so. This can never avail. I must know that I am clothed, before I can do anything acceptable in the sight of God.

And this, be it observed, is the difference between true Christianity and human religiousness. The former is founded upon the fact of a man's being clothed; the latter, upon the fact of his being naked. The former for its starting post what the latter has for its goal. that a true Christian does, is because he is clothed — perfectly clothed; all that a mere religionist does, in order that he may be clothed. This makes a vast difference. The more we examine the genius of man's religion, in all its phases, the more we shall see its insufficiency to remedy his state, or even to meet his own sense thereof. It may do very well for a time. It may avail so long as death, judgement, and wrath of God are looked at from a distance, if at all; but, when a man comes to look these realities straight in the face, he will find, in truth, that his religion is a bed too short for him to stretch himself upon, and a covering too narrow for him wrap himself in.

The moment Adam heard the voice of the Lord in Eden, "*he was afraid*," because, as he himself confessed, "I was naked." Yes, naked, although he had his apron on him. But it is plain that that covering did not even satisfy His own conscience. Had his conscience been divinely satisfied, he would not have been afraid. "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." (1 John 3: 20, 21.) But if even the human conscience cannot find repose in man's religious efforts, how much less can the holiness of God. Adam's apron could not screen him from the eye of God; and he could not stand in His presence naked; therefore he fled to hide himself. This is what conscience will do at all times. It will cause man to hide himself from God; and, moreover, all that his own religiousness offers him is a hiding-place from God. This is a miserable provision, inasmuch as he must meet God, some time or other; and if he has nought save the bad Conscience of what he is, he must be afraid — yea, he must be wretched. Indeed, nothing is needed, save hell itself, to complete the misery of one who feels he has to meet God, and knows only his own unfitness to meet Him.

Had Adam known God's perfect love, he would not have been afraid. "There is no tear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." (1 John 4: 17, 18.) But Adam knew not this, because he had believed the serpent's lie. He thought that God was anything but love; and, therefore, the very last thought of his heart would have been to venture into His presence. He could not do it. Sin was there, and God and sin can never meet; so long as there is sin on the conscience, there must be the sense of distance from God. "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity." (Hab. 1: 13) Holiness and sin cannot dwell together. Sin, wherever it is found, can only be met by the wrath of God.

But, blessed be God, there is something beside the *conscience of what I am*. There is *the revelation of what He is*; and this latter the fall of man really brought out. God had not revealed Himself, fully, in creation: He had shown "His eternal power and Godhead,"\* *Theiotes* but He had not told out all the deep secrets of His nature and character. Wherefore Satan made a grand mistake in coming to meddle with God's creation. He only proved to be the instrument of his own eternal defeat, and confusion, and "his violent dealing" shall for ever "come down upon his own pate." His lie Only gave occasion for the displays of the full 'truth in reference to God. Creation never could have brought out what God was. There was infinitely more in Him than power and wisdom. There was love, mercy, holiness, righteousness, goodness, tenderness, long-suffering. Where could all these be displayed, in a world of sinners? God, at the first, came to create; and, then, when the serpent presumed to meddle with creation, God came down to save. This brought out in the first words uttered by the Lord God, after man's fall. "And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?" This question proved two things. It proved that man was lost, and that God had come to seek. It proved

man's sin, and God's grace. "Where art thou?" Amazing faithfulness? Amazing grace Faithfulness, to disclose, in the very question itself, the truth as to man's condition: grace, to bring out, in the very fact of God's asking such a question, the truth as to His character and attitude, in reference to fallen man. Man was lost; but God had come down to look for him — to bring him out of his hiding place, behind the trees of the garden, in order that, in the happy confidence of faith, he might find a hiding place in Himself. This was grace. To create man out of the dust of the ground was power; but to seek man in his lost estate was grace. But who can utter all that is wrapped up in the idea of God's being a seeker? God seeking a sinner? What could the Blessed One have seen in man, to lead Him to seek for him? Just what the shepherd saw in the lost sheep; or what the woman saw in the lost piece of silver; or what the father saw in the lost son. The sinner is valuable to God; but why he should be so eternity alone will unfold.

{\*There is a profoundly interesting thought suggested by comparing the word *Theiotes* (Rom. 1: 20) with the word *Theotes* (Col. 2: 9 They are both rendered "Godhead;" but they present a very different thought. The heathen might have seen that there was something superhuman, something divine, in creation; but pure, essential, incomprehensible Deity dwelt in the Adorable Person of the Son.)

How, then, did the sinner reply to the faithful and gracious inquiry of the Blessed God? alas! the reply only reveals the awful depth of evil into which he had fallen. "And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Here, we find him actually laying the blame of his shameful fall on the circumstances in which God had placed him, and thus, indirectly, upon God Himself. This has ever been the way with fallen man. Everyone and everything is blamed but self. In the case of true conviction, the very reverse is exhibited. "Is it not I that have sinned" is the inquiry of a truly humbled soul. Had Adam known himself, how different would have been his style! But he neither knew himself nor God, and, instead of throwing the blame entirely upon himself, he threw it upon God.

Here, then, was man's terrible position. He had lost all. His dominion — his dignity — his happiness — his purity — his peace — all was gone from him; and, what was still worse, he accused God of being the cause of it.\* There he stood, a lost, ruined, guilty, and yet, *self-vindicating*, and, therefore, *God-accusing* sinner.

{\*Man not only accuses God of being the author of his fall, but also blames Him for his non-recovery. How often do we hear persons say that they cannot believe unless God give them the power to believe; and, further, that unless they are the subjects of God's eternal decree, they cannot be saved.

Now it is perfectly true, that no man can believe the gospel, except by the power of the Holy Ghost; and it is also true, that who so believe the gospel are the happy subjects of God's eternal counsels. But does all this set aside man's responsibility to believe a plain testimony set before him in God's Word. It most certainly does no such thing. But it does reveal the sad evil of man's heart, which leads him to reject Gods testimony which is plainly revealed, and to give as a reason for so doing God's decree which is a profound secret, known only to Himself However it will not avail, for we read in 1 Thess. 1: 8, 9, that those "Who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting destruction." Men are responsible to believe the gospel, and they will be punished for not believing it. They are not responsible to know anything about God's counsels, inasmuch as they are not revealed, and, therefore, there can be no guilt attached to ignorance concerning them. The apostle could

say to the Thessalonians, "knowing brethren beloved, our election of God." How did he know it? Was it by having access to the page of God's secret and eternal decrees? By no means. How then? "Because (*hoti*) our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power." (1 Thess. 1: 4, 5) This is the way to know the election of any. When the gospel comes in power, it is a plain proof of God's election.

But, I doubt not, the people who draw a plea from the divine counsels for rejecting the divine testimony, only want some flimsy excuse to continue in sin. They really do not want God; and it would be far more honest in them to say so, plainly, than to put forward a plea which is not merely flimsy, but positively blasphemous. Such a plea will not avail them much amid the terrors of the day of judgement now fast approaching. }

But, just at this point, God began to reveal Himself, and His purposes of redeeming love; and herein lay the true basis of man's peace and blessedness. when man has come to the end of himself, God can show what He is; but not until then. The scene must be entirely cleared of man, and all his vain pretensions, empty boastings, and blasphemous reasonings, ere God can or will reveal Himself. Thus it was when man was hidden behind the trees of the garden, that God unfolded His wondrous plan of redemption through the instrumentality of the bruised seed of the woman. Here we are taught a valuable principle of truth as to what it is which alone will bring a man, peacefully and confidently, into the presence of God.

It has been already remarked that conscience will never effect this. Conscience drove Adam behind the trees of the garden; revelation brought him forth into the presence of God. The consciousness of what he was terrified him; the revelation of what God was tranquillised him. This is truly consolatory for a poor sin burdened heart. The reality of what I am is met by the reality of what God is; and this is salvation.

There is a point where God and man must meet, whether in grace or judgement, and that point is where both are revealed *as they are*. Happy are they who reach that point in grace! Woe be to them who will have to reach it in judgement! It is with what we are that God deals; and it is as He is that He deals with us. In the cross, I see God descending in grace to the lowest depths, not merely of my negative, but my positive condition, as a sinner. This gives perfect peace. If God has met me, in my actual condition, and Himself provided an adequate remedy, all is eternally settled. But all who do not thus, by faith, see God, in the cross, will have to meet Him, by and by, in judgement He will have to deal, according to what He is, with what they are.

The moment a man is brought to know his real state, he can find no rest until He has found God, in the cross, and then he rests in God Himself. He, blessed be His name is the rest and hiding-place of the believing soul. This at once, puts human works and human righteous in their proper place. We can say, with truth, that those who rest in such things cannot possibly have arrived at the true knowledge of themselves. It is quite impossible that a divinely quickened conscience can rest in ought save the perfect sacrifice of the Son of God. All effort to establish one's own righteousness must proceed from ignorance of the righteousness of God. Adam might learn, in the light of the divine testimony about "the seed of the woman," the worthlessness of his fig-leaf apron. The magnitude of that which had to be done, proved the sinner's total inability to do it. Sin had to be put away Could man do that? Nay, it was by him it had come in. The serpent's head had to be bruised Could man do that? Nay, he had become the serpent's slave. God's claims had to be met. Could man do that? Nay, he had, already, trampled them under foot. Death had to be abolished. Could man do that? Nay, he had, by sin, introduced it, and imparted to it its terrible sting.

Thus, in whatever way we view the matter, we see the sinner's complete impotency, and, as a

consequence, the presumptuous folly of all who attempt to assist God in the stupendous work of redemption, as all assuredly do who think to be saved in any other way but "by grace, through faith."

However, though Adam might, and, through grace, did, see and feel that he could never accomplish all that had to be done, yet God revealed Himself as about to achieve every jot and tittle thereof, by the seed of the woman. In short, we see that He graciously took the entire matter into His own hands. He made it, altogether, a question between Himself and the serpent; for although the man and the woman were called upon, individually, to reap, in various ways, the bitter fruits of their sin, yet it was to the serpent that the Lord God said, "Because thou hast done this." The serpent was the source of the ruin; and the seed of the woman was to be the source of the redemption. Adam heard all this, and believed it; and, in the power of that belief, "he called his wife's name the mother of *all living*. This was a precious fruit of faith in God's recreation. Looking at the matter from nature's point of view, Eve might be mother called, "the mother of all *dying*." But, in the judgement of faith, she was the mother of all *living*. "His mother called him Ben-oni; (the son of my sorrow;) but his father called him Benjamin (the son of my right hand)."

It was through the sustaining energy of faith that Adam was enabled to endure the terrible results of what he had done. It was God's wondrous mercy to allow him to hear what He said to the serpent, before he was called to listen to what He had to say to himself. Had it not been so, he must have been plunged in despair. It is despair to be called upon to look at myself, without being able to look at God, as revealed in the cross, for my salvation. There is no child of fallen Adam who could bear to have his eyes opened to the reality of what he is, and what he has done, without being plunged in despair, unless he could take refuge in the cross. Hence, in that place to which all who reject Christ must finally be consigned, hope cannot come. There, men's eyes will be opened to the reality of what they are, and what they have done; but they will not be able to find relief and refuge in God. What God is, will, then, involve hopeless perdition; as truly as what God is, doth, now, involve eternal salvation. The holiness of God will, then, be eternally against them; as it is now that in which all who believe are called to rejoice. The more I realise the holiness of God, now, the more I know my security; but, in the case of the lost, that very holiness will be but the ratification of their eternal doom. Solemn — unspeakably solemn — reflection!

We shall, now, briefly glance at the truth presented to us in God's providing a coats for Adam and Eve. "Unto Adam, also, and to his wife, did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them." We have here, in figure, the great doctrine of divine righteousness set forth. The robe which God provided was an effectual covering, because He provided it just as the apron was an ineffectual covering, because man had provided it. Moreover, God's coat was founded upon blood-shedding. Adam's apron was not. So also, now God's righteousness is set forth in the cross; man's righteousness is set forth in the works, the sin-stained works of his own hands. When Adam stood clothed in the coat of skin he could not say, "I was naked," nor had he any occasion to hide himself. The sinner may feel perfectly at rest, when, by faith, he knows that God has clothed him: but to feel at rest till then, can only be the result of presumption or ignorance. To know that the dress I wear, and in which I appear before? God, is of His own providing, must set my heart at perfect rest. There can be no true, permanent rest in ought else.

The closing verses of this chapter are full of instruction. Fallen man, in his fallen state, must not be allowed to eat of the fruit of the tree of life, for that would entail upon him endless wretchedness in this world. To take of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever, in our present condition, would be unmingled misery. The tree of life can only be tasted in resurrection. To live for ever, in a frail tabernacle, in a body of sin and death, would be intolerable. Wherefore, the Lord God "drove out the

man." He drove him out into a world which, everywhere, exhibited the lamentable results of his fall. The Cherubim and the flaming sword, too, forbid fallen man to pluck the fruit of the tree of life; while God's revelation pointed him to the death and resurrection of the seed of the woman, as that wherein life was to be found beyond the power of death.

Thus Adam was a happier and a safer man, outside the bounds of Paradise, than he had been within, for this reason — that, within, his life depended upon himself whereas, outside, it depended upon another, even a promised Christ. And as he looked up, and beheld "the Cherubim and the flaming sword," he could bless the hand that had set them there, "to keep the way of the tree of life," inasmuch as the same hand had opened a better, a safer, and a happier way to that tree. If the Cherubim and flaming sword stopped up the way to Paradise, the Lord Jesus Christ has opened "a new and living way" into the holiest of all. "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (Compare John 14: 6; Heb. 10: 20.) In the knowledge of this, the believer now moves onward through a world which is under the curse — where the traces of sin are visible on all hands. He has found his way, by faith, to the bosom of the Father; and while he can secretly repose there, he is cheered by the blessed assurance that the one who has conducted him thither, is gone to prepare a place in the many mansions of the Father's house, and that he will soon come again and receive him unto Himself, amid the glory of the Father's kingdom. Thus, in the bosom, the house, and the kingdom of the Father, the believer finds his present portion, his future home and reward.

### **Genesis 4 & Genesis 5**

As each section of the Book of Genesis opens before us, we are furnished with fresh evidence of the fact that we are travelling over, what a recent writer has well termed, "the seed-plot of the whole Bible;" and not only so, but the seed-plot of man's entire history.

Thus, in the fourth chapter, we have, in the persons of Cain and Abel, the first examples of a religious man of the world, and of a genuine man of faith. Born, as they were, outside of Eden, and being the sons of fallen Adam, they could have nothing, natural, to distinguish them, one from the other. They were both sinners. Both had a fallen nature. Neither was innocent. It is well to be clear in reference to this, in order that the reality of divine grace, and the integrity of faith, may be fully and distinctly seen. If the distinction between Cain and Abel were founded in nature, then it follows, as an inevitable conclusion, that they were not the partakers of the fallen nature of their father, nor the participators in the circumstances of his fall; and, hence, there could be no room for the display of grace, and the exercise of faith.

Some would teach us that every man is born with qualities and capacities which, if rightly used, will enable him to work his way back to God. This is a plain denial of the fact so clearly set forth in the history now before us. Cain and Abel were born, not inside, but outside of Paradise. They were the sons, not of innocent, but of fallen Adam. They came into the world as the partakers of the nature of their father; and it mattered not in what ways that nature might display itself, it was nature still — fallen, ruined, irremediable nature. "That which is born of the flesh is (not merely fleshly, but) flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is, (not merely spiritual, but) spirit." (John 3)

If ever there was a fair opportunity for the distinctive qualities, capacities, resources, and tendencies of nature to manifest themselves, the lifetime of Cain and Abel furnished it. If there were ought in nature, whereby it could recover its lost innocence, and establish itself again within the bounds of Eden, this was the moment for its display. But there was nothing of kind. They were both lost. They were "flesh. They were not innocent. Adam lost his innocence and never regained it. He can only be looked at as the head of a fallen race, who, by his "disobedience," were made "sinners." (Rom. 5: 19)

He became, so far as he was personally concerned, the corrupt source, from whence have emanated the corrupt streams of ruined and guilty humanity — the dead trunk from which have shot forth the branches of a dead humanity, morally and spiritually dead.

True, as we have already remarked, he himself was made a subject of grace, and the possessor and exhibitor of a lively faith in a promised Saviour; but this was not anything natural, but something entirely divine. And, inasmuch as it was not natural, neither was it within the range of nature's capacity to communicate it. It was not, by any means, hereditary. Adam could not bequeath nor impart his faith to Cain or Abel. His possession thereof was simply the fruit of love divine. It was implanted in his soul by divine power; and he had not divine power to communicate it to another. Whatever was natural Adam could, in the way of nature, communicate; but nothing more. And seeing that he, as a father, was in a condition of ruin, his son could only be in the same. As is the begetter, so are they also that are begotten of him. They must, of necessity, partake of the nature of him from whom they have sprung. "as is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy." (1 Cor. 15: 48)

Nothing can be more important, in its way, than a correct understanding of the doctrine of federal headship. If my reader will turn, for a moment, to Rom. 5: 12-21, he will find that the inspired apostle looks at the whole human race as comprehended under two heads. I do not attempt to dwell on the passage; but merely refer to it, in connection with the subject in hand. The fifteenth chapter of first Corinthians will also furnish instruction of a similar character. In the first man, we have sin, disobedience, and death. In The Second man, we have righteousness, obedience, and life. As we derive a nature from the former, so do we also from the latter. No doubt, each nature will display, in each specific case, its own peculiar energies; it will manifest in each individual possessor thereof, its own peculiar powers. Still, there is the absolute possession of a real, abstract, positive nature.

Now, as the mode in which we derive a nature from the first man is by birth, so the mode in which we derive a nature from the Second man is by *new* birth. Being born, we partake of the nature of the former; being "born *again*," we partake of the nature of the latter. A newly born infant, though entirely incapable of performing the act which reduced Adam to the condition of a fallen being, is, nevertheless, a partaker of his nature; and so, also, a newly born child of God — a newly regenerated soul, though having nothing whatever to do with the working out of the perfect obedience of "the man Christ Jesus," is, nevertheless, a partaker of His nature. True it is that, attached to the former nature, there is sin; and attached to the latter, there is righteousness. man's sin, in the former case; God's righteousness in the latter: yet, all the while, there is actual, *bona fide* participation of a real nature, let the adjuncts be what they may. The child of Adam partakes of the human nature and its adjuncts; the child of God partakes of the divine nature and its adjuncts. The former nature is according to "the will of man," (John 1) the latter is according to "the will of God;" as St. James, by the Holy Ghost, teaches us, "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth, (James 1: 18)

From all that has been said, it follows, that Abel was not distinguished from his brother Cain by anything natural. The distinction between them was not grounded upon ought in their nature or circumstances, for, as to these, "there was no difference." What, therefore, made the vast difference? The answer is as simple as the gospel of the grace of God can make it. The difference was not in themselves, in their nature, or their circumstances; it lay, *entirely*, in their *sacrifices*. This makes the matter most simple, for any truly convicted sinner — for any one who truly feels that he not only partakes of a fallen nature, but is himself, also, a sinner. The history of Abel opens, to such an one, the only true ground of his approach to, his standing before, and his relationship with, God. It teaches him, distinctly, that he cannot come to God on the ground of anything in, of, or pertaining to, nature; and he must seek, *outside himself*, and in the person and work of another, the true and everlasting basis of his

connection with the Holy, the Just, and only True God. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews sets the whole subject before us, in the most distinct and comprehensive way. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice (*pleiona thusian*) than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God bearing witness (*parturountos*) to his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh." Here we are taught that it was, in no wise, a question as to the men, but only as to their "Sacrifice" — it was not a question as to the offerer, but as to his offering. Here lay the grand distinction between Cain and Abel. My reader cannot be too simple in his apprehension of this point, for therein lies involved the truth as to any sinner's standing before God.

And, now, let us enquire what the offerings were. "And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto Jehovah. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fruit thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering, he had not respect." (Gen. 4: 3-5) This sets the difference clearly before us: Cain offered Jehovah the fruit of a cursed earth, and that, moreover, without any blood to remove the curse. He presented "An unbloody sacrifice," simply because he had no faith. Had he possessed that divine principle, it would have taught him, even at this early moment, that "Without shedding of blood, there is no remission." (Heb 9) This is a great cardinal truth. The penalty of sin is death. Cain was a sinner, and, as such, death stood between him and Jehovah. But, in his offering, there was no recognition whatever of this fact. There was no presentation of a sacrificed life, to meet the claims of divine holiness, or to answer to his own true condition as a sinner. He treated Jehovah as though He were, altogether, such an one as himself, who could accept the sin-stained fruit of a cursed earth.

All this, and much more, lay involved in Cain's "unbloody sacrifice." He displayed entire ignorance, in reference to divine requirements, in reference to his own character and condition, as a lost and guilty sinner, and in reference to the true state of that ground, the fruit of which he presumed to offer. No doubt, reason might say, "what more acceptable offering could a man present, than that which he had produced by the labour of his hands, and the sweat of his brow?" Reason, and even man's religious mind, may think thus; but God thinks quite differently; and faith is always sure to agree with God's thoughts. God teaches, so faith believes, that there must be a sacrificed life, else there can be no approach to God.

Thus, when we look at the ministry of the Lord Jesus, we see, at once, that, had He not died upon the cross, all His services would have proved utterly unavailing as regards the establishment of our relationship with God. True, "He went about doing good" all His life; but it was His death that rent the veil. (Matt. 27: 61) Nought but His death could have done so. Had he continued, to the present moment, "going about doing good," the veil would have remained entire, to bar the worshipper's approach into "the holiest of all." Hence we can see the false ground on which Cain stood as an offerer and a worshipper. An unpardoned sinner coming into the presence of Jehovah, to present "an unbloody sacrifice," could only be regarded as guilty of the highest degree of presumption. True, he had toiled to produce his offering; but what of that? Could a sinner's toil remove the curse and stain of sin? Could it satisfy the claims of an infinitely holy God! Could it furnish a proper ground of acceptance for a sinner? Could it set aside the penalty which was due to sin? Could it rob death of its sting, or the grave of its victory? Could it do any or all of these things? Impossible. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." Cain's "unbloody sacrifice," like every other unbloody sacrifice, was not only worthless, but actually abominable, in the divine estimation. It not only demonstrated his entire ignorance of his own condition, but also of the divine character. "God is not worshipped with men's hands as though he needed anything." And yet Cain thought he could be thus approached. And every mere religionist

thinks the same. Cain has had many millions of followers, from age to age. Cain-worship has abounded all over the world. It is the worship of every unconverted son, and is maintained by every false system of religion under the sun.

Man would fain make God a receiver instead of a giver; but this cannot be; for, "it is more blessed to give than to receive;" and, assuredly, God must have the more blessed place. "Without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better." "Who hath *first* given to him?" God can accept the smallest gift from a heart which has learnt the deep truth contained in those words, "Of thine own have we given thee;" but, the moment a man presumes to take the place of the "first" giver, God's reply is, "if I were hungry, I would not tell thee;" for "He is not worshipped with men's hands, as though he *needed anything*, seeing he *giveth* to *all* "life and breath and *all* things." The great Giver of "all things" cannot possibly "need anything." Praise is all that we can offer to God; but this can only offered in the full and clear intelligence that our sins are all put away; and this again can only be known by faith in the virtue of an accomplished atonement.

My reader may pause, here, and read prayerfully the following scriptures, namely, Psalm 1; Isaiah 1: 11-18; Acts 17: 22-34, in all of which he will find distinctly laid down the truth as to man's true position before God, as also the proper ground of worship.

Let us now consider Abel's sacrifice. "And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof." In other words, he entered, by faith, into the glorious truth, that God could be approached by sacrifice; that there was such a thing as a sinner's placing the death of another between himself and the consequence of his sin, that the claims of God's nature and the attributes of His character could be met by the blood of a spotless victim — a victim offered to meet God's demands, and the sinner's deep necessities. This is, in short, the doctrine of the cross, in which alone the conscience of a sinner can find repose, because, therein, God is fully glorified.

Every divinely convicted sinner must feel that death and judgement are before him, as "the due reward of his deeds;" nor can he, by ought that he can accomplish, alter that destiny. He may toil and labour; he may, by the sweat of his brow, produce an offering; he may make vows and resolutions; he may alter his way of life; he may reform his outward character; he may be temperate, moral, upright, and, in the human acceptance of the word, religious; he may, though entirely destitute of faith, read, pray, and hear sermons. In short, he may do anything, or everything which lies within the range of human competency; but, notwithstanding all, "death and judgement" are before him. He has not been able to disperse those two heavy clouds which have gathered upon the horizon. There they stand; and, so far from being able to remove them, by all his doings, he can only live in the gloomy anticipation of the moment Then they shall burst upon his guilty head. It is impossible for a sinner, by his own works, to place himself in life and triumph, at the other side of "death and judgement — yea, his very works are only performed for the purpose of preparing him, if possible, for those dreaded realities.

Here, however, is exactly where the cross comes in. In that cross, the convicted sinner can behold a divine provision for all his guilt and all his need. There, too, he can see death and judgement entirely removed from the scene, and life and glory set in their stead. Christ has cleared the prospect of death and judgement, so far as the true believer is concerned, and filled it with life, righteousness, and glory. "He hath abolished death, and brought life and incorruptibility to light, through the gospel." (2 Tim. 1: 10) He has glorified God in the putting away of that which would have separated us for ever, from His holy and blissful presence. "He has put away sin," and, hence it is gone. (Heb. 9: 26) all this is, in type, set forth in Abel's "more excellent sacrifice." There was no attempt, on Abel's part, to set aside the truth as to his own condition, and proper place as a guilty sinner — no attempt to turn aside the edge of the

flaming sword, and force his way back to the tree of life — no presumptuous offering of an unbloody sacrifice" — no presentation of the fruit of a cursed earth to Jehovah — he took the real ground of a sinner, and, as such, set the death of a victim between him and his sins, and between his sins and the holiness a sin-hating God. This was most simple. Abel deserved death and judgement, but he found a substitute.

This is it with every poor, helpless, self-condemned, conscience-smitten sinner. Christ is his substitute, his ransom, his most excellent sacrifice, his ALL. Such an one will feel, like Abel, that the fruit of the ground could never avail for him; that were he to present to God the fairest fruits of earth, he would still have a sin-stained conscience, inasmuch as "without shedding of blood is no remission." The richest fruits, and the most fragrant flowers, in the greatest profusion, could not remove a single stain from the conscience. Nothing but the perfect sacrifice of the Son of God can give ease to the heart and conscience. All who by faith lay hold of that divine reality, will enjoy a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. It is faith which puts the soul in present possession of this peace. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5: 1) "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain."

It is not a question of feeling, as so many would make it. It is entirely a question of faith in an accomplished fact, faith wrought in the soul of a sinner, by the power of the Holy Ghost. This faith is something quite different from a mere feeling of the heart, or an assent of the intellect. Feeling is not faith. Intellectual assent is not faith. Some would make faith to be the mere assent of the intellect to a certain proposition. This is fearfully false. It makes the question of faith human, whereas it is really divine. It reduces it to the level of man, whereas it really comes from God. Faith is not a thing of today or tomorrow. It is an imperishable principle, emanating from an eternal source, even God Himself; it lays hold of God's truth, and sets the soul in God's presence.

Mere feeling and sentimentality can never rise above the source from whence they emanate; and that source in self; but faith has to do with God and His eternal word, and is a living link, connecting the heart that possesses it with God who gives it. Human feelings, however intense; human sentiments, however refined, could not connect the soul with God. They are neither divine nor eternal, but are human and evanescent. They are like Jonah's gourd, which sprang up in a night, and perished in a night. Not so faith. That precious principle partakes of all the value, all the power, and all the reality of the source from whence it emanates, and the object with which it has to do. It justifies the soul; (Rom. 5: 1) it purifies the heart; (Acts 15: 9) it works by love; (Gal. 5: 6) it overcomes the world. (1 John 5: 4) Feeling and sentiment never could accomplish such results; they belong to nature and to earth, faith belongs to God and to heaven; they are occupied with self, faith is occupied with Christ; they look inward and downward, faith looks outward and upward; they leave the soul in darkness and doubt, faith leads it into light and peace; they have to do with one's own fluctuating condition, faith has to do with God's immutable truth, and Christ's eternally enduring sacrifice.

No doubt, faith will produce feelings and sentiments spiritual feelings and truthful sentiments — but the fruits of faith must never be confounded with faith "itself. I am not justified by feelings, nor yet by faith feelings, but simply by faith. And why? Because faith believes God when He speaks; it takes Him at His word; it apprehends Him as He has revealed Himself in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is life, righteousness, and peace. To apprehend God as He is, is the sum of all present and eternal blessedness. When the soul finds out God, it has found out all it can possibly need, here or hereafter; but He can only be known by His own revelation, and by the faith which He Himself imparts, and which, moreover, always sees divine revelation as its proper object.

Thus, then, we can, in some measure, enter into the meaning and power of the statement, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Cain had no faith, and, therefore, he offered an unbloody sacrifice. Abel had faith, and, therefore, he offered both "blood, and fat," which, in type, set forth the presentation of the life, and also the inherent excellency of the Person of Christ. "The blood," set forth the former; "the fat," shadowed forth the latter. Both blood and fat were forbidden to be eaten, under the Mosaic economy. The blood is the life; and man, under law, had no title to life. But, in the sixth of John, we are taught, that unless we eat blood, we have no life in us. Christ is the life. There is not a spark of life outside of Him. ALL out of Christ is death. "In him was life," and in none else.

Now, He gave up His life on the cross; and, to that life, sin was, by imputation, attached, when the blessed One was nailed to the cursed tree. Hence, in giving up His life, He gave up, also, the sin attached thereto, so that it is, effectually, put away, having been left in His grave from which He rose triumphant, in the power of a new life, to which righteousness as distinctly attaches itself, us did sin to that life which He gave up on the cross. This will help us to an understanding of an expression used by our blessed Lord, after His resurrection, "a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see we have." He did not say, "flesh and blood;" because, in resurrection, He had not assumed, into His sacred person, the blood which He had shed out upon the cross, as an atonement for sin. "The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood which maketh an atonement for the soul." (Lev. 17: 11) Close attention to this point will have the effect of deepening, in our souls, the sense of the completeness of the putting away of sin, by the death of Christ; and we know that whatever tends to deepen our sense of that glorious reality, must, necessarily, tend to the fuller establishment of our peace, and to the more effectual promotion of the glory of Christ, as connected with our testimony and service.

We have, already, referred to a point of much interest and value, in the history of Cain and Abel, and that is, the entire identification of each with the offering which he presented. My reader cannot possibly bestow too much attention upon this. The question, in each case, was not as to the person of the offerer; but, entirely, as to the character of his offering. Hence, of Abel we read that "God testified of his gifts." He did not bear witness to Abel, but to Abel's sacrifice; and this fixes, distinctly, the proper ground of a believer's peace and acceptance before God.

There is a, constant tendency, in the heart, to ground our peace and acceptance upon something in or about ourselves even though we admit that that something is wrought by the Holy Ghost. Hence arises the constant looking *in*, when the Holy Ghost would ever have us looking *out*. The question for every believer is not, "what am I" but, "what is Christ?" Having come to God "in the name of Jesus," he is wholly identified with Him, and accepted in His name, and, moreover, can no more be rejected than the One in whose name he has come. Before ever a question can be raised as to the feeblest believer, it must be raised as to Christ Himself. But this latter is clearly impossible, and thus the security of the believer is established upon a foundation which nothing can possibly move. Being in himself a poor worthless sinner, he has come in the name of Christ, he is identified with Christ, accepted in and as Christ, bound up in the same bundle of life with Christ. God testifies, not of him, but of his gift, and his gift is Christ. ALL this is most tranquillising and consolatory. It is our happy privilege to be able, in the confidence of faith, to refer every objection, and every objector, to Christ, and His finished atonement. ALL our springs are in Him. In Him we boast all the day long. Our confidence is not in ourselves, but in Him who hath wrought everything for us. We hang on His name, trust in His work, gaze on His Person, and wait for His coming.

But the carnal mind, at once, displays its enmity against all this truth which so gladdens and

satisfies the heart of a believer. Thus it was with Cain. "He was very wroth, and his countenance fell." That which filled Abel with peace, filled Cain with wrath. Cain in unbelief, despised the only way in which a sinner could come to God. He refused to offer blood, without which there can be no remission; and, then, because *he* was not received, *in his sins*, and because Abel was accepted, *in his gift*, "he was wroth, and his countenance fell." And yet, how else could it be? He should either be received with his sins, or without them; but God could not receive him with them, and he would not bring the blood which alone maketh atonement; and, therefore, he was rejected, and, being rejected, he manifests in his ways, the fruits of corrupt religion. He persecutes and murders the true witness — the accepted, justified man — the man of faith; and, in so doing, he stands as the model and forerunner of all false religionists, in every age. At all times, and in all places, men have shown themselves more ready to persecute on religious grounds, than on any other. This is Cain-like. Justification — full, perfect, unqualified justification, by faith only, makes God everything, and man nothing: and man does not like this; it causes his countenance to fall, and draws out his anger. Not that he can give any reason for his anger; for it is not, as we have seen, a question of man at all, but only of the ground on which he appears before God. Had Abel been accepted on the ground of ought in himself, then, indeed, Cain's wrath, and his fallen countenance, would have had some just foundation; but, inasmuch as he was accepted, exclusively, on the ground of his offering; and, inasmuch as it was not to him, but to his gift, that Jehovah bore testimony, his wrath was entirely without any proper basis. This is brought out in Jehovah's word to Cain: "If thou doest well, (or, as the LXX reads it, if thou offer correctly, (*orthos prosenegkes*) shalt thou not be accepted?" The well-doing had reference to the offering. Abel did well by hiding himself behind an acceptable sacrifice. Cain did badly by bringing an offering without blood; and all his after-conduct was but the legitimate result of his false worship.

"And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him." Thus has it ever been; the Cains have persecuted and murdered the Abels. At all times, man and his religion are the same; faith and its religion are the same: and wherever they have met, there has been conflict.

However, it is well to see that Cain's act of murder was the true consequence — the proper fruit — of his false worship. His foundation was bad, and the superstructure erected thereon was also bad. Nor did he stop at the act of murder; but having heard the judgement of God thereon, despairing of forgiveness through ignorance of God, he went forth from His blessed presence, and built a city, and had in his family the cultivators of the useful and ornamental sciences-agriculturists, musicians, and workers in metals. Through ignorance of the divine character, he pronounced his sin too great to be pardoned.\* It was not that he really knew his sin, but that he knew not God. He fully exhibited the terrible fruit of the fall in the very thought of God to which he gave utterance. He did not want pardon, because he did not want God. He had no true sense of his own condition; no aspirations after God; no intelligence as to the ground of a sinner's approach to God. He was radically corrupt — fundamentally wrong; and all he wanted was to get out of the presence of God, and lose himself in the world and its pursuits. He thought he could live very well without God, and he therefore set about decorating the world as well as he could, for the purpose of making it a respectable place, and himself a respectable man therein, though in God's view it was under the curse, and he was a fugitive and a vagabond.

{\*The word used by Cain occurs in Ps. 32: 1 whose transgression is *forgiven*. The LXX renders it by *aphethenai*, to be remitted.}

Such was "*the way of Cain* in which way millions are, at this moment, rushing on. Such persons are not, by any means, divested of the religious element in their character. They would like to offer something to God; to do something for Him. They deem it right to present to Him the results of their

own toil. They are ignorant of themselves, ignorant of God; but with all this there is the diligent effort to improve the world; to make life agreeable in various ways; to deck the scene with the fairest colours. God's remedy to *cleanse* is rejected, and man's effort to *improve* is put in its place. This is "the way of Cain." (Jude 11)

And, my reader, you have only to look around you to see how this "WAY is prevailing at the present moment. Though the world is stained with the blood of "a greater than" Abel, even with the blood of Christ; yet see what an agreeable place man seeks to make of it As in Cain's day, the grateful sounds of "the harp and organ," no doubt, completely drowned, to man's ear, the cry of Abel's blood; so now, man's ear is filled with other sounds than those which issue from Calvary; and his eye filled with other objects than a crucified Christ. The resources of his genius, too, are put forth to render this world a hot-house, in which are produced, in their rarest form, all the fruits for which nature so eagerly longs. And not merely are the real wants of man, as a creature, supplied, but the inventive genius of the human mind has been set to work for the purpose of devising things, which, the moment the eye sees, the heart desires, and not only desires, but imagines that life would be intolerable without them. Thus, for instance, some years ago, people were content to devote three or four days to the accomplishing of a journey of one hundred miles; but now they can accomplish it in three or four hours; and not only so, but they will complain sadly if they happen to be five or ten minutes late. In fact, man must be saved the trouble of living. He must travel without fatigue, and he must hear news without having to exercise patience for it. He will lay iron rails across the earth, and electric wires beneath the sea, as if to anticipate, in his own way, that bright and blissful age, when "there shall be no more sea."\*

{\*True, the Lord is using all those things for the furtherance of His own gracious ends; and the Lord's servant can freely use them also; but this does not hinder our seeing the spirit which originates and characterises them.}

In addition to all this, there is abundance of religion, so called; but, alas charity itself is compelled to harbour the apprehension, that very much of what passes for religion is but a screw in the vast machine, which has been constructed for man's convenience, and man's exaltation. Man would not be without religion. It would not be respectable; and, therefore, he is content to devote one-seventh of his time to religion; or, as he thinks and professes, to his eternal interests; and then he has six-sevenths to devote to his temporal interests; but whether he works for time or eternity, it is for *himself*, in reality. such is "the way of Cain." Let my reader ponder it well. Let him see where this way begins, whither it tends, and where it terminates.

How different the way of the man of faith! Abel felt and owned the curse; he saw the stain of sin, and, in the holy energy of faith, offered that which met it, and met it thoroughly — met it divinely. He sought and found a refuge in God Himself; and instead of building a city on the earth, he found but a grave in its bosom. The earth, which on its surface displayed the genius and energy of Cain and his family, was stained underneath with the blood of a righteous man. Let the man of the world remember this; let the man of God remember it; let the worldly-minded Christian remember it. The earth which we tread upon is stained by the blood of the Son of God. The very blood which justifies the Church condemns the world. The dark shadow of the cross of Jesus may be seen by the eye of faith, looming over all the glitter and glare of this evanescent world. "The fashion of this world passeth away." It will soon all be over, so far as the present scene is concerned. "The way of Cain" will be followed by "the error of Balaam," in its consummated form; and then will come "the gainsaying of Core;" and what then "The pit" will open its mouth to receive the wicked, and close it again, to shut them up in "blackness of darkness for ever." (Jude 13)

In full confirmation of the foregoing lines, we may run the eye over the contents of Chapter 5 and find therein the illuminating record of man's weakness, and subjection to the rule of death. He might live for hundreds of years, and "beget sons and daughters;" but, at last, it must be recorded that "*he died.*" "Death reigned from Adam to Moses." "It is appointed unto men once to die." Man cannot get over this. He cannot, by steam, or electricity, or anything else within the range of his genius, disarm death of its terrible sting. He cannot, by his energy, set aside the sentence of *death*, although he may produce the comforts and luxuries of *life*.

But whence came this strange and dreaded thing, death? Paul gives us the answer: "By one man sin entered into the world, and *death by sin.*" (Rom. 5: 12) Here we have the origin of death. It came by sin. Sin snapped asunder the link which bound the creature to the living God; and, that being done, he was handed over to the dominion of death, which dominion he had no power whatever to shake off. And this, be it observed, is one of the many proofs of the fact of man's total inability to meet God. There can be no fellowship between God and man, save in the power of life; but man is under the power of death; hence, on natural grounds, there can be no fellowship. Life, can have no fellowship with death, no more than light with darkness, or holiness with sin. Man must meet God on an entirely new ground, and on a new principle, even faith; and this faith enables him to recognise his own position, as "sold under sin," and, therefore, subject to death; while, at the same time, it enables him to apprehend God's character, as the dispenser of a new life — life beyond the power of death — a life which can never be touched by the enemy, nor forfeited by us.

This it is which marks the security of the believer's life — a risen, glorified Christ — a Christ victorious over everything that could be against us. Adams life was founded upon his own obedience; when he disobeyed, life was forfeited. But Christ, having life in Himself, came down into this world and fully met all the circumstances of man's sin, in ever possible form; and, by submitting to death, destroyed him who had the power thereof, and, in resurrection, becomes the life and righteousness of all who believe in His most excellent name.

Now, it is impossible that Satan can touch this life, either in its source, its channel, its power, heaven its sphere, or its duration. God is its source; a risen Christ, its channel, The Holy Ghost, its power; heaven, its sphere; and eternity its duration. Hence, therefore, as might to one possessing this wondrous life, the whole scene is changed; and while, in one sense, it must be said, "in the midst of life we are in death," yet, in another sense it can be said, "in the midst of death we are in life". There is no death in the sphere into which a risen Christ introduces His people. How could there be? Has not he abolished it? It cannot be an abolished and an existing thing at the same time, and to the same people; but God's word tells us it is abolished. -Christ emptied the scene of death, and filled it with life and, therefore, it is not death, but glory that lies before the believer, death is behind him for ever. As to the future, it is all glory, cloudless glory. True, it may be his lot to "fall asleep" — to "sleep in Jesus" — but that is not death, but "life in earnest." The mere matter of departing to be with Christ cannot alter the specific hope of the believer, which is to meet Christ in the air, to be with Him, and like Him, for ever.

Of this we have a very beautiful exemplification in Enoch, who forms the only exception to the rule of Gen. 5. The rule is, "he died;" the exception is, "he should not see death." "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." (Heb. 11: 5.) Enoch was "the seventh from Adam;" and it is deeply interesting to find, that death was not suffered to triumph over "the seventh;" but that, in his case, God interfered, and made him a trophy of His own glorious victory over all the power of death. The heart rejoices, after reading, six times, the sad record, "he died," to find, that the seventh did not die; and when we ask, how was this? the answer is, "by faith." Enoch lived in the faith

of his translation, and walked with God three hundred years. This separated him, practically, from all around. To walk with God must, necessarily, put one outside the sphere of this world's thoughts. Enoch realised this; for, in his day, the spirit of the world was manifested; and then, too, as now, it was opposed to all that was of God. The man of faith felt he had nought to do with the world, save to be a patient witness, therein, of the grace of God, and of coming judgement. The sons of Cain might spend their energies in the vain attempt to improve a cursed world, but Enoch found a better world and lived in the power of it.\* His faith was not given him to improve the world, but to walk with God.

{\*It is very evident, that Enoch knew nothing whatever about of "making the best of both worlds." To him there was but one world. Thus it should be with us }

And, oh! how much is involved in these three words, "walked with God!" What separation and self-denial! what holiness and moral purity! what grace and gentleness what humility and tenderness! and yet, what zeal energy? What patience and long-suffering! and yet what faithfulness and uncompromising decision! To walk with God comprehends everything within the range of the divine life, whether active or passive. It involves the knowledge of God's character as He has revealed it. It involves, too, the intelligence of the relationship in which we stand to Him. It is not a mere living by rules and regulations! nor laying down plans of action; nor in resolutions to go hither and thither to do this or that. To walk with God is far more than any or all of these things. Moreover, it will sometimes carry us right athwart the thoughts of men, even of our brethren, if they are not themselves walking with God. It may, sometimes, bring against us the charge of doing too much; at other times, of doing too little; but the faith that enables one to "walk with God," enables him also to attach the proper value thoughts of man.

Thus we have, in Abel and Enoch, most valuable instruction as to the sacrifice on which faith rests; and, as to the prospect which hope now anticipates; while, at the same time, "the walk with God" takes in all the details of actual life which lie between those two points. Lord will give grace and glory;" and between the grace that has been, and the glory that is to be, revealed, there is the happy assurance, that "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." (Psalm 84: 11)

It, has been remarked, that "the cross and the coming of the Lord form the termini of the Church's existence on earth," and these termini are prefigured in the sacrifice of Abel, and the translation of Enoch. The Church knows her entire justification through the death and resurrection of Christ, and she waits for the day, when He shall come and receive her to Himself. She, "through the Spirit, waits for the hope of righteousness by faith." (Gal. 5: 5) She does not wait for righteousness, inasmuch as she, by grace, has that already; but she waits for the hope which properly belongs to the condition into which she has been introduced.

My reader should seek to be clear as to this. Some expositors of prophetic truth, from not seeing the Church's specific place, portion, and hope, have made sad mistakes. They have, in effect, cast so many dark clouds and thick mists around "the bright and morning star," which is the proper hope of the Church, that many saints, at the present moment, seem unable to rise above the hope of the God-fearing remnant of Israel, which is to see "the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings." (Mal. 4) Nor is this all. Very many have been deprived of the moral power of the hope of Christ's appearing, by being taught to look for various events and circumstances previous to the moment of His manifestation to the Church. The restoration of the Jews, the development of Nebuchadnezzar's image, the revelation of the man of sin — all these things, it is maintained, must take place ere Christ comes. That this is not true, might be proved from numerous passages of New Testament scripture, were this the fitting place to adduce them.

The Church, like Enoch, will be taken away from the evil around, and the evil to come. Enoch was not left to see the world's evil rise to a head, and the judgement of God poured forth upon it. He saw not the fountains of the great deep broken up," nor "the windows of heaven opened." He was taken away before any of these things occurred; and he stands before eye of faith as a beautiful figure of those," who shall not all sleep, but shall all be changed, in a moment in the twinkling of an eye." (1 Cor. 15: 51, 52) Translation, not death, was the hope of Enoch; and, as to the Church's hope, it is thus briefly expressed by the apostle, "To wait for the Son from heaven." Thess. 1: 10) This, the simplest and most unlettered Christian can understand and enjoy. Its power, too be can, in some measure, experience and manifest. He may not be able to study prophecy very deeply, but he can, blessed be God, taste the blessedness, the reality, the comfort, the power, the elevating and separating virtue of that celestial hope, which properly belongs to him as a member of that heavenly body, the Church; which hope is not merely to see "the Sun of Righteousness" how blessed soever that may be in its place, but to see "the bright and morning star." (Rev. 2: 28.) And as in the natural world, the morning star is seen, by those who watch for it, before the sun rises, so Christ, as the morning star, will be seen by the Church, before the remnant of Israel can behold the beams of the Sun.

### **Genesis 6 — Genesis 9**

We have, now, arrived at a deeply-important and strongly-marked division of our book. Enoch has passed off the scene. His walk, as a stranger on earth, has terminated in his translation to heaven. He was taken away before human evil had risen to a head, and, therefore, before the divine judgement had been poured out. How little influence his course and translation had upon the world, is manifest from the first two verses of chapter 6. "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose."

The mingling of that which is of God with that which is of man, is a special form of evil, and a very effectual engine, in Satan's hand, for marring the testimony of Christ on the earth. This mingling may frequently wear the appearance of something very desirable; it may often look like a wider promulgation of that which is of God — a fuller and a more vigorous outgoing of a divine influence — a something to be rejoiced in rather than to be deplored: but our judgement as to this will depend entirely upon the point of view from which it is contemplated. If we look at it in the light of God's presence, we cannot possibly imagine, that an advantage is gained when the people of God mingle themselves with the children of this world; or when the truth of God is corrupted by human admixture. Such is not the divine method of promulgating truth, advancing the interests of those, who ought to occupy the place of witnesses for Him on the earth. Separation from all evil is God's principle; and this principle can never be infringed without serious damage to the truth.

In the narrative now before us, we see that the union of the sons of God with the daughters of men led to the most disastrous consequences. True, the fruit of that union seemed exceedingly fair, in man's judgement, as we read, "the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown;" yet, God's judgement was quite different. He seeth not as man seeth. His thoughts are not as ours. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Such was man's condition before God — "evil *only*" — "evil continually." So much for the mingling of the holy with the profane. Thus it must ever be. If the holy seed will not maintain its purity, all must be forfeited as regards testimony on the earth. Satan's first effort was to frustrate God's purpose by putting the holy seed to death, and when that failed; he sought to gain his end by corrupting it.

Now it is of the deepest moment, that my reader should clearly understand the aim, the character, and the result of this union between "the sons of God" and the daughters of men. There is great danger, at the present day of compromising truth for the sake of union. This should be carefully guarded against. There can be no union attained at the expense of truth. The true Christian's motto should ever be — "maintain truth at all cost; if union can be promoted in this way, so much the better, but maintain the truth." The principle of expediency, on the contrary may be thus enunciated, — "promote union at all cost; if truth can be maintained as well, so much the better, but promote union." This latter principle can only be carried out at the expense of all that is divine in the way of testimony.\* There can, evidently, be no true testimony where truth is forfeited; and hence, in the case of the antediluvian world, we see that the unhallowed union between the holy and the profane-between that which was divine and that which was human, only had the effect of bringing the evil to a head, and then God's judgement was poured out.

{\*We should ever bear in mind, that "the wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable." (James 3: 17) The wisdom which is from beneath would put "peaceable" first, and, therefore, it can never be pure.}

"The Lord said, I will destroy man." Nothing less would do. There must be the entire destruction of that which had corrupted God's way on the earth. "The mighty men, and men of renown," must all be swept away, without distinction. "all flesh" must be set aside, as utterly unfit for God. "The end of all flesh is come before me." It was not merely the end of some flesh; no, it was all corrupt, in the sight of Jehovah — all irrecoverably bad. It had been tried, and found wanting; and the Lord announces His remedy to Noah in these words, "Make thee an ark of gopher wood."

Thus was Noah put in possession of God's thoughts about the scene around him. The effect of the word of God was to lay bare the roots of all that which man's eye might rest upon with complacency and pride. The human heart might swell with pride, and the bosom heave with emotion, as the eye ran down along the brilliant ranks of men of art, men of skill, "men of might "men of renown." The sound of the harp and the organ might send a thrill through the whole soul, while at the same time, the ground was cultivated, and man's necessities were provided for in such a way as to contradict every thought in reference to approaching judgement. But oh I those solemn words, "*I will destroy*"; What a heavy gloom they would necessarily cast over the glittering scene! Could not man's genius invent some way of escape? Could not "the mighty man deliver himself by his much strength?" Alas! no: there was ONE way of escape, but it was revealed to faith, not to sight, not to reason, not to imagination.

By faith Noah, being *warned of God*, of things *not seen as yet*, moved with fear (*eulabetheis*) prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is of faith; (Heb 11: 7) The word of God brings His light to shine upon all that by which man's heart is deceived. It removes completely the gilding with which the serpent covers a vain, deceitful, passing world over which hangs the sword of divine judgement. But it is only faith that will be "warned of God," when the things of which He speaks are "not seen as yet; Nature is governed by what it sees — it is governed by it's senses, Faith is governed by the pure word of God; (inestimable treasure in this dark world!)" This gives stability, let outward appearances be what they may. When God spoke to Noah of judgement impending, there was no sign of it. It was "not seen as yet;" but the word of God made it a present reality to the heart that was enabled to mix that word with faith. Faith does not wait to see a thing, ere it believes, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

All that the man of faith needs, is to know that God has spoken; this imparts perfect certainty to

his soul. "Thus saith the Lord," settles everything. A single line of Sacred Scripture is an abundant answer to all the reasonings and all the imaginations of the human mind; and when one has the word of God as the basis of his convictions, he may calmly stand against the full tide of human opinion and prejudice. It was the word of God which sustained the heart of Noah during his long course of service; and the same word has sustained the millions of God's saints, from that day to this, in the face of the world's contradiction. Hence, we cannot set too high a value upon the word of God. Without it, all is dark uncertainty; with it, all is light and peace. Where it shines, it marks out for the man of God a sure and blessed path; where it shines not, one is left to wander amid the bewildering mazes of human tradition. How could Noah have "preached righteousness," for 120 years, if he had not had the word of God as the ground of his preaching? How could he have withstood the scoffs and sneers of an infidel world? How could he have persevered in testifying of "judgement to come," when not a cloud appeared on the world's horizon? Impossible. The word of God was the ground on which he stood, and "the Spirit of Christ" enabled him to occupy, with holy decision, that elevated and immovable ground.

And now, my beloved Christian reader, what else have we wherewith to stand, in service for Christ, in an evil day, like the present? Surely, nothing; nor do we want ought else. The word of God, and the Holy Ghost by whom, alone, that word can be understood, applied or used, are all we want to equip us perfectly—to furnish us thoroughly, "to all good works," under whatever head those works may range themselves. (2 Tim 3: 16, 17) What rest for the heart? What relief from all Satan's imagery, and man's imaginations! God's pure, incorruptible, eternal word May our hearts adore Him for the inestimable treasure "Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually;" but God's word as the simple resting-place of Noah's heart.

"God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me.....Make thee an ark of gopher wood. Here was man's ruin, and God's remedy. Man had been allowed to pursue his career to the utmost limit, to bring his principles and ways to maturity. The leaven had worked and filled the mass. The evil had reached its climax. "All flesh" had become so bad that it could not be worse; wherefore nothing remained but for God to destroy it totally; and, at the same time, to save all those who should be found, according to His eternal counsels, linked with "the eighth person" — the only righteous man then existing. This brings out the doctrine of the cross, in a very vivid manner. There we find, at once, God's judgement of nature with all its evil; and, at the same time, the revelation of His saving grace, in all its fullness, and in all its perfect adaptation to those who have really reached the lowest point of their moral condition, as judged by Himself. (The day-spring from on high hath visited us." (Luke 1: 78) Where? Just *where we are*, as sinners. God has come down to the very deepest depths of our ruin. There is not a point in all the sinner's state to which the light of that blessed day-spring has not penetrated; but, if it has thus penetrated, it must, by virtue of what it is, reveal our true character. The light must judge everything contrary to itself; but, while it does so, it also "gives the knowledge of salvation through the remission of sins." The cross, while it reveals God's judgement upon" all flesh," reveals His salvation for the lost and guilty sinner. Sin is perfectly judged — the sinner perfectly saved — God perfectly revealed, and perfectly glorified, in the cross.

If my reader will turn, for a moment, to the First Epistle of Peter, he will find much light thrown upon this entire subject. At the third chapter, verse 18, we read, "for Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which (Spirit) he went and preached (through Noah) to the spirits (now) in prison; which once were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, wherein few, that is eight souls, were saved through water (*di udatos*); to which the anti type (*antitupon*) baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, (as by

water,)\* but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who, having gone into heaven, is at the right hand of God, angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him."

{\*It is impossible to over-estimate the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, as seen in the way in which He treats the ordinance of baptism, in the above remarkable passage. We know the evil use which has been made of baptism, — we know the false place it has gotten in the thoughts of many, — we know how that the efficacy, which belongs only to the blood of Christ, has been attributed to the water of baptism, — we know how the regenerating grace of the Holy Ghost has been transferred to water baptism; and, with the with the knowledge of all this, we cannot but be struck with the way in which the Spirit of God guards the subject, by stating, that it is not the mere washing away of the filth of the flesh, as by water, But the answer of a good conscience toward God," which "answer" we get, not by baptism, how important soever it may be, as an ordinance of the kingdom, but "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."

Baptism, I need hardly say, as an ordinance of divine institution, and in its divinely-appointed place, is most important and deeply significant; but when we find men, in one way or another, putting the figure in place of the substance, we are bound to expose the work of Satan by the light of the word of God.}

This is a most important passage. It sets the doctrine of the ark and its connection with the death of Christ very distinctly before us. As in the deluge, so in the death Christ, all the billows and waves of divine judgement passed over that which, in itself, was without sin. The creation was buried beneath the flood of Jehovah's righteous wrath; and the Spirit of Christ exclaims, "All thy billows and thy waves have gone over me." (Ps. 42: 7) Here is a profound truth for the heart and conscience of a believer. "All God's billows and waves" passed over the spotless Person of the Lord Jesus, when He hung upon the cross; and, as a most blessed consequence, not one of them remains to pass over the person of the believer. At Calvary we see, in good truth, "the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven opened." "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts." Christ drank the cup, and endured the wrath perfectly. He put Himself, judicially, under the full weight of all His people's liabilities, and gloriously discharged them. The belief of this gives settled peace to the soul. If the Lord Jesus has met all that could be against us, if He has removed out of the way every hindrance, if He has put away sin, if He has exhausted the cup of wrath and judgement on our behalf, if He has cleared the prospect of every cloud, should we not enjoy settled peace? Unquestionably. Peace is our unalienable portion. To us belong the deep and untold blessedness, and holy security, which redeeming love can bestow on the righteous ground of Christ's absolutely accomplished work.

Had Noah any anxiety about the billows of divine judgement? None whatever. How could he? He knew that "all" had been poured forth, while he himself was raised, by those very outpoured billows, into a region of cloudless peace. He floated in peace on that very water by which "all flesh" was judged. He was put. beyond the reach of judgement; and put there, too, by God Himself. He might have said, in the triumphant language of Romans 8, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He had been invited in by Jehovah Himself, as we read in Genesis 7: 1, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark;" and when he had taken his place there, we read, "*the Lord shut him in*" Here assuredly, was full and perfect security for all within. Jehovah kept the door, and no one could go in or out without him. There was both a window and a door to the ark. The Lord secured, with His own omnipotent hand, the door, and left Noah the window from which he might look upward to the place from whence all the judgement had emanated, and see that no judgement remained for him. The saved family could only look *upward*, because the window was "above" (Gen. 6: 16) They could not see the waters of

judgement, nor the death and desolation which those waters had caused. God's salvation — the "gopher wood," stood between them and all these things. They had only to gaze upward into a cloudless heaven, the eternal dwelling-place of the One who had condemned the world, and saved them.

Nothing can more fully express the believer's perfect security in Christ than those words, "the Lord shut him in." Who could open what God had shut? None. The family of Noah were as safe as God could make them. There was no power, angelic, human, or diabolical, which could possibly burst open the door of the ark, and let the waters in. That door was shut by the selfsame hand that had opened the windows of heaven, and broken up the fountains of the great deep. Thus Christ is spoken of as the One "that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth." (Rev. 3: 7) He also holds in His hand "the keys of hell and of death." (Rev. 1: 18) None can enter the portals of the grave, nor go forth there from, without him. He has "all power in heaven and on earth." He is head over all things to the Church," and in Him the believer is perfectly secure. (Matt. 28: 18; Eph. 1: 22) Who could touch Noah? What wave could penetrate that ark which was "pitched within and without with pitch?" Just so now, who can touch those who have, by faith, retreated into the shadow of the cross? Every enemy has been met and silenced — yes, silenced for ever. The death of Christ has triumphantly answered every demur; while, at the same time, His resurrection is the satisfactory declaration of God's infinite complacency in that work which is, at once, the basis of His righteousness in receiving us, and of our confidence in drawing nigh unto Him.

Hence, therefore, the door of our ark being secured, by the hand of God Himself, nothing remains for us but to enjoy the window; or, in other words, to walk in happy and holy communion with Him, who has saved us from coming wrath, and made us heirs and expectants of coming glory. Peter speaks of those, who "are blind, and cannot see afar off and have forgotten that they were purged from their old sins." (2 Peter 1: 9.) This is a lamentable condition for any to be in, and it is the sure result of not cultivating diligent, prayerful communion with Him, who has eternally shut us in in Christ.

Let us, now, ere we proceed further with Noah's history, glance, for a little, at the condition of those, to whom he had so long preached righteousness. We have been looking at the *saved*, let us now look at the *lost*, we have been thinking of those *within* the ark, let us now think of those *without*. No doubt, many an anxious look would be cast after the vessel of mercy, as it rose with the water; but, alas! "the door was shut" the day of grace was over — the time of testimony closed, and that for ever, so far as they were concerned. The same hand which had shut Noah in, had shut them out, and it was as impossible for those without to get in, as it was for those within to get out. The former were irrecoverably lost; the latter, effectually saved. The long-suffering of God, and the testimony of His servant had both been slighted. Present things had engrossed them. "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, and were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all." (Luke 17: 26, 27) There was nothing wrong in any of these things, abstractedly looked at. The wrong was not in the things done, but in the doers of them. Every one of them might be done in the fear of the Lord, and to the glory of His Holy name, were they only done in faith. But, alas! they were not so done. The word of God was rejected. He told of judgement; but they did not believe. He spoke of sin and ruin; but they were not convinced. He spoke of a remedy; but they would not give heed. They went on with their own plans and speculations, and had no room for God. They acted as if the earth belonged to them, by a lease, for ever. They forgot that there was a clause of surrender. They thought not of that solemn "*until*." God was shut out. "Every imagination of the thoughts of their heart was only evil continually;" and hence, they could do nothing right. They thought, spake, and acted for themselves. They did their own pleasure, and forgot God.

And, my reader, remember the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, how He said, "as it was in the days

of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man." Some would have us to believe, that ere the Son of man appears in the clouds of heaven, this earth shall be covered, from pole to pole, with a fair mantle of righteousness. They would teach us to look for a reign of righteousness and peace, as the result of agencies now in operation; but the brief passage just quoted cuts up by the roots, in a moment, all such vain and delusive expectations. How was it in the days of Noah? Did righteousness cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea? Was God's truth dominant? Was the earth filled with the knowledge of the Lord? Scripture replies, "the earth was filled with violence." "ALL flesh had corrupted his way on the earth." "The earth also was corrupt before God." Well, then, "*so shall it be* in the days of the Son of man." This is plain enough. "Righteousness" and "violence" are not very like each other. Neither is there any similarity between universal wickedness and universal peace. It only needs a heart subject to the Word, and freed from the influence of preconceived opinions, in order to understand the true character of the days immediately preceding "the coming of the Son of man." Let not my reader be led astray. Let him reverently bow to Scripture. Let him look at the condition of the world, "in the days before the flood;" and let him bear in mind, that "*as*" it was then, "*so*" shall it be at the close of this present period. This is most simple — most conclusive. There was nothing like a state of universal righteousness and peace then, neither shall there be anything like it by and by.

No doubt, man displayed abundant energy in making the world a comfortable and an agreeable place for himself; but that was a very different thing from making it a suitable place for God. So, also, at this present time; man is as busy as he can be, in clearing the stones off the pathway of human life, and making it as smooth as possible; but this is not "making straight in the desert a highway for our God;" nor is it making "the rough places smooth," that all flesh may see the salvation of Jehovah. Civilisation prevails; but civilisation is not righteousness. The sweeping and garnishing are going forward; but it is not in order to fit the house for Christ, but for Antichrist. The wisdom of man is put forth in order to cover, with the folds of his own drapery, the blots and blemishes of humanity; but, though covered, they are not removed! They are and will, ere long, break out in more hideous deformity than ever. The painting of vermilion will soon be obliterated, and the carved cedar wood destroyed. The dams, by which man sedulously seeks to stem the torrent of human wretchedness, must soon give way before the overwhelming force thereof. All the efforts to confine the physical, the mental, and the moral degradation of Adams posterity within those enclosures, which human benevolence, if you please, has devised, must, in the sequel, prove abortive. The testimony has gone forth. "The end of all flesh has come before me." It has not come before man; but it has come before God; and, albeit, the voice of the scoffers may be heard, saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For, since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation;" yet the moment is rapidly hastening on, when those scoffers will get their answer. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." (2 Peter 3: 4-10) This, my reader, is the answer to the intellectual scoffs of the children of this world, but not to the spiritual affections and expectations of the children of God. These latter, thank God, have a totally different prospect, even to meet the Bridegroom in the air, before evil shall have reached its culminating point, and, therefore, before the divine judgement shall be poured forth thereon. The Church of God looks not for the burning up of the world, but for the arising of "the bright and morning Star."

Now, in whatever way we look at the future, from whatever point of view we contemplate it, whether the object, which presents itself to the soul's vision be the Church in glory, or the world in flames, the coming of the Bridegroom, or the breaking in of the thief, the morning Star, or the scorching sun, the translation, or the deluge, we must feel the unspeakable importance of attending to

God's present testimony in grace, to lost sinners. "Now is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. 6: 2) "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (2 Cor. 5: 19) He is reconciling now, He will be judging by and by; it is all grace now; it will be all wrath then; He is pardoning sin now, through the cross; He will punish it then, in hell, and that for ever. He is sending out a message of purest, richest, freest grace. He is telling sinners of an accomplished redemption through the precious sacrifice of Christ. He is declaring that all is done. He is waiting to be gracious. "The long-suffering of our Lord is salvation." "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3) All this makes the present moment one of peculiar solemnity. Unmingled grace declared! — unmingled wrath impending. How solemn! How deeply solemn!

And, then, with what profound interest should we mark the unfolding of the divine purposes! Scripture sheds its light upon these things; and such a light, too, that we need not, as another has said," vacantly stare on passing events, as those, who know not where they are, and whither they are going." We should accurately know our bearings. We should fully understand the direct tendency of all the principles now at work. We should be well aware of the vortex, toward which all the tributary streams are rapidly flowing on. Men dream of a golden age; they promise themselves a millennium of the arts and science; they feed upon the thought, that "tomorrow shall be as this day, and more abundant." But, oh! how utterly vain are all those thoughts, dreams, and promises. Faith can see the clouds gathering thickly around the world's horizon. Judgement is coming. The day of wrath is at hand. The door will soon be shut. The "strong delusion" will soon set in, with terrible intensity. How needful, then, it is, to raise a warning voice — to seek, by faithful testimony, to counteract man's pitiable self-complacency. True, in so doing, we shall be exposed to the charge which Ahab brought against Micaiah, of always prophesying evil: but no matter for that. Let us prophesy what the word of God prophesies, and let us do this simply for the purpose of "persuading men." The Word of God only removes from beneath our feet a hollow foundation, for the purpose of placing instead thereof, a foundation which can never be moved. It only takes away from us a delusive hope, to give us, instead, "a hope which maketh not ashamed." It takes away "a broken reed," to give us "the rock of ages." It sets aside "a broken cistern, which can hold no water," to set in its place "the fountain of living waters." This is true love. It is God's love. He will not cry "peace, peace, when there is no peace;" nor "daub with untempered mortar." He would have the sinner's heart resting; sweetly in His own eternal Ark of safety, enjoying a present communion with Himself, and fondly cherishing; the hope, that, when all the ruin, the desolation, and the judgement, have passed away, it shall rest with him in a restored creation.

We shall now return to Noah, and contemplate him in a new position. we have seen him building the ark, we have seen him in the ark, and we shall now view him going forth of the ark, and taking his place in the new world.\* "And God remembered Noah." The strange work of judgement being over, the saved family, and all in association with them, come into remembrance. "God made a wind to pass over the earth; and the waters assuaged; the fountains also of deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained. The beams of sun now begin to act upon a world that had been baptised with a baptism of judgement. Judgement is God's "strange work." He delights not in, though He is glorified by, it. Blessed be His name, He is ever ready to leave the place of judgement, and enter that of mercy, because He delights in mercy.

{\*I would here mention, for my reader's prayerful consideration, a thought very familiar to the minds of those who have especially given themselves to the study of what is called "dispensational truth." It has reference to Enoch and Noah. The former was taken away, as we have seen. before the

judgement came; whereas the latter was carried through the judgement. Now, it is thought that Enoch is a figure of the Church, who shall be taken away before human evil reaches its climax, and before the divine judgement falls thereon. Noah, on the other hand, is a figure of the remnant of Israel, who shall be brought through the deep waters of affliction. and through the fire of judgement, and led into the full enjoyment of millennial bliss, in virtue of God's everlasting covenant. I may add, that I quite receive this thought in reference to those two Old Testament fathers. I consider that it has the full support of the general scope and analogy of Holy Scripture.}

"And it came to pass, at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made: and he sent forth a raven, which went forth, to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth." The unclean bird made its escape, and found, no doubt, a resting-place on some floating carcass. It sought not the ark again. Not so the dove. "She found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark . . . . and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark: and the dove came in to him, in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf, plucked off." Sweet emblem of the renewed mind, which, amid the surrounding desolation, seeks and finds its rest and portion in Christ; and not only so, but also lays hold of the earnest of the inheritance, and furnishes the blessed proof, that judgement has passed away, and that a renewed earth is coming fully into view. The carnal mind, on the contrary, can rest in anything and everything but Christ. It can feed upon all uncleanness. "The olive leaf" has no attraction for it. It can find all it needs in a scene of death, and hence is not occupied with the thought of a new world and its glories; but the heart, that is taught and exercised by the Spirit of God, can only rest and rejoice in that in which He rests and rejoices. It rests in the Ark of His salvation "until the times of the restitution of all things." May it be thus with you and me, beloved reader; may Jesus be the abiding rest and portion of our hearts, that so we may not seek them in a world which is under the judgement of God. The dove went back to Noah, and waited for his time of rest: and we should ever find our place with Christ, until the time of His exaltation, and glory, in the ages to come. "He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." ALL we want, as to this, is a little patience. May God direct our hearts into His love, and into "the patience of Christ."

"And God spake unto Noah, saying, go forth of the ark." The same God that had said, "make thee an ark," and "come thou into the ark," now says, "go forth of the ark." "And Noah went forth . . . . and builded an altar unto the Lord." ALL is simple obedience. There is the obedience of faith and the worship of faith: both go together. The altar is erected, where, just before, all had been a scene of death and judgement. The ark had borne Noah and his family safely over the waters of judgement. It had carried him from the old into the new world, where he now takes his place as a worshipper.\* And, be it observed, it was "unto the Lord" he erected his altar. Superstition would have worshipped the ark, as being the means of salvation. It is ever the tendency of the heart to displace God by His ordinances. Now, the ark was a very marked and manifest ordinance; but Noah's faith passed beyond the ark to the God of the ark; and, hence, when he stepped out of it, instead of casting back a lingering look at it, or regarding it as an object of worship or veneration, he built an altar unto the Lord, and worshipped Him: and the ark is never heard of again.

{\*It is interesting to look at this entire subject of the ark and deluge in connection with that most important and deeply significant ordinance of baptism. A truly baptised person, that is, one who as the apostle says, "obeys from the heart that type of doctrine to which he is delivered" is one who has passed from the old world into the new, in spirit and principle, and by faith. The water rolls over his person, signifying that his old man is buried, that his place in nature is ignored — that his old nature is entirely set aside; in short, that he is a dead man. When he is plunged beneath the water, expression is given to the fact, that his name, place and existence, in nature, are put out of sight; that the flesh, with

all that pertained thereto, its sins, its iniquities, its liabilities, is buried in the grave of Christ, and never can come into God's sight again.

Again when he rises up out of the water, expression is given to the truth that he only comes up as the possessor of a new life, even the resurrection of Christ. If Christ had not been raised from the dead, the believer could not come up out of the water, but should remain buried beneath its surface, as the simple expression of the place which righteously belongs to nature. But inasmuch as Christ rose from the dead in the power of a new life, having entirely put away our sins, we also come up out of the water; and, in so doing set, forth the fact that we are put, by the grace of God, and through the death of Christ, in full possession of a new life to which divine righteousness inseparably attaches. "We are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (See Rom 6 and Col 2. *passim*. Comp. also 1 Peter 3: 18-22) All this makes the institution of baptism one of immense importance, and pregnant with meaning}

This teaches us a very simple, but, at the same time, a very seasonable lesson. The moment the heart lets slip the reality of God Himself, there is no placing a limit to its declension; it is on the highway to the grossest forms of idolatry. In the judgement of faith, an ordinance is only valuable as it conveys God, in living power, to the soul; that is to say, so long as faith can enjoy Christ therein, according to His own appointment. Beyond this, it is worth just nothing; and if it, in the smallest degree, comes between the heart and His precious work and His glorious Person, it ceases to be an ordinance of God, and becomes an instrument of the devil. In the judgement of superstition, the ordinance is everything, and God is shut out; and the name of God is only made use of to exalt the ordinance, and give it a deep hold of the human heart, and a mighty influence over the human mind. Thus it was that the children of Israel worshipped the brazen serpent. That, which had once been a channel of blessing to them, because used of God, became, when their hearts had departed from the Lord, an object of superstitious veneration; and Hezekiah had to break it in pieces, and call it "a piece of brass. In itself it was only a "Nehushtan," but, when used of God, it was a means of rich blessing. Now, faith owned it to be what divine revelation said it was; but superstition, throwing, as ever does, divine revelation overboard, lost the real purpose of God in the thing, and actually made a god of the thing itself. (See 2 Kings 18: 4)

And, my reader, is there not a deep lesson in all this for the present age? I am convinced there is. We live in an age of ordinances. The atmosphere, which enwraps the professing church, is impregnated with the elements of a traditionary religion, which robs the soul of Christ and His divinely full salvation. It is not that human traditions boldly deny that there is such a person as Christ, or such a thing as the cross of Christ: were they to do so, the eyes of many might be opened. However, it is not thus. The evil is of a far more invidious and dangerous character. Ordinances are added to Christ and the work of Christ, The sinner is not saved by Christ alone, but by Christ and ordinances. Thus he is robbed of Christ altogether; for it will, assuredly be found that *Christ and ordinances* will prove in the sequel, to be *ordinances, and not Christ*. This is a solemn consideration for all who stand up for a religion of ordinances. "If ye be circumcised Christ will profit you nothing." It must be Christ wholly, or not at all. The devil persuades men, that they are honouring Christ when they make much of His ordinances. whereas, all the while, he knows full well, that they are, in reality, setting Christ entirely aside, and deifying the ordinance. I would only repeat here a remark which I have made elsewhere, namely, that superstition makes *everything* of the ordinance; infidelity, and mysticism, make *nothing* of it; faith uses to divine appointment.

But I have already extended this section far beyond the limit which I had prescribed for it. I shall,

therefore, close it with a hasty glance at the contents of Gen. 9. In it we have the new covenant, under which creation was set, after the deluge, together with the token of that covenant. "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." Observe, God's command to man, on his entrance into the restored earth, was to refill that earth; not parts of the earth, but the earth. He desired to have men dispersed abroad, over the face of the world, and not relying upon their own concentrated energies. We shall see, in Gen. 11, how man neglected all this.

The fear of man is now lodged in the heart of every other creature. Henceforth the service, rendered by the inferior orders of creation to man, must be the constrained result of "fear and dread." In life, and in death, the lower animals were to be at the service of man. ALL creation is delivered, by God's everlasting covenant, from the fear of a second deluge. Judgement is never again to take that shape. "The world that then was, being overflowed with *water*, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto *fire* against the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men." The earth was once purged with water; and it will be again purged by fire; and in this second purgation none will escape, save those, who have fled for refuge to Him, who has passed through the deep waters of death, and met the fire of divine judgement.

"And God said, This is the token of the covenant ..I do set my bow in the cloud.....and I will remember my covenant," The whole creation rests, as to its exemption from a second deluge, on the eternal stability of God's covenant, of which the bow is the token; and it is happy to bear in mind, that when the bow appears, the eye of God rests upon it; and man is cast not upon his own imperfect and most uncertain memory, but upon God's. "I" says God, "Will remember." "How sweet to think of what God will, and what He will not remember! He will remember His own covenant, but He will not remember His people's sins. The cross, which ratifies the former, puts away the latter. The belief of this gives peace to the troubled and uneasy conscience.

"And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that *the bow shall be seen in the cloud.*" Beautiful and most expressive emblem! The beams of the sun, reflected from that which threatens judgement, tranquillise the heart, as telling of God's covenant, God's salvation, and God's remembrance. Precious, most precious sunbeams, deriving additional beauty from the very cloud which reflects them! How forcibly does this bow in the cloud remind us of Calvary. There a cloud indeed — a dark, thick, heavy cloud of judgement discharging itself upon the sacred head of the Lamb of God - a cloud so dark, that even at mid-day "there was darkness over all the earth." But, blessed be God, faith discerns, in that heaviest cloud that ever gathered, the most brilliant and beautiful bow that ever appeared, for it sees the bright beams of God's eternal love darting through the awful gloom, and reflected in the cloud. It hears, too, the words, "it is finished," issuing from amid the darkness, and in those words it recognises the perfect ratification of God's everlasting counsels, not only as to creation, but the tribes of Israel and the Church of God.

The last paragraph of this chapter presents a humiliating spectacle. The lord of creation fails to govern himself: "And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard; and he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent." What a condition for Noah, the only righteous man, the preacher of righteousness, to be found in. Alas! what is man? Look at him where you will, and you see only failure. In Eden, he fails; in the restored earth, he fails; in Canaan, he fails; in the Church, he fails; in the presence of millennial bliss and glory, he fails. He fails everywhere, and in all things: there is no good thing in him. Let his advantages be ever so great, his privileges ever so vast, his position ever so desirable, he can only exhibit failure and sin.

We must, however, look at Noah in two ways, namely, as a *type*, and as a *man*; and while the type

is full of beauty and meaning, the man is full of sin and folly; yet the Holy Ghost has written these words, "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation; and Noah walked with God." Divine grace had covered all his sins, and clothed his person with a spotless robe of righteousness. Though Noah exposed his nakedness, God did not see it, for He looked not at him, in the weakness of his own condition, but in the full power of divine and everlasting righteousness. Hence we may see how entirely astray — how totally alienated from God and His thoughts, Ham was, in the course he adopted; he evidently knew nothing of the blessedness of the man, whose iniquity is forgiven, and his sin covered; on the contrary, Shem and Jepheth exhibit, in their conduct, a fine specimen of the divine method of dealing with human nakedness; wherefore they inherit a blessing, whereas Ham inherits a curse.

## Genesis 10

This section of our book records the generations of Noah's three sons, noticing, especially, Nimrod, the founder of the kingdom of Babel, or Babylon, a name which occupies a very prominent place on the page of inspiration. Babylon is a well-known name — a well known influence. From Genesis 10 to Revelation 18 Babylon, again and again, appears before us, and always as something decidedly hostile to those who occupy, for the time being, the position of public testimony for God. Not that we are to look upon the Babylon of Old Testament scripture as identical with the Babylon of the apocalypse. By no means. I believe the former is a city; the latter, a system; But both the city and system exert a powerful influence against God's people. Hardly had Israel entered upon the wars of Canaan when "a Babylonish garment" brought defilement and sorrow, defeat and confusion, into the host. This is the earliest record of Babylon's pernicious influence upon the people of God; but every student of Scripture is aware of the place which Babylon gets throughout the entire history of Israel.

This would not be the place to notice, in detail, the various passages in which this city is introduced. I would only remark, here, that whenever God has a corporate witness on the earth, Satan has a Babylon to mar and corrupt that witness. When God connects His name with a city on the earth, then Babylon takes the form of a city; and when God connects His name with the Church, then Babylon takes the form of a corrupt religious system, called "the great whore," "the mother of abominations," &c. In a word, Satan's Babylon is always seen as the instrument moulded and fashioned by his hand, for the purpose of counteracting the divine operations, whether in Israel of old, or the Church now. Throughout the Old Testament Israel and Babylon are seen, as it were, in opposite scales: when Israel is up, Babylon is down; and when Babylon is up, Israel is down. Thus, when Israel had utterly failed, as Jehovah's witness, "the king of Babylon broke his bones," and swallowed him up. The vessels of the house of God, which ought to have remained in the city of Jerusalem, were carried away to the city of Babylon. But Isaiah, in his sublime prophecy, leads us onward to the opposite of all this. He presents, in most magnificent strains, a picture, in which Israel's star is in the ascendant, and Babylon entirely sunk. "And it shall come to pass in the day that the Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve, that thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! . . . since *thou* art laid down, no *hewer* is come up against *us*." (Isa. 14: 3-8.)

Thus much as to the Babylon of the Old Testament. Then, as to the Babylon of Revelation, my reader has only to turn to Rev. 17 and Rev. 18 to see her character and end. She is presented in marked contrast with the bride, the Lamb's wife; and as to her end, she is cast as a great millstone into the sea; after which we have the marriage of the Lamb, — with all its accompanying bliss and glory.

However, I could not attempt to pursue this most interesting subject here: I have merely glanced at it in connection with the name of Nimrod. I feel assured that my reader will find himself amply

repaid, for any trouble he may take in the close examination of all those scriptures, in which the name of Babylon is introduced. We shall now return to our chapter.

"And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a *mighty one in the earth*. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, *in the land of Shinar*." Here, then, we have the character of the founder of Babylon. He was "a mighty one *in the earth*" — "a mighty hunter before the Lord." Such was the origin of Babylon; and its character, throughout the entire book of God, remarkably corresponds therewith. It is always seen as a mighty influence in the earth, acting in positive antagonism to everything which owes its origin to heaven; and it is not until this Babylon has been totally abolished, that the cry is heard, amid the hosts above, "Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" Then all Babylon's mighty hunting will be over for ever, whether it be its hunting of wild beasts, to subdue them; or its hunting of souls, to destroy them. ALL its might, and all its glory, all its pomp and pride, its wealth and luxury, its light and joy, its glitter and glare, its powerful attractions and wide-spread influence, shall have passed away for ever. She shall be swept with the besom of destruction, and plunged in the darkness, the horror and desolation, of an everlasting night. "How long, O Lord?"

### Genesis 11

This is a chapter of very deep interest to the spiritual mind. It records two great facts, namely, the building of Babel, and the call of Abraham; or, in other words, man's effort to provide for himself, and God's provision made known to faith; man's attempt to establish himself *in the earth*, and God's calling a man *out of it*, to find his portion and his home *in heaven*.

"And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there..... And they said, Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." The human heart ever seeks a name, a portion, and a centre in the earth. It knows nothing of aspirations after heaven, heaven's God, or heaven's glory. Left to itself, it will ever and find its objects in this lower world; ever "build beneath the skies." It needs God's call, God's revelation, and God's power, to lift the heart above this present world, for man is a grovelling creature, alienated from heaven, and allied to earth. In the scene now before us, there is no acknowledgement no looking up to, or waiting on, Him; nor was it the thought of the human heart to set up a place in which God might dwell — to gather materials for the purpose of building a habitation for Him — alas! no; His name is never once mentioned. To make a name for himself was man's object on the plain of Shinar; and such has been his object ever since. Whether we contemplate man on the plain of Shinar, or on the banks of the Tiber, we find him to be the same self-seeking, self-exalting, God-excluding creature, throughout. There is a melancholy consistency in all his purposes his principles, and his ways; he ever seeks to shut out God, and exalt himself.

Now, in what light soever we view this Babel confederacy, it is most instructive to see in it the early display of man's genius and energies regardless of God. In looking down along the stream of human history, we may easily perceive a marked tendency to confederacy or association. Man seeks, for the most part to compass his great ends in this way. Whether it be in the way of Philanthropy, Religion, or Politics, nothing can be done without an association of men regularly organised. It is well to see this principle — well to mark its incipient working — to see the earliest model which the page of inspiration affords of a human association, as exhibited on the plain of Shinar, in its design, its object, its attempt, its overthrow. If we look around us, at the present moment, we see the whole scene filled

with associations. To name them were useless, for they are as numerous as are the purposes of the human heart. But it is important to mark, that the first of all these was the Shinar association, for the establishment of the human interests, and the exaltation of the human name — objects which may well be set in competition with any that engage the attention of this enlightened and civilised age. But, in the judgement of faith, there is one grand defect, namely, God is shut out; and to attempt to exalt man, without God, is to exalt him to a dizzy height, only that he may be dashed down into hopeless confusion, and irretrievable ruin. The Christian should only know one association, and that is, the Church of the living God, incorporated by the Holy Ghost, who came down from heaven as the witness of Christ's glorification, to baptise believers into one body, and constitute them God's dwelling-place. Babylon is the very opposite of this, in every particular; and she becomes at the close, as we know, "the habitation of devils." (See Rev. 18)

"And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city." Such was the end of man's first association. Thus it will be to the end, "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces..... gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces." (Isa. 8: 9) How different it is when God associates men! In the second chapter of Acts, we see the blessed One coming down, in infinite grace, to meet man, in the very circumstances in which his sin had set him. The Holy Ghost enabled the messengers of grace to deliver their message in the very tongue wherein each was born. Precious proof this, that God desired to reach man's heart with the sweet story of grace! The law from the fiery mount was not thus promulgated. When God was telling what man ought to be, He spoke in one tongue; but when He was telling what He Himself was, He spoke in many. Grace broke through the barrier which man's pride and folly had caused to be erected, in order that every man might hear and understand the glad tidings of salvation — the wonderful works of God." And to what end was this? Just to associate men on God's ground, round God's centre, and on God's principles. It was to give them, in reality, one language, one centre, one object, one hope, one life. It was to gather them in such a way as that they never should be scattered or confounded again; to give them a name and a place which should endure for ever; to build for them a tower and city which should not only have their top reaching to heaven, but their imperishable foundation laid in heaven, by the omnipotent hand of God Himself. It was to gather them around the glorious Person of a risen and highly exalted Christ, and unite them all in one grand design of magnifying and adoring Him.

If my reader will turn to Revelation 7, he will find, at the close thereof, "ALL nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," standing round the Lamb; and, with one voice, ascribing all praise to Him. Thus the three scriptures may be read in most interesting and profitable connection. In Gen. 11 God gives various tongues as an expression of His *judgement*; in Acts 2 He gives various tongues as an expression of *grace*; and in Rev. 7 we see all those tongues gathered round the Lamb, in *glory*. How much better it is, therefore, to find our place in God's association than in man's! The former ends in glory, the latter in confusion; the former is carried forward by the energy of the Holy Ghost, the latter by the unhallowed energy of fallen man; the former has for its object the exaltation of Christ, the latter has for its object the exaltation of man, in some way or other.

Finally, I would say, that all who sincerely desire to know the true character, object, and issue of human associations, should read the opening verses of Genesis 11; and, on the other hand, all who desire to know the excellency, the beauty, the power, the enduring character of divine association,

should look at that holy, living, heavenly corporation, which is called, in the New Testament, the Church of the living God, the body of Christ, the bride of the Lamb.

May the Lord enable us to look at, and apprehend, all these things, in the power of faith; for only in this way can they profit our souls. Points of truth, however interesting; scriptural knowledge, however profound and extensive; Biblical criticism, however accurate and valuable, may all leave the heart barren, and the affections cold. We want to find Christ in the Word; and, having found Him, to feed on Him by faith: This would impart freshness, unction, power, vitality, energy, and intensity, all of which we deeply stand in need of, in this day of freezing formalism. What is the value of a chilling orthodoxy without a living Christ, known in all His powerful, personal attractions? No doubt, sound doctrine is immensely important. Every faithful servant of Christ will feel himself imperatively called upon to "hold fast the form of sound words." But, after all, a living Christ is the very soul and life, the joints and marrow, the sinews and arteries, the essence and substance of sound doctrine. May we, by the power of the Holy Ghost, see more beauty and preciousness in Christ, and thus be weaned from the spirit and principles of Babylon.

We shall, God willing, consider the remainder of Gen. 11 in the next section.

## **Genesis 12**

The book of Genesis is, for the most part, taken up with the history of seven men, namely, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. There is, I doubt not, a specific line of truth brought out in connection with each of those men. Thus, for example, In Abel we have the great foundation truth of man's coming to God, in the way of atonement — atonement apprehended by faith. In Enoch, we have the proper portion and hope of the heavenly family; while Noah presents to us the destiny of the earthly family. Enoch was taken to heaven before the judgement came; Noah was carried through the judgement into a restored earth. Thus, in each, we have a distinct character of truth, and, as a consequence, a distinct phase of faith. My reader can pursue the subject fully, in connection with Hebrews 11; and I feel assured he will find much interest and profit, in so doing. We shall now proceed with our immediate theme, namely, the call of Abraham.

By comparing Gen. 12: 1, Gen. 11: 31, with Acts 7: 2-4, we learn a truth of immense practical value to the soul. "The Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and *from thy kindred*, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee. (Gen. 12: 1) Such was the communication made to Abraham — a communication of the most definite character, designed of God to act upon Abraham's heart and conscience. "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into a land that I shall show thee. Then went he forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran, (or Haran;) and from thence, *when his father was dead*, he removed him into this land wherein ye now dwell." (Acts 7: 2-4) The result of this communication is given in Gen. 11: 31, "And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, *to go the land of Canaan*: and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there..... and Terah died in Haran."

From all these passages taken together, we learn that ties of nature hindered the full response of Abraham's soul to the call of God. Though called to Canaan, he, nevertheless, tarried at Haran, till nature's was snapped by death, and then, with unimpeded step he made his way to the place to which "the God glory" had called him. This is full of meaning. influences of nature are ever hostile to the full and practical power of "the calling of God." We are sadly prone to take lower ground than that which

the divine call would set before us. It needs great simplicity and integrity of faith to enable the soul to rise to the height of God's thoughts, and to make our own of that which He reveals.

The apostle's prayer (Eph. 1: 15-22) demonstrates how fully he, by the Holy Ghost, entered into the difficulty with which the Church would ever have to contend in seeking to apprehend "the hope of *God's calling* and the riches of the glory of *his inheritance* in the saints;" because, evidently, if we fail to apprehend the calling, we cannot walk worthy" thereof. I must know where I am called to go, before I can go thither. Had Abraham's soul been fully under the power of the truth" that God's calling was to Canaan, and that too, lay "his inheritance," he could not have remained in Charran. And so with us. If we are led by the Holy Ghost into the understanding of the truth, that we are called with a heavenly calling; that our home, our portion, our hope, our inheritance, are all above, where Christ sitteth at God's right hand," we could never be satisfied to maintain a standing, seek a name, or lay up an inheritance, on the earth. The two things are incompatible: this is the true way to look at the matter. The heavenly calling is not an empty dogma, a powerless theory, nor a crude speculation. It is either a divine reality, or it is absolutely nothing. Was Abraham's call to Canaan a speculation? Was it a mere theory about which he might talk or argue, while, at the same time, he continued in Charran? Assuredly not. It was a truth, a divine truth, a powerfully practical truth. He was called to Canaan, and God could not, possibly, sanction his stopping short thereof. Thus it was with Abraham, and thus it is with us. If we would enjoy the divine sanction and the divine presence, we must be seeking, by faith, to act upon the divine call. That is to say, we must seek to reach, in experience, in practice, and moral character, the point to which God has called us, and that point is full fellowship with His own Son — fellowship with Him in His rejection below, fellowship with Him in His acceptance above.

But, as in Abraham's case, it was death that broke the link by which nature bound him to Charran; so, in our case, it is death which breaks the link by which nature ties us down to this present world. We must realise the truth that we have died in Christ, our head and representative — that our place in nature, and in the world, is amongst the things that were — that the cross of Christ is to us what the Red sea was to Israel, namely, that which separates us, for ever, from the land of death and judgement. Thus only shall we be able to walk, in any measure, "worthy of the calling wherewith we are called" — our high, our holy, our heavenly calling — our "calling of God in Christ Jesus."

And, here, I would dwell, for a little, on the cross of Christ in its two grand, fundamental phases, or in other words, the cross as the basis of our worship and our peace and our testimony, our relation with God, and our relation with the world. If, as a convicted sinner, I look at the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ I behold in it the everlasting foundation of my peace, I see my "sin" put away, as to the root or principle thereof, and I see my "sins" borne. I see God to be in very deed, "for me," and that, moreover, in the very condition in which my convicted conscience tells me I am. The cross unfolds God as the *sinner's* Friend. It reveals Him in that most wondrous character, as the righteous Justifier of the most ungodly sinner. Creation never could do this. Providence never could do this. Therein I may see God's power, His majesty, and wisdom: but what if all these things should be ranged against me? Looked at, in themselves, abstractly they would be so, for I am a sinner; and power, majesty, and wisdom, could not put away my sin, nor justify God in receiving me.

The introduction of the cross, however, changes the aspect of things entirely. There I find God dealing with sin in such a manner as to glorify Himself infinitely. There I see the magnificent display and perfect harmony of all the divine attributes. I see love, and such love as captivates and assures my heart, and weans it, in proportion as I realise it, from every other object. I see wisdom, and such wisdom as baffles devils and astonishes angels. I see power, and such power as bears down all opposition. I see holiness, and such holiness as repulses sin to the very furthest point of the moral

universe, and gives the most intense expression of God's abhorrence thereof, that could possibly be given. I see grace, and such grace as sets the sinner in the very presence of God — yes, puts him into His bosom. Where could I see all these things but in the cross? Nowhere else. Look where you please, and you cannot find aught that so blessedly combines those two great points, namely, "glory to God in the highest," and "on earth peace."

How precious, therefore, is the cross, in this its first phase, as the basis of the sinner's peace, the basis of his worship, and the basis of his eternal relationship with the God who in there so blessedly and so gloriously revealed? How precious to God, as furnishing Him with a righteous ground on which to go in the full display of all His matchless perfections, and in His most gracious dealings with the sinner! So precious is it to God that, as a recent writer has well remarked, ALL that He has said — all that He has done, from the very beginning, indicates that it was ever uppermost in His heart. And no wonder! His dear and well-beloved Son was to hang there, between heaven and earth, the object of all the shame and suffering that men and devils could heap upon Him, because He loved to do His Father's will, and redeem the children of His grace. It will be the grand centre of attraction, as the fullest expression of His love, throughout eternity."

Then, as the basis of our practical discipleship and testimony, the cross demands our most profound consideration. In this aspect of it, I need hardly say, it is as perfect as in the former. The same cross which connects me with God, has separated me from the world. A dead man is, evidently, done with the world; and the believer, having died in Christ, is done with the world; and, having risen with Christ, is connected with God, in the power of a new life, a new nature. Being thus inseparably linked with Christ, he, of necessity, participates in His acceptance with God, and in rejection by the world. The two things go together. The former makes him a worshipper and a citizen in heaven, the latter makes him a witness and a stranger on earth. That brings him inside the veil; this puts him outside the camp. The one is as perfect as the other. If the cross has come between me and sins, it has just as really come between me and the world. In the former case, it puts me into the place of peace with God; in the latter; it puts me into the place of hostility with the world, i.e., in a moral point of view; though, in another sense, it makes me the patient, humble witness of that precious, unfathomable, eternal grace which is set forth in the cross.

Now the believer should clearly understand, and rightly distinguish between, both the above phases of the cross of Christ. He should not profess to enjoy the one while he refuses to enter into the other. If his ear is open to hear Christ's voice within the veil, it will be open also to hear His voice outside the camp. He enters into the atonement which the cross has accomplished, he should also realise the rejection which it necessarily involves. The former flows out of the part which God had in the cross; the latter, out of the part which man had therein. It is our happy privilege, not only to be done with our sins, but to be done with the world also. ALL this is involved in the doctrine of the cross. Well, therefore, might the apostle say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Paul looked upon the world as a thing which ought to be nailed to the cross; and the world, in having crucified Christ, had crucified all who belonged to Him. Hence there is a double crucifixion, as regards the believer and the world; and were this fully entered into, it would prove the utter impossibility of ever amalgamating the two. Beloved reader, let us deeply, honestly, and prayerfully ponder these things; and may the Holy Ghost give us the ability to enter into the full practical power of both the phases of the cross of Christ.

We shall, now, return to our theme.

We are not told how long Abraham tarried at Haran; yet God graciously waited on His servant

until, freed from nature's clog, he could fully obey His command. There was, however, no accommodation of that command to the circumstances of nature. This would never do. God loves His servants too well to deprive them of the full blessedness of entire obedience. There was no fresh revelation to Abraham's soul during the time of his sojourn in Haran. It is well to see this. We must act up to the light already communicated, and then God will give us more. "To him that hath shall more be given." This is God's principle. Still, we must remember, that God will never drag us along the path of true-hearted discipleship. This would greatly lack the moral excellency which characterises all the ways of God. He does not drag, but draw, us along the path which leads to ineffable blessedness in Himself; and if we do not see that it is for our real advantage to break through all the barriers of nature, in order to respond to God's call, we forsake our own mercies. But, alas! our hearts little enter into this. We begin to calculate about the sacrifices, the hindrances, and the difficulties, instead of bounding along the path, in eagerness of soul, as knowing and loving the One whose call has sounded in our ears.

There is much true blessing to the soul in every step of obedience, for obedience is the fruit of faith; and faith puts us into living association and communion with God Himself. Looking at obedience, in this light, we can easily see how distinctly it is marked off, in every feature of it, from legality. This latter sets a man, with the entire burden of his sins on him, to serve God, by keeping the law; hence, the soul is kept in constant torture, and, so far from running in the path of obedience, it has not even taken the very first step. True obedience, on the contrary, is simply the manifestation or outflow of a new nature, communicated in grace. To this new nature God graciously imparts precepts for its guidance; and it is perfectly certain that the divine nature, guided by the divine precepts, can never, by any possibility, resolve itself into legality. What constitutes legality is the old nature taking up God's precepts and assaying to carry them out. To attempt to regulate man's fallen nature, by God's pure and Holy law, is as useless and absurd as anything can be. How could fallen nature breathe an atmosphere so pure? Impossible. Both the atmosphere and the nature must be divine.

But not only does the blessed God impart a divine nature to the believer, and guide that nature by His heavenly precepts, He also sets before it suited hopes and expectations. Thus, in Abraham's case, *The God of glory* appeared unto him." And for what purpose? To set before His soul's vision an attractive object — "a land that I will show thee." This was not compulsion, but attraction. God's land was, in the judgement of the new nature — the judgement of faith far better than Ur, or Charran: and albeit, he had not *seen* the land, yet inasmuch as it was God's land, faith judged it to be worth having, and, not only worth having, but, also, fully worth the surrender of present things. Hence, we read, "by faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive as an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out, not knowing whither he went." That is to say, "he walked by faith, not by sight." Though he had not seen with his eyes, he believed with his heart, and faith became the great moving spring in his soul. Faith rests on a far more solid ground than the evidence of our senses, and that is, the word of God. Our senses may deceive us, but God's word never can.

Now, the entire truth of the divine nature, together with the precepts which guide, and the hopes which animate it — the whole of the divine doctrine respecting these things, is completely thrown overboard by the system of legalism. The legalist teaches that we must surrender earth in order to get heaven. But how can fallen nature surrender that to which it is allied? How can it be attracted by that in which it sees no charms? Heaven has no charms for nature; yea, it is the very last place it would like to be found in. Nature has no taste for heaven, its occupations, or its occupants. Were it possible for nature to find itself there, it would be miserable. Thus, then, nature has no ability to surrender earth, and no desire to get heaven. True, — it would be glad to escape hell and its ineffable torment, gloom, and misery. But the desire to escape hell, and the desire to get heaven, spring from two very different

sources. The former may exist in the old nature; the latter can only be found in the new. Were there no "lake of fire," and no "worm" in hell, nature would not so shrink from it. The same principle holds good in reference to all of nature's pursuits and desires. The legalist teaches that we must give up sin before we can get righteousness. But nature cannot give up sin; and as to righteousness, it absolutely hates it. True, it would like a certain amount of religion; but it is only with the idea that religion will preserve it from hell fire. It does not love religion because of its introducing the soul to the present enjoyment of God and His ways.

How different from all this miserable system of Legalism, in every phase thereof, is "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God!" This gospel reveals God Himself coming down in perfect grace, and putting away sin by the sacrifice of the cross; putting it away, in the most absolute manner, on the ground of eternal righteousness, inasmuch as Christ suffered for it, having been made sin for us. And not only is God seen putting away sin, but also imparting a new life, even the risen life of His own risen, exalted, and glorified Son, which life every true believer possesses, in virtue of being linked, in God's eternal counsels, with Him who was nailed to the cross, but is now on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. This nature, as we have remarked, He graciously guides by the precepts of His holy word, applied in power by the Holy Ghost. He also animates it by the presentation of indestructible hopes. He reveals, in the distance, "the hope of glory" — "a city which hath foundations" — "a better country, that is an heavenly" — "the many mansions" of the Father's house, on high — "golden harps" — "green palms," and "white robes" — "a kingdom which cannot be moved" — everlasting association with Himself, in those regions of bliss and light, where sorrow and darkness can never enter — the unspeakable privilege of being led, throughout the countless ages of eternity, "beside the still waters, and through the green pastures" of redeeming love. How different is all this from the legalist's notion? Instead of calling upon me to educate and manage, by the dogmas of systematic religion, an irremediably corrupt nature, in order that thereby I may surrender an earth that I love, and attain to a heaven which I hate, He, in infinite grace, and on the ground of Christ's accomplished sacrifice, bestows upon me a nature which can enjoy heaven, and a heaven for that nature to enjoy; and, not only a heaven, but Himself the unfailing spring of all heavens joy.

Such is God's most excellent way. Thus He dealt with Abraham. Thus He dealt with Saul of Tarsus. Thus He deals with us. The God of glory showed Abraham a better country than Ur or Charran. He Saul of Tarsus a glory so bright, that it closed his eyes to all earth's brightest glories, and caused him to count them all "but dung," that He might win that Blessed One who had appeared to him, and whose voice spoken to his inmost soul. He saw a heavenly Christ in glory; and, throughout the remainder of his course, notwithstanding the weakness of the earthen vessel, that heavenly Christ and that heavenly glory engrossed his whole soul.

"And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land." The presence of the Canaanite in God's land would, necessarily, prove a trial to Abraham. It would be a demand upon his faith and hope, an exercise of heart, a trial of patience. He had left Ur and Charran behind, and come into the country of which "the God of glory" had spoken to him, and there he finds "the Canaanite." But there, too, he finds the Lord. "And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will give this land." The connection between the two statements is beautiful and touching. "The Canaanite was then in the land," and lest Abraham's eye should rest upon the Canaanite, the present possessor of the land, Jehovah appears to him as the One who was going to give the land to him and to his seed for ever. Thus Abraham was taken up with the Lord, and not with the Canaanite. This is a full of instruction for us. The Canaanite in the land is the expression of the power of Satan; but, instead of being occupied with Satan's power to keep us out of

the inheritance, we are called to apprehend Christ's power to bring us in. "We wrestle, not with flesh and blood,.....but with spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies." The very sphere into which we are called is the sphere of our conflict. Should this terrify us? By no means. We have Christ there — a victorious Christ, in whom we are "more than conquerors." Hence, instead of indulging "a spirit of fear," we cultivate a spirit of worship. "And there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him." "And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and Pitched his tent." The altar and the tent give us the two great features of Abraham's character. A worshipper of God, a stranger in the world — most blessed characteristics! Having nothing on earth — having our all our all in God. Abraham had not so much as to set his foot upon;" but he had God to enjoy, and that was enough.

However, faith has its trials, as well as its answers. It is not to be imagined that the man of faith, having pushed out from the shore of circumstances, finds it all smooth and easy sailing. By no means. Again and again, he is called to encounter rough seas and stormy skies; but it is all graciously designed to lead him into deeper and more matured experience of what God is to the heart that confides in Him. Were the sky always without a cloud, and the ocean without a ripple, the believer would not know so well the God with whom he has to do; for, alas! we know how prone the heart is to mistake the peace of circumstances for the peace of God. When everything is going on smoothly and pleasantly, our property safe, our business prosperous, our children and servants carrying themselves agreeably, our residence comfortable, our health excellent, everything, in short, just to our mind, how apt we are to mistake the peace which reposes upon such circumstances, for that peace which flows from the realised presence of Christ. The Lord knows this; and, therefore, He comes in, in one way or another, and stirs up the nest, that is, if we are found nestling in circumstances, instead of in Himself.

But, again, we are frequently led to judge of the rightness of a path by its exemption from trial, and *vice versa*. This is a great mistake. The path of obedience may often be found most trying to flesh and blood. Thus, in Abraham's case, he was not only called to encounter the Canaanite, in the place to which God had called him, but there was also "a famine in the land." Should he, therefore, have concluded that he was not in his right place? Assuredly not. That would have been to judge according to the sight of his eyes, the very thing which faith never does. No doubt it was a deep trial to the heart, an inexplicable puzzle to nature; but to faith it was all plain and easy. When Paul was called into Macedonia, almost the first thing he had to encounter was the prison at Philippi. This, to a heart out of communion, would have seemed a death-blow to the entire mission. But Paul never questioned the rightness of his position. He was enabled to "sing praises" in the midst of it all, assured that everything was just as it should be: and so it was; for in the prison of Philippi was one of God's vessels of mercy, who could not, humanly speaking, have heard the gospel, had not the preachers of it been thrust into the very place where he was. The devil was made, in spite of himself, the instrument of sending the gospel to the ears of one of God's elect.

Now, Abraham should have reasoned in the same way, in reference to the famine. He was in the very place in which God had set him; and, evidently, he received no direction to leave it. True, the famine was there; and, moreover, Egypt was at hand, offering deliverance from pressure; still the path of God's servant was plain. *It is better to starve in Canaan, if it should be so, than live in luxury in Egypt.* It is better far to suffer in God's path, than be at ease in Satan's. It is better to be poor with Christ, than rich without Him. Abraham had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and men servants, and maid servants, and she asses, and camels." Substantial proofs, the natural heart would, doubtless, say, of the rightness of his step, in going down to Egypt. But, ah! he had no altar — no communion. Egypt was not the place of God's presence. He lost more than he gained by going thither. This is ever the case. Nothing can ever make up for the loss of our communion with God. Exemption from temporary

pressure, and the accession of the greatest wealth, are but poor equivalents for what one loses by diverging a hair's breadth from the straight path of obedience. How many of us can add our amen to this? How many, in order to avoid the trial and exercise connected with God's path, have slipped aside into the current of this present evil world, and thereby brought leanness and barrenness, heaviness and gloom, into their souls? It may be they have, to use the common phrase, "made money," increased their store, obtained the world's favour, been "entreated well" by its Pharaohs, gotten a name and a position amongst men; but are these a proper equivalent for joy in God, communion liberty of heart, a pure, uncondemning conscience, a thankful, worshipping spirit, vigorous testimony, and effectual service? Alas! for the man that can think so. And yet all the above incomparable blessings have been often sold for a little ease, a little influence, a little money.

Christian reader, let us watch against the tendency to slip aside from the narrow, yet safe, the *sometimes* rough, yet *always* pleasant, path of simple, wholehearted obedience. Let us keep guard — jealous, careful guard, over "faith and a pure conscience," for which nothing can compensate. Should trial come, let us, instead of turning aside into Egypt, wait on God; and thus the trial, instead of proving an occasion of stumbling, will prove an opportunity for obedience. Let us, when tempted to slip into the course of the world, remember Him: 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) If such was His love for us, and such His sense of the true character of this present world, that He gave Himself, in order to deliver us from it, shall we deny Him by plunging again into that from which His cross has for ever delivered us? May God Almighty forbid! May He keep us in the hollow of His hand, and under the shadow of His wings, until we see Jesus as He is, and be like Him, and with Him for ever.

### Genesis 13

The opening of this chapter presents to us a subject of immense interest to the heart, namely, the true character of divine restoration. When the child of God has, in any way, declined in his spiritual condition, and lost his communion, he is in great danger, when conscience begins to work, of failing in the apprehension of divine grace, and of stopping short of the proper mark of divine restoration. Now, we know that God does everything in a way entirely worthy of Himself. Whether He creates, redeems, converts, restores, or provides, He can only act like Himself. What is worthy of Himself is, ever and only, His standard of action. This is unspeakably happy for us, inasmuch as we would ever seek to "limit the Holy One of Israel;" and in nothing are we so prone to limit Him as in His restoring grace. In the case now before us, we see that Abraham was not only delivered out of Egypt, but brought back" unto the place where his tent had been *at the beginning*,..... unto the place of the altar which he had made there *at the first*: and there Abraham called on the name of the Lord." Nothing can satisfy God, in reference to a wanderer or backslider, but his being entirely restored. We, in the self-righteousness of our hearts, might imagine that such an one should take a lower place than that which he had formerly occupied; and so he should, were it a question of his merit or his character; but, inasmuch as it is, altogether, a question of grace, it is God's prerogative to fix the standard of restoration; and His standard is set forth in the following passage "If thou wilt return, O Israel, return to me." It is thus that God restores, and it would be unworthy of Himself to do anything else. He will either not restore at all, or else restore, in such a way, as to magnify and glorify the riches of His grace. Thus, when the leper was brought back, he was actually conducted "to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." When the prodigal returned, he was set down at the table with the father. When Peter was restored, he was able to stand before the men of Israel and say, "ye denied the Holy One, and the Just" — the very thing which he had done himself, under the most aggravated circumstances. In all these cases, and many more which might be adduced, we see the perfectness of God's restoration. He always brings the soul

back to Himself, in the full power of grace, and the full confidence of faith. "If thou wilt return, return to me." "Abraham came unto the place where his tent had been *at the beginning*.

Then, as to the moral effect of divine restoration, it is most deeply practical. If legalism gets its answer in the *character* of the restoration, antinomianism gets its answer in the *effect* thereof. The restored soul will have a very deep and keen sense of the evil from which it has been delivered, and this will be evidenced by a jealous, prayerful, holy, and circumspect spirit. We are not restored in order that we may, the more lightly, go and sin again, but rather that we may "go and sin no more." The deeper my sense of the *grace* of divine restoration, the deeper will be my sense of the *holiness* of it also. This principle is taught and established throughout all scripture?; but especially in two well-known passages, namely, Ps. 23: 3, and 1 John 1: 9; "He restoreth my soul: *He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness* for his name's sake." And, again, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to *cleanse us from all unrighteousness*." The proper path for a divinely-restored soul, is "the path of righteousness." In other words, having tasted divine grace, we walk in righteousness. To talk of grace, while walking in unrighteousness, is, as the apostle says, to turn "the grace of our God into lasciviousness." If grace reigned through righteousness unto eternal life," it also manifests itself in righteousness, in the outflow of that life. The grace that forgives us our sins, cleanses us from all unrighteousness. Those things must never be separated. When taken together, they furnish a triumphant answer to the legalism and antinomianism of the human heart.

But there was a deeper trial for Abraham's heart than even the famine, namely, that arising from the company of one who, evidently, was not walking in the energy of personal faith, nor in the realisation of personal responsibility. It seems plain that Lot was, from the very beginning, borne onward rather by Abraham's influence and example, than by his own faith in God. This is a very common case. If we look down along the history of the people of God, we can easily see how that, in every great movement produced by the Spirit of God, certain individuals have attached themselves thereto who were not personally participators of the power which had produced the movement. Such persons go on for a time, either as a dead weight upon the testimony. or an active hindrance to it. Thus, in Abraham's case, the Lord called him to leave his kindred; but he brought his kindred with him. Terah retarded him in his movement, until death took him out of the way. Lot followed him somewhat further, until "the lusts of other things" overpowered him, and he entirely broke down.

The same thing is observable in the great movement of Israel out of Egypt. "A mixed multitude" followed them, and caused much defilement, weakness, and sorrow, for we read, in Numbers 11, "the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel *also* wept again, and said, who shall give us flesh to eat." So also, in the early days of the Church; and not only so, but in every revival which has taken place therein, down to the present day, many have been acted upon by various influences, which, not being divine, proved evanescent; and the persons so acted upon, sooner or later, gave way, and found their proper level. Nothing will endure but that which is of God. I must realise the link between me and the living God. I must know myself as one called of Him into the position which I occupy, else I shall have no stability, and exhibit no consistency therein. It will not do for us to follow in the track of other people, merely because it is their track. God will graciously give each a path to walk in, a sphere to move in, and a responsibility to fulfil; and we are bound to know our calling and the functions thereof, that, by His grace ministered to our souls daily, we may work therein effectually, to His glory. It matters not what our measure may be, provided it be what God hath dealt to us. We may have "five talents," or we may have but "one;" still if we use the "one," with our eye fixed on the Master, we shall just be as sure to hear from His gracious lips the words, "well done," as if we had used the "five." This is encouraging. Paul, Peter, James, and John had each his peculiar measure,

his special ministry; and so with all; none needs to interfere with another. A carpenter has a saw and a plane, a hammer and a chisel, and he uses each as he needs it. Nothing can be more worthless than imitation. If, in the natural world, we look at the various orders of creation, we see no imitation. ALL have their proper sphere, their proper functions. And if it be thus in the natural world, how much more in the spiritual. The field is wide enough for all. In every house there are vessels of various sizes and various shapes. The master wants them all.

Let us, therefore, my beloved reader, search and see whether we are walking under a divine or a human influence; whether our faith stands in the wisdom of man, or in the power of God; whether we are doing things because others have done them, or because the Lord has called us to do them; whether we are merely propped up by the example and influence of our fellow, or sustained by personal faith in God. These are serious inquiries. It is, no doubt, a happy privilege to enjoy the fellowship of our brethren; but if we are propped up by them, we shall soon make shipwreck. So also, if we go beyond our measure, our action will be strained and unsightly, uneasy and unnatural. It is very easy to see when a man is working in his place, and according to his measure. ALL affectation, assumption, and imitation, is contemptible in the extreme. Hence, though we cannot be great, let us be honest; and though we cannot be brilliant, let us be genuine. If a person goes beyond his depth, without knowing how to swim, he will surely flounder. If a vessel put out to sea, without being sea-worthy and in trim, it will surely be beaten back into harbour, or lost. Lot left "Ur of the Chaldees," but he fell in the plains of Sodom. The call of God had not reached his heart, nor the inheritance of God filled his vision. Solemn thought! may we ponder it deeply? Blessed be God, there is a path for each of His servants, along which shines the light of His approving countenance, and to walk therein should be our chief joy. His approval is enough for the heart that knows Him. True, we may not always be able to command the approval and concurrence of our brethren; we may frequently be misunderstood; but we cannot help these things. "The day" will set all this to rights, and the loyal heart can contentedly wait for that day, knowing that then "every man shall have praise of God."

But it may be well to examine, more particularly, what it was that caused Lot to turn aside off the path of public testimony. There is a crisis in every man's history, at which it will, assuredly, be made manifest on what ground he is resting, by what motives he is actuated, and by what objects he is animated. Thus it was with Lot. He did not die at Charran; but he fell at Sodom. The *ostensible* cause of his fall was the strife between his herdmen and those of Abraham; but the fact is, when one is not really walking with a single eye and purified affections, he will easily find a stone to stumble over. If he does not find it at one time, he will at another. If he does not find it here, he will find it there. In one sense, it makes little matter as to what may be the apparent cause of turning aside; the real cause lies underneath, far away, it may be, from common observation, in the hidden chambers of the heart's affections and desires, where *the world* in some shape or form, has been sought after. The strife between the herdmen might have been easily settled without spiritual damage to either Abraham or Lot. To the former, indeed, it only afforded an occasion for exhibiting the beautiful power of faith, and the moral elevation, the heavenly vantage ground, on which faith ever sets the possessor thereof. But to the latter, it was an occasion for exhibiting the thorough worldliness of his heart. The strife no more produced the worldliness in Lot than it produced the faith in Abraham; it only manifested, in the case of each, what was really there.

Thus it is always: controversies and divisions arise in the Church of God, and many are stumbled thereby, and driven back into the world, in one way or another. They then lay the blame on the controversy and division, whereas the truth is, that these things were only the means of developing the real condition of the soul, and the bent of the heart. The world was in the heart, and *would be* reached

by some *route* or another; nor is there much of moral excellency exhibited in blaming men and things, when the root of the matter lies within. It is not that controversy and division are not to be deeply deplored: assuredly they are. To see brethren contending in the very presence of "the Canaanite and the Perizzite is truly lamentable and humiliating. Our language should ever be, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee..... for we are brethren." Still, why did not Abraham make choice of Sodom? Why did not the strife drive him into the world? Why was it not an occasion of stumbling to him? Because he looked at it from God's point of view. No doubt, he had a heart that could be attracted by "well-watered plains," just as powerfully as Lot's heart; but then he did not allow his own heart to choose. He first let Lot take his choice, and then left God to choose for him. This was heavenly wisdom. This is what faith ever does: it allows God to fix its inheritance, as it also allows Him to make it good. It is always satisfied with the portion which God gives. It can say, the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." It matters not where "the lines" fall; for, in the judgement of faith, they always "fall in pleasant places," just because God casts them there.

The man of faith can easily afford to allow the man of sight to take his choice. Because, "If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." What beautiful disinterestedness and moral elevation we have here! and yet what security! It is certain that, let nature range where it will, let it take its most comprehensive grasp, its boldest and highest flight, there is never the slightest danger of its laying its hand upon faith's treasure. It will seek its portion in quite an opposite direction. Faith lays up its treasure in a place which nature would never dream of examining; and, as to its approaching thereto, it could not if it would; and it would not if it could. Hence, therefore, faith is perfectly safe, as well as beautifully disinterested, in allowing nature to take its choice.

What, then, did Lot choose, when he got his choice. He chose Sodom. The very place that was about to be judged. But how was this? Why select such a spot? Because he looked at the outward appearance, and not at the intrinsic character and future destiny. The intrinsic character was "*wicked*." Its future destiny was "*judgement*" — to be destroyed by "fire and brimstone out of heaven." But, it may be said, "Lot knew nothing of all this." Perhaps not, nor Abraham either; but God did; and had Lot allowed God to "choose his inheritance for him," He, certainly, would not have chosen a spot that He Himself was about to destroy. He did not, however. He judged for himself. Sodom suited him, though it did not suit God. His eye rested on the "well-watered plains," and his heart was attracted by them. "He pitched his tent *toward* Sodom." Such is nature's choice! "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." Lot forsook Abraham for the same reason. He left the place of testimony, and got into the place of judgement.

"And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will give it, and to thy Seed for ever." The strife and "separation," so far from damaging Abraham's spiritual condition, rather brought out, in full relief, his heavenly principles, and strengthened, in his soul, the life of faith. Moreover, it cleared the prospect for him, and delivered him from the company of one who could only prove a dead weight. Thus it worked for good, and yielded a harvest of blessing. It is, at once, most solemn, and yet most encouraging, to bear in mind that, in the long run, men find their proper level. Men who run unsent, break down, in one way or another, and find their way back to that which they profess to have left. On the other hand, those who are called of God, and lean on Him, are, by His grace, sustained. "Their path is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The thought of this should keep us humble, watchful, and prayerful. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," for, truly, "there are

first that shall be last, and there are last that shall be first." "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved," is a principle which, whatever be its specific application, has a wide moral bearing. Many a vessel has sailed out of harbour, in gallant style, with all its canvass spread, amid cheering and shouting, and with many fair promises of a first-rate passage; but, alas! storms, waves, shoals, rocks, and quicksands, have changed the aspect of things; and the voyage that commenced with hope, has ended in disaster. I am, here, only referring to the path of service and testimony, and, by no means, to the question of a man's eternal acceptance in Christ. This latter, blessed be God, does not, in any wise, rest with ourselves, but with Him who has said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." But, do we not know, that many Christians set out on some special course of service or testimony, under the impression that they are called of God thereto, and, after a time, they break down? Unquestionably. And, further, very many set out in the profession of some special principle of action, respecting which they have not been divinely taught, or the consequences of which they have not maturely considered in the presence of God, and, as a necessary result, they themselves have been found, after a time, in the open violation of those very principles. ALL this is deplorable, and should be carefully avoided. It tends to weaken the faith of God's elect, and causes the enemies of the truth to speak reproachfully. Each one should receive his call and his commission directly from the Master Himself. ALL whom Christ calls into any special service, He will, infallibly, maintain therein, for He never sent any one a warfare at his own charges. But if we run unsest, we shall not only be left to *learn* our folly, but to *exhibit* it.

Yet, it is not that any one should set himself up as the impersonation of any principle, or as an example of any special character of service or testimony. God forbid. This would be the most egregious folly, and empty conceit. It is a teacher's business to set forth Gods Word; and it is a servant's business to set forth the Master's will; but while all this is fully understood and admitted, we must ever remember the deep need there is of counting the cost, ere we undertake to build a tower, or go forth to war. Were this more seriously attended to, there would be far less confusion and failure in our midst. Abraham was called of God from Ur to Canaan, and, hence, God led him forth on the way. When Abraham tarried at Charran, God waited for him; when he went down into Egypt, He restored him; when he needed guidance, He guided him; when there was a strife and a separation, He took care of him; so that Abraham had only to say, "Oh, how great is thy goodness *which thou hast laid up* for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men." He lost nothing by the strife. He had his tent and his altar before; and he had his tent and his altar afterwards. "Then Abram removed *his tent*, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there *an altar* unto the Lord." Lot might choose Sodom; but as for Abraham, he sought and found his all in God. There was no altar in Sodom. Alas! all who travel in that direction are in quest of something quite different from that. It is never the worship of God, but the love of the world, that leads them thither. And even though they should attain their object, what is it? How does it end? Just thus, "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls."

#### **Genesis 14**

We are, here, presented with an historic record of the revolt of five kings from under the hand of Chederlaomer, and a battle consequent thereon. The Spirit of God can occupy himself with the movements of "kings and their armies," when such movements are in anywise connected with the people of God. In the present case, Abraham personally had nothing whatever to do with the revolt or its consequences. His "tent and altar" were not likely to furnish an occasion for the declaration of war, nor yet to be much affected by the outbreak or issue thereof. The proper portion of a heavenly man could never, by any possibility, tempt the cupidity nor excite the ambition of the kings and conquerors

of this world.

However, although Abraham was not affected by the battle of "four kings with five," yet Lot was. His position was such as to involve him in the whole affair. So long as we are enabled, through grace, to pursue the path of simple faith, we shall be thrown completely outside the range of this world's circumstances; but if we abandon our high and holy position as those whose "citizenship" is in heaven," and seek a name, a place, and a portion in the earth, we must expect to participate in earth's convulsions and vicissitudes. Lot had taken up his abode in the plains of Sodom, and was, therefore, deeply and sensibly affected by the wars of Sodom. It must ever be thus. It is a bitter and a painful thing for the child of God to mingle himself with the children of this world. He can never do so without serious damage to his own soul, as well as to the testimony with which he is entrusted. What testimony had Lot in Sodom? A very feeble one, indeed, if one at all. The very fact of his settling himself there was the death blow to his testimony. To have spoken a word against Sodom and its ways, would have been to condemn himself, for why was he there? But, in truth, it does not, by any means, appear that, to testify for God, formed any part of his object in "pitching his tent toward Sodom." Personal and family interests seem to have been the leading springs of action in his heart: and though, as Peter tells us, "his righteous soul was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, from day to day," yet had he but little power to act against it, even if inclined so to do.

It is important, in a practical point of view, to see that we cannot be governed by two objects at the same time. For example, I cannot have before my mind, as objects, my worldly interests and the interests of the gospel of Christ. If I go to a town for the purpose of setting up in business, then, clearly, business is my object, and not the gospel. I may, no doubt, propose to myself both to attend to business and to preach the gospel as well; but, all the while, either one or the other must be my object. It is not that a servant of Christ may not most blessedly and effectually preach the gospel and attend to business also; he assuredly may; but, in such a case, the gospel will be his object, and not business. Paul preached the gospel and made tents; but the gospel was his object, and not tent making. If I make business my object, the gospel preaching will speedily prove to be formal and unprofitable work; yea, it will be well if it be not made use of to sanctify my covetousness. The heart is very treacherous; and it is often truly astonishing to see how it deceives us when we desire to gain some special point. It will furnish, in abundance, the most plausible reasons; while the eyes of our understanding are so blinded by self-interest, or unjudged wilfulness, as to be incapable of detecting their plausibility. How frequently do we hear persons defending a continuance in a position which they admit to be wrong, on the plea that they thereby enjoy a wider sphere of usefulness. To all such reasoning, Samuel furnishes a pointed and powerful reply, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Which was, Abraham or Lot, able to do the more good? Does not the history of those two men prove, beyond a question, that the most effectual way to serve the world is to be faithful to it, by separating from, and testifying against it?

But, be it remembered, that genuine separation from the world can only be the result of communion with God. I may seclude myself from the world, and constitute myself the centre of my being, like a monk or a cynic; but separation to God is a totally different thing. The one chills and contracts, the other warms and expands. That drives us in upon ourselves; this draws us out in love and interest for others. That makes self and its interests our centre; this makes God and His glory our centre. Thus, in Abraham's case, we see that the very fact of his separation enabled him to render effectual service to one who had involved himself in trouble by his worldly ways. "When Abraham heard that *his brother* was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan..... and he brought back all the goods, and also

brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people." Lot was Abraham's brother, after all; and brotherly love must act. "A brother is born for adversity;" and it often happened that a season of Adversity softens the heart, and renders it susceptible of kindness, even from one with whom we have had to part company; and it is remarkable that, while, in verse 12, we read, "they took Lot, *Abraham's brother's son*," yet, in verse 14, we read, "when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive." The claims of a brother's trouble are answered by the affections of a brother's heart. This is divine. Genuine faith, while it always renders us independent, never renders us indifferent. It will never wrap itself up in its fleece while a brother shivers in the cold. There are three things which faith does; it "purifies the heart;" it "works by love;" and it "overcomes the world;" and all these results of faith are beautifully exhibited in Abraham on this occasion. His heart was purified from Sodom's pollutions; he manifested genuine love to Lot his brother; and, finally, he was completely victorious over the kings. Such are the precious fruits of faith, that heavenly, Christ honouring principle.

However, the man of faith is not exempt from the assaults of the enemy; and it frequently happens that immediately after a victory, one has to encounter a fresh temptation. Thus it was with Abraham. "The king of Sodom went out to meet him, after his return from the slaughter of Chederlaomer, and of the kings that were with him." There was, evidently, a very deep and insidious design of the enemy in this movement. "The king of Sodom" presents a very different thought, and exhibits a very different phase of the enemy's power, from what we have in "Chederlaomer and the kings that were with him." In the former, we have rather the hiss of the serpent; in the latter, the roar of the lion; but whether it were the serpent or the lion, the Lord's grace was amply sufficient; and most seasonably was this grace ministered to the Lord's servant, at the exact moment of need. "And Melchisedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine, and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand." we have, here, to remark, first, the peculiar point at which Melchisedek enters the scene; and, secondly, the double effect of his ministry. He did not come forth when Abraham was in pursuit of Chederlaomer, but when the king of Sodom was in pursuit of Abraham. This makes a great moral difference. A deeper character of communion was needed to meet the deeper character of conflict.

And, then, as to the ministry, the "bread and wine" refreshed Abraham's spirit, after his conflict with Chederlaomer; while the benediction prepared his heart for his conflict with the king of Sodom. Abraham was a conqueror, and yet he was about to be a combatant, and the royal priest refreshed the conqueror's spirit, and fortified the combatant's heart.

It is peculiarly sweet to observe the manner in which Melchizedek introduces God to the thoughts of Abraham. He calls Him "the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth;" and, not only so, but pronounces Abraham "blessed" of that same God. This was effectually preparing him for the king of Sodom. A man who was "blessed" of God, did not need to take aught from the enemy; and if the possessor of heaven and earth" filled his vision, "the goods" of Sodom could have but little attraction. Hence, as might be expected, when the king of Sodom made his proposal, "give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself," Abraham replies, "I have lift up my hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe latchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich." Abraham refuses to be enriched by the king of Sodom. How could he think of delivering Lot from the power of the world, if he himself were governed thereby? The only true way in which to deliver another is to be thoroughly delivered myself. So long as I am in the fire, it is quite impossible I can pluck another out of it. The path of separation is the path of power, as it is also the path of peace and blessedness.

The world, in all its various forms, is the great instrument of which Satan makes use, in order to weaken the hands, and alienate the affections, of the servants of Christ. But, blessed be God, when the heart is true to Him, He always comes in to cheer, to strengthen, and to fortify, at the right time. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro, throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." (2 Chr. 16: 9) This is an encouraging truth for our poor, timid, doubting, faltering hearts. Christ will be our strength and shield. He will "cover our heads in the day of battle;" He will "teach our hands to war, and our fingers to fight;" and finally, "He will bruise Satan under our feet shortly." ALL this is unspeakably comforting to a heart sincerely desirous of making way against "the world, the flesh, and the devil." May the Lord keep our hearts true to Himself, in the midst of the ensnaring scene around us.

## Genesis 15

"After these things, the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram. I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." The Lord would not suffer His servant to be a loser, by rejecting the offers of this world. It was infinitely better for Abraham to find himself hidden behind Jehovah's shield, than to take refuge beneath the patronage of the king of Sodom; and to be anticipating his "exceeding great reward," than to accept "the goods" of Sodom. The position into which Abraham is put, in the opening verse of our chapter, is beautifully expressive of the position into which every soul is introduced by the faith of Christ. Jehovah was his "shield," that He might rest in Him; Jehovah was his "reward," that he might wait for Him. So with the believer now: he finds his present rest, his present peace, his present security, all in Christ. No dart of the enemy can possibly penetrate the shield which covers the weakest believer in Jesus.

And then, as to the future, Christ fills it. Precious portion! Precious hope! A portion which can never be exhausted: a hope which will never make ashamed. Both are infallibly secured by the counsels of God, and the accomplished atonement of Christ. The present enjoyment thereof is by the ministry of the Holy Ghost who dwells in us. This being the case, it is manifest that if the believer is pursuing a worldly career, or indulging in worldly, or carnal desires, he cannot be enjoying either the "shield" or the "reward. If the Holy Ghost is grieved, He will not minister the enjoyment of that which is our proper portion — our proper hope. Hence, in the section of Abraham's history now before us, we see that when he had returned from the slaughter of the kings, and rejected the offer of the king of Sodom, Jehovah rose before his soul in the double character, as his "Shield and his exceeding great reward. Let the heart ponder this, for it contains a volume of deeply practical truth. We shall now examine the remainder of the chapter.

In it we have unfolded to us the two great principles of sonship and heirship. "And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and lo, one born in my house is mine heir." Abraham desired a son, for he knew, upon divine authority, that his "seed" should inherit the land. (Gen. 13: 15) Sonship and heirship are inseparably connected in the thoughts of God "He that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir." Sonship is the proper basis of everything; and, moreover, it is the result of God's sovereign counsel and operation, as we read in James, "of his own will begat he us." Finally, it is founded upon God's eternal principle of resurrection. How else could it be? Abraham's body was "dead;" wherefore, in his case, as in every other, sonship must be in the power of resurrection. Nature is dead, and can neither beget nor conceive ought for God. There lay the inheritance stretching out before the patriarch's eye, in all its magnificent dimensions; but where was the heir? Abraham's body and Sarah's womb alike answered "death." But Jehovah is the God of resurrection, and, therefore, a "dead body" was the very thing for Him to act upon. Had nature not been

dead, God should have put it to death ere He could fully show Himself. The most suitable theatre for the living God is that from which nature, with all its boasted powers and empty pretensions, has been totally expelled by the sentence of death. Wherefore, God's word to Abraham was, "look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; and he said unto him, so shall thy seed be." When the God of resurrection fills the vision there is no limit to the soul's blessing, for He who can quicken the dead, can do anything.

"And he believed in the Lord, and he counted it unto him for righteousness." The imputation of righteousness to Abraham is, here, founded upon his believing in the Lord as the Quickener of the dead. It is in this character that He reveals Himself in a world where death reigns; and when a soul believes in Him, as such, it is counted righteous in His sight. This necessarily shuts man out, as regards his co-operation, for what can he do in the midst of a scene of death? Can he raise the dead? Can he open the gates of the grave? Can he deliver himself from the power of death, and walk forth, in life and liberty, beyond the limits of its dreary domain? Assuredly not. Well, then, if he cannot do so, he cannot work out righteousness, nor establish himself in the relation of sonship. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," and, therefore, so long as a man is under the power of death, and under the dominion of sin, he can neither know the position of a son, nor the condition of righteousness. Thus, God alone can bestow the adoption of sons, and He alone can impute righteousness, and both are connected with faith in Him as the One who raised up Christ from the dead.

It is in this way that the apostle handles the question of Abraham's faith, in Romans 4, where he says, "It was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed unto him; but for us also to whom it shall be imputed, *if We believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.*" Here, the God of resurrection is presented "to us also," as the object of faith, and our faith in Him as the alone ground of our righteousness. If Abraham had looked up into heaven's vault, spangled with innumerable stars, and then looked at "his own body now dead," how could he ever grasp the idea of a seed as numerous as those stars? Impossible. But he did not look at his own body, but at the resurrection power of God, and, inasmuch as that was the power which was to produce the seed, we can easily see that the stars of heaven and the sand on the sea-shore are but feeble figures indeed; for what natural object could possibly illustrate the effect of that power which can raise the dead ?

So also, when a sinner hearkens to the glad tidings of the gospel, were he to look up to the unsullied light of the divine presence, and then look: down into the unexplored depths of his own evil nature, he might well exclaim, How can I ever get thither? How can I ever be fit to dwell in that light? Where is the answer? In himself? Nay, blessed be God, but in that blessed! One, who travelled from the bosom to the cross and the grave, and from thence to the throne, thus filling up, in His Person and work, all the space between those extreme points. There can be nothing higher than the bosom of God — the eternal dwelling-place of the Son; and there can be nothing lower than the cross and the grave; but, amazing truth! I find Christ in both. I find Him in the bosom, and I and Him in the grave. He went down into death in order that He might leave behind Him, in the dust thereof, the full weight of His people's sins and iniquities. Christ, in the grave, exhibits the end of everything human — the end of sin — the full limit of Satan's power. The grave of Jesus forms the grand terminus of death. But resurrection takes us beyond this terminus, and constitutes the imperishable basis on which God's glory and man's blessing repose for ever. The moment the eye of faith rests on a risen Christ, there is a triumphant answer to every question as to sin, judgement, death, and the grave. The One who divinely met all these, is alive from the dead; and has taken His seat at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens; and, not only so, but the Spirit of that risen and glorified One, in the believer, constitutes him a son. He is quickened out of the grave of Christ: as we read, "and you, being dead in your sins, and the

uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." (Col. 2: 13)

Hence, therefore, sonship, being founded on resurrection, stands connected with perfect justification — perfect righteousness — perfect freedom from everything which could, in any wise, be against us. God could not have us in His presence with sin upon us. He could not suffer a single speck or stain of sin upon His sons and daughters. The father could not have the prodigal at *His* table with the rags of the far country upon him. He could go forth to meet him in those rags. He could fall upon his neck and kiss him, in those rags. It was worthy, and beautifully characteristic of his *grace* so to do; but then to seat him at his table in the rags would never do. The grace that brought the father out to the prodigal, reigns through the righteousness which brought the prodigal in to the father. It would not have been grace had the father waited for the son to deck himself in robes of his own providing; and it would not have been righteous to bring him in in his rags; but both grace and righteousness shone forth in all their respective brightness and beauty when the father went out and fell on the prodigal's neck; but yet did not give him a seat at the table until he was clad and decked in a manner suited to that elevated and happy position. God, in Christ, has stooped to the very lowest point of man's moral condition, that, by stooping He might raise man to the very highest point of blessedness, in fellowship with Himself. From all this, it follows, that our sonship, with all its consequent dignities and privileges, is entirely independent of us. We have just as little to do with it as Abraham's dead body and Sarah's dead womb had to do with a seed as numerous as the stars which garnish the heavens, or as the sand on the seashore. It is all of God. God the Father drew the plan, God the Son laid the foundation, and God the Holy Ghost raises the superstructure; and on this superstructure, appears the inscription, "THROUGH GRACE, BY FAITH, WITHOUT WORKS OF LAW"

But, then, our chapter opens another most important subject to our view, namely, *heirship*. The question of sonship and righteousness being fully settled — divinely and unconditionally settled, the Lord said unto Abraham, "I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it." Here comes out the great question of heirship, and the peculiar path along which the chosen heirs are to travel ere they reach the promised inheritance. "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we *suffer* with him, that we may be also glorified together." Our way to the kingdom lies through suffering, affliction, and tribulation; but, thank God, we can, by faith, say, "the *sufferings* of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. And further, we know that "our *light affliction* which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Finally, "we glory in *tribulation*, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." It is a high honour and a real privilege to be allowed to drink of our blessed Master's cup, and be baptised with His baptism; to travel in blest companionship with Him along the road which leads directly to the glorious inheritance. The Heir and the joint-heirs reach that inheritance by the pathway of suffering.

But let it be remembered that the suffering of which the joint-heirs participate has no penal element in it. It is not suffering from the hand of infinite justice, because of sin; all that was fully met on the cross, when the divine victim bowed His sacred head beneath the stroke. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins," and that "once," was on the tree and *nowhere else*. He never suffered for sins before and He never can suffer for sins again. "*Once*, in the end of the world, (the end of all flesh,) hath he appeared to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself." "Christ was *once* offered."

There are two ways in which to view a suffering Christ: first, as bruised of Jehovah; secondly, as rejected of men. In the former, He stood alone; in the latter, we have the honour of being associated with Him. In the former, I say, He stood alone, for who could have stood with Him? He bore the wrath

of God alone; He travelled in solitude, down into "the rough valley that had neither been eared nor sown," and there He settled, for ever, the question of our sins. *With* this we had nothing to do, though to this we are eternally indebted for everything. He fought the fight and gained the victory, alone; but He divides the spoils with us. He was in solitude in the horrible pit and miry clay;" but directly He planted His foot on the everlasting "rock of resurrection, He associates us with Him. He uttered the cry alone; He sings the "*new song*" in company. (Ps. 40: 2, 3)

Now, the question is, shall we refuse to suffer from the hand of man *with Him* who suffered from the hand of God *for us* That it is, in a certain sense. a question is evident, from the Spirit's constant use of the word "IF" in connection with it. "If so be we suffer; If, with him." "If we suffer, we shall reign." There is no such question as to sonship. We do not reach the high dignity of sons through suffering, but through the quickening power of the Holy Ghost, founded on the accomplished work of Christ, according to God's eternal counsel. This can never be touched. We do not reach the *family* through suffering. The apostle does not say, "that ye may be counted worthy of the *family* of God for which ye also suffer." They were in the family already; but they were bound for the kingdom; and their road to that kingdom lay through suffering; and not only so, but the measure of suffering for the kingdom would be according to their devotedness and conformity to the King. The more like we are *to Him*, the more we shall suffer *with Him*; and the deeper our fellowship with Him in the suffering, the deeper will be our fellowship in the glory. There is a difference between the *house* of the Father and the kingdom of the Son: in the former, it will be a question of capacity; in the latter, a question of assigned position. All my children may be round my table, but their enjoyment of my company and conversation will entirely depend on their capacity. One may be seated on my knee, in the full enjoyment of his relationship, as a child, yet perfectly unable to comprehend a word I say; another may exhibit uncommon intelligence in conversation, yet not be a whit happier in his relationship than the infant on my knee. But when it becomes a question of service for me, or public identification with me, it is, evidently, quite another thing. This is but a feeble illustration of the idea of capacity in the Father's house, and assigned position in the kingdom of the Son.

But let it be remembered that our suffering with Christ is not a yoke of bondage, but a matter of privilege; not an iron rule, but a gracious gift; not constrained servitude, but voluntary devotedness. "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) Moreover, there can be little doubt but that the real secret of suffering for Christ is to have the heart's affections centred in Him. The more I love Jesus, the closer I shall walk with Him, and the closer I walk with Him, the more faithfully I shall imitate Him, and the more faithfully I imitate Him, the more I shall suffer with Him. Thus it all flows from love to Christ; and then it is a fundamental truth that "we love him because he first loved us." In this, as in everything else, let us beware of a legal spirit; for it must not be imagined that a man, with the yoke of legality round his neck, is suffering for Christ; alas ! it is much to be feared that such an one does not know Christ; does not know the blessedness of sonship; has not yet been established in grace; is rather seeking to reach the family by works of law, than to reach the kingdom by the path of suffering.

On the other hand, let us see that we are not shrinking from our Master's cup and baptism. Let us not profess to enjoy the benefits which His cross secures, while we refuse the rejection which that cross involves. We may rest assured that the road to the kingdom is not enlightened by the sunshine of this world's favour, nor strewn with the roses of its prosperity. If a Christian is advancing in the world, he has much reason to apprehend that he is not walking in company with Christ. "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be." What was the goal of Christ's earthly career? Was it an elevated, influential position in this world? By no means. What then? He found His

place on the cross, between two condemned malefactors. "But," it will be said, "God was in this." and yet man was in it likewise; and this latter truth is what must inevitably secure our rejection by the world, if only we keep in company with Christ. The companionship of Christ, which lets me into heaven, casts me out of earth; and to talk of the former, while I am ignorant of the latter, proves there is something wrong. If Christ were on earth, now, what would His path be? Whither would it tend? Where would it terminate? Would we like to walk with Him? Let us answer those enquiries under the edge of the word, and under the eye of the Almighty; and may the Holy Ghost make us faithful to an absent — a rejected — a crucified Master. The man who walks in the Spirit will be filled with Christ; and, being filled with Him, he will not be occupied with suffering, but with Him for whom he suffers. If the eye is fixed on Christ, the suffering will be as nothing in comparison with the present joy and future glory.

The subject of heirship has led me much further than I intended; but I do not regret it, as it is of considerable importance. Let us now briefly glance at the deeply significant vision of Abraham as set forth in the closing verses of our chapter. "And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. And he said unto Abram, know of a surety, that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years: and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance....And it came to pass, that, *when the sun went down*, and it was dark, behold, a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces."

The entire of Israel's history is summed up in those two figures, the "furnace" and the "lamp." The former presents to us those periods of their history in which they were brought into suffering and trial; such, for example, as the long period of Egyptian bondage, their subjection to the kings of Canaan, the Babylonish captivity, their present dispersed and degraded condition. During all these periods they may be considered as passing through the smoking furnace. (See Deut. 4: 20; 1 Kings 8: 51; Isa. 48: 10.)

Then, in the burning lamp, we have those points in Israel's eventful history at which Jehovah graciously appeared for their relief, such as their deliverance from Egypt, by the hand of Moses; their deliverance from under the power of the kings of Canaan, by the ministry of the various judges; their return from Babylon, by the decree of Cyrus; and their final deliverance, when Christ shall appear in His glory. The inheritance must be reached through the furnace; and the darker the smoke of the furnace, the brighter and more cheering will be the lamp of God's salvation. Nor is this principle confined merely to the people of God, as a whole; it applies, just as fully, to individuals. Who have ever reached a position of eminence as servants, have endured the furnace before they enjoyed the lamp. "An horror of great darkness" passed across the spirit of Abraham. Jacob had to endure twenty-one years of sore hardship, in the house of Laban. Joseph found his furnace of affliction in the dungeons of Egypt. Moses spent forty years in the desert. Thus it must be with all God's *servants*. They must be "tried" first, that, being found "faithful," they may be "put into the ministry." God's principle, in reference to those who serve Him, is expressed in those words of St. Paul, "not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." (1 Tim 3: 6)

It is one thing to be a *child* of God; it is quite another to be a *servant of Christ*. I may love my child very much, yet, if I set him to work in my garden, he may do more harm than good. Why? Is it because he is not a dear child? No; but because he is not a practised servant. This makes all the difference. Relationship and office are distinct things. Not one of the Queen's children is, at present, capable of being her prime minister. It is not that all God's children have not something to do, something to suffer, something to learn. Undoubtedly they have; yet it ever holds good, that *public service and private discipline* are intimately connected in the ways of God. One who comes forward

much, in public, will need that chastened spirit, that matured judgement, that subdued and mortified mind, that broken will, that mellow tone, which are the sure and beautiful result of God's secret discipline; and it will, generally, be found that those who take a prominent place without more or less of the above moral qualifications, will, sooner or later, break down.

Lord Jesus, keep thy feeble servants very near unto thine own Most Blessed Person, and in the hollow of thine Hand!