

The Berean Expositor

Acts xvii. 10, 11

“Study to show thyself approved unto God,
a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the Word of truth”

II Tim. ii. 15

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DEAR FELLOW-MEMBERS,

By the grace of God we are enabled to issue another volume of *The Berean Expositor* and for this we are thankful. We have no spiritual “gimmicks” to offer, only the faithful exposition of the Word of God in all its fullness, keeping in mind the sacred deposit of Truth first given through the Apostle Paul and preserved to us today.

We give our heartfelt thanks to all who have made this possible not only in this country, but also abroad. We have the privilege of being “fellow workers together”, not only to make known the gospel of God’s grace, but also “to make all see what is the dispensation of the Mystery (Secret) which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God” (Eph. iii. 9). May the Lord keep us loyal and fruitful in this witness for Him. We go forward with the assurance that His grace and strength are all-sufficient and that He can and will give the “increase” which will be to His glory.

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November 1966.

INDEX

GOAL OF GOD, The (I Cor. xv. 28)--	
God is, and always has been, "all in all" in creation	8
An examination of the term "All in all"	10
An examination of the term "all things under His feet"	13
HEBREWS--	
One Sacrifice for sins for ever (ix. 23 - x. 18)	17, 22
Perdition, or the saving of the soul (x. 19-39)	29
Let us draw near . . . not draw back (x. 19-39)	36
"The substance of things hoped for" (xi. 1)	40
The Perfecting of Faith—Abel and Enoch	47
Noah and Abraham, Inheritors (xi. 7, 8)	54
Abraham, The obedience that inherits (xi. 8)	58
Faith, Pilgrimage and Earnest (xi. 9-19)	62
Crossed Hands or Restoration (xi. 20-22)	70
Moses, the faith that triumphs	77
Faith and the better thing	84
INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES, The--	93
MEDITATIONS ON PSALM LI.--	
The Historical Setting of the Psalm	6, 105
OCCASIONAL MEDITATIONS	6
ON THE THRESHOLD--	
(II Cor. v. 9)	107
(Matt. xvi. 24)	108
PLAN OF GOD, The--	109-153
THE PLEROMA--	
The title, Head, and its relation to "The Fullness"	154-168
THESSALONIANS, FIRST EPISTLE TO--	169-192
THESSALONIANS, SECOND EPISTLE TO--	193-213
TITUS, The Epistle to--	214-243
THINGS THAT BE OF GOD--	

**Things that be of God.
The Gospel of God (Rom. i. 1).
pp. 179, 180**

Recognizing as we must, that the Epistle to the Romans is not milk for babes, but indeed strong meat for the man of God, it is most important to note that, in the very first verse of this fundamental epistle, the Apostle places “The Gospel of God”, and not only so, but when in chapter xvi. he closes this epistle with a reference to “The mystery, kept in silence in age times”, he nevertheless relates this advanced doctrine with what he there calls ‘my Gospel’ (Rom. xvi. 25-27). These two sections have a correspondence which it is wise to observe:

The Outer Section Introduction Rom. i. 1-7	The Inner Section Conclusion Rom. xvi. 25-27
The Gospel of God. Concerning His Son Jesus Christ. Promised afore by Prophets. Grace from God our Father.	My Gospel. The preaching of Jesus Christ. Through prophetic writings. Praise to everlasting God.

The great theme of this Epistle is summed up in the words “Justification by faith, without works of law”. The fact that there is an overruling theme in this epistle must be kept in mind. However deep or high, however intricate, whether doctrinal, dispensational or practical in character, it is the Gospel of God. In these brief articles we are confining ourselves to the “Things that be of God” and it is “The Gospel of God” that awaits us on the very threshold.

Sing we now the happy tidings,
God's good news about His Son.
Promised in the Holy Writings,
He the mighty task has done.
Woman's Seed so long predicted,
Who should bruise the serpent's head.
He the fatal blow inflicted,
Rose in triumph from the dead.

He Who took the seed of David,
Was as God's own Son proclaimed.
Power of God to sinners saved.
Though by sinners still defamed.
Now in risen power and glory,
Yet on earth to be adored.
Israel shall bow down before Thee—
David's Son and David's Lord.

Blessed gospel of salvation,
Who of such would be ashamed?
Power of God in every nation,
Where the gospel is proclaimed.
Righteousness of God revealed,
Faith its source and faith its goal.
He is faithful, and has sealed
All whose faith has made them whole.

F. BARTLETT

Occasional Meditations.
Zech. xiii. 7 and Gen. iii. 21 - 24.
pp. 219, 220

It will be remembered that in Gen. iii. 24 there is an allusion to what was afterwards typified in the Tabernacle, with the one difference that in Genesis we have the flaming sword, while in the Tabernacle it is the presence of God, and the atoning blood. A moment's reflection will show that there is an obvious connection between the blood and the sword.

When the sword has fallen upon the victim it has done its appointed work, if that victim be of God's appointing. Zech. xiii. 7 provides some wonderful teaching in this context.

In the preceding verses, the prophet refers to the last days when Israel will be back in their own land, and to the work of cutting off sinners at the commencement of the Millennium. False prophets are also referred to, and the succeeding verses speak of two-thirds of Israel being cut off. What is the reason for the sparing of the third part to be saved? They certainly are not better than the others, for this would set aside the whole of revealed truth as to man's corruption. The answer to the question is provided by the principle of vicarious suffering. A righteous One is cut off in the place of the unrighteous ones, so that they may be righteously brought into the presence of a holy God.

In verse 7 the sword of God's anger is called upon to awake. The guilty may well tremble in view of the day when the Lord lifts up His glittering sword (Rom. xiii. 4). Anger if prompted by passion may be averted by entreaties, but anger set in motion by justice, as the arm of vengeance for a broken law, is unmoved by sentiment and can only be stayed by the law itself being fully vindicated.

And so we come, with the knowledge that we are treading on holy ground, to the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. The One against Whom this sword awakes is called "My Shepherd", in striking contrast with the idol shepherd of xi. 16, 17, for he is Antichrist. The Shepherd of xiii. 7 is Christ.

The phrase 'the man that is My fellow', in verse 7, implies the closest possible fellowship and nearness. Since the fall of Adam and the expulsion from the garden, all men by nature have been alienated from God. In Gen. iii. the promised Seed is to conquer; but here it is the Lord Who is smitten. The apparent contradiction is resolved when we remember, that by dying He 'destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil'. The One Who was to bruise the serpent's head was Himself to be bruised in the heel in the process. The stroke of vengeance, we see here, is administered by God Himself, and John provides a wonderful commentary on this verse. The Shepherd Who

said 'I and My Father are one' in John x. 30, is the One Who gives His life for the sheep.

Dear fellow-believer, you who have already some experience of approaching the Mercy Seat, through faith in the blood of Atonement, keep well before the heart and mind "The goodness and severity of God"; that love was never to be exercised at the expense of righteousness, and that OUR access caused HIM to cry:

"My God My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

The Goal of God.

(I Cor. xv. 28).

No.1. God is, and always has been, “all in all” in creation. pp. 9 - 11

A plan of action, presupposes a goal toward which everything contributes either by way of direct purpose, incidental assistance, or the overruling and directing of evil antagonism. That such a purpose is an integral part of the Scriptures is evident to all who have studied its teaching with any approach to understanding. To most of our readers, it is the goal of the ages, the purpose, which gives a life pulse to the most formal and ceremonial parts of Scripture, even as it crowns the most glorious of the triumphs of redeeming love. The goal of the ages is expressed in one statement made by the apostle Paul:

“That God may be all in all” (I Cor. xv. 28).

It would be only too easy at this point to allow ourselves to be turned aside from the main purpose of our inquiry, to the unfruitful debate which gathers around the Divine intention expressed in the second word “All”. To the question of the disciples:

“Lord are there few that be saved?” (Luke xiii. 23).

His answer was in effect, ‘see to it that *you* are’.

In the series of articles entitled “The Reconciliation of all Things” which ran through Volume VI *The Berean Expositor* we have given the answer that we find in Scripture as to the number comprehended by the ‘all’ who are reconciled and redeemed. That is not our chief quest now. For our present purpose it makes no difference to our approach or our conclusion whether ‘all’ is limited to Adam’s seed, to believers, to the elect—or whether it is as universal as creation itself—our concern is rather with the intention behind the first word ‘all’ of I Cor. xv. 28. What does it mean when it says “That God may be ALL in all”?

If we turn our thought to the witness of the heavens and observe the silent obedience of sun, moon and star, or if we consider the testimony of the creation around us, and observe the unbroken obedience—that is ever and always going on in the world of chemistry or biology, we can say that here, in this irrational unmoral creation, God is and always has been “All in all”. Never in the experience of human observation has the sun refused to rise and set, never has the ocean grown weary of its tidal regularity, never has the power of gravitation, or the law of chemical combination been transgressed. This fact is fully recognized in the Scriptures.

“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created” (Rev. iv. 11).

“And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory,

and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever”
(Rev. v. 13).

If the words ‘every creature’ are construed as inclusive of mankind, then the rest of the book of Revelation, with its revolt, blasphemy, wickedness and wrath is inexplicable, but if they refer to creation apart from men and angels, all is harmony.

Throughout the Scriptures we find references to the perfect submission of all creation to the will and power of the Creator.

“Fire and hail; snow and vapors; stormy wind, fulfilling His word” (Psa. cxlviii. 8).

“He sendeth forth His commandment upon earth; His word runneth very swiftly. He giveth snow like wool; He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth forth His ice like morsels: Who can stand before His cold? He sendeth out His word and melteth them: He causeth His wind to blow, and the waters flow” (Psa. cxlvii. 15-18).

There is, however, no need to multiply these evidences. The reader will call to mind many a passage where sun and star, or the humbler creatures of earth are revealed as entirely subservient to the Divine Will. God has always been ‘all in all’ as *Creator*. without this perfect alignment creation would vanish and the whole fabric turn to chaos. He upholds all things and by Him all things consist. That, therefore, cannot be a future *goal* which has always been in existence from the beginning. When we look again at I Cor. xv. 28, we find that it is in a context that speaks of rule, authority, power, enmity, resurrection, immortality, sin, law, death and victory. These terms do not belong to science, they are out of place when dealing with creation as such, they are entirely related to man, his nature, his fall, his redemption and his final oneness with God. The goal of the ages expressed in the words “That God may be all in all” therefore looks to the one great exception in the earth—to man, the moral, reasonable creature, who can and did, by the very fact that he was moral and not mechanical, come under the category of ‘ought’ and in connection with whom even God uses the contingent “IF”. God Who is already ‘all’ in creation, will one day be ‘all’ within the moral realm; but whereas in the realm of irresponsible creation “He spake, *and it was done*”, the question never arose as to whether fire and hail, snow and vapours, or stormy wind, would or would not fulfil His Word; the creation, constitution and the probation of the first man, a responsible creature, as recorded in Gen. i.-iii. reveals an entirely different proposition. Here, the Lord does not ‘speak’ and find it done. In the material world, He had but to say “Light be”, and “Light was”, but in the moral and the spiritual world, no such instantaneous command or response was or is possible. In the very nature of the moral world, *compulsory* obedience, *compelled* love, *coerced* sanctity or *commanded* affection are impossible. Where probation has no place in the obedience of creation to the laws of its being, time and experience are essential factors in the work of grace in the moral sphere. It may have been necessary that the fitting of the earth for man should occupy six days, followed by one day’s rest, in order that it foreshadow the course of the ages, but the reader of the Scripture is made abundantly alive to the fact, that God was under no more physical *necessity* to occupy six days in the work, than He Who fainteth not nor is weary, was under any *necessity* to have the seventh day set apart for rest. With regard to man, however, and the purpose of his creation, time, probation, testing, experience, suffering, faith, hope, reward, punishment, all have their place, and it is therefore of the very nature

of the subject that it should involve patient waiting, great giving, unbounded love, and grace beyond dreams, before the “all” which characterized God’s pre-eminence in nature should find its echo in the moral world.

When therefore the Apostle wrote “That God may be ALL in all” that ‘all’ must contain within its scope all that goes to make up the moral nature of man, and all that is reflected of the nature of God, both in the law of Sinai, in the gospel of grace, and in the person of Christ. We are now we trust, prepared to give this most important theme our closes attention, and we pray that light and truth may be our guide and goal as we seek to open up the Scriptures.

No.2. An examination of the term “All in all”. pp. 51 - 54

We have seen that when the goal of the ages is expressed in the words “that God may be all in all”, something essentially different from the blind unintelligent unconscious obedience of all creation is involved, for man is a rational being, he is a moral agent, he is actuated by desire, he is influenced by example, he can turn away from the truth, he can say ‘no’ to his Maker. He can be rewarded for service or punished for iniquity, and if God is yet to be “All in all”, with regard to man, then such a goal presupposes a working of laws, and movements of grace that are unknown to the present world of created things. In this article we devote ourselves to the examination of those passages, other than I Cor. xv. 28, where the expression ‘all in all’ is used.

While an exact verbal parallel with I Cor. xv. 28 does not exist, there are four other passages in which the variation is so slight that it would be sacrificing genuine illumination for mere pedantic scruples if we denied ourselves the benefit of their comparison.

The passages are as follows:

- A | I Cor. xii. 6. Members of the Corinthian church.
- B | I Cor. xv. 28. The goal of the ages realized.
- C | Eph. i. 23. The goal set forth in the Mystery.
- A | Eph. iv. 6. Members of the Body.
- B | Col. iii. 11. The goal anticipated.

Let us examine these passages. The first one has to do with “spiritual gifts” (I Cor. xii. 1). These spiritual gifts were very diverse in character. One believer had the spirit of wisdom, another the gift of healing, yet another the gift of prophecy, another the speaking in an unknown tongue; nevertheless, however diverse these gifts may have been,

“All these worketh that one and self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will” (I Cor. xii. 11).

As an illustration of this “diversity in unity” the Apostle takes the human body, with its head, its hands, its feet, its organs of sight, of smell, of hearing, and even those members which have less honour, or are uncomely; and he declares, that:

“God hath set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased Him”
(I Cor. xii. 18).

Paul then reverts to the original theme, namely that of ‘spiritual gifts’ saying:

“God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues”
(I Cor. xii. 28).

Now all this is but an expansion of the statement of verse 6:

“There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God Which worketh *all in all*”
(I Cor. xii. 6).

In order to perceive the strong emphasis that is in this verse on the idea of “in-working”, let us give the verse a literal translation “diversities of *energema* (inworkings) but it is the same God which *energeo* (inworketh) *ta panta en pasin* the all things in all”.

Keeping this feature in mind, but reserving it until we have taken our examination further, let us look at the remaining passages. For obvious reasons, we defer I Cor. xv. 28, until we can approach it armed with the knowledge gained from other sources. Our next passage therefore must be Eph. i. 23. Here we meet with a quotation from Psa. viii., which figures also in the context of I Cor. xv. 28, namely the expression “all things under His feet”, but as this demands separate treatment, we concentrate for the time being on the actual passage which uses the expression “all in all”.

“And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church which is His Body, the fullness of Him that filleth *ta panta en pasi* ‘all in all’.”
(Eph. i. 22, 23).

If we ponder this passage we shall see that the words ‘the fullness of Him that filleth all in all’ are an expansion of the meaning of the earlier part of the verse, thus:

A		a		Head over all things.
		b		To the church which is His Body.
A		a		The fullness of Him.
		b		That filth all in all.

Just as in Col. iii. 11 Christ and the church anticipates the goal of the ages, so Eph. i. 23 anticipates the goal as expressed in Eph. iii. 19:

“That ye may be filled with (or unto) all the fullness of God.”

Christ fills all things. He that descended to the lower parts of the earth, ascended also far above all heavens, with this object:

“That He might fill all things” (Eph. iv. 10).

Not only must He fill all things, we find in Col. i. an intermingling of creative power and supremacy and redemptive pre-eminence associated with the idea of fullness.

He is the “Firstborn of all creation”, because “in Him were all things created” and “He is before all things and in Him all things consists”. He is the “Firstborn from the dead” and as such is the “Head of the Body the Church” so that “in all things” He might have pre-eminence, “for” continues the word of explanation “It was the good pleasure (of the Father) that in Him should all the fullness dwell” (Col. i. 15-20).

God comes down in the Person of Christ so that in Him, man may be brought back to God. So we read that “in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are filled to the full in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power”.

Returning to Eph. i. 22, 23, Christ is Head *now*, He is Head over all things to the Church *now*, even though still rejected by the world; and consequently when we read I Cor. xv. 28 in the light of His present filling of all in all as set forth in this relationship with the Church which is His Body we may catch a glimpse of the glory of that day.

The next passage indicated is Eph. iv. 6, where the emphasis is upon the unity of the Spirit, and the completely satisfying fullness of our God and Father.

“Who is over all, and through all, and in you all” (or as it may read “in all things to you”) (Eph. i. 6) a passage that clearly anticipates the day when “God shall be all in all”.

The last reference is Col. iii. 11. Its context takes us back to the original creation of man and the evident purpose there expressed (Col. iii. 10), but this demands a study itself. Here, moreover, the new man is stressed, another anticipation of that day when He shall make “all things new”. This aspect too we must consider separately. The immediate context stresses the passing away of all those differences of race, creed and caste, of Greek and Jew, who in their new relationship find their wisdom and their righteousness alone in Him (I Cor. i. 30); of circumcision and uncircumcision who find their full acceptance in Him (Gal. vi. 15, 16); of Scythian, bondman and free who alike find their complete emancipation in Him.

“All things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours: and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s” (I Cor. iii. 22, 23).

Nothing short of this spirit will fulfil “the End” (I Cor. xv. 24) towards which the purpose of the ages slowly but surely moves. This, and nothing short of this, will fulfil the words of I Cor. xv. 28.

“That God may be all in all.”

No.3. An examination of the term “all things under His feet”. pp. 149 - 152

We have already quoted Eph. i. 22, 23 but deferred the examination of the words ‘all things under His feet’, so that they may be given separate consideration.

As is known, the words occur for the first time in Scripture in Psa. viii., and they are quoted not only in Eph. i. but in Heb. ii., as well as in I Cor. xv. Connected with this passage we must consider another phrase, namely, “Till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool”, which occurs originally in Psa. cx. and is quoted in Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts and Hebrews. If we attend to the way in which these two passages from the Psalms are originally employed, and then to the way in which the several writers of the N.T. have quoted them, we shall gain further illumination upon the goal of God as expressed in I Cor. xv. 28.

First let us consider Psa. viii. The first book of the Psalms, Psa. i.-xli. (note the double amen at the end of Psa. xli.) is divided according to *The Companion Bible*, into three large sections:

- (1) Psa. i.-viii.: Man and the Son of Man (viii. 4).
- (2) Psa. ix.-xv.: The Man of the earth (Antichrist x. 18).
- (3) Psa. xvi.-xli.: The Man Christ Jesus.

Of this subdivision we are particularly interested in the first, for that includes the Psalm which contains the words ‘all things under his feet’ (Psa. viii. 6).

When we think of I Cor. xv. 28 and Psa. viii. together, we discover that there is in both an enemy; that they both make pointed allusion to sun and star and speak of the glory that pertains to the earth and the glory that pertains to the heavens. Even the flesh of man, fish and birds are compared and contrasted. The frailty of man even at his creation is indicted by the contrast between Adam, the first man, who was made ‘a living soul’, and Christ, the last Adam, the second Man, as a ‘life giving Spirit’. The further frailty of the sons of Adam is revealed in the references to the human body during this life and to the resurrection body of the life to come. “It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.”

We pass now to the reference to Psa. viii. in the epistle to the Hebrews.

“the world to come’ whereof the Apostle speaks is the *oikoumene*, used of the Roman empire (Luke ii. 1; Acts xxiv. 5), of Babylonian empire (Isa. xiv. 17), and of Alexander’s empire (Aelitan V.H. 3:29). Here, the usage of this particular word, links together the Gentile dominion given to Nebuchadnezzar and passed on in turn to Medo-Persia, to Alexander, to Rome and to all succeeding Gentile powers that ‘tread down Jerusalem until finally,

“The kingdoms of *this world* are become the *kingdoms* of our Lord, and of His Christ”
(Rev. xi. 15).

Psa. viii. however recognizes that the glory of the Lord is associated with ‘the heavens’ as well as with the earth. The Psalmist does not people heaven with the redeemed; he sees no other occupants than the sun, the moon and the stars. Nevertheless, those who know the teaching of the N.T. know that there is a higher sphere, higher than all spheres of glory and blessing, now opened to faith by grace, and accordingly, it is fitting that this expression ‘all things under His feet’ should be found once more in the epistle to the Mystery—Ephesians.

In Eph. i. 21-23 where the words occur, we read that Christ has been given to be Head over all things to the Church which is His Body, but not that the Church is under His feet. Principalities, powers, might and dominion are under His feet, and in that position, Christ with all such powers beneath His feet is “Head OVER ALL THINGS to the church” for this church is potentially ‘seated together’ in those high heavens where He now sits, henceforth expecting His foes to be made His footstool. This passage in Ephesians, quite apart from any problems raised, is most certainly the heavenly aspect of the Saviour’s dominion over “all things”, and indicates ‘things in heaven and things on earth’ are being prepared for the final application of redeeming and restoring grace.

We have already realized the great need to distinguish loving submission as exemplified by the Saviour Himself both at the beginning of His Mediatorial condescension, when we read that He was ‘subject’ to His parents (Luke ii. 51) and as its consummation when the Son Himself shall be ‘subject’ (I Cor. xv. 28), from that subjection of enemies who are to be made His footstool (Heb. i. 10, 12, 13), and who are especially visualized in the term ‘under his feet’, but it is important enough to justify a repetition now.

Satan is to be bruised under the saints’ feet shortly (Rom. xvi. 20). All enemies are put ‘under His feet’ (I Cor. xv. 25), consequently, we must distinguish those who are made subject under Him (as He was Luke ii. 51 and will be I Cor. xv. 28), from those who are ‘put under His feet’ as all enemies must be, before the consummation is reached.

There can be no clearer indication of the intention of the words ‘under His feet’ than can be found in the subjugation of the Kings of Canaan as recorded in Josh. x.:

“Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings” (Josh. x. 24),

and we are not left to our own surmisings as to the intention of this symbolic act:

“Thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight” (Josh. x. 25).

Before therefore the goal of the ages can be reached, there must and shall be:

- (1) The willing submission of all the redeemed.
- (2) The putting down of all authority and power.
- (3) The willing submission of the Son.
- (4) The delivering up of the Kingdom to the Father "That God may be all in all".

HEBREWS

Perfection or Perdition

No.40. One sacrifice for sins for ever (ix. 23 - x. 18). pp. 1 - 6

The section of this epistle that lies before us is the last of the series that, step by step, sets aside the Old Covenant with its types and shadows, and leads on unto perfection, and opens with the words:

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near” (Heb. x. 19-22).

This reverses the order in which the subject has been dealt with.

- (1) The perfect Priest (v.-viii.).
- (2) The Heavenly Sanctuary (ix. 1-24).
- (3) The once offered Sacrifice (ix. 25 - x. 18).

We are now to review the teaching of the Apostle on the last and perhaps most critical element of both Old and New Covenants, viz., the sacrifice. The section ix. 23 - x. 18 bases its teaching upon the contrast that exists between the repeated sacrifices of the law and the once offered sacrifice of the New Covenant, the one a shadow, the other the very image.

Hebrews ix. 23 - x. 18.

- A | ix. 23, 24. Patterns and figures of heaven itself.
- B | ix. 25. The offering “often”, “annually”.
- C | ix. 26-28. The offering ONCE.
- A | x. 1-. A shadow.
- B | x. -1. The offering “annually”.
- C | x. 2-18. The offering ONCE.

The cleansing of heavenly things.

In what sense are we to understand that “it was necessary” that the “heavenly things themselves” should be purified? The difficulty arises from the fact that we are not Hebrews and have had no personal contact with the Mosaic economy. In verse 22 we read that “almost all things are by the law purified by blood”, and it will be observed in verses 19-21 that inanimate and consequently unsinning things as “the book”, “the Tabernacle” and the “vessels of the ministry” were purified by the sprinkling of blood. The dedication to God likewise of the heavenly realities can only be by blood, but this time by the precious blood of Christ. The Tabernacle needed purifying on account of the people (Lev. xvi. 16). So “heaven itself” needed to be cleansed, not only because of

those who have heavenly destiny (Eph. i. 10; Col. i. 20), but also because of those who by sin forfeited their heavenly abode (II Pet. ii. 4).

Better sacrifices.

Seeing that the Apostle's argument in this section finds its strength in the fact that Christ offered *one* Sacrifice for sin, as contrasted with the repeated sacrifices of the law, why does he speak of Christ's Offering in the plural, "better sacrifices"? There is a recognized figure of speech in the Hebrew Old Testament called *Heterosis* or "Exchange". It has a wide range into which we will not enter here, the section which includes our difficulty being the *Heterosis* of number. A few examples will suffice:

- Gen. iv. 10. "Bloods" = life's blood.
- Gen. xix. 11. "Blindnesses" = intense blindness.
- Psa. li. 17. "Sacrifices" = the great sacrifice.

This last reference is practically identical with Heb. ix. 23. The Apostle, using a recognized figure of speech, must be understood to mean "the infinitely better sacrifice". While we are dealing with this figure we might observe that in verse 24 "holy places" means "the most holy place", as it is translated in ix. 8.

The end of the world.

In contrasting the offerings made under the law with the Offering of Christ, the writer makes much of the fact that the law offered sacrifices continually, but that Christ offered but one Sacrifice, and one only. Otherwise it would be necessary that Christ should suffer often since the foundation of the world. We know from Heb. ix. 15 that the Sacrifice of Christ was retrospective, and was "for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant", and also from Rom. iii. 25 we learn that the Offering of Christ declared God's righteousness in remitting the sins of the past. The apostle makes a statement in Heb. ix. 26, "But now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (*epi sunteleia ton aionon*), "upon an ending together of the ages". This needs some careful study. The LXX uses the word *sunteleia* in Exod. xxiii. 1-16 in a way which may help us. "Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto Me in the year":

- (1) The feast of unleavened bread.
- (2) The feast of the harvest.
- (3) The feast of the ingathering (*sunteleia*) which is in the end of the year.

Once again may we be permitted to say that those to whom the apostle wrote knew the law and much of its significance? The instructed Hebrew saw in the feasts of Israel, as set out in Lev. xxiii., the plan of the ages. He saw that Christ was the true Passover and the true Firstfruits. The feast of the seventh month, the *sunteleia*, would vividly bring to mind the *sunteleia* of the ages. It has been objected that the "consummation of the ages" has not arrived, and therefore this passage as it stands in the A.V. is not true. The same

objection can be lodged again in Heb. i. 1, for the period called “these last days” was over 1,900 years ago.

When Christ was born, Gal. iv. 4 declares that it was the *fullness of time*. We must avoid the error of introducing truth that belongs to another dispensation to confuse the teaching of earlier revelations. Paul’s prison ministry is, so far as time is concerned, a parenthesis. During the Acts period the coming of the Lord was expected to take place during the lifetime of the believer then living. Peter had no difficulty when he joined together the “blood and fire and pillars of smoke” that have not yet come with the Pentecostal gifts that are long past. Moreover, the objection to the application of the *sunteleia* of the ages to the time of the Offering of Christ robs the passage of another vital connection, viz., the Day of Atonement.

The Day of Atonement, like the feast of *sunteleia*, took place in the seventh month, after the interval that provides a typical anticipation of the parenthesis that has actually come. Yet at the time of writing the apostle finds no difficulty in speaking of Christ’s Sacrifice in the terms of the Day of Atonement. The condition of things during the Acts is likened to the time when the high priest had entered into the holiest of all, during which time the people waited for his second appearing, when they were assured of forgiveness and acceptance. The fact that this second appearing did not take place, that Israel’s forgiveness and acceptance is deferred, that it was all anticipated, deferment as well, in the plan of the feasts of Lev. xxiii., does not alter the teaching of Heb. ix. A somewhat similar expression occurs in I Cor. x. 11, “They are written for our admonition, unto whom the *ends of the ages have reached*” (*ta tele ton aionon*).

The typical happenings to Israel in the wilderness foreshadowed the state of things that would be true at the end, and the Corinthians were living at the time of the end, for so the Scripture of their calling and dispensation declares. The Jews divided all time into three great ages: (1) Before the law; (2) Under the law; (3) After the law. The age after the law they naturally thought of as the Millennium, not knowing that the elective period, when Gentiles were being called, must also be reckoned with.

To put away sin.

What are we to understand by this expression? It is usually taken to mean just what the A.V. says. The word “to put away” in the original is *athetesis* from *atheteo*. Let us examine the usage of these words; we shall then have positive evidence, and moreover the reader will be made independent of the opinions of others.

Atheteo.

Mark vi. 26.	“Reject her.”
Mark vii. 9.	“Full well ye reject the commandment”, margin “frustrate”.
Luke vii. 30.	“Rejected the counsel of God”, margin “frustrated”.
Luke x. 16.	“He that despiseth” (four times).
John x. 48.	“He that rejecteth Me.”
I Cor. i. 19.	“I will bring to nothing the understanding.”
Gal. ii. 21.	“I do not frustrate the grace of God.”

Gal. iii. 15.	“No man disannulleth.”
I Thess. iv. 8.	“He therefore that despiseth” (twice), margin “rejecteth”.
I Tim. v. 12.	“Have cast off their first faith.”
Heb. x. 28.	“He that despised Moses’ law.”
Jude 8.	“These despise dominion.”

We believe that no one after pondering this list of occurrences can avoid the conclusion that *atheteo* means “to set aside” or “to annul” as a covenant or a commandment. The word occurs 57 times in the LXX, and in order that no phase of the meaning should be left unconsidered we have consulted every reference. We cannot spare the space to give them here, and it is not necessary. Every occurrence deals either with rebellion, treachery or the setting aside of covenant obligations. Indeed, in one of the cases the word stands alone, the word covenant being implied. The same remarks are true also of *athetema* (LXX) and *athetesis*.

Athetesis, this word actually occurring in Heb. ix. 26, occurs nowhere else but in Heb. vii. 18. There the passage is rendered:

“For there is verily a DISANNULLING of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.”

Chapter vii. is dealing with the failure of *Israel’s priesthood*; the law concerning priesthood “perfected nothing”. Only in the virtue of a “better hope” can any draw nigh unto God. Chapter ix. 19-28 is dealing with the failure of Israel’s sacrifices; the law concerning sacrifices was a shadow and could not “perfect” those who drew nigh. Only in the virtue of a “better sacrifice” can any draw nigh to God. The parallel is complete. Moreover both sections deal with the removal and failure of the Old Covenant:

- A | vii. 18. The setting aside (*athetesis*) of the commandment concerning the priests.
- B | viii. 8. Finding fault with the first Covenant.
- A | ix. 26. The setting aside (*athetesis*) of the sin offering.
- B | x. 9. Taking away the first Covenant.

It may be objected that where we have inserted “sin-offering” the A.V. says “sin”, but it is recognized by students of Scripture that the word “sin” often stands for the “offering for sin”, and consequently may be so understood here. Heb. ix. 26 is not dealing with the forgiveness or the putting away of sin, it deals with the *abrogation of the sin-offering*, a fact absolutely necessary if Israel were to believe on the Son of God, and to leave the shadows of the Old Covenant. “He appeared to set aside the sin-offering by the sacrifice of Himself.” The reader has only to read Heb. x. 4-9 to find abundant confirmation of this interpretation.

The idea that has been read into this verse by the advocates of Universal Reconciliation that the offering of Christ was “for the repudiation of sin at the conclusion of the aeons” does violence to the order of the words in the original and fails to give the true meaning of *athetesis*. There is not one single instance in either the New Testament or the LXX where the word is used in connection with “putting away sin”, whereas the

consistent usage compels us to see that here, in Heb. ix. as in Heb. vii., the disannulling of a weak and profitless symbol is entirely in harmony with the context and aim of the epistle. Verses 27 and 28 must be read together, as they are two members of one simile indicated by the words “as” and “so”. Some intended likeness must be discovered, for if a contrast were intended we should get the expression used in Rom. v. 15.

Now what is the intention of the writer when he says, “and as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”? The majority of commentators take it to refer to mankind in general, and that the offering of Christ “once” is set over against the dying “once” of verse 27. While this contains truth, we are not persuaded that it is the true meaning of the passage. For one thing there is hardly a deviation from the one great theme discernible in the whole of chapters vii., viii. and ix. Every effort and argument is brought to bear upon the one absorbing theme, the superiority of the Priesthood and Offering of Christ, and the typical teaching of the types and shadows of the law.

Who are “the men”?

“It is appointed to ‘the men’ once to die”. The priests of the order of Aaron are definitely called “*dying men*” (Heb. vii. 8), and “men having weakness” (Heb. vii. 28). So that, to say the least, we may admit the probability that in the context that speaks of the typical Tabernacle priesthood and offerings, “the men” may refer to these same dying priests. It occurred to us at this point to consult the LXX for the usage of “judgment”, knowing that in many cases the word judgment is synonymous with salvation in the O.T. Turning up the word *krisis* we found the list too formidable for the time at our disposal but believing that the key to Heb. ix. 27, 28 lies in the law concerning the cities of refuge, and knowing that Numb. xxv. contains a full statement concerning these cities, we looked to see whether *krisis* occurs in that chapter. It does:

“And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment (*krisis*)” (Numb. xxxv. 12).

This statement is followed by a law making a distinction between a willful murder and a manslayer, and when these distinctions have been made the Scripture continues:

“Then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood according to these judgments (*krimata*): and the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to the city of his refuge, whither he was fled (*katapheugo*): and he shall abide in it unto the DEATH of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil after the death of the high priest the slayer shall return into the land of his possession” (Numb. xxxv. 24-28).

This is the “judgment” equivalent to salvation that was to be pronounced by the congregation, and hinged upon the death of the anointed high priest. It will be seen that such an interpretation harmonizes with the simile here intended:

- A | 27-. And as.
 B | -27-. The men die once.
 C | -27. Judgment.
 A | 28-. So also.
 B | -28-. Christ was offered once.
 C | -28. Salvation.

Judgment and Salvation.

In Judges ii. 16-19 we have the close connection established between the judge and deliverance:

“And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered (*saved*) them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge when the judge was dead, they returned (turned back)” (Judges ii. 18, 19).

The judges of Israel were first of all saviours. This is seen in the judgeship of Othniel and Ehud “The Lord raised up a *saviour* to the children of Israel” (Judg. iii. 9-15). The reader will doubtless call to mind the many passages where the poor, the needy and the righteous call upon God to “judge” them, and such passages as Psa. i. 5 where the ungodly are excluded from “judgment”. It is this Old Testament conception of judgment and the particular exercise of it seen in Numb. xxxv. that must be kept to the fore as we read Heb. ix. 27.

No.41. One Sacrifice for sins for ever (ix. 23 - x. 18). pp. 21 - 27

We continue our study of the nature of the “one sacrifice” which the Saviour offered once for all, by considering,

The Day of Atonement.

The type of the city of refuge is now dropped and the great Day of Atonement is in view. The return of the Lord “the second time” is to be understood in the light of the action of the high priest on the Day of Atonement. There in the holiest of all the high priest appeared in the presence of God for the people (Lev. xvi. 23, 24); then putting on his gorgeous robes he came out to bless the waiting congregation. The apostle could hardly find a grander and more impressive moment in the whole Levitical ritual with which to impress a Jew than this. He, however, refers to it but to draw attention even here to the surpassing excellence of Christ. When the high priest came out from the presence of God, he made a fresh atonement for himself and for the people (Lev. xvi. 24). This shows once more the failure of the type, for when Christ, the true High Priest, appears the second time it will be “apart from a sin offering”—“Christ dieth no more”.

The second appearing of the Lord, in fulfillment of the type of Lev. xvi., will also be His Second Coming, and as we have already indicated, at the time of the writing of Hebrews that Second Coming was imminent. The Lord had ascended, had entered into the presence of God, and had Israel repented and “looked for Him”, He would have returned in His robes of glory and beauty without sin unto salvation. Israel, however, failed. The Second Coming was deferred. A parenthetical dispensation must now run its course before that typical seventh month is fulfilled, and before every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him.

Perfected for ever.

We have already had brought before us the solemn fact that ‘the law made nothing perfect’, and this statement was not allowed to remain merely as a general remark, it was particularized. The priesthood made nothing perfect, the Tabernacle services made nothing perfect, and now we are to have the final argument to show that the sacrifices of the law made nothing perfect, but the teaching of this epistle is not a threefold negative, but is a glorious positive that the one offering of Christ did make perfect in its fullest sense. Chapter x. 1-18 is devoted to this theme.

Hebrews x. 1 - 18.

- A | 1-4. | a | The yearly offerings.
 - b | Not able to *perfect for ever*.
 - c | Those that draw nigh.
 - d | Argument from cessation of offerings.
 - e | Argument from remembrance of sins.
- B | 5-10. | f | The prepared *body*.
 - g | No pleasure in sacrifices.
 - h | I come to do Thy will.
 - i | The first taken away.
 - i | The second established.
 - h | By the which will.
 - g | Sanctified through one offering.
 - f | The *body* of Jesus Christ.
- B | 11-13. | f | The priest *standing*.
 - g | The repeated sacrifice.
 - h | Never take away sins.
 - g | Christ’s one Sacrifice.
 - h | For sins.
 - f | He *sat down*.
- A | 14-18. | a | By one Offering.
 - b | *Perfected for ever*.
 - c | Them that are sanctified.
 - e | Argument from remembrance of sins.
 - d | Argument from cessation of offerings.

“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things” (x. 1).

The Syriac version interprets this clause, “For the law, a shadow was in it, not the substance itself”. Just as in Col. ii. 17 “the shadow” is in antithesis to the “body of Christ”, so here the “shadow” is in contrast with the “very image”, the reality itself. That which cast its shadow in the law is the real thing. Every sacrifice offered upon Israel’s altar was a foreshadowing of the one and only acceptable Offering of Christ.

“Can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year” (x. 1).

The inability of the sacrifices of the law is associated with their repetition, a feature which is enlarged upon in the next verse. The feature that is most important in this verse and which shows up prominently in the structure, viz. A | b, is hidden in the A.V. word “continually”. The English reader sees in it but an extension of the words “year by year”. The Greek reads *eis to dienekes*, “unto the unbroken continuance”. The phrase does not occur outside the epistle to the Hebrews, and in that epistle it occurs four times:

“Abideth a priest *continually*” (vii. 3).

“They offered year by year *continually*” (x. 1).

“One sacrifice for sins for *ever*” (x. 12).

“For by one offering He hath perfected for *ever*” (x. 14).

It will be seen that the phrase is used in connection with the vital theme of the epistle. The Melchisedec Priesthood is “for unbroken continuance”, unbroken by death, as was in the case with every other priest. In connection with x. 1 a complete balance is discovered in verse 14, “perfected unto unbroken continuance”. Verse 1, therefore, reads thus:

“For the law having a shadow of the good things about to be, not the very image of the things, can never with those annual sacrifices which they offer, *perfect unto unbroken continuance* those who draw near.”

The English word “continually” bears two distinct meanings. (1) Frequently, repeatedly; (2) permanently. The translation given in the A.V. of x. 1 uses the word “continually” in the sense of “repeatedly” year by year. This rendering has only to be used in the other passages to demonstrate its unsuitability. “Christ abideth a Priest *repeatedly*” is opposed to both sense and truth. “One sacrifice for sins *repeatedly*” has no meaning.

We have been misled here in x. 1 by the twofold meaning of an English word, and this is not by any means an isolated case. Let us translate *eis to dienekes*, “unto perpetuity”, which phrase is less cumbersome than the more literal rendering given above.

The next verse exposes the fatal failure of every sacrifice offered under the law. *They never touched the conscience.*

This feature has been enlarged upon in ix. 12-14, where the “blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of an heifer” are seen in their typical “purifying of the *flesh*”, and the blood of Christ Who offered Himself without spot to God is seen as the great antitype purging the conscience from dead works, that those thus cleansed may serve the living God. Likewise in the same chapter the apostle, speaking of the gifts, sacrifices, meats, drinks and divers baptisms, says they were imposed until the time of reformation and could never make those who did the service “perfect as pertaining to the conscience”. Further in x. 22 when the controversy is over, the apostle exhorts his readers to:

“Draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.”

Had the sacrifice once perfected the offerer as pertaining to the conscience, no further offering would have been necessary or tolerated. The law was a shadow, it purified the flesh, and its repeated offerings testify to its insufficiency. Further, the very repetition is a continual remembrance of sin, whereas when the New Covenant is in force God says, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more”.

The final setting aside of the sacrifices of the law is made in verse 4:

“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”

The argument now rests upon the very nature of things. Nothing more can be said. Can a shadow save us? Will a ceremonial, an external cleansing satisfy us? Can the blood of an animal make reconciliation for a man? The answer is *No*, and that answer Scripture has already anticipated in the fortieth Psalm.

The prepared body.

In brushing aside the last remaining hope of Israel under the law, and in shutting down any future argument by the word “impossible”, the apostle was but reaching forward to the glorious fact that “what the law could not do, God did by sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. viii. 3). The quotation from Psa. xl. is prefaced by the words, “Wherefore when He cometh into the world”. This can only refer to His first coming in the flesh. He is yet to be brought into the world again, when all the angels of God shall worship Him (Heb. i. 6). We are permitted (let us remember what holy ground is here) to learn the words that the Son of God breathed when the moment came for His birth at Bethlehem. His name was to be called Jesus, for He was coming into the flesh to save His people from their sins by the sacrifice of Himself:

“Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldst not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me” (Heb. x. 5).

When we turn to the Psalm quoted we read:

“Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; mine ears hast Thou opened” (Psa. xl. 6).

It is a fact unquestioned that Psa. xl. gives a translation of the Hebrew, yet the LXX which purports to translate the Hebrew reads as the Greek New Testament it is too wide a subject to discuss here as to how the LXX came by its present rendering; what we may

do is to realize that the twofold statement of Psa. xl. and Heb. x. present two versions of one truth. Just as Matthew and Luke, both recording one utterance of the Lord, use slightly different words to express their phase of the utterance, yet without fully exhausting it, so we must take both Old Testament and New Testament records as supplying a full quotation of the utterance of the Word immediately before He became flesh and tabernacled among us. The Hebrew word “opened” is *karah* and is usually translated “dig”, as a grave, a pit, or a well. The feminine form of the noun, however, *mekurah*, is translated “birth” in Ezek. xvi. 3, and “nativity” in Ezek. xxi. 30. Compare the two references following:

“Thy birth (margin *cutting out or habitation*) and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite” (Ezek. xvi. 3).

“The place where thou wast created, in the land of *thy nativity*” (Ezek. xxi. 30).

This use of the word to *dig* for birth or nativity is parallel with the words of Isa. li. 1, 2:

“Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye *are digged*. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah *that bare you*.”

This strange (to us) use of the word makes the meaning of Psa. xl. clearer. “The ear” being “digged” is by an easy transition “the body” that was “prepared”. The ear standing as it does for obedience, as in Isa. l. 5, 6:

“The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spiting.”

Some expositors see in this expression “mine ears hast thou opened” a reference to Exod. xxi. 6, where the willing servant is taken and his ear bored with an awl as a sign of obedience “for ever”, an act largely the result of love for wife and children who would otherwise be left behind had the man gone free. The word “bore” is entirely different from the word “dig” or “open”, nevertheless the type is too beautiful to ignore, and aptly sets forth that One Who voluntarily laid aside His glory, “and took upon Him the form of a slave and became obedient unto death” (Phil. ii. 7, 8). This body prepared for the Lord set aside all sacrifice and offering, gathering into one Offering the varied phases and aspects of sacrifice and obedience, as it is written in the volume of the book:

“Lo, I come to do Thy Will, O God.”

The four kinds of sacrifices that were ordained by the law, and which were shadows of the one Offering of Christ, are divided into two groups—burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin. The former are a sweet savour to God, the latter for the sins of His people. Both aspects are combined in the one sacrifice of Christ.

By the which will.

It is important when seeking the Scriptural meaning of sacrifice that we bear in mind the teaching of this passage. “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God” is equivalent to “Lo, I

come to do all that burnt offering and sacrifice for sins typified”. By so doing the first Covenant was taken away and the second established (x. 9):

“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second” (viii. 7).

The first Covenant was faulty because it was a shadow, it was weak because of the flesh. It was impossible because its sacrifices were of bulls and goats; it was a failure because it did not touch the conscience. All this has found rectification in Christ. His blood has ratified the New Covenant, His Offering touches the conscience and makes a way into the true holiest of all:

“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. x. 10).

It will help us if we carefully analyse the statements of this verse:

- (1) What is the will of God intended by—“The which will?”
- (2) What is the meaning of the consequence?—“We are sanctified”.
- (3) What means were used to accomplish this will?—“The offering of the body”.
- (4) What constitutes its eternal efficacy?—“Once for all”.

The strange expression “by the *which* will” must mean the “done will” accomplished by Christ. This will done by Christ cannot be confined to the earthly life and perfect obedience of those sinless years, for the very accomplishment of that will is found in “the offering of the body of Jesus Christ” and that as a sacrifice which involved:

- (1) Suffering (Heb. ix. 26; xiii. 12).
- (2) Crucifixion (Heb. vi. 6; xii. 2).
- (3) Shedding of blood (Heb. ix. 14; x. 19).
- (4) Death (Heb. ii. 9; ix. 15).
- (5) An Altar (Heb. xiii. 10).
- (6) A Priest (Heb. xiii. 1; ix. 11).
- (7) A Sanctuary (Heb. ix. 24; x. 19).

It is utterly impossible to avoid the sacrificial character of the work of Christ when thinking of His accomplishment of the Divine will. *That* was the will of God in its essence. The purpose of this will is “sanctification”. Sanctification involves a complete heart dedication to God and His service, set forth typically by the sprinkling of the blood of the Covenant, the people, and the vessels of ministry (Heb. ix. 18-22). Sanctification involves cleansing from both external and internal defilement, set forth typically in the “divers washings” “the ashes of the heifer sprinkling the unclean” (Heb. ix. 10, 13). Sanctification involves access, and sonship (Heb. x. 22; ii. 11-13). Sanctification is the will of God for all His children irrespective of the differences of dispensations under which they have been called.

“Will of God.”

This is seen in Eph. i. 4:

“According as He hath chosen us that we should be holy and without blame.”

And it is accomplished, as in Heb. x., by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, for in Eph. v. 26, 27 and Col. i. 22 we read:

“That He might sanctify that it should be holy and without blemish.”

“In the body of His flesh (nothing could be more definite) through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable (irreproachable) in His sight.”

The eternal efficacy of the Offering of Christ is expressed in the fact that it was offered “once for all”. Over and over again, first from this angle, then from that, the apostle brings to view the repeated offerings of the law and contrasts them with the once offered Sacrifice of Christ. Where there is remission of sin no more offering is necessary. It may be of service to remark that the words “once for all” mean “once for all time” and have no reference to the number for whom the sacrifice was made.

We now come to the close of the long argument that has gathered round the Lord as High Priest and Sacrifice supreme. By way of recapitulation the apostle reminds us that the typical priest “standeth daily offering oftentimes the same sacrifices”, whereas Christ “sat down on the right hand of God”. The sacrifices repeatedly offered were such that they:

“Can never take away sins” (x. 11).

“But this Man, after He had offered one Sacrifice for sins for ever (unto perpetuity)”
(x. 12).

His sacrifice is finished, He now awaits the end, “Expecting till His enemies be made His footstool”. Then emerges the last word of the argument, embodying in itself the essence of chapters vii.-ix.:

“For by one offering He hath perfected for ever (unto perpetuity) them that are sanctified” (x. 14).

This “will” being in absolute contrast with the Old Covenant (*see* x. 1-3 and structure), is in entire conformity with the New Covenant as set forth in verses 15-18.

The effect of sanctification is seen in the laws written in the heart and the mind. The fullness of the sanctification is seen in the fact that “their sins and iniquities will I remember no more”. The completeness, the “perfecting unto perpetuity” of the sanctified is expressed in the words, “there is no more offering for sins”.

“The comers” have been made perfect.

The conscience has been purged.

There is no more remembrance.

There is no need for annual or daily repetition (x. 1, 2).

We now stand at the opening of a new, a practical, section which urges the believer to draw near, to endure, to live by faith, to run with patience. This we must reserve for a future article. The condensed nature of *The Berean Expositor* prevents us from writing

articles that apply the doctrines of Scripture, touch the affection or stir the spirit. Such is not our mission, but we do earnestly pray that none will contemplate either the great Offering or its marvelous results without heartfelt thanksgiving and desire for fuller practical consecration.

**No.42. Perdition, or the saving of the soul (x. 19 - 39).
pp. 41 - 48**

Doctrine has held sway over the reader of this epistle for a long period, but however involved the argument may be, and however multiplied the proofs, it must certainly somewhere before the close, give place to practical teaching and exhortation. To that we have arrived, and it is introduced by the words of verses 19-22, "Having therefore Let us". The exhortation "let us" is valueless without the "having therefore", but so also is the "having" without the practical issue. What does the apostle say these believers have?

Boldness to enter into the holiest. Under the law this was restricted to the high priest, and to the day of atonement. "The high priest *alone once*" (ix. 7). "With the blood of others" (ix. 25). The case is now different. Boldness to enter is the privilege of all believers by the blood of Jesus.

By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us. The legal way was old. "Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (viii. 13). This way is new. *Prosphatos* means primarily "newly slain"; the legal way was dead. "Priests were not suffered to continue by reason of death" (vii. 23). The entrance is "by the blood of Jesus" (x. 19) and "His flesh" (x. 20). The New Covenant demands a new way.

The Lord's flesh is likened to the veil. Of all the many and wonderful suggestions that have been made by commentators as to the meaning here of the veil, none seem worth a second thought that have no place for that historic fact that "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Matt. xxvii. 51) when the Lord Jesus died. The second veil barred the entrance to the holiest of all, "the Holy Ghost thus signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest". The newly-slain and living way means a rent veil.

And having an High Priest over the house of God. As chapter viii. puts it, New Covenant believers have a seated Priest in a heavenly sanctuary. So far the summary of the doctrine, what they "have". Now follows the summary of the practice "let us".

Let us draw near with a true heart. To draw near expresses the full privilege of those who are sanctified. It is a word used nowhere else in the epistles of Paul except I Tim. vi. 3 where "consent" translates the word and shows an entirely different usage.

So special a word we would expect to be stamped with the hallmark “seven”, for that is the number of its occurrences in Hebrews.

The true heart means the heart of the New Covenant realities in contrast with the old Covenant shadows (viii. 10). So we read of the “true” Tabernacle (viii. 2), and of the antitypes of the “true” (ix. 24).

In full assurance of faith. Heb. vi. 11 speaks of a full assurance of hope, and both hope and faith find anchor “within the veil” (Heb. vi. 19; x.20).

To draw near (*proserchomai*).

- A | iv. 14-16. Having a great High Priest,
let us hold fast our profession and *draw near* boldly.
- B | vii. 25. Saved unto all perfection those who *draw near*.
x. 1. Could not perfect unto perpetuity those who *draw near*.
- A | x. 19-23. Having an High Priest,
let us *draw near* with boldness, and let us hold fast our profession.
- B | xi. 6. Those who *draw near* to God must believe that He is.
xii. 18. *Sinai*. Blackness, Darkness.
xii. 22. Zion. Spirit of perfected righteous ones.

Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. The sprinkling here refers to the “ashes of the heifer sprinkling the unclean”, which set forth in type that cleansing of the conscience from dead works, which was only possible through the blood of Christ (ix. 13,14). The washing of the bodies with pure water refers to the spiritual reality set forth in the typical “divers washings” of the law (ix. 10).

Let us let us let us. Three times over comes the beseeching command, let us draw near, let us hold fast, let us consider one another. *The first is God-ward, the second is personal, the third is for others.*

Let us hold fast the profession of our hope without wavering. The word here (*elpis*) is hope, not faith, and refers to “that better hope whereby we draw near to God” (vii. 19). This must be held at all costs “without wavering”. This firm hold of the hope and its profession is in view in Heb. iii. 6 & 14, and to this all the exhortations to endure are directed. Without wavering (*aklines*) may be translated “without bending”. It is the exact opposite of *klino* “turned to flight” (Heb. xi. 34).

For He is faithful that promised. Much is made of the promises in this epistle, indeed *epaggelia* occurs therein fourteen times. Much is made too of the faithfulness of the Promiser, especially in Heb. vi. 13-19.

Let us consider one another. There is a false piety that believes that God is well pleased with a monastic isolation, that God only wrote four commandments and not ten, and that has no room for the love of neighbour, as a corollary to the love of God. This is a travesty of truth. “He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love

God Whom he hath not seen?" (I John iv. 20). The special "provoking" here is to "love and to good works". The word "good" here is not *agathos*, but *kalos* as in Heb. v. 14; vi. 5.

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. The usual interpretation of this passage associates it with attendance at a Christian place of worship. The word "assembling" (*episunagoge*), and its cognate (*episunago*), are never used of an "assembling" in the sense of attending service at church. *Episunago* is used in Matt. xxiii. 37 and its parallel passage for the Lord's desire to gather the children of Jerusalem to Himself as a hen does her chickens. It is used in Matt. xxiv. 31 and its parallel passage of the gathering together of the elect by the angels. It is used in Mark i. 33 and Luke xii. 1, for the crowd who gathered for healing or interest. The only other place where *episunagoge* occurs is II Thess. ii. 1, "The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our *gathering together* unto Him". The apostle by the use of the word "forsaking" evidently glances back to such passages as II Chron. xxiv. 18, where the "forsaking" of the house of the Lord meant *apostasy*, and was visited with wrath, and also to Neh. x. 39 and xiii. 11, where adherence to the house of God indicated loyalty. The "gathering together of ourselves" has value only as it foreshadows the hope of "our gathering together unto Him". At the present time faithfulness to truth and to the blessed hope sometimes cuts us off from Christian assemblies, and this passage must never be used to justify compromise. The present dispensation knows no "place of worship" except where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, for God dwelleth not in temples made with hands. Churches and chapels are conveniences, not essentials.

Hope, the anchor of the soul.

The added words, "so much the more, as ye see the day approaching", confirms the thought that the hope and its gathering together is all the while in view. As *we* see the day approaching we must confess that it has often cut us off from assembling with the Lord's people, simply because corporate testimony has gone the way of all the earth.

A further confirmation of this higher and fuller meaning is found in the argument that immediately follows. The forsaking of the assembly is called a "willful sin after the reception of the truth", and for such "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins". Under the law sins were placed under two heads:

- (1) Sins of omission, ignorance, and inadvertence (Lev. iv. 2, etc.).
- (2) Sins of presumption, high hand, malice aforethought (Numb. xv. 30, 31).

Apostasy from the profession of the hope had the character of presumptuous sin, for which the law made no provision. That David (as in Psa. li.), for example, could be forgiven, shows that a fuller Sacrifice is found under the gospel than under the law, but the apostle does not bring this forward, neither does he mitigate the severity of the judgment that is pronounced against such. "Fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries", "died without mercy", "of how much sorer punishment", "vengeance is Mine", "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God", all stress the extreme severity of the penalty. "Trodden under foot the Son of God", "counting the blood of the

Covenant unholy”, “doing despite to the Spirit of grace”, these terms reveal the enormity of the sin of turning back to Judaism. In this light, Heb. vi. 1-8 is to be read, to which the word “illuminated” of x. 32 evidently refers. These are the only occurrences of *photizo* in Hebrews.

Things that accompany salvation.

Just as the apostle in Heb. vi., after speaking in severe terms of apostates, turns to the Hebrew believers saying, “But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak” (vi. 9), so here in Heb. x. 32 he continues:

“But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions.”

There is also blessed condescension to the frail and the weaker faith. Not only does he call to remembrance the conspicuous hero of the fight, but the more reticent and less observed partner in the fight. Some were made a “gazing stock”. Not so much is said of violence, or of actual suffering, but this reference shows that the Lord enters into that shrinking which most of us have of being pilloried for our faith. Blessed truth, He knows, and weighs these things in the balance of the Sanctuary. They might have gone free from observation. They might have remained quietly shielded, but they are remembered in that they became “companions” of them that were so used. Instead of the reading, “Ye had compassion of me in my bonds” the texts read, “of those in bonds”. This epistle to the Hebrews does not teach that the writer (Paul as we believe) was a prisoner at the time of writing. They also took with joy the spoiling of their possessions, probably by “extortion” as the words are rendered in Matt. xxiii. 25.

“Knowing that you have for yourselves a better and enduring possession” (Heb. x. 34).

The text omits the words “in” and “in heaven”. Upon this series of admonitions the apostle rests his exhortation:

“Cast not away therefore your confidence (boldness, x. 19), which hath great recompence of reward” (x. 35).

What they did need was patience. Patience is essential for perfecting. The epistle of James is written around that thought. The first chapter opens with it (verses 3, 4 and 12), and the fifth chapter closes with it, “Ye have heard of the *patience* of Job, and have seen the *end* of the Lord” (James v. 11). “The day” was approaching. That day was the coming of the Lord, “for *yet a little*, and He that shall come will come, *and will not tarry*” (Heb. x. 37). This coming was a possibility at this time, conditional on Israel’s repentance (Acts iii. 19-26).

The quotation from Habakkuk.

This introduces the quotation from Habakkuk which figures so prominently in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians. The words “The just shall live by faith” are divisible under three heads and the apostle has taken this course with the verse.

“*The just by faith shall live*” (Rom. i. 17). The argument of Rom. i. is concerning the provision of righteousness. “The just *by faith* shall live” (Gal. iii. 11). The argument of Gal. iii. revolves around works of law, and faith. “The just by faith *shall live*” (Heb. x. 38). The argument of Heb x. and xi. is entirely devoted to “*living by faith*”. Here we have a splendid example of exhortation, where doctrine and practice are both given their place. Referring once again to Heb. vi. 12 we read of “faith and patience” inheriting the promises. Out of the thirty-two occurrences of *pistis* (“faith”) in Hebrews, 29 are found in this practical section x. 19 - xiii. 25.

The essence of the test of Habakkuk (ii. 3, 4) seems to be found in the words “though it tarry, wait!” The delay, the silence of God (Hab. i. 1-4) is solved by the assurance that “the vision is yet for an *appointed time*”. The waiting does not mean that God is indifferent. All the details of His purpose have an appointed time. This fact of itself should enable us to wait. Further, “at the end it shall speak and not lie”. When the time does come, nothing can prevent God from speaking, acting, delivering, or doing whatever is particularly required. Yet further, the feeling of delay is merely human. “Though it tarry it will surely come, it will not tarry”. It is here that the prophet writes the words which are repeated and interpreted with such fullness by the apostle Paul, “the just shall live by his faith”.

The Hebrew believers had suffered the spoiling of their goods, and a reference to Hab. iii. 17, with its sixfold failure of fig, vine, olive, field, fold and stall, places them in the goodly fellowship of the prophets. The better and enduring possessions that they had are found in Hab. iii. 19, “The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds’ feet, and He will make me to walk upon mine high places”. Living by faith is placed in contrast with “drawing back unto perdition”, and this drawing back is in its turn contrasted with “believing unto the acquiring (not "saving") of the soul”.

Perfection or Perdition.

We are here confronted with a group of problems which will repay all the time devoted to their solution. The two words that provide the key to the difficulty are *perdition* and *saving*. What is perdition? Does this passage teach that a believer who does not hold fast the profession of his hope can draw back and finally be cast into *hell*? However we may object to the phrasing, that, bluntly, is the difficulty before us. In searching for an answer which would satisfy the demands of all Scripture, we discovered that there are three sets of passages in which *perdition* is used as the alternative to *perfection*, and this relationship of the words is of itself illuminating. The first Scripture is this epistle to the Hebrews. It hardly needs demonstrating that the epistle is summed up in the words of chapter vi. 1, “Let us go on unto perfection”, and that x. 39 provides the alternative, “draw back to perdition”. It may be objected that as this emphasizes the very verse we seek to understand, our use of it is biased and unfair. We therefore turn to the second passage (Phil. iii.), where “Let us go on unto perfection” is expressed by the words, “Not as though I were already perfect, but I follow after” (Phil. iii. 12).

“As many as would be perfect” (Phil. iii. 15) are exhorted *positively* to follow the example of Paul; and *negatively* to avoid the example of those whose end is *perdition*. Now it does not seem possible that a church that had reached such a height of spiritual experience as that attained by the Philippians should need to be solemnly warned not to follow the example of the ungodly. Those who were more likely to cause a slip and possibly a forfeiture were those believers who were following the policy expressed in the words, “making the best of both worlds”. These caused the apostle to weep as he spoke of their walk, and summarized it as the walk of those who were:

“The enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is *perdition* (A.V. destruction), whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, *who mind earthly things*” (Phil. iii. 18, 19).

The last statement proves that those enemies are not the unsaved, for how can an unsaved man mind anything else but earthly things? To believers Paul can write, “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. iii. 2). Such believers as those Philippians referred to in iii. 18, 19 constitute themselves the enemies of the *cross* of Christ, for that cross speaks of separation from the things of the flesh and the world.

Keeping this passage in mind we look at the third, viz. The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v.-vii.). The exhortation to endure, to suffer with the reward of the earthly kingdom in view, has only to be mentioned to be accepted as the main theme of this sermon. Its goal is expressed in Matt. v. 48, “Be ye therefore *perfect*, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect”. The word *perdition* comes later, in Matt. vii. 13, “Broad is the way, that leadeth to *perdition* (A.V. destruction)”. The passage immediately goes on to say, “by their fruits ye shall know them” (verse 20).

Here we have three occasions where these words occurs as the two poles of their respective contexts. Still the question remains, What is intended by the word *perdition*? Perdition, as some of its contexts indicate, can mean utter destruction, as of the Man of Sin, but if we could only find a passage where the word is used without any doctrinal or theological meaning we could then understand how such a word could be used of so vastly different subjects. In the providence of God such a passage exists, and moreover is used by Matthew who has provided one of the sets already:

“There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment To what purpose is this WASTE (perdition)?” (Matt. xxvi. 7, 8).

Before proceeding, let us be sure we understand the meaning of the alternative, “perfection”. *Teleios* is cognate with *telos*, and *telos* means the end, the goal. To go on unto perfection is to reach one’s goal. That this is innate in the word, two passages will show. In Phil. iii. 12 Paul explains what he means by being perfect, by adding, “That I may apprehend that for which I am also apprehended of Christ Jesus”, and in Gal. iii. 3 he places “perfected” in antithesis to “begin”: “Having *begun* in the spirit, are ye now *made perfect* (ended, as it were, finished) by the flesh?” Perdition set over against perfectness then means to end in *waste* instead of in triumph. Therein lies the tragedy of drawing back. The foundation is laid, the builder will be saved, but he may be saved yet

“so as by fire”. He may not himself be *lost*, but he may “suffer loss”, and see his life’s work turn to smoke (I Cor. iii.). This was the dreadful possibility before the Hebrews.

Saving (purchasing) the soul.

Peripoiesis translated “saving” occurs but five times in the New Testament, viz.:

- “The redemption of the *purchased possession*” (Eph. i. 14).
- “To *obtain* salvation” (I Thess. v. 9).
- “To the *obtaining* of the glory” (II Thess. ii. 14).
- “The *saving* of the soul” (Heb. x. 39).
- “A *peculiar* people” (I Pet. ii. 9).

Peripoieomai is translated “purchased” in Acts xx. 28, and “purchase” in I Tim. iii. 13.

Not only must we have the true conception of this word “saving”, but we must also be sure that we have no traditional warp regarding the expression saving the “soul”. It is used in evangelical preaching and literature as though it means the salvation of the sinner, but the striking thing is that Paul has no use for the expression. Peter uses the words “the salvation (*soterian*, not *peripoiesis*) of your souls”, but not in the sense usually employed, for he speaks of it as the *end* of their faith and of “salvation ready to be revealed in the *last time at the revelation of Jesus Christ*” (I Pet. i. 5-9). So far as the present is concerned, believers are exhorted rather to *lose their souls* than to save them; which, however, is not a popular expression today. The moment we see this we are on the track of the truth of Heb. x., and Matt. xvi. supplies the key:

“If any man will come after Me, let him *deny* himself, and take up his *cross*, and follow Me. For whosoever will *save his life (soul)* shall *lose it*: and whosoever will *lose his soul* for My sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall *gain* the whole world, and *lose his own soul*? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and *then* He shall *reward* every man according to his works” (Matt. xvi. 24-27). (Soul and life translate the one Greek word *psuche*).

The man who denies himself, and takes up his cross, *loses his soul* in this life. If he turns back to the good things that he has relinquished, making his belly his god, and finding his glory in his shame, *he saves his soul* in this life, but becomes the enemy of the cross, for he has refused to bear it. The one who is willing to lose his soul for Christ’s sake will find it when the Lord gives *reward* at His Coming. All this is intended by the words of Heb. x. 39. Here, as in Heb. vi., hope is the anchor of the soul, is connected with the obtaining of the promises, enters within the veil, and belongs to those once “enlightened”. Heb. xi. which immediately follows contains a list of Old Testament saints who *lost their souls* for Christ’s sake, to find them in the better resurrection.

As this chapter is so important, and we have one special feature to make clear, we conclude this study at this point. We trust that the close parallel that is observable between Matthew, Philippians and Hebrews will not be without salutary effect upon us all. Let us go on unto perfection; let us remember the awful *waste* of precious opportunities that will be ours if we “neglect so great salvation”, if we neglect to “work

out our own salvation”. The body of our humiliation is soon to be fashioned like unto the body of His glory. A little while and the time will come, “the appointed time” for which we wait. Let us then take heart. We have need of patience. Let patience have her *perfect* work, that we may be perfect and entire, *lacking nothing*.

**No.43. Let us draw nearnot draw back (x. 19 - 39).
pp. 61 - 64**

We have seen that the whole teaching and exhortation of the epistle to the Hebrews may be summed up under two phrases:

- (1) Let us go on unto perfection, or
- (2) Draw back unto perdition.

The examples of those that draw back to perdition are those whose carcasses fell in the wilderness (Heb. iii.), those who are “dull of hearing” and never advance from being “babes” (Heb. v.), or who like Esau despise their birthright (Heb. xii.), or prefer Sinai to Sion (Heb. xii.). Here we find such alternatives as:

SHADOW and VERY IMAGE
FIGURE and TRUE
WORLDLY SANCTUARY and HEAVENLY HOLLIEST OF ALL
OLD COVENANT and NEW COVENANT
FLESH CLEANSED and CONSCIENCE CLEANSED
MOUNT SINAI and MOUNT SION
VANISHING and REMAINING,

all set forth, with earnest instruction and entreaty, to urge along the upward path to perfection, and to shun apostasy and perdition. Heb. x. 19-39, the passage before us, takes up this double exhortation. Doctrine has reached its zenith at verse 18, and from verse 19 to the end of the epistle it is largely a matter of exhortation. The double theme sets the bounds of the section before us.

- A | 22. Let us *draw near*.
In full assurance of faith.
- A | 38, 39. We are not of them who *draw back* but,
Believe to the saving of the soul.

Havinglet us.

No exhortation in Scripture stands alone. Beneath the feet of practice stands privilege. The fruit of good works derives its nourishment from the root of grace. If the apostle says, “Let us”, he will also say, “Having therefore”.

“Having therefore boldness . . . High Priest”	Let us draw near Let us hold fast Let us consider one another (x. 19-24).
“Seeing we are encompassed”	Let us lay aside Let us run with patience (xii. 1, 2).
“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom”	Let us have grace Let brotherly love continue (xii. 28 - xiii. 1).
“Wherefore Jesus suffered without the gate”	Let us go forth therefore Unto Him without the camp (xiii. 12, 13).

Here are four groups of teaching which space out the remainder of the epistle, and each group manifests the same feature. The strongest preventative against “drawing back” is evidently to “draw near”, and we have every reason to draw near seeing that we “have therefore” boldness of access, and a great High Priest.

The new and living way.

The old typical way into the holiest is not the way that one must pass who desires to go on unto perfection.

“The way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service PERFECT, as pertaining to the conscience” (Heb. ix. 8, 9).

In place of the old and typical way stands the new and living way, “newly slain”, as the word *prosphatos* means etymologically, although we cannot discover any example of its usage that will warrant the doctrine that appears to lie in this suggestive word. The second element evidently became superfluous in New Testament times. This new and living way has been consecrated, or dedicated, for us. Heb. ix. 18, using the word, reads, “Neither was the first covenant dedicated without blood”. Consecration or dedication here includes the idea of something “new” or as we might say “initiation”. Consecration in Heb. vii. 28 has the entirely opposite thought of attaining an “end”.

<i>Teleioo</i>	Heb. vii. 28	To perfect, bring to full <i>end</i> .
<i>Egkainizo</i>	Heb. x. 20	To initiate, bring in <i>new</i> .

Here is the introduction of something new in its consecration, new in its constitution, a new way, newly dedicated.

Reconciliation by Incarnation?

The way into the holiest of all is “through the veil, that is to say His flesh”. The connection between the Incarnation and reconciliation is a theme that attracts many believers and teachers. The fact that Christ became man, and, as they express it, brought His Godhead down to our humanity that He might lift our humanity up to God, is not the

Scriptural basis for reconciliation. Heb. ii. 14 most surely reveals the absolute necessity for the Lord to partake of flesh and blood, but it as surely declares the purpose to be:

“That THROUGH DEATH He might destroy and deliver” (Heb. ii. 14, 15).

Or again, in Heb. x., if we read in verse 5 of a “body prepared”, we read in verse 10 of that body “offered”. Not by Incarnation but by His one Sacrifice are we saved and sanctified. Calvary and not Bethlehem is the place of redemption, and though the crib at Bethlehem was necessarily the first step, it is the cross of Calvary that is the consummation. There could be no access into the holiest of all until “the veil, that is to say His flesh” was rent in twain from top to bottom (Matt. xxvii. 50, 51).

The three-fold exhortation.

Let us *draw near*. Let us *hold fast*. Let us *consider*. The true heart with which we are exhorted to draw near is consonant with the fact that Christ is the minister of the *true* Tabernacle (Heb. viii. 2; ix. 24). Instead of external washings, this heart is sprinkled from an evil *conscience*. The bodies washed with pure water seems to be a reference to the washing of the high priest and the Levites (Lev. xvi. 4; Numb. viii. 7), which type is fulfilled in the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience.

Side by side with this three-fold exhortation is seen the abiding three “Faith, hope and love” (Heb. x. 22-24). As we see these graces in their context we realize that to the Hebrews, as to the Corinthians (I Cor. xiii.), and to the Thessalonians (I Thess. i. 3), “these three” are the true antidote to apostasy.

Drawing back into perdition.

There is an evident parallel between Heb. ii.-iv. and Heb. x. 19 - xii. 3. In both passages we see the evil heart of unbelief that departs from the living God. In both the true antidote is “Let us draw near”. In both there is the holding fast of the “confession”. In chapter iii. we have stressed those who failed to enter in because of unbelief. In chapter xi. we have those who “through faith” obtained promises and triumphed. The two-fold title of Christ, “The Apostle and High Priest of our profession” (Heb. iii. 1) is parallel with the two-fold title of Heb. xii. 2, “The Captain and Perfector of faith”. The key to the character of the apostasy that is in view is found in Heb. x. 30:

“Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people.”

These words are a quotation from Deut. xxxii., the great prophetic forecast of Israel’s history given by Moses just before his end. This song of forty-three verses traverses the whole of prophetic times. It reveals the failure of Israel and their setting aside, the period while they are *Lo-ammi*, “not My people”, and provoked to jealousy, and the mercy of the Lord that gathers them back again with rejoicing. Dr. Ginsburg reads Deut. xxxii. 34, 35 as follows:

“Is not this laid up in store with Me, Sealed up in My treasures? *For the day of vengeance and recompense, For the time when their foot shall slip*”,

and this is evidently “the day approaching” of Heb. x. 25. The apostasy foretold by Moses is manifestly at hand in Heb. x., and explains Heb. vi. as well.

Ye have need of patience.

While Israel as a nation were fast slipping away, the apostle turns with renewed earnestness to the tried and tested remnant with words of encouragement and exhortation. He bids them to call to remembrance the former days, in which, after they were illuminated, they endured a great fight of afflictions. Among the elements of endurance that he enumerates are:

Being made a gazing stock.
Being a fellow-partaker of those so used.

There is something very gracious in this recognition. To be a “gazing stock”, a “spectacle”, may not seem half so heroic as some other forms of martyrdom, yet the Lord knows the intensity of mental suffering that some natures may endure. Then, further, the Lord takes note of those who simply stand by and share the sufferings of others. The suffering of “reproaches” associated them with Christ Himself (Heb. xiii. 13), and the “enduring possession” with the “enduring city” (xiii. 14). Early Christians were called by their enemies, atheists, their places of assembly were misrepresented as being convened for most immoral purposes, all of which misrepresentations would constitute a very real suffering of reproach for Christ.

The words “goods” and “substance” should be rendered by the same word, and perhaps “possession” is the most suitable. The words in the original being *huparchonta* and *huparxin*.

“And submitted to the seizure of your possessions with joy knowing in yourselves that you have in heaven, a better and an enduring possession” (Heb. x. 34 not AV JP).

The case of Moses in Heb. xi. 24-26 supplies a very full example of the meaning of the apostle here. He esteemed this “reproach” as greater than all the treasures of Egypt. He too looked unto the recompense of the reward. So he urges these Hebrew saints:

“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Heb. x. 35, 36).

A chapter could well be devoted to the words, “Ye have need of patience”. It is the “patience of hope”, the patience that James speaks of when he says:

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her PERFECT work” (James i. 2-4).

It is evident that the words, “ye might receive the promise”, indicate a long wait and a patient endurance, by the conclusion of the matter in Heb. xi. 39:

“And these all, having obtained (received ? JP) a good report through faith, received NOT the promise.”

What does the apostle bring forward to encourage these tried and tested believers?

The Coming of the Lord.

The relation of the Coming of the Lord to the church of the Mystery has been dealt with elsewhere, but it is here brought forward as the crowning argument in the writer’s testimony:

“For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb. x. 37-39).

No.44. “The substance of things hoped for” (xi. 1). pp. 89 - 95

Chapter x., as we have seen, ends on the exhortation to live by faith. The words “we are not of them who draw back unto *perdition*” imply the alternative, “we are of them who go on unto *perfection*”. In our last study we drew attention to the meaning of perdition when set over against perfection. To live by faith is evidently very closely allied with perfection, and in chapter xii. comes the exhortation to run with patience, ‘looking unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter (*teleiotes*) of faith.’”

For those who have a desire to “go on unto perfection”, here in Christ is the supreme Example. Even as we say the words, however, we are conscious of a great gulf between the Lord and ourselves. It is just here that Heb. xi. so wonderfully fits in and comes to our aid. In this chapter, living by faith is subdivided for us, and we see one phase in one example, and another phase in another, and are gently led on to contemplate the *Perfecter* Himself in Whom all faith was resident in its fullness.

Light from the works of God.

It will be profitable for us to turn aside for a moment from the written Word that we may obtain help from an analogy in the works of God. The light of the sun untinted by the atmosphere through which it comes is pure white. If falling rain or water-mist intercepts the rays of sunlight, we have the phenomenon called the rainbow. We have all seen with pleasure in our childhood the colours of the rainbow caused by a decanter of water standing on a white table-cloth, or by the prism-shaped pendant ornaments that our grandparents had upon the mantle-shelf. These are but demonstrations of the fact that

pure white light is made up of the three primary colours, red, yellow, and blue, and these mingling form the secondaries, orange, green, and violet. For reasons the explanation of which lies outside the scope of this book, the actual spectrum or rainbow is found to contain bands of seven colours, always in the following order: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.

All colour in nature is dependent upon the fact that sunlight contains in itself the whole range of colour that exists. The red rose is called red because the petals have the power of absorbing the blue and the yellow rays of light, and throwing back to our eye the red. A leaf is green because it lays hold upon the red rays and throws back the blue and the yellow. A white chalk cliff throws back all the rays, while a black felt hat retains all the rays. Hence, a white dress is cooler than a black one as the light and heat rays are in measure treated alike. Now it is not our intention to attempt to give a discourse upon the spectrum, wonderful though that may be, but to use the spectrum as an illustration of the place of Heb. xi.

The pure white light of the sun, as representing perfect light, composed of the perfect number of colours, will represent Christ, as set forth in Heb. xii. 2. Heb. xi. will then represent the prism of glass which has the power of splitting up the perfect light of the sun, and so will split up the perfect faith of Christ, and focus a ray of each colour, as it were, upon one or more examples, enabling us to see the better the sevenfold splendour of the perfection of faith in Christ, after having seen the seven aspects of it separately in the lives of others.

Before we go further we must make certain that there are these sets of “sevens”, and so taking nothing for granted we begin to count, (1) Abel, (2) Enoch, (3) Noah, (4) Abraham, (5) Isaac, (6) Jacob, and (7) Sarah. Here the record comes to an end for a time, while verses 12-16 speak of the pilgrim character of faith. It will be observed that a woman ends the series. We commence counting again in verse 17, (1) Abraham, (2) Isaac, (3) Jacob, (4) Joseph, (5) Moses, (6) Israel, and (7) Rahab. We have another set of seven, again ending with a woman. In verse 32 the apostle says that time would fail to tell of all that could be brought forward, but nevertheless the apparently haphazard list that is assembled in this verse still presents the spectrum, (1) Gideon, (2) Barak, (3) Samson, (4) Jephthae, (5) David, (6) Samuel, and (7) the prophets.

The seven-fold division of Heb. xi. being an established fact, we can now proceed to a further examination. How are these lists related to each other? It seems to be a Scriptural principle that truth is confirmed by two or more witnesses. Believing this to be the case, we approached the double list of names that are mentioned in detail, and found that they were arranged in pairs. For example, Abel and Enoch are both connected with death:

“He being *dead* yet speaketh” (verse 4).

“Enoch was translated that he should not see *death*” (verse 5).

The next pair, Noah and Abraham, are related to an inheritance:

Noah “became *heir of* the righteousness which is by faith” (verse 7).

Abraham “was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an *inheritance*” (verse 8).

Isaac and Jacob are mentioned as dwelling in *tents*, heirs with Abraham of the same promise, and looking for a city which hath foundations, so emphasizing their pilgrim character. Sarah and Abraham are by this arrangement brought together in the centre. Here *resurrection* is the theme.

Sarah “received strength to conceive seed of him as good as *dead*” (verses 11,12).

Abraham “offered up his only begotten son accounting that God was able to *raise him up, even from the dead*; from whence also he received him in a figure” (verses 17-19).

Isaac and Jacob are both mentioned together in connection with blessing that overruled the flesh.

Isaac “*blessed* Jacob and Esau concerning things to come” (verse 20).

Jacob “*blessed* both the sons of Joseph” (verse 21).

Joseph and Moses are both closely associated with Egypt. Joseph spoke of the *exodus* of the children of Israel (verse 22). Moses turned his back upon the treasures of *Egypt* (verse 26). Israel and Rahab conclude the series. Both are associated with the fall of Jericho and with being spared during judgment. Israel were saved, while Egypt’s firstborn perished and the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea (verse 29). Rahab “perished not with them that believed not” (verse 31). Thus we have the perfect white light of faith split up into its seven parts:

- A | Faith in connection with DEATH—Abel and Enoch.
- B | Faith in connection with INHERITANCE—Noah and Abraham.
- C | Faith in connection with PILGRIMAGE—Isaac and Jacob.
- D | Faith in connection with RESURRECTION—Sarah and Abraham.
- C | Faith in connection with BLESSING—Isaac and Jacob.
- B | Faith in connection with EGYPT—Joseph and Moses.
- A | Faith in connection with DELIVERANCE—Israel and Rahab.

The three chief features, viz., beginning, middle, and end, emphasize death, resurrection, and deliverance.

A principle of interpretation.

The way in which we are to interpret this series is suggested in Heb. xii. 24. Concerning Abel’s faith Heb. xi. 4 says, “he being dead yet speaketh” and in Heb. xii. 24 we read of the blood of sprinkling that “speaketh *better things* than Abel”. Here is a principle of interpretation. Heb. xi. are types; “the better things” are found in Christ. We can say that Christ’s well-pleasing walk speaketh “better things” than that of Enoch, and so of all the rest. It is helpful to see the rays of light separated and set forth in this example, but their chief good is that they enable us the better to appreciate the fullness that there is in Christ.

The seven-fold analysis of perfected faith that occupies the bulk of Heb. xi. is introduced by a statement that reveals the underlying and essential character of this faith in all and every one of its manifestations; “Now faith is the SUBSTANCE of things hoped for, the EVIDENCE of things not seen.” This passage may be taken apart from its context as a general definition of faith, but its real force can only be appreciated as it is seen at the head of this seven-fold exposition of perfected faith.

Moreover, viewing the statement in its context, it cannot be separated from the closing words of chapter x. There the believer is seen “losing” in this life, but sustained by the consciousness of that “possession of a better and more lasting nature” (x. 34), which was held in faith and prospect. The words immediately preceding the definition of faith in Heb. xi. 1 speak of a future day when those who have “lost their soul” for Christ’s sake shall “gain” or “acquire it”. Now it is evident that if these believers were really to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, they must have had very vividly before them “the better and more lasting possessions” that awaited them in glory.

Substance and evidence.

As we examine the testimony of this chapter to the faith of Abel, Abraham, Moses and others, we shall see how much and how readily they gave up life, home, and wealth for the Lord’s sake, and of them all it could be said that they were sustained by that faith which is the substance of things hoped for. Moses “endured, as seeing Him Who is invisible”. What therefore are we to understand by the words “substance” and “evidence”?

In preparation for this, we covered a fairly wide circle in the examination of this word “substance” and its usage, but nothing revealed the intention of the apostle so well as the way in which it is used in the LXX or Greek version of the Old Testament. *Hupostasis*, the word translated “substance”, is found in a number of passages in the Old Testament, a few of them being given hereafter as illuminating Heb. xi. 1, “And now, Lord, what wait I for? my (*ground of*) hope is in Thee” (Psa. xxxvii. 7). Where the Hebrew had the simple word “hope”, the LXX had “My *hupostasis* (or ground of hope) is in Thee”. “I sink in deep mire where there is no *standing*” (Psa. lxi. 2). In the next reference it is difficult to avoid a lengthy explanation if a literal rendering, together with the LXX parallels, is demanded. It so happens that in the A.V. the two adjoining verses contain the word “substance” as a rendering of other words. We think, however, that sufficient for our purpose will be provided by ignoring the surrounding difficulties, and lifting out the word translated by *hupostasis*. Spurrell’s translation avoids some of the pitfalls.

“My own person was not concealed from Thee, *when I was formed in a secret manner; curiously wrought* in the lower bowels of the earth. Thine eyes beheld me in embryo; and my members, each one of them was recorded in the book” (Psa. cxxxix. 15, 16—Spurrell’s Version).

“My bones which Thou hast made in secret were not hidden from Thee, nor my SUBSTANCE, in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes saw my unwrought (substance)” (LXX translation).

There is much in the passage for meditation. Faith is to the things hoped for as the unborn embryo is to the fully formed and living child. There is much that is secret, dark and mysterious, but the whole presses forward to fullness of life. Such is the underlying thought of Heb. xi. 1. The things hoped for were at the moment “not seen”, they were as yet “unborn” yet very real to faith. As we watch the expectant mother lovingly and quietly preparing the little garments for the life that is not yet manifest, we have God’s own illustration of that faith which is the substance of things hoped for. Let us now examine the second statement:

“Faith is the *evidence* of things not seen.”

Elengchos occurs but twice in the New Testament, Heb. xi. 1 and II Tim. iii. 16. The A.V. translates it once “evidence” and once “reproof”. When we turn to the verb *elengcho* we have a wider field for investigation. The following are the renderings in the A.V., convict, convince, rebuke, reprove, tell one’s fault. In no one place is it ever translated “prove” or “demonstrate”, or by any such word that is parallel to “evidence”. We find the word in Heb. xii. 5 where it is translated “to be rebuked”. Now structurally this passage balances Heb. xi. 1 thus:

Elengchos

- A | xi. 1. Faith. Substance and *elengchos*. A.V. “evidence”.
- B | xi. 2-40. The cloud of witnesses.
- B | xii. 1, 2. The cloud of witnesses.
- A | xii. 3-5. Faith. The *elengchos*. A.V. “rebuked”.

Now if the last passage is rightly rendered “rebuke”, how can the only other occurrence of the word in Hebrews, bound as it is by all the ties of structure and consistent argument, be rightly translated “evidence”? The reader may by this time be ready to consult the LXX again, and the first passage we note will be Habk. ii. 1, “I will stand upon my watch what I shall answer upon my *reproof*”, which is in the immediate context of the quotation, “the just shall live by his faith”. Instead of “proof” we find “reproof”. Let us search this matter further. Now *elengchos* occurs some twenty one times, and *elengcho* some 53 times. It is manifestly impossible to provide a concordance of the occurrences here. We will give a few, but would here assure the reader that every one of these 74 occurrences has been investigated, and that all point in one direction, namely, that *elengchos* does not mean “evidence” but “rebuke”. Let us see a few examples:

- “And Abraham REPROVED Abimelech because of a well of water” (Gen. xxi. 25).
- “Thou shalt in any wise REBUKE thy neighbour” (Lev. xix. 17).
- “The Lord had REBUKED him” (II Chron. xxvi. 20).
- “Behold, happy is the man whom God CORRECTETH” (Job. v. 17).
- “My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of HIS CORRECTION: for whom the “LORD loveth He CORRECTETH” (Prov. iii. 11, 12).

The apostle *has quoted* this passage of Prov. iii. 11, 12 in Heb. xii. 5, 6 and there, instead of giving the word “correction” twice as does the LXX, he uses the word “chasteneth”. For confirmation of this synonym we may turn to Rev. iii. 19, “As many

as I love, I *rebuke* and *chasten*". Those desirous of searching out this matter more fully will doubtless find opportunity. Sufficient has been here noted to show that the primary idea of Heb. xi. 1 is "Faith is a substance of things hoped for, a reproof of things not seen". This, however, does not convey sense to English ears, so we must consider the matter further. As the verse stands in the A.V. we have a repetition. Faith is a substance and an evidence. When we look at the actual thing in progress and in fact, we find that faith has a two-fold association: (1) It looks forward to a future glory; (2) It endures present suffering. The two are linked "For the joy He endured the Cross".

The Hebrew believers would readily believe that faith was the substance of things hoped for. They would rejoice in Enoch's *translation*; but would they so readily rejoice in Abel's *death*? They would rejoice in Noah's *preservation* and *inheritance*, but would they so readily rejoice in Abraham's surrender? Were they ready for the fact to be applied to themselves that these examples of faith all died "NOT HAVING RECEIVED the promise"? Were they ready to follow Moses not only for the *future* reward, but in the reproach and suffering of the *present*? What is this "reproof" then? It is the Lord's discipline meted out in love to every son, to every one of the "many sons" who by this very selfsame Author, Captain, and Perfecter of faith are being led as He Himself was led through suffering to glory (Heb. ii. 10). It is the Gethsemane experience of Heb. v. 7-9, for there in the garden, the Lord sweat as it were great drops of blood, and in Heb. xii. 4 is the application to "every son": "Ye have not yet resisted *unto blood*". Here then is the twofold character of perfected faith. A hand that reaches out on either side to join together suffering and glory. No one can fail to see the tremendous value of such a word to those who were passing through the experiences of these Hebrews at the time of writing the epistle. Here then, in this present time, faith is hope in embryo, with its accompanying sorrows; it is both substance and reproof, both crown and cross.

In attempting the translation of Heb. xi. 1 and retaining the rendering "reproof", care must be exercised in ascertaining the meaning of the genitive case expressed by "of". It may be the genitive of *character*, like "the bond *of* perfectness"; or of *origin*, "the gift *of* God"; or of *possession*, "the sword *of* the Spirit", i.e., "the Spirit's sword"; or of *apposition*, "the firstfruits *of* the spirit", i.e., "the firstfruits (*of our inheritance*), *that is to say*, the spirit"; or *of relation*, "the reproach *of* Christ", i.e., reproach in connection with Christ. Of all these the last appears nearest to the meaning of Heb. xi. 1, "The reproof in connection with faith" being very parallel with "The reproach in connection with Christ", and in this way we should translate the passage. Faith assumes the invisible. Every believer should be able to say, though with purer intent than she who first uttered the words,

"Thy letters have transported me beyond
This ignorant present, and I feel now
The future in the instant."

This faith characterized the elders who received a good report. Report is *martureo*, and this constitutes them the great cloud of witnesses (*martur* of Heb. xii. 1). These elders come before us again at the end of the chapter, "These all, having obtained a *good report* through faith, received not the promise" (Heb. xi. 39), but although they received

it not, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, *but having seen them afar off*, and were *persuaded* of them" (Heb. xi. 13). They had both the substance and the discipline, and these alone will enable the believer to go on unto perfection.

Dispensational truth and faith.

According to the A.V., verse 3 turns aside to speak of the creation of "the worlds". It is reserved for the speculative mind of man to conceive of "worlds". Scripture speaks of the "world". Material creation, however, is not in view here. An "age" was drawing to an end. A dispensation that was secret was about to be introduced. The Hebrew believer could see nothing tangible; things were being shaken, and the apostle draws attention to the fact that:

"By faith we understand that the ages were readjusted by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things that do appear" (Heb. xi. 3 not AV JP).

The word translated "framed" in the A.V., and which we render "readjust" is *katartizo*, and occurs in Heb. x. 5, where it is translated "prepared"; also in xiii. 21, where it is translated "perfect". In both passages "adapt" seems the best translation. That there is a sense of repairing or readjustment in the word can be seen in Matt. iv. 21, the first occurrence, where it is translated "mending", and in Gal. vi. 1 where it reads "restore". The peculiar work of the gifts of the ascended Lord at the inauguration of the new dispensation seems to combine both words. The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers of Eph. iv. were to "readjust and adapt the saints" owing to the cleavage that had come at Acts xxviii.

The Hebrew believers were being shown that a change was imminent. The setting aside of Israel involved a change in the economy of the ages. Not only had these Hebrew believers to have a faith that could grasp the realities while the types and shadows passed away, but they must be prepared to exercise a faith that would appear to have nothing substantial beneath it, except the bare Word of God, and the blessed hope of resurrection. This faith saw no immediate "land" or accessible "city", saw no evident prosperity, no "milk and honey" as a reward for faithfulness and obedience. All its possessions were afar off, and those who were exhorted to "live by faith" were also told of those who "died in faith" without having received the promises, but who saw them "afar off".

These words, weighty in themselves, introduce the seven-fold series of those who each in their turn set forth some one aspect of that faith which in its perfection was exhibited in Christ.

No.45. The Perfecting of Faith---Abel and Enoch.
pp. 101 - 108

The first of the series of examples of perfected faith that is given in Heb. xi. is the two-fold witness of Abel and Enoch, who, though unlike in some respects, are alike in this that they both have to do specifically with death in connection with their faith. Let us give attention in the first instance to the witness of Abel.

The first feature of perfected faith emphasizes the Atonement. Elsewhere we have drawn attention to the two words that mark the difference between Redemption (*exodus* = a leading out), and Atonement (*eisodos* = a leading in). Abel does not speak so much of redemption from sin, as access and acceptance. There are many things that belong to the life of faith, but all service, witness, suffering or warfare are secondary when compared with Abel's initial witness, which gives first place to the recognition of the claims and provision of the holiness of God. Enoch's faith corresponds with this in the fact that it emphasizes both the walk that is pleasing to God, and further that "he that cometh to God must believe that He is".

The faith of Abel.

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh" (Heb. xi. 4).

Here the good *report* becomes both "witness" and "testifying", and the correction should be made in our translation of the passage. We must turn to Genesis in order to see for ourselves the record that is referred to here:

"And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him" (Gen. iv. 3-7).

"In process of time." Literally, "At or after the end of some days", "some" being often expressed by the plural form alone. Nothing is certain as to what days are intended.

Some think the sabbath is meant, some the end of the year, or at some set time like harvest. The important fact to observe is that there was some recognition of appointed time, and hence the implication is that Abel's faith was connected with "a word of God", as all faith has ever been.

"An offering" (*minchah*). This word is often used as a contrast to *zebah*, a sacrifice with blood, but standing alone it is often used for sacrifice in general. As the passage stands in the A.V. the word "also" in verse 4 ("And Abel, he also") simply adds the

action of Abel to that of Cain. If, however, the word “also” be read after the verb, as it actually stands in both the Hebrew and in the LXX, there is a possibility that a deeper lesson is intended. There is something suggestive in the Greek of Heb. xi. 4 too. There is no word for “excellent” there, which is supplied. Translating the words just as they come we read, “By faith more sacrifice Abel than Cain offered”. Is it possible that in this simple and literal statement we have fuller light on Gen. iv. than the A.V. gives us there? In what way did Abel offer “more sacrifice”?

Coming back to this chapter and reading the “also” after the verb we have, “And Abel he brought also of the firstlings of his flock”, and this at least opens the way for the implied thought that Abel brought a bloodless gift even as Cain did, but that he “brought also” the lamb which alone made any other offering acceptable. This at least is exactly the teaching of the epistle to the Hebrews. All the typical offerings, even though they were of bulls and goats and ordained by God, were in measure but the offering of Cain in this sense, that they sought to render the offerer accepted without the precious blood of Christ which alone cleanses and gives access. On the other hand a bloodless sacrifice was acceptable (see Heb. xiii. 15), but only when sanctified by the blood of Christ.

The LXX rendering of Gen. iv. 7 is somewhat strange, and the relation of the existing Hebrew text with the Greek is too complicated to be dealt with here. We give it, however, for what it may be worth, for it seems to suggest that the mistake of Cain was not so much in the offering that he *did bring*, as in the offering that he *refused*:

“If thou hast brought rightly, but not rightly divided it, hast thou not sinned?”

However difficult it may be for us at this date to reconcile such a rendering with the Hebrew of Gen. iv. 7, we must give the credit of common sense to the translators of the LXX that they felt that such a translation expressed the teaching of the passage. Cain sinned through a failure to discern the difference between the offering of fruit, which had in it no confession of human unworthiness, and the offering which involved the shedding of blood, which pointed to the one Sacrifice for sin and acceptance which was to be offered by the Lord Himself.

If we understand the word “sin” in verse 7 to mean Cain’s own transgression, the sense is not very clear. “If thou doest not well” indicates sin, and the statement resolves itself into, “If thou art a sinner—thou art a sinner”. But “sin” (i.e. the same Hebrew word) is spoken of in Exod. xxix. 14 as having flesh, and skin, and capable of being “burnt with fire”; it has “blood” according to Exod. xxx. 10; the worshipper could “lay his hand” upon its head according to Lev. iv. 29, and it could be “eaten” according to Lev. x. 17. This is sufficient to prove that “a sin offering” in the shape of a bullock, a goat, or a lamb could be the true meaning of the word “sin” in Gen. iv. 7. The statement “sin lieth at the door” is today a proverb, but a proverb that has arisen from this very translation, and therefore not a proof that such would be the interpretation which Cain would give to the term. The idea that sin was typified as in the act of springing upon Cain is hardly justified by the usage of the word “lieth”.

When we read in Psa. xxiii. 2, “He maketh me to *lie down* in green pastures”, we certainly have no thought of a beast of prey in the act of taking a spring. We are not to suppose that when Jacob saw the flocks of sheep “lying” by the well that they were preparing to spring at him, or at one another (Gen. xxix. 2). The word is indeed spoken of a leopard, but not in the act of springing on its prey, but the very reverse: “the leopard shall *lie down* with the kid” (Isa. xi. 6). The word is spoken of the couching of sheep, and wild beasts, lions, leopards and asses, of the needy that shall “lie down” in safety (Isa. xiv. 30); of flocks that “rest” (Song of Sol. i. 7), but not one passage can bear the meaning often read into Gen. iv. 7. The door belongs neither to Cain or to Abel. So far as the Scriptures actually state it can just as well be the door of the primal tabernacle mentioned in Gen. iii. 24. Over 40 times in the Pentateuch is this word used of the “door” of the tabernacle. The sense therefore of Gen. iv. 7 seems clearly to be:

“If thou doest not well, a sin offering coucheth at the door of the tabernacle.”

Cain was without excuse, inasmuch as faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, Abel must have “heard”. Cain also would have heard likewise, and even if he had misunderstood, the Lord graciously pointed out his error, and gave him full opportunity for repentance and acceptance. Cain, Korah, and Balaam make up a terrible trio that fitly prefigure the state of things at the time of the end (Jude 11). The hymnology of Cain’s successors harps upon the string:

“Something in my hand I bring”,

while the language of faith is expressed by:

“Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling.”

We must not lose sight of the theme of the epistle to the Hebrews, nor the fact that Abel is mentioned as one of a series that sets forth the need that the just shall *live* by faith. Abel’s example is given here as an encouragement to the Hebrews who were losing heart, were in danger of drawing back, and to whom it is written in the sequel of Heb. xi.:

“For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted *unto blood*, striving against sin” (Heb. xii. 3, 4).

The rock upon which faith rests is the Offering of Christ and that is the rock upon which unbelief is broken to pieces. A principle of interpretation is supplied by Heb. xii. 24. Whatever is good in Abel is better in Christ. Whatever will be found good in Enoch, or Noah, or Abraham, or the rest, will likewise be found better in the Saviour. He is the perfecter of faith. In Him the whole spectrum meets; all others are so many broken facets reflecting something only of His ineffable perfection:

“By faith Abel offered unto God more sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God bearing witness of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh” (Heb. i. 4 not AV JP).

“The blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than Abel” (Heb. xii. 24).

Enoch, or the faith that transfers (Heb. xi. 5, 6).

While it is misleading as a rule to speak in generalities, it seems clear from Scripture that, so far as the human side of the purpose of the ages is concerned, all doctrine may be reduced under two heads, (1) Adam, (2) Christ. As practice flows from doctrine, practical teaching will also have reference to these two heads of mankind. With this thought in mind it will not be difficult to see that each successive witness to faith in Heb. xi. in some way reverses the action and attitude of Adam.

For example, Adam's refuge in the covering of fig leaves is reversed in Abel's refuge in the atonement by blood. That fellowship which Adam enjoyed was spoiled by sin when it could be written, "I heard Thy voice and I was afraid". This is reversed in Enoch's walk with God. Adam's sin involved his house in death, and his heritage in a curse, whereas Noah's faith prepared an ark to the saving of his house, and he became the heir of the righteousness of faith. The reader may continue the parallel. Enoch was the seventh from Adam; he lived 365 years, which evidently suggests a complete typical cycle of time. In Enoch we have full restoration typified.

We see moreover that Enoch and Abel make one dual witness, showing that man's restoration can come only along the lines of the great Sacrifice for sin.

ADAM *walked* with God.
ADAM *covered* himself with leaves.
ABEL *covered* by the atonement.
ENOCH *walked* with God.

Not only do the numbers "the seventh" from Adam, and the 365 years point out Enoch as the end of a cycle, but his name means "Initiated", and his translation appears to have left its mark upon the old world, for it is highly probable that the *Phoenix*, is simply *Pa-phenoch*, "The house of Enoch".

Enoch, the perfected.

We are apt to forget in our studies that all Scripture, though universal in its application and true for all time, nevertheless had a primary and restricted origin. Heb. xi. is so full, each character so great, that we forget that the writer was addressing "Hebrews", and urging them to "go on unto perfection", and that every item of this chapter has been divinely selected with that fact in mind. Abel showed the absolute necessity for the "one Sacrifice" of Christ, and the danger of going in the way of Cain should that one Offering be despised or rejected. Enoch's case sets forth the goal, summed up in the "walk", and the "translation". Towards the close of Heb. xi. the apostle speaks of:

"Others (who) were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a BETTER RESURRECTION" (Heb. xi. 35).

It must be observed here that the obtaining of a better resurrection is directly connected with *not* accepting deliverance, and the question arises, How can Enoch's

example have any bearing upon this, or upon the Hebrews, seeing that Enoch apparently *did not die*? It is time therefore to search and see. The sources of direct information are the following. The passage in Gen. v., the LXX translation, and the passage in Heb. xi. These we must give first.

“And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him” (Hebrew of Gen. v. 24).

“And Enoch pleased God: and he was not found, for God translated him” (LXX version of Gen. v. 24).

“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. xi. 5).

It will be noticed that the record grows as we proceed. The Hebrew is the shortest statement. Paul does not quote the Hebrew original, but quotes the LXX version as more suitable to his purpose, and more familiar to his readers, who used that version daily.

Did Enoch die?

Let us examine the actual statements used before we come to any conclusion. “*He was not*”. Identical words are used in Jer. xxxi. 15, “Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they *were not*”. There is no ambiguity in Reuben’s meaning when he cried, “The child *is not*” (Gen. xxxvii. 30), or of Jacob’s lament “Joseph *is not*, and Simeon *is not*” (Gen. xlii. 36), indeed Jacob said, “Me have ye *bereaved*”.

“*For God took him.*” The Hebrew word *laqach* is used both of death and of translation:

“Behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke” (Ezek. xxiv. 16).

“Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day?” (II Kings ii. 3).

The case of Elijah is somewhat parallel with that of Enoch. Elijah is taken up to heaven by a whirlwind, and Elisha “saw him no more” (verse 12). When the sons of the prophets urged Elisha to send the fifty men to look for Elijah, the result is recorded, “They sought three days, but found him not” (verse 17). It is the LXX that adds the word “found” in Gen. v. 24. While this reference to Elijah strengthens the conception that Enoch did not die, Psa. xxxvii. 35, 36 shows that the avoidance of death is not necessarily implied by the word, “I have seen the wicked yet he passed away, and, lo, *he was not*; yea, I sought him, but he could not *be found*”.

By faith Enoch was translated. It is usual to suppose that the use of the word “translation” is the end of all controversy, and that such a word could not apply to any who had died. Yet, notice the first occurrence of the word in the New Testament:

“So Jacob went down into Egypt, and DIED, he, and our fathers, and were carried over (TRANSLATED) into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre” (Acts vii. 15, 16).

It is evident that the word “translation” of itself does not necessitate escape from death. Heb. vii. 12 has already used the word to speak of the change of the priesthood and the law.

That he should not see death. The fifth chapter of Genesis is punctuated by the words, “and he died”, eight times. Enoch’s translation breaks the sad sequence of mortality and provides the exception. Heb. xi. 5 does not say simply, “Enoch was translated that he should not die”, but “that he should not *see* death”. We found that in the words of Heb. ii. 9 and Matt. xvi. 28 “tasting death” was not exactly synonymous with dying. May there not be a reason for the choice of the expression “see death” here? In John viii. 51 we have a parallel expression, though a different word is used for “to see”. Verse 52 in most MSS paraphrases the expression by the words “taste death”, although the Vatican MS here retains the word “see”. The idiom is explained for us in Acts ii. 26, 27:

“My flesh shall rest in hope: because Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell (Hades), neither wilt Thou suffer Thine holy One to SEE corruption.”

It will be observed that death is contemplated here, but not corruption. In verse 29 Peter expands the idea: “The patriarch David is both dead and buried, *and his sepulchre* is with us unto this day”. To this add Acts xiii. 36, 37:

“David fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and SAW corruption.”

Peter’s further remark, “David is not ascended into the heavens” (Acts ii. 34), shows that the idea involved in “not seeing corruption” was not so much that of dying, or of even being buried, but of *being left in the tomb*, of not ascending into the heavens. We venture nothing in speculations upon the holy nature of the Son of God. We know not what would have taken place had He remained in the tomb for a long period. What we do know is that He was raised on the third day, “was not left in Hades, neither suffered to see corruption” which says as much as we can bear.

Leaving the resurrection of dead ones.

The ambiguity that surrounds the translation of Enoch serves a good purpose. While we cannot say with certainty that Enoch did die, or that he was taken away by God without dying, this very uncertainty enabled the apostle to use the example of Enoch to encourage the Hebrews “to go on unto perfection”. We may be better prepared to follow the teaching of Heb. vi., having come so far. Among the items that were to be “left” as they pressed on to “perfection” is included, strangely, “the resurrection of dead ones”. This does not mean a denial of the resurrection, but the giving up of the hope of a general resurrection of dead ones, for a special and prior hope of “a better resurrection” of those who, though dying, should not “see” death, who in other words should attain unto an “out-resurrection”. The parallel with Philippians is apparent and instructive. This “better resurrection” which could be illustrated by Enoch’s translation is seen in Heb. xi. 40 compared with xii. 22, 23:

“God having provided (foreseen) some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect (*perfected*).”

“But ye are come to the spirits of just men made perfect (*perfected*).”

Just as the blood of Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant, speaks better things than that of Abel, so the resurrection that awaited those who pressed toward the mark, and who laid aside every weight and ran with patience, surpassed the translation of Enoch. The parallel with Philippians is found even in the word “better”. Hebrews speaks of a resurrection that was “better”, while Paul in Phil. i. 23 says, “To depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better”.

Metathesis occurs three times in Hebrews, so also does *metatithemi*. It will be wise to allow these references a place before concluding. Heb. vii. 12 speaks of a “change” of both priesthood and law. Heb. xi. 5 speaks of the translation of Enoch, and Heb. xii. 27 says:

“Yet once more, signifieth the removing (*translation*) of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.”

Apart from inspiration altogether we should expect that so important a word would be used with judgment, and that the reference to Enoch’s translation was not made in forgetfulness of the presence of the word in chapter vii., nor of its appearance in chapter xii. It is evident that “translation” does not express the meaning in xii. 27 or vii. 12, but “transfer” does. The important point in the interpretation of this epistle is that a change had come, bringing with it the *possibility of a transfer*. Heb. xi. opens with the fact that the ages were framed or adjusted by God, and seeing that some things had become shaken, and were set aside upon the failure of Israel, *a transfer* was held out to faith, whereby the “word of the beginning” could be left for “better things”. Abel will stand for the “better sacrifice”, and Enoch for the “better resurrection”, and while these Hebrews may indeed die in faith, not having received the promise, they may nevertheless be able to entertain a better hope, founded upon better promises, embracing a better country, that is a heavenly.

The closing down, for the time being, of the earthly section of the purpose of the ages, opened for the believing Hebrew the prospect of a *transfer* to a heavenly country or city more fully detailed in Heb. xii. 22-29, and being in some degree a secret. This, while being by no means the same either in sphere, calling, or character as the dispensation of the Mystery, did hold out to those who believed the added revelation, a *prize* connected with this heavenly calling, which could be attained only by “going on unto perfection”. The subject will not be dropped until we reach the end of chapter xii. It may be helpful as a sidelight upon this theme to note what the wisest King of Israel is alleged to have said:

“For honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor is it measured by number of years. But wisdom is the gray hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age. *He pleased God*, and was beloved of Him: so that living among sinners *he was translated*. Yea speedily was he caught away, lest the wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul He, *being made perfect* in a short time, fulfilled a long time” (Wisdom of Solomon 4:8-13).

The reader may have missed the familiar comment which sees in Enoch's translation the rapture of the church, but we trust he will have gained by having attention drawn both to the difficulties of the case, and of its fitness with the theme of the Hebrews:

“Let us go unto perfection leaving a resurrection of dead ones for a better resurrection and the spirits of just men made perfect.”

That the prize of Phil. iii. may be considered parallel, the reference to “reward” in Heb. xi. 6 will show, and that “to walk and please God” is the high goal of faith, Heb. xi. and the bulk of the epistles testify.

No.46. Noah and Abraham, Inheritors (xi. 7, 8). pp. 121 - 124

However personally we may feel the application of this or any other Scripture, we deprive ourselves of much that is helpful in its interpretation when we lose sight of the original purpose of its writing, and the conditions under which it was written. Heb. xi. is so full of teaching that we are apt to isolate it from its context in the appreciation of its present application. The aspect of faith that we are to consider under the names of Noah and Abraham, while containing much that has a direct personal application *to ourselves*, was nevertheless written in the first place to the *Hebrews*, and written to them in circumstances that make the examples cited of supreme importance in the process of the apostle's instruction to them.

The faith that inherits.

Among the items of prominence in the message to the Hebrews is that which deals with the relation of faith to *inheritance*. Chapters iii. and iv. are devoted to the idea of the necessity of faith in connection with inheriting. “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (iii. 19). It is time, however, that we saw for ourselves that *inheritance* is the connecting theme of this second pair of examples:

“By faith Noah became HEIR of the righteousness which is by faith” (xi. 7).

“By faith Abraham went out to the place he should afterwards receive for an INHERITANCE” (xi. 8 not AV JP).

Without the Scripture before us, we should doubtless assign the position of “heir of the *righteousness by faith*” to Abraham, rather than to Noah, as so much is said of him in that connection in Romans and Galatians as well as in Gen. xv. The fact that Noah is also associated with righteousness by faith, shows that from earliest days this principle has been in operation, and but the more emphasizes that unpalatable fact, that “the law made nothing perfect”; that Sinai is a transition, not a goal (Heb. xii. 18-24), and that the gospel committed to Paul, which reaches back as far as Adam, and as wide as the ends of

the earth, is *the* gospel that carries with it age-lasting issues. It operated in Eden, and was believed by Abel.

The epistle to the Hebrews looks at righteousness by faith from a different angle from that of Romans. In Hebrews we see faith at work. “By faith Noah prepared an ark”. Such is the simple statement. We must, however, not omit the moving causes that assisted Noah’s faith to prepare, against all reason, an ark on dry land. Noah’s act is the result of (1) a divine warning, and (2) a pious fear.

A divine warning.

We are not allowed to forget the important truth that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”. Noah was doubtless wise in consequence of his 600 years of experience, his fellowship with God, and his purity of life, which would all be in favour of enabling him to foresee the goal toward which the ungodliness of his day was fast heading, but this wisdom would never have evolved “an ark”. *Chrematizo*, to warn, is used in the N.T. to indicate a warning given by means of a dream (Matt. ii. 12, 22); by the Holy Spirit (Luke ii. 26); or by an angel (Acts x. 22). Its direct connection with the body of the epistle to the Hebrews will be seen by looking at Heb. viii. 5 and xii. 25. Moses was “warned” by God in connection with the Tabernacle which he “prepared” (see Heb. ix. 2). Heb. xii. 25 applies this “warning”:

“See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused Him who WARNED them on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that WARNS us from heaven” (not AV JP).

The verse following reveals that the two warnings, the one so much greater than the other, were the voices of Sinai and Calvary. Heb. ii. 1-4 is here repeated with solemn emphasis and *with the same sequence*. The warning of Heb. ii. 1-4 is followed by a reference to the “world to come” and its dominion. The warning of Heb. xii. 25 is followed by a reference to a kingdom that abides the terrific “shaking” of the last days. So, to come back to Noah, we have the warning, the Flood (parallel with the shaking), and the world to come, the dominion restored after the Flood, called in Heb. xi. 7 “the inheritance of the righteousness which is by faith”. Though we may have passed these close parallels lightly by, the originally exercised readers of this epistle would have found them very pointed.

Both Noah and Abraham received a message from God that put a great test upon faith, for Noah was warned of things “not seen as yet”, and Abraham went out “not knowing” whither he went. What they *did* know was the faithfulness of Him Who spake. So these Hebrews, taught from infancy to believe the law of Sinai to be eternal and unalterable, to believe their ritual to be not only of divine appointing, but to be as lasting as God’s throne, found an almost insuperable difficulty in the teaching of the apostle that such things were waxing old and *vanishing away*, that God Himself found fault with the first Covenant and had set it aside for the aionian Covenant sealed by the blood of Christ Himself.

A pious fear.

The second motive that is revealed is that Noah was “moved with fear”. The English word “fear” has to stand for (1) *phobos*, a “fear that flees”, from *phobomai* to flee; for (2) *deilos*, a “fear that shrinks”; and for (3) *eulabeia*, a “fear that worships”. This last is the word used of Noah in Heb. xi. 7. He certainly did not have the fear that flees, nor the fear that “draws back unto perdition”, but the fear that reverently acquiesces in the will of God. We find the word, or its cognates, translated “devout” in Luke ii. 25; Acts ii. 5 and viii. 2. The true translation of Heb. v. 7 is “He was heard for His piety” (or godly fear), and so it is translated in Heb. xii. 28, adding one more link to the record of Noah that we have already seen exists. *Phobos* and *eulabeia* are definitely contrasted in Heb. xi., so that we need make no mistake. Moses was NOT moved with *phobos* (Heb. xi. 23-27); Noah WAS moved with *eulabeia* (Heb. xi. 7), and both acted “by faith”.

The apostle makes no reference to “the sons of God”, “the daughters of men” or “the giants” of Gen. vi., not because the subject was unimportant, but because, out of a wealth of material (like John xx. 30, 31), he selected his examples with a specific object: to help these Hebrews “to leave and go on”.

“Noah prepared an ark to the saving of his house” (Heb. xi. 7).

We have already seen that the chapter of UNBELIEF (Heb. iii.), is in structural correspondence with the chapter of FAITH (Heb. xi.), but it may not be fully realized how many items in these two chapters link them together. For instance where Heb. xi. says “Faith is the SUBSTANCE of things hoped for” (Heb. xi. 1), Heb. iii. says “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our CONFIDENCE stedfast unto the end” (Heb. iii. 14); in each case “substance” and “confidence” translate the one Greek word *hupostasis*. In Heb. iii. 6 this truth is expressed by using a synonymous word:

“Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”

This brings into prominence the figure of a house. Noah is said to have saved his “house”, and Gen. vii. opens with the words “Come thou and all thy house”. The nation of Israel is repeatedly spoken of as “the house of Israel”, in a sense that is unique, for no such term is applied to any company of redeemed Gentiles. It is with the “house of Israel” that the Lord will make the New Covenant (Heb. viii. 10), and Paul has a particular reason to stress the saving of the “house” in Heb. xi., because he has used a special word in both Heb. iii. and xi. to enforce his teaching. That word is the Greek *kataskewazo*, prepare.

“For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded (*kataskewazo*) the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded (*kataskewazo*) by some man; but He that built (*kataskewazo*) all things is God” (iii. 3, 4).

Now the point of the example in Heb. xi. 7 seems to be that Moses after all was a servant, it is Christ Who is the Son. Moses “prepared” the house, but could do no more. Noah PREPARED AN ARK, and saved “the house”. So, said the apostle, will you not be prepared to “leave” the work of Moses the servant, who can do nothing more than condemn you, and enter into the provision made by Christ, whose one Offering is typified by the use of the Hebrew word *kopher* “pitch” which later in the law is translated “atonement”:

“Christ as a Son (is) over His own house; Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” (iii. 6).

Saved condemned.

Noah’s faith moved him to prepare an ark “to the *saving* of his house, by the which he *condemned* the world”. While from one point of view Christian charity knows no bounds, from another point of view Christianity is very drastic and provoking. This is not limited to the Christian faith. It belongs to all propositions and to all issues. The man who is convinced that the teetotaler is right cannot avoid the alternative that the drinker is wrong. The man who sees in Socialism the panacea for all evil cannot avoid condemning Conservatism and Capitalism by his very conviction. The church by its very constitution condemns the world. There is no justification for bitterness, for wrangling, for strife, but even among professing Christians it is not possible to hold certain vital doctrines without condemning those who deny them. Christian charity is a lovely thing, but it does not enable us to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds.

The inheritance.

All that we have seen concerning Noah has been leading to this last clause, “He became the HEIR of the righteousness which is by faith”. The warning, the preparing, the saving of his house had one thing in view—the inheritance. Noah was not moved to construct an ark either to demonstrate his own prowess, or even his faith, but as a means to an end. *Redemption is for a purpose, it is not an end in itself.* So marvelous is that redemption, that we often speak of it as though it were the end itself of the purpose of God. Eph. i. 1-14 shows as clearly as any passage the intermediate position of redemption, with the will of God stated *first*, the inheritance reached at the *last*, and the “mystery of His will” which involves redemption coming in between.

The blessing of God upon Noah, when he stood upon the restored earth with his saved house, was practically a repetition of the dominion given to Adam, modified by the changed circumstances (Gen. ix. 1-7).

“In the six hundredth and FIRST year, in the FIRST month, the FIRST day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth” (Gen. viii. 13).

Thus Noah and his inheritance anticipates that day when He that sits upon the throne shall say, “Behold, I make all things new”, faintly suggested also by the “no more curse” of Gen. xiii. 21. We have further light upon the faith that inherits in the case of

Abraham, who pairs with Noah; this we must reserve for another study. Meanwhile, let us rejoice in the fact revealed in Rom. viii. 17, “if children, then heirs, *heirs of God*”.

**No.47. Abraham. The obedience that inherits (xi. 8).
pp. 141 - 145**

The association of faith and inheritance is set forth by the two great examples of Noah and Abraham. In our last example the great contributing motives were a divine warning, a godly fear, and a preparation. Abraham’s example supplies other facets of this jewel of truth.

The obedience of faith.

“By faith Abraham obeyed.” This simple statement is supplemented by illuminating clauses which we must earnestly consider.

- A1 | He was called to GO OUT.
- B1 | Unto a place . . . an inheritance.
- A2 | And he WENT OUT.
- B2 | Not knowing whither he went.

First let us observe, “He was called to go out and he went out”. Such is the record on the tables of faith. Abraham’s actual record is not so simple. His obedience was partial and in stages; this we can read in Genesis. A comparison with Heb. xi. 8 indicates how many seasons of our lives may be blanks in the roll of faith. The story of Abraham’s obedience is written for our learning. Let us seek grace to be humble disciples in this school of grace. The *first* movement is indicated by Stephen:

“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 the land which I shall shew thee” (Acts vii. 2, 3).

The *second* movement is revealed in Gen. xii. 1:

“Now 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 shew thee.”

The *third* movement is given in Gen. xiii. 14, 15:

“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 I give it, and to thy seed for ever.”

The *fourth* and crowning movement is given in Gen. xxii. 12-18:

“Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me . . . in blessing I will bless thee . . . because thou hast obeyed My voice.”

The old man.

It is very evident when we compare Acts vii. 2, 3 with Gen. xii. 1 that the Lord spoke to Abram twice. Gen. xii. adds to Acts vii. by saying not only “country” and “kindred”, but “thy father’s house”. In the first movement, instead of leaving his father’s house we find Terah, his father, accompanying Abram.

“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 into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there” (Gen. xi. 31).

Here Abram is seen leaving his native land, and Stephen declares that “he came out of the land of the Chaldeans”, but we feel a little uneasy about the presence of Terah and Lot in the face of the command “from thy kindred”. Notice the failure also in the abortive effort suggested in the words:

“And they went forth with them to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and *dwelt there.*”

If the map is consulted it will be seen that Abram and Terah made a journey of some 600 miles, but when they stayed at Haran they were still on *the same side of the Euphrates*. The lesson is repeated at the time of the Exodus. Nothing but a “three days journey” could satisfy the command of God, and Pharaoh, it will be remembered, tried to play the part of Terah by suggesting first that Israel should worship God “in the land”, and then, this being rejected, that Israel should go “not very far off”, *anything* except that which set forth resurrection ground. In spite of the 600 miles journey, Abram was no nearer entering the inheritance. He must cross the river. He must become “Abram the *Hebrew*”, the one who “crossed over”. This, however, could not take place while Terah lived. Stephen’s words echo the doctrine of Rom. vi. when he said, “When his father *was dead*, he removed him into this land”. Terah stands for the old man, and the old man is a hinderer. Not until we can realize that our old man has been crucified, and that we are alive unto God, can we proceed.

The flesh.

The second movement sees Abram leaving Haran and his father’s house, and actually entering the land of Canaan. Then to him is made the great seven-fold covenant. Famine, however, soon puts Abram to the test. A question which perhaps cannot be answered presents itself. Had Lot not been with Abram, would Abram have stood true? The analogy of Israel in the wilderness gives light. Just as Abram took Lot with him across the Euphrates, so we read in Exod. xii. 38, “A mixed multitude went up also with them”. And just as trouble with Lot and the latter’s inability to resist the well-watered plain of Sodom was directly connected with flocks and herds, so with this mixed multitude is enumerated “flocks, and herds, even very much cattle”. Numb. xi. 4, 5 reveals the evil effect of this company:

“And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel ALSO we remember the fish, which we did eat in EGYPT.”

Famine tested Abram while Lot was with him, “and Abram went down into Egypt” (Gen. xii. 10). All this period in Egypt was so much waste of time. Abram returned with Lot (Gen. xiii. 1) unto the place of the altar which he had made there at the *first*, and *there* Abram called on the name of the Lord. Lot stands for the flesh which clogs and trips the true child of God. So far as Terah was concerned, Abram did not move from Haran until *Terah was dead*. With Lot, however, it was different. Abram began to realize the need of separation, and the moment the trouble arose about the flocks and the herds, Abram seemed to seize the opportunity: “Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me” (Gen. xiii. 9). Lot “lifted up his eyes” and chose the plain of Jordan. The Lord spoke to Abram *after* that Lot was separated from him, “Lift up now *thine* eyes”. Lot had lifted up his and seen Sodom. Abram, when separated from Lot, saw his inheritance. Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom—odious name! 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. Hebron means *fellowship*. Abram’s fellowship with God was impossible while Lot remained with him. How would the Hebrews, to whom this epistle was written, understand all this? Would not some of them begin to see the need for the separation from the “Lots” of their profession? Would they not perceive the true Abrahamic spirit in the call to go outside the camp?

Faith perfected.

It was after Abram’s victory (where Lot met with such humiliating defeat) that he met the high priest whose name so fills the epistle to the Hebrews (Melchisedec), and it is immediately after the meeting with Melchisedec that we arrive at the inheritance and righteousness of faith. This close association of righteousness and inheritance is a feature lost sight of by too many for us to pass it by. Gen. xv. 6, the great passage concerning justification by faith, is introduced by Abram’s question concerning his *heir*, and the Lord’s answer concerning this is the groundwork of Abram’s faith. Rom. i.-iii. lay the foundation of justification by faith, and are followed by chapter iv., which is nothing more nor less than an exposition of Gen. xv. 6. In the midst of this chapter we read:

“The promise, that he should be the HEIR of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be HEIRS, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect” (Rom. iv. 13, 14).

In like manner Gal. iii. 29 concludes with the words:

“If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and *heirs* according to the promise if a son, then an *heir* of God through Christ the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman” (Gal. iii. 29; iv. 7, 30).

Titus iii. 7 also testifies to the same truth:

“That being justified by His grace, we should be made *heirs* according to the hope of *aionian* life.”

The perfecting of Abraham's faith, however, is seen in Gen. xxii. There he not only stood before God, having left his native land, his kindred, his father's house, but he had also foregone his rights in the matter of Lot, and now he goes to the full limits and voluntarily gives his best, his beloved son in whom all the promises of God were vested. The Hebrews were exhorted to:

“Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience INHERIT the promises. For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself” (Heb. vi. 12, 13).

Abraham “patiently endured” and “obtained the promise”. So, continues the epistle to these tried Hebrews:

“Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Heb. x. 36).

James ii. 22 declares that in the offering of Isaac Abraham's faith was “perfected”, brought to its true end, the keyword of Hebrews. Translated into terms of doctrine, the several steps in Abraham's faith are seen to be so many approximations of the cross of Christ:

- (1) The step that followed the death of Terah stands for the crucifixion of the old man (Rom. vi. 6).
- (2) The separation from Lot, and the vision that followed with the dwelling at Hebron, the place of fellowship, stands for the crucifixion of the flesh (Gal. v. 24).
- (3) The repudiation of all reward from the king of Sodom “lest he should say, I have made Abraham rich”, stands for the crucifixion of the world (Gal. vi. 14).
- (4) The offering up of Isaac, the beloved son, is the fellowship of His sufferings, the conformity to His death, which is on the one hand intimately connected with the perfecting, the prize, and the heavenly citizenship, and on the other is strongly contrasted with those who mind earthly things, and constitute themselves “enemies of the cross of Christ” (Phil. iii. 10-21; Heb. vi. 6).

So far we have traced the meaning of the statement “By faith Abraham obeyed”. Looking to the opening paragraph of this section we see that there is another pair of statements to consider. The obedience of faith is found in the words, “Go out”, “he went out”. As we read Heb. xi. 8 it *might appear* that the fact that Abraham knew all about the inheritance, enabled him to step out in faith. “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed”. This, however, is not the meaning. When he obeyed he did not have the inheritance so definitely revealed, for the verse continues, “and he went out, *not knowing* whither he went”. This brings Abraham into line with the other examples of faith. “Faith is the substance of things *not seen*”. Noah was warned of the things *not seen* as yet. Abraham knew that he was to go into a land of the Lord's providing, and he knew that it was to be his inheritance, but the revelation of that inheritance grew with his obedience.

Is there no parallel experience suggested in Eph. i. 18? “That ye may know what is the riches of the glory of His *inheritance* in the saints.” Is there no parallel in

I Cor. ii. 9, 10? We shall learn presently that Abraham received a higher call and a fuller revelation that eclipsed the original inheritance of the land, but this we must deal with in its true place. For the time being we must stop. The thread is taken up in the record of the next pair, Isaac and Jacob.

Let us not set aside this word “obey”. True, we are of faith; true, we are not under law, but under grace; true we are sons, not servants. Does this mean that obedience, the obedience of faith, is not for us? “Though He were a Son, yet learned He *obedience*all them that *obey Him*” (Heb. v. 8, 9). The words obedience and obey mean “to hear with submission”. It is translated simply “hearken” in Acts xii. 13. It is incipient in Heb. iii. and iv. in the words, “Today if ye will *hear* His voice”. Faith comes out of hearing (Rom. x. 17), and the obedience of faith is simply that hearing and practical response continued throughout the walk of life.

No.48. Faith, Pilgrimage and Earnest (xi. 9 - 19). pp. 161 - 168

Abraham’s faith is too great, his example too full, to be circumscribed within the space of one verse, or one phrase. His example blends with that of Isaac and Jacob, and reappears in verses 11 and 12 in connection with Sarah. Not only is Abraham the greatest example of faith’s obedience, but, together with Isaac and Jacob, he is the example of the faith that waits, that leads outside the camp, that makes the child of God a pilgrim and a stranger. It will be seen that after Sarah’s faith is recorded, the pilgrim character of faith is resumed and amplified in verses 14-16:

“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. xi. 9, 10).

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city” (Heb. xi. 13-16).

Strangers and pilgrims.

A glance at these two sets will reveal the fact that in verses 13-16 the theme of verses 9 and 10 is developed and filled out. This is made clear in the following structure:

- A | 9-. By faith Sojourn in land of promise.
- B | -9. Dwelling in tents.
- C | 10. For he looked for a city. (Sarah and resurrection).
- A | 13-. According to faith died, not having received the promises.
- B | -13. Confessed they were strangers and pilgrims.
- C | 14-16. For they seek a country and a city.

It is a common mistake to speak of the early fathers of Israel as nomads, wandering sheiks of the desert, little better than Gypsies. Such they became by *faith*, not by birth. Recent excavations have confirmed the opinion that Ur of the Chaldees was no mean city. The trend of archaeological investigation goes to prove that the culture of Egypt came from Chaldea, so that Abraham, the man of *the city*, voluntarily becomes the man of *the tent* by reason of his faith.

“To sojourn” means to dwell as a stranger, as *paroikia* is translated in Acts xiii. 17. In Heb. xi. 13 the structure reveals that the thought corresponding to sojourning is dying. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country (9). According to faith these all died, not having received the promises (13). There is something about faith, and the God in Whom that faith rests, that has this separating effect. It made a martyr of Abel, and potentially one of Enoch; it separated Noah from his fellows, and Abraham from his country. Faith has to do with things “hoped for”, and the reproach and reproof connected with faith is for things “not seen”. We need to be more fully alive to the fact that faith operates *only* in the sphere of resurrection. But, one may interpose, are we not to exercise faith in matters of daily life here? Do we not believe that the very daily bread that perishes is a gift of God? Most assuredly, but how much richer to believe that these are not ours in the course of ordinary providence, or on the same plane as the feeding of sparrows, but that all such blessings are wilderness provisions coming to us by reason of the risen Christ, and to enable us to cover the distance, shall we say, between our Red Sea and the Jordan. Paul’s testimony in Galatians should be the normal experience:

“I have been crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Gal. ii. 20).

That it appears so very unusual is to our shame. It is impossible to read of Abraham in the epistles without being made conscious of the resurrection. Rom. iv. 17 tells us that when he believed God, Who made the promise to him that he should be the father of many nations, he believed *God Who quickeneth the dead*. Heb. xi. 19 tells us that when Abraham offered up Isaac on the mountain, he did so accounting that God was able to raise him up, *even from the dead*. When the child of God can receive the daily supply, the opportunity to earn a living, the gift of health and strength, as directly flowing from the risen Lord, then he is experiencing something of the true nature of faith.

Those who died, not having received the promises, “saw them afar off”. This principle runs throughout the Word. Heavy trials may be called “light afflictions that are but for a moment”, if it can be added, “*while* we look not at the things which are *seen*”

(II Cor. iv. 17, 18). While Abraham is not mentioned in II Cor. iv., we have but to read on into chapter v. 1, 2 to find the “tent” contrasted with the “building of God in the heavens”, exactly as we have the “tent” and “the city” of God in Heb. xi. Without resurrection, Heb. xi. 13 would surely read, “These all died in *despair*, not having received the promises”. When one hears children of God “claiming” here and now all sorts of blessings because of the victory of Calvary, one wonders what the effect of this passage suddenly brought home by the Spirit of God would be. Do we not see that faith can contentedly *go without* rather than “claim” all now, simply because faith has to do with resurrection and new life? How many children of God press the question of bodily healing on these lines! They teach and believe that, had we all sufficient faith, sickness among saints would be unknown. Why they do not pursue this to its logical conclusion and say that, were there Sufficient faith among saints, *death* would be unknown, we cannot tell, except it be that facts are too stubborn. Christ has not purchased for the saint either immunity from sickness or from death; He does give “the *power* of His resurrection” now, and He will give incorruptible life after this present life has been laid down.

These saints of God, who according to faith died *not having received the promises* were not thereby rendered miserable; they “embraced” or “saluted” these far-off promises, and patiently waited that good time when their inheritance could be enjoyed unspoiled by sin and death.

Tent and city.

The outward symbol of the pilgrim is the tent. Before this epistle closes the apostle presses this fact upon the Hebrews in very solemn terms:

“Wherefore Jesus also suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here have we NO CONTINUING CITY, but we SEEK one to come” (Heb. xiii. 12-14).

Christ Himself is a stranger in this world. The only dwelling place of God that Hebrews mentions is a “tent” or “tabernacle”. Not until the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwells righteousness, shall come, will it be right for “tent” and “city” to come together (Rev. xxi. 2, 3). Heb. xii. 27, 28 stresses this same truth. The unshaken kingdom “abides”, and is closely connected with the “heavenly Jerusalem” (xii. 22). This “prepared” city that “abides” is seen in John xiv. 2, 3 “In My Father’s house are many *abiding places* I go to *prepare* a place for you”. And just as the Lord reveals Himself in John xiv. 6 as “the true and living Way”, so in Heb. x. 20 He is revealed as “the new and living way”, while John i. 14 tells us that “the Word was made flesh and *tabernacled* among us”.

Are the saints of God alone to exercise patience? Is not God Himself called “the God of *patience*” and “the God of *hope*” in Rom. xv. 5 and 13? Is not Christ spoken of as “henceforth *expecting*” (Heb. x. 13)? and shall we therefore murmur that our inheritance is not yet here? Members of the Body of Christ would do well to remember that, though “blessed with *all* spiritual blessings”, those blessings are “in the heavenlies in Christ”,

and the selfsame chapter of Ephesians tells us that what we have here and now is “the earnest of the inheritance *until* the redemption of the purchased possession”. Is it not truer faith to bear the reproach of Christ, and be a mere tent-dweller with this “earnest”, than to look upon the city and the plain of Jordan, making oneself believe that it is like the “garden of the Lord” (Gen. xiii. 10)? Since the events of Gen. iii., should we not view any appearance of Eden with suspicion? A paradise this side of resurrection is but the devil’s millennium that has captivated preacher and politician throughout the ages. The dwelling in tents was a “confession”:

They “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (verse 13).
“They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country” (verse 14).

Here we have two sides of the story. Merely to become strangers and pilgrims may indicate that we are but moral Ishmaels, and prefer the desert to human society, but to be strangers and pilgrims because we seek that city and country of God is the true thing. For the member of the Body of Christ, all this teaching of Heb. xi. is found in doctrinal language in Philippians. The Hebrews were exhorted concerning the things that accompany salvation (Heb. vi. 9), as the Philippians were to “work out their own salvation” (Phil. ii. 12). The Philippians were assured that it was God Who “worked in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. ii. 13), even as the Hebrews were told to rest in the God of peace, Who “worked in them that which was well-pleasing in His sight” (Heb. xiii. 21). Paul was confident that God would “perfect” the good thing He had begun in the Philippians (i. 6), as in the Hebrews (xiii. 21). Phil. iii. speaks of Paul, the Hebrew, and his loss for Christ’s sake, and the Hebrews are given both example (xi. 26) and precept (x. 34-36) to the same end. The Philippians were exhorted to press toward the mark (iii. 14), and the Hebrews were exhorted to run the race (xii. 1-3), and both with the personal example of Christ before them. Both Philippians and Hebrews were warned concerning those who were enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil. iii. 18; Heb. x. 29), the great incentive in Philippians being the “citizenship which is in heaven” (iii. 20), with a like incentive of the heavenly Jerusalem before the Hebrews (xi. 10). The *cities* are not identical, the *prizes* are not the same, but the *principles* are exactly parallel in their outworking. The tent-dwelling, the sojourning, the pilgrimage, are re-interpreted for us in Phil. ii. and iii.

The heavenly country and city.

We now come to the incentive that was operative in Abraham: “He *looked* for a city” built by God. He had no faith to *build* a city for himself. It is the Cains, the Nimrods and the Hiels that found cities rather than the Abrahams of Faith. Abraham was concerned about the city’s “foundations”. He looked for the city having “the foundations”. The order of words in the original is suggestive: “He looked for the foundations-having city”. “To look for” is strictly “to expect”, as the only other reference in Hebrews is translated (x. 13). Abraham shared the same spirit of patient waiting as his Lord manifested. “The foundations” are described in Rev. xxi. 14, 19, 20; they bear the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and like the whole purpose of the ages, rest upon the unimpeachable righteousness of God.

These tent-dwellers had no need to make loud professions; their actions spoke for them: “for they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country”. This was their “confession”; they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the land. As “partakers of the heavenly calling” they had this “confession” of which the Lord was both apostle and High Priest (iii. 1; iv. 14, where *homologia* is translated “profession”). The whole of the intervening passages of chapters iii. and iv. are taken up with Israel in the wilderness, and the rest that “remaineth”. Israel in the wilderness not only remembered the fish and the cucumbers, etc., of Egypt (Numb. xi. 5), but went so far as to say: “Let us make a *captain*, and let us return into Egypt” (Numb. xiv. 4). This word “captain” is *archegos* in the LXX, and occurs in Heb. ii. 10 (“Captain”) and xii. 2 (“Author”). The lesson is plain. These Hebrew believers would be readers of the LXX, and the connection between the passages would be obvious. This temptation is recognized in Heb. xi. 15:

“And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.”

The word “mindful” means “to remember”, and is the same verb as is used in the LXX of Numb. xi. 5, “We remember”. Can there be any possible doubt but that the words of Phil. iii. 13, “*forgetting* those things which are behind”, are used in true contrast? We need a holy forgetfulness of some things. Why had these saints no opportunity afforded them of returning to Chaldea? They were not “mindful”. Have you never had your interest in a particular subject quickened, and then, the next day perhaps, have seen a newspaper article or heard a conversation upon the very subject? You say, how strange! But is it? You would have seen the article or heard the conversation even though the subject had never come before your notice, yet it would have left no impression because you were not interested. Jonah will always find a ship ready for Tarshish (Jonah i. 3), but such a circumstance will be no evidence of the will of the Lord. The only way to live, if we would walk worthy of our calling is to remember the exhortation, “Seek those things which are above set your mind on things above for ye died” (Col. iii. 1-3).

The positive is resumed in Heb. xi. 16: “But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly”. The word country is strictly “the fatherland”. It is one of the “better” things of Hebrews, and is balanced in this chapter by the better resurrection and provision of xi. 35 and 40. Now, just as the true followers of the Captain of salvation—are all one, “for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren” (ii. 11), so here, these have followed the true Captain, and have not appointed a captain to lead them back to Egypt, “wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city”. These pilgrims of faith will find their inheritance in that day, when the voice out of heaven shall say: “Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and *be their God*” (Rev. xxi. 3). Among those who will have no part in that city are “the fearful”. Throughout the epistle to the Hebrews the apostle’s eye seems to be upon that word. These saints were in danger of “drawing back unto perdition”, of failing to hold fast the confidence of their hope to the end. Such could not be renewed again unto repentance. Such drawing back could only end in loss.

Heb. xi. does not minimize the pilgrim journey or its accompanying reproach, but it does point to a way to the better things, the city which has the foundations, for which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were content to be labeled strangers and pilgrims in the land of promise. If you do not presume, as some would have you do, and “claim” blessings now that belong to the “far off” city, remember that it is a part of faith now to “not receive” the promises, and that the *earnest* of the inheritance is all that the tent-dweller may legitimately hope to enjoy.

The faith of Sarah and Abraham in relation to Israel comes centrally in the set of seven pairs that occupy the bulk of Heb. xi. Its great theme is resurrection. This is true not only by reason of its pre-eminent place in *their* faith, but resurrection, in some phase or other, appears closely connected with *all* the examples of this chapter; so much so, that it brings forward the challenging inquiry, *Is there any faith recognized in Scripture that is not actively or passively associated with resurrection?* Both Sarah and Abraham exhibited a faith in “God Who quickeneth the dead” (Rom. iv. 17), in relation to Isaac; Sarah at his birth, and Abraham at his great trial. The faith of Abraham concerning the birth of Isaac is omitted in chapter xi. of Hebrews.

Whether it be Abraham and Sarah respecting the birth of Isaac, or Abraham alone at the offering of Isaac, standing out as a beacon of light through all the darkness of human doubt and incredulity, one feature is emphasized: *the promise and the Promiser*. Taking the testimony of Rom. iv. to Abraham’s faith we read:

“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end *the promise* might be sure to all the seed.”

“He staggered not at *the promise of* God through unbelief being fully persuaded that, what He had *promised*, He was able also to perform.”

“Now it was not written for his sake alone but for us also if we believe on Him that *raised up* Jesus our Lord from the dead” (Rom. iv. 16-25).

Here we have Abraham’s faith concerning the birth of Isaac most intimately connected with the promise and the resurrection. Now let us consider the testimony concerning Sarah:

“Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful Who had promised” (Heb. xi. 11).

The words “as good as dead” of Rom. iv. 19 are parallel with “past age” of this passage, and stress the figure of resurrection. Abraham’s trial of faith recorded in Heb. xi. 17-19 revolves around these same features of faith and promise and resurrection:

“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received *the promises* offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to *raise him up, even from the dead*; from whence also he received him in a figure” (Heb. xi. 17-19).

As at the beginning, so here in a greater degree, Abraham:

“against (natural) hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, *according to that which was spoken*, So shall thy seed be” (Rom. iv. 18).

It is very evident that the faith of Abraham and Sarah in the Promiser was such that they believed He was the One Who quickeneth the dead. Therefore Abraham could believe this when all human hope had long passed. Sarah could receive strength when she was as good as dead, and Abraham, without knowing exactly how it would be accomplished, was confident that He Who had vested the promises in Isaac would, if needs be, raise him from the dead in order that His promise might be fulfilled. This appears to be an essential element of faith. It is surely significant that we do not read the word “promise” (*epangelia*) in the Gospels, until *after the resurrection of the Lord* (Luke xxiv. 49). This has reference to the Holy Spirit which came upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost. The shedding forth of the Holy Spirit and His miraculous gifts was directly connected with the resurrection of Christ, as Acts ii. 29-33 will show:

“He spake of the *resurrection* of Christ therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father *the promise* of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth *this*, which ye now see and hear.”

The noun “promise” is an important word in Hebrews, occurring as it does 14 times, as follows:

“Let us therefore fear, lest, a *promise* being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it” (iv. 1).
“Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit *the promises*” (vi. 12).
“After he had patiently endured, he obtained the *promise*” (vi. 15).
“To shew unto the heirs of *promise* the immutability of His counsel” (vi. 17).
“He (Melchisedec) blessed him that had the *promises*” (vii. 6).
“A better covenant established upon better *promises*” (viii. 6).
“The new testament (covenant) receive the *promise* of eternal inheritance” (ix. 15).
“Ye have need of patience, that ye might receive the *promise*” (x. 36).
“By faith he sojourned in the land of *promise*” (xi. 9).
“Heirs with him of the same *promise*” (xi. 9).
“These all died in faith, not having received the *promises*” (xi. 13).
“He that had received the *promises* offered up his only begotten son” (xi. 17).
“Through faith obtained *promises*” (xi. 33).
“Received not the *promise*: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (xi. 39, 40).

It will be seen that the example of Abraham would clinch, as it were, the exhortations dealing with the promise that had been given earlier in the epistle. Some of these Hebrew believers were shrinking back under a great trial of faith. Abraham’s trial and triumph would encourage them to persevere. Perhaps the fact that these blessings were reserved for resurrection had not been fully grasped by them. Abraham’s confidence would tend to reassure them.

The miracle and the marvel of resurrection.

Sarah’s unbelief was rebuked by the word: “Is anything too hard for the Lord”? (Gen. xviii. 14), and these words have a fuller message than the English translation supplies.

The word “hard” is *pala*, and is rendered “wonderful”, “marvel”, and the like. It is used of the plagues of Egypt and the future day of restoration (Psa. lxxviii. 12; Zech. viii. 6); it is associated with the wonder of child-birth (Psa. cxxxix. 14, 15); it enters into the name of the Angel who appeared to Samson’s mother (Judg. xiii. 18), and above all in the name of that “Child born and Son given” of whom Isaac was but a type—“His name shall be called *Wonderful*” (Isa. ix. 6). Is anything too wonderful for the Lord of resurrection?

Have we not allowed ourselves to be robbed of a full apprehension of God’s grace and power by reason of the limits imposed by translation? The word usually rendered “miracle” is *dunamis*. This word occurs twice in Heb. xi., viz., “Sarah received *strength*, (11), and “quenched the *violence* of fire” (34). The only reference therefore to God’s power in this chapter has to do with resurrection. When Paul said: “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection” he actually said, “the *miracle* of His resurrection”. Sarah knew this miracle, Abraham knew it, Jonah experienced it, and Israel anticipated it (Hos. vi. 2). This miraculous power of resurrection lies behind every promise of God, and however dark and apparently contrary to all reasonable expectation the present path may be, faith (as in the trial of Abraham) goes on beyond even the power of death, and believes in *God Who quickeneth the dead*.

When Abraham heard the call the first time, he obeyed and went out not *knowing*. When he responded the second time, he obeyed, still not knowing, but assured that God was faithful that promised. He obtained promises, he patiently endured, and could like Paul say, “I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded”. Sarah “judged Him faithful Who had promised”. Abraham “accounted Him able to raise up Isaac, even from the dead”. These are but variants of the same act of faith.

Members of the One Body too, have a promise to keep in mind, a promise made before age times (Titus i. 2), a promise sealed, for which an earnest has been given (Eph. i. 13), a promise which forms a precious feature of their peculiar calling (Eph. iii. 6), a promise which likewise looks forward to the day of resurrection, the day of redemption, for its fulfillment, and which they may anticipate as they walk in the power that is to usward who believe, a power which is nothing short of the power of His resurrection.

“For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (II Cor. i. 20).

**No.49. Crossed Hands or Restoration (xi. 20 - 22).
pp. 181 - 188**

The insistence of Heb. xi. upon the peculiar characteristics of faith, brings into prominence some incidents in the lives of the patriarchs that might otherwise have remained in the background. This is specially the case with Joseph, for who, unguided by God, would have picked out of that wonderful life the commandment concerning his bones? In the verse before us we have a pair of witnesses that have to do with "blessing", but blessing given with some rather unusual accompaniment or in some rather unusual circumstance:

"By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff" (Heb. xi. 20, 21).

It is very evident to the most casual reader that these two acts form a pair. In both cases the old man, the father, is partially blind. "His eyes were dim, so that he could not see" (Gen. xxvii. 1). "Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see" (Gen. xlvi. 10). In both cases, two sons are connected with the blessing; in the first Jacob and Esau, in the second Ephraim and Manasseh. In both, the younger is blessed above the elder, and in both there is an attempt to interfere with the Divine purpose by the fondness of the parent for the firstborn. We have already demonstrated that Heb. xi. is occupied with a series of seven pairs, and this close parallel is but added confirmation.

Grace not law.

We take it that the reader is sufficiently acquainted with the narrative of the two passages of Genesis, to enable us to proceed at once to the lesson intended by the apostle when writing to the Hebrews. One of the stumbling-blocks in the path of the early church was the necessity to set aside generations of racial pride and the privileges of circumcision. The Hebrew section could not readily relinquish their connection with the law and their position as the firstborn, and around this difficulty a great deal of the argument of Galatians and Romans is written:

"And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise" (Gal. iii. 17, 18).

"Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all" (Rom. iv. 16).

These two passages make it very clear that the promises of God do not move along the line of works, law or race, but that the promises originally made to Abraham and his seed included both the Jew and Gentile in their embrace. Rom. ix. 7-12 throws further light upon the question, revealing that deeper motives and purposes are involved:

“In Isaac shall thy seed be called And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth); it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.”

Ishmael the firstborn is set aside, and Isaac is seen as the child of promise. Esau the firstborn is set aside, and the younger, Jacob, is the true seed, a “supplanter”, by Divine intention. Manasseh the firstborn is passed over, that Ephraim the younger may receive the blessing, and so on down the ages.

We believe that we are not alone in experiencing considerable difficulty when asked to believe that when Isaac was deceived into blessing Jacob in the place of Esau, that Isaac acted “by faith”. If *that is* faith what is credulity, or unbelief or disobedience? For observe, in Gen. xxvii. we have the following statements, and are not left to our own deductions:

- (1) Isaac most pointedly intended to bless Esau.
- (2) Rebekah as definitely intended Jacob to be blessed.

Rebekah’s *methods* are to be condemned, but at least she sought, even by questionable means, that the revealed purpose of God at the birth of Esau and Jacob should be carried out. We cannot suppose that Isaac had lived in ignorance of this prophecy given at the birth of the children, and therefore his direct choice of Esau can scarcely be called “the obedience of faith”.

- (3) When Esau returned we read, “And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where is he?” etc. This trembling and questioning are no evidence of faith. Yet it still stands written, “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come”.

The turning point of the narrative where faith begins to operate appears to be at the moment when Isaac realized the deception that had been practised upon him. The words “And Isaac trembled with a great trembling greatly” (Gen. xxvii. 33 margin) appear too strong if they simply indicate Isaac’s fear of Esau’s anger. May they not rather indicate that with the revelation of Jacob’s deception came also the consciousness of his own failure to seek first the will of the Lord? And so at the end of the very same verse that sees him “trembling greatly”, we find him suddenly resolute: “Yea, and he shall be blessed”. So we find the vacillating Pilate suddenly adamant, when the purpose of God shall so require: “What I have written, I have written.”

The blessing intended in unbelief for Esau is confirmed to Jacob “by faith”. Strange overruling, yet can we not see some parallels in our own wayward wanderings? Esau was blessed concerning things to come, and the blessing is recorded in verses 39 and 40. Jacob’s full blessing, freely and by faith, however, is not given until the 28th chapter: “And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him” (Gen. xxviii. 1). There is no deception now, no compulsion; faith sees clearly the path to tread. The blessing evidently has intimate relation to the great promise of God to Abraham concerning a Seed and a land, for Isaac

immediately adds: “Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.” Here Jacob follows in line with Isaac, as Isaac with Abraham (see Gen. xxiv. 37). Then follows that blessing which Rebekah had schemed in vain to hear, and Jacob had deceived in vain to receive:

“And God Almighty (El Shaddai, as in xvii. 1) bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people” (Gen. xxviii. 3).

The margin renders “multitude” by “assembly”. The LXX translates the word *kahal* by *sunagoge*, “synagogue”. This also is a peculiar item in the great promise to Abraham, for it reappears as the change of Jacob’s name to Israel:

“I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a *company* (*kahal*, LXX *sunagoge*) of nations shall be of thee” (Gen. xxxv. 11).

It occurs yet again in the passage where Jacob blesses Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen. xlviii. 4). We do not know whether the note to the word “multitude” (Gen. xlviii. 19) in *The Companion Bible* has been or will be corrected in later editions, but the student should remember that in this verse the word is quite different from the above, being the Hebrew *melo*, and involves a different idea. This is but an expansion of the original promise: “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. xii. 3).

Gen. xxviii. 4 continues:

“And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.”

Here, without the shadow of doubt, is the promise of Abraham, and given by faith to Jacob by Isaac. If we contrast the blessing of Gen. xxviii. 1-4 with that of xxvii. 28, 29 we shall find that the former blessing, received by deception, was the firstborn’s blessing, while the latter, given freely and by faith, was the one for which Jacob had seized the chance of birthright, and Rebekah had plotted in vain; for this promise was by grace, and did not necessarily descend to the natural firstborn. This lesson is repeated in the second instance given in Heb. xi. When the moment came for the two sons of Joseph to be blessed, Joseph placed the firstborn at the right hand of Jacob:

“And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim’s head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh’s head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn and he set Ephraim before Manasseh” (Gen. xlviii. 14-20).

It is not our object to attempt an exposition here of these two blessings, which include within their terms practically all that belongs to the purpose of God for the earth until the end of the Millennium. Our purpose is rather to gather the lesson that may be learned for ourselves, and to see how it is related to the need of the Hebrew believer and the theme of the epistle.

The blessing of the crossed hands.

This would be but one more blow at the passing system of law and Jewish privilege. Already the Aaronic and Levitical priesthood had given place to that after the order of Melchisedec. Already the sacrifices of bulls and goats had passed away in view of the one great Sacrifice for sin. Already the old Covenant had been set aside for the new. We have read of a better Covenant, better sacrifices, a better hope, and now we are to realize that there are “better promises” than those of the law. When the twelfth chapter is concluded we shall find a better “Firstborn” connected with Mount Sion, than was connected with Mount Sinai (Heb. xii. 18-23), and we shall perhaps believe that it is not accident but design that places Heb. xii. 16, 17 immediately before these verses, and introduces Esau, as a profane person, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. With all Jacob’s manifold faults, and we are not called upon to gloss them over, Jacob schemed and plotted *for the blessing*. He did not, like his profane brother, hold it cheap and barter it away. Jacob, though the younger, was the recipient of blessing; who, when he was most blessed, halted upon his thigh. His blessing at the end was deliberately contrary to law and expectation, and this, together with Jacob’s crosshand blessing and Isaac’s previous blessing, bring forward one more important feature in the constitution of faith, namely, that it sets aside the flesh. This is but another way of saying that faith is ever associated with resurrection, as we have already seen. May we rejoice that “all spiritual blessings” are not given as deserts, but in pure grace, and that the highest of all inheritances has been bestowed upon those who by nature and practice seemed the least likely. A blessing of crossed hands indeed!

“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed” (Rom. iv. 16).

Among the characters of the Old Testament that are outstanding types of Christ, Joseph takes a prominent place. His separate position in the family of Jacob, his betrayal, his imprisonment, his exaltation to the throne, all provide food for holy wonder as we see the Messiah, Who was to come after many years, so clearly anticipated by God and recorded in His Word. Heb. xi. 22, however, is not so much concerned with Joseph as a type, as with Joseph as the man of faith. Moreover we must never lose sight of the fact that the apostle, when writing this chapter, had the Hebrews in mind, and was guided in the selection of his examples so as to afford to these saints all the help possible in their difficult path.

“By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones” (Heb. xi. 22).

The expression “when he died” is the rendering of the Greek verb *teleutao*, which suggests the end or close of life. Earlier on we have found that one of the key words of Hebrews is the word “perfect” and its variants. We have:

teleios in ix. 11, the “more perfect tabernacle”;
teleiotes (vi. 1), “let us go on unto perfection”;
teleioo (x. 14), “perfected for ever”;
teleiosis (vii. 11), “if perfection were by the Levitical priesthood”;

teleiotes (xii. 2), “the Author and Finisher (Perfecter) of faith”;
teleutao (xi. 22), “Joseph when he died”;
telos (vi. 11), “hope unto the end”.

It would not be true to say that *teleutao* necessarily carries with it the idea of perfecting, for it is used of the death of Herod (Matt. ii. 19), and the punishment of the law-breaker (Matt. xv. 4), as well as of the death of David (Acts ii. 29), Jacob (Acts vii. 15) and Joseph (Heb. xi. 22). Yet, seeing how closely the theme of Hebrews is interwoven with this word, it is possible that it was used with intent, because of what was to be written immediately afterward.

The exodus.

What Joseph particularly remembered when near the close of his life, was the “departing of the children of Israel”, or, as the original has it, “the exodus”. “Made mention” is perhaps better rendered “remembered” as the margin suggests. In what way could Joseph have “remembered” the exodus of Israel? The actual deliverance at the Passover did not take place for nearly two centuries after his death. He is said to have remembered this exodus “by faith”, and therefore must have known and believed some “word of God” (Rom. x. 17). It is very evident that the promise of Gen. xv. was believed by Joseph, and he realized that his own imprisonment and elevation to the throne, the coming of his brethren and their settlement in Egypt were all parts of one great whole. The basis of Joseph’s faith reads as follows:

“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 thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full” (Gen. xv. 13-16).

Joseph, surely, was one of those witnesses who “died in faith, not having received the promise”, but who nevertheless saw it afar off and was persuaded of it. There is no murmuring when his time comes to die, but just a confident assurance that God will keep His word:

“And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which He sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence” (Gen. l. 24, 25).

Twice in this small compass we have the expression “visiting He will visit”, the Hebrew figure denoting emphasis and certainty. Joseph knew that bondage and affliction awaited Israel, yet who more fitted to speak confidently than himself? Had not Joseph endured sorrow and reproach? Is it not written of him: “Whose feet they hurt with fetters; he was laid in iron”? (Psa. cv. 18). Nevertheless, the Lord had kept His word of promise to Joseph, and so He would keep His covenant with His servant Abraham also. In the exodus Joseph would have no *conscious* part, for he knew that his hour had come.

Resurrection.

Joseph, however, did not only remember the exodus of Israel; he gave commandment concerning his bones. Why was this? He certainly did not intend Israel to hold them in reverence as the church of Rome does the bones of martyrs. There is something distinctly personal in Joseph's desire. If we compare the statements of Scripture concerning Jacob and Joseph we shall realize that there is some important lesson involved in their concern about their bones and their burial. We will continue first the record of Joseph:

“And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph” (Josh. xxiv. 32).

This parcel of ground was bought by Jacob, as recorded in Gen. xxxiii. 19, and there he had erected an altar and called it *El-elohe-Israel*, God--the God of Israel. When Jacob came to die, after blessing the twelve tribes, he too makes special arrangements for his burial in the land of Canaan:

“I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying-place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah” (Gen. xlix. 29-31).

It is suggestive that it is in the passages where we read that Joseph and Jacob “died” (*teleutao*) that we read of this special burial. Stephen in his speech before the Sanhedrin spoke to men who were not only his opponents, and so not likely to allow any mistake to pass unnoticed, but who were also well versed in the history of the fathers. Consequently we must accept Acts vii. 15, 16 as added light and not attempt to explain it away:

“So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died (*teleutao*), he, and our fathers, and were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem.”

Here we learn that not only were Jacob and Joseph buried in purchased burial places in the land of promise, but that the parcel of land that Jacob had bought (Josh. xxiv. 32) had originally belonged to Abraham, and had been secured by Jacob, after his long absence, by the payment of the added one hundred pieces of silver. Further, it will be seen that the fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, were buried together in the one place, the cave of Machpelah, while Joseph and his brethren, the heads of the tribes of Israel, were all buried together in the other place, purchased both by Abraham and by Jacob for this very purpose. Who can doubt the meaning? There, in that land of pilgrimage, a land that was promised but not enjoyed, faith saw afar off the promise fulfilled in resurrection. The burying places secured from the inhabitants were just so many pledges of undying faith, and the holy dead, lying together in solemn stillness, spoke of the quiet confidence of faith awaiting the day when in resurrection glory all should come into their own.

There is one more passage that must be noted, viz., Gen. xlviii. 21, 22:

“And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers. Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.”

Here we have a portion of the promised land not bought with money, but taken by the sword. This was “a double portion”, a portion above his brethren, the portion of the victor, the overcomer. It is surely something more than coincidence that the word “portion” in this passage should be the very word “shechem”, which occurs as a place name in the record of Josh. xxiv. 32. It would appear that the complete story is somewhat as follows:

- (1) Abraham purchased the field of Machpelah, and there Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Rebekah and Leah were buried (Gen. xxiii. 4-20; xlix. 29-31).
- (2) Abraham also purchased a portion of land in Shechem of the sons of Emmor, as a burying place for the twelve patriarchs (Acts vii. 16).
- (3) This piece of land was apparently seized by the Amorites, and delivered from them by Jacob’s sword and bow, and doubly secured by the further payment of a sum of money to the sons of Emmor (Gen. xlviii. 21, 22 and Josh. xxiv. 32).

The glorious truth of Ephesians was a mystery, or secret, unknown when Abraham, Jacob and Joseph lived. Certain underlying principles, however, receive a little light from the Old Testament records. We can surely see how strong the hope of resurrection was, how intimately it was associated with the inheritance and restoration. Here, in these typical transactions, we can see the “redemption of the purchased possession”, and in the very possession of these sacred spots of earth, an “earnest of the inheritance”, and in Jacob’s fight with the Amorite for this precious pledge the conflict with principalities and powers in Eph. vi.

Jacob undertook no campaign against the Canaanites. In fact he was strongly opposed to such a spirit (Gen. xxxiv. 25-30). But when it was necessary to fight for the sacred pledge of the inheritance for which he was willing to wait, then he did not hesitate to enter into battle. This is the true overcoming for the present time. Many dear servants of God are being persuaded to adopt an attitude that is alike dangerous and undispensational. We must not forget that dominion over the Canaanite was not granted to Israel until, under Joshua, they crossed over Jordan. No walls of Jericho fell down flat before either Abraham, Isaac or Jacob. Such is not the condition of pilgrimage but of conquest, and the day of redemption, the day of entry into our inheritance, though near, is not actually present.

This precious lesson of faith would come with quickening force to the Hebrew who read it, and, under God, it was calculated to strengthen the afflicted and persecuted believer by the simple grandeur of its example:

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off” (Heb. xi. 13).

The purchased possession.

There is more in this purchase of land than is at first sight evident, owing to the law of inheritance and its relation to redemption. When Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer, bought the land that belonged to Elimelech and Chilion and Mahlon, he also bought Ruth, the wife of Mahlon, to be his wife, “*to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place*” (Ruth iv. 9, 10). Jeremiah also bought a piece of land in Anathoth at the command of the Lord, and as an evidence of his faith in the restoration of his people:

“Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is thine to buy it Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land” (Jer. xxxii. 7-15).

To the Hebrew who knew the law, those sacred burial grounds would be so many pledges of future resurrection and restoration. “The purchased possession” would be redeemed, the inheritance would be enjoyed, and during the intervening time of waiting and discipline, “faith is the substance of things hoped for”.

No.50. Moses, Faith that triumphs (xi. 23 - 28). pp. 201 - 207

In the structure of Heb. xi., the witness of Joseph and Moses are coupled. Let us notice a lesson that arises out of the comparison of these two witnesses to overcoming faith. Both have to do with Egypt; both have to do personally with Pharaoh, but here the similarity ceases, and contrast begins.

In the case of Joseph, he was led steadily, step by step, through suffering and shame, until at last he sat upon the throne of Egypt and became the saviour of his people. In the case of Moses, he was led just as steadily to turn his back upon Egypt and its throne, and from greatness and wealth he descended to reproach and affliction that he, too, might be, equally and as surely, a saviour of his people. Now both these contrary actions were “by faith”. How easy it would have been for Moses to have reasoned that in Joseph he had a precedent for accepting the honour of adoption, and of remaining attached to the throne of Egypt! How easily he could have deceived himself by reasoning that this closeness to the throne was a God-given responsibility that he must use for the amelioration of Israel’s sorrows! Yet how false it would have been! Moses, as surely as Joseph, knew the promise of Gen. xv. God had declared that “in the fourth generation” Israel should come out of the land of their affliction, and Moses knew that in his own person, *that fourth generation* stood represented. This can be easily seen by reading Exod. vi. 16-20.

“These are the names of the sons of LEVI (generation No. 1)
Gershon, and KOHATH and Merari (generation No. 2)
The sons of Kohath, AMRAM, etc. (generation No. 3)
And took him Jochebed to wife; and she bare him Aaron and MOSES”
(generation No. 4).

Moses’ faith, like Joseph’s, came by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Joseph said, “God shall surely visit you”—that Moses had heard, as recorded in Exod. iii. Moses knew that Israel were to leave Egypt; they were to be saved by no laws, however good, that emanated from that land of bondage. Joseph’s faith as surely saw that Israel must remain in Egypt for some two hundred years, as Moses saw that they could not remain another generation. They both believed the Word, and though their actions, viewed externally, were so directly opposite, really they were entirely both in line and harmony.

Here is the right division of the Word of truth in actual practice. We have to see where we are in the outworking of the divine purpose, and to emulate *the faith*, but not copy the *external expression* of it, manifested in different periods, lest by so doing we err as surely as Moses would have done had he emulated Joseph and ruled in Egypt. By faith Moses forsook Egypt, and refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. Abraham “went out”. Moses “refused”, and “forsook”.

Moses stands with Abraham in the list of witnesses, inasmuch as more space is devoted to these two than to all others. There are points of resemblance that should not be passed unnoticed. Abraham left a highly civilized community to become a dweller in tents. Moses turned his back upon the treasures of Egypt to become associated with God’s people in their affliction. Both Abraham and Moses had the faith that “sees the invisible”, a quality shared by Noah, and all who were moved with like precious faith, as the opening words of this chapter indicate.

The witness of Moses to that faith which is both the substance of things hoped for, and the proof and reproof associated with things not seen, is given in a series of statements that cover his life from the day of his birth until the great day of Israel’s deliverance by the passover. His history, as given, is bounded on either side by protection from one who would destroy in the first place all the male children, and in the second the firstborn. At the beginning faith provided an ark of bulrushes, and at the end the blood of the passover lamb. Lying between these two extremes are four related acts that carry the story on to its blessed conclusion.

“By faith Moses REFUSED to be called the son CHOOSING rather to suffer affliction with the people of God ESTEEMING the reproach of Christ greater riches By faith he FORSOOK Egypt” (24-27).

The first item in this exhibition of faith is connected with his birth and, while included in the faith of Moses, is yet, strictly speaking, the faith of his parents. The last item, however, balances this, for while it reads “by faith he kept the passover”, this faith was shared by all Israel, so that we perceive that faith can sometimes be collective, while at

others, as in the case of Moses refusing, choosing, esteeming and forsaking, it may be very personal and individual.

When Moses was born, two parts of God's promise drew near together. Amram his father knew full well that Moses was the fourth generation from the entry into Egypt. He also knew that there was another prophecy which must be fulfilled namely, that 400 years were to elapse (see Gen. xv. 13 and 16). It might have been difficult to have understood clearly, before the event, how 400 years and a fourth generation could coincide, but by the time Moses was born the possibility of this coincidence became manifest.

We learn that the parents of Moses hid the child for three months "because they saw that he was a proper child". Stephen speaking of this same event, says Moses was "exceeding fair", margin, "fair to God", a Hebraism indicating something exceptional. The word *asteios*, "fair", "proper", is an unusual word, occurring only in Acts vii. 20 and Heb. xi. 23. Etymologically it means "belonging to the city", like "polite" (from *polis*, a city), "urbane" (from *verbs*, a city). One edition of the LXX introduces the name of God into the description of David in I Sam. xvi. 12, where it reads: "Now he was ruddy and *fair in aspect through the Lord*". It may be therefore that Moses at his birth had something about him that first of all caused his parents to stop and think, and then to perceive that here was the promised deliverer of the Lord's people.

"And they were not afraid of the king's commandment" (Heb. xi. 23)

The hiding of Moses was by faith, not fear, for faith is not presumption. It would not have been an act of faith to have exposed Moses, and it is salutary to remember the Saviour's repudiation of the devil's suggestion to "tempt the Lord". When we read the record in Exod. ii. the mother alone is mentioned: "When *she* saw, *she* hid, *she* took him", etc. Heb. xi., however, assures us of the fact that both parents were associated in this venture of faith, even as Exod. ii. goes on to reveal the part played by the elder sister Miriam.

Faith and the powers that be.

It will also be observed that faith set aside the commandment of the king. Normally, the child of God is called upon to be law-abiding. Taxes were paid both by the Lord (Matt. xvii. 27), by the command of the Lord (Matt. xxii. 21), and by the command of his servant Paul (Rom. xiii. 7). Human government was to be viewed as under the ordering of God (Rom. xiii. 1; Titus iii. 1; I Pet. ii. 17). The order of human society is not invaded because believers are "all one in Christ". Though it be true that "in Christ" there are no longer "male and female", yet these distinctions are observed in the order of the home life (Eph. v. 22-33), and in the church (I Tim. ii. 8-15). Though there be no longer "bond and free", nevertheless the relationship of master and servant remains untouched (Eph. vi. 5-9).

While this is the general attitude, it will be seen that there are times when faith takes the position of Peter and John:

“Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye” (Acts iv. 19).

There are times when the commandment of the king must be ignored or flatly contradicted:

“Now when Daniel *knew* that the writing was signed he prayed, and gave thanks before his God, *as he did aforetime*” (Dan. vi. 10).

“Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Dan. iii. 18).

What it all amounts to is this, that whether we obey the command from the king, or whether we reject it, in both actions we must see to it that we are simply obeying the *Word of God*. This is what the parents of Moses did. Seeing by faith that this child was the one marked out by God for a special purpose, they had but one course of action, which they took, and so their names are found enrolled upon the scroll of witnesses for that faith which is the substance of things hoped for.

The positive acts of faith that pertain to Moses now follow. The faith that marked the infant days of Moses was prominent in his after life. One or two notable manifestations of that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, are given in the record of Heb. xi.:

Substance. “Refused choosing esteeming ... for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward” (Heb. xi. 24-26).

Not seen. “Forsook not fearing for he endured, as seeing Him Who is invisible” (Heb. xi. 27, 28).

No act of faith is recorded of Moses until “he was come to years”. The original has it: “having become great”, which is a quotation from the LXX of Exod. ii. 11, and refers to his growth in years as much as, if not more than, to his greatness in wealth and position, although this too, belongs to the expression (see Gen. xxiv. 35).

The example of Moses very aptly illustrates the exhortation of Heb. v. 14; vi. 1: “Them that are of full age Leaving let us go on”. When faith is tested there is no make-believe about it. Moses was great, learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and mighty in words and deeds (Acts vii. 22). He apparently had a definite offer made by Pharaoh’s daughter of formal adoption into the royal house. It was a very real test. Abraham’s trial of faith, too, was intensely real. Nothing on earth could have been so dear in his eyes as his beloved son Isaac. Paul’s test of faith was real. The renunciation of the position and privilege of being a Hebrew and a Pharisee cannot be easily estimated by such as ourselves.

The activities of faith.

Moses refused, chose, esteemed; had respect, forsook, endured, and kept by faith.

He *refused* to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.

He *chose* rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

He *esteemed* the reproach for Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.
He *had respect* unto the recompense of the reward.
He *forsook* Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king.
He *endured*, as seeing Him Who is invisible.
He *kept* the passover, and the sprinkling of blood.

To the Hebrews had been written:

“Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward” (Heb. x. 34, 35),

and in Moses they would see a very glorious example. These Hebrews were exhorted to consider the “enduring” nature of their heavenly possessions; they were urged to remember that they were associated with a kingdom that “remains” (xii. 28), that here they had no continuing city, but sought one to come (xiii. 14). So then the sinfulness of Egypt’s pleasures is not stressed so much as their transience. Moses had a birthright and an adoption that he could not barter for Egypt’s pottage (Heb. xii. 16; Rom. ix. 4), and there was a danger that the Hebrews would succumb under the pressure of their trials, and for a brief period of so-called “peace”, forfeit their heavenly calling. The essential element in the faith necessary to endure and overcome is that which is manifested in Moses’ action, and definitely expressed in Heb. xi. 6: “He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder (a recompenser) of them that diligently seek Him”.

Hebrews is the epistle of the “right hand of God”. There the great High Priest has sat down, and because the Psalmist said “At Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore”, those whose faith enables them to “see Him Who is invisible”, are enabled to esteem, at their true worth, those “pleasures of sin” that are “for a season”.

Joseph and Moses.

Joseph’s faith led him step by step to the throne of Egypt. Moses’ faith led him step by step away from Egypt and its throne to the wilderness and to hardship. The apostle had said earlier, concerning the Patriarchs, that “if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned” (Heb. xi. 15). We shall never lack the counsel of *Mr. Worldly Wiseman*, and our own hearts will often turn us astray. Think how one might have argued the case with Moses:

- (1) Joseph’s example. See how he used his exalted position for the glory of God and the well-being of his people.
- (2) Are you not therefore disobedient to the example of such a man?
- (3) Why not see in your preservation and adoption just the same all-powerful Hand, leading you on to this crisis in your life?
- (4) Use your influence at court; get measures put into operation that shall ameliorate the sufferings of your people and be a deliverer indeed.

Doubtless we can supplement this from our own experience. But all this would be vain, *for God had spoken*. The promise made to Abraham and remembered by Joseph

(Heb. xi. 22), was nearly due to be performed. God had said that Israel would be afflicted, but at the set time He would *bring them out*, and Moses' faith, like our own, rested upon "the Word of God" (Rom. x. 17).

By the time Moses was born, a new dispensation had dawned; "a new king that knew not Joseph" occupied the throne. So the apostle would press upon the consciences of the Hebrews the necessity to weigh the change of dispensation ushered in by the rejection of their Messiah. They had to "forsake", "go forth unto Him without the camp", rather than continue in those things that had ceased to be the will of God.

By faith he forsook Egypt.

We must now consider a difficult passage.

"By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him Who is invisible" (Heb. xi. 27).

It is generally reckoned that this cannot refer to the time when Moses fled unto Midian, but to the second time that he left Egypt, victoriously at the time of the exodus. There is no need to comment upon the obvious "faith" that enabled Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt, so we ask a moment's attention while we look once again at that earlier flight from Egypt.

"Not fearing the wrath of the king." When we have read through the chapters of Exodus detailing the attitude of Moses towards Pharaoh, the mighty miracles that were wrought, the power that moved heaven and earth and even the angel of death, it seems rather tame to say of that *triumphant* departure from Egypt, the Israelites loaded with the "spoil" thrust upon them, that Moses "forsook" Egypt, and did not "fear" the wrath of the king. He had forsaken Egypt forty years before, and his return was with the express purpose of leading Israel out, not with any intention of settling down himself. Time after time he stood before Pharaoh, calm, unflinching, master of the situation. There was no wrath of the king to fear when, at the last, Israel moved out of the land, and the attempt of Pharaoh to overtake them at the Red Sea hardly fits the passage in the chapter we are considering.

There are several points of contact between Heb. xi. & Stephen's speech in Acts vii. Stephen gives a very full account of the occasion that led to Moses' flight from Egypt:

"And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: *for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.* And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren, why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday? Then fled Moses" (Acts vii. 23-29).

Stephen supplies us with the *motive* that prompted Moses' action. He supposed that Israel would have risen as one man and acknowledged him as their deliverer. This was not to be. They rejected him. He left Egypt and remained away for 40 years. Then, Stephen continues:

“This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? The same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. He brought them out” (Acts vii. 35, 36).

It is very evident that Moses' two manifestations to Israel are typical of the First and Second Coming of Christ. His flight into Midian is parallel with the Lord's rejection, ascension to heaven and present period of waiting. Stephen, too, does not say that Moses forsook or left Egypt the second time, but that “he brought them out”. Let us look at Exod. ii. 11-14 again. Verse 11 opens with the words “When Moses was grown” which is translated in the LXX by words identical with Heb. xi. 24. Exod. ii. 12 gives a statement not repeated by Stephen:

“He looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.”

It is easy to say, Moses evidently looked “this way and that”, to make sure that no man should witness the deed, but is that truth? Stephen tells us that he assumed that Israel would understand his motive, and Isaiah seems to use the expression in such a way as to compel us to believe that Moses was conscious of the Messianic foreshadowing of his acts:

“He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him” (Isa. lix. 16).

“And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me” (Isa. lxiii. 5).

While Exod. ii. 14 says “and Moses feared” it does not say he “feared the wrath of the king”; but it appears that he feared something less personal and more vital. Spurrell translates the passage: “Then Moses was afraid, for he said, Surely this transaction is known”, which endeavours to draw attention to what was passing in Moses' mind. We know from Stephen that Moses expected Israel to see in this act his credentials as a God-sent deliverer, and that when he was sent later, he said: “They will not believe me they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee” (Exod. iv. 1), and that the signs of the serpent and the leprosy were given to him.

Let no one judge Moses for the slaying of the Egyptian. Under God he was the instrument of slaying thousands of Egypt's firstborn, and of overcoming the flower of their army at the Red Sea. We understand that at the reply of the quarrelling Israelites, Moses was seized with some apprehension that his mission would miscarry, saying: “Surely the intention of my act is evident to them”, much in the same way the Lord said to His disciples after He had washed their feet: “What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter”, which refers to something more than the external act of washing the feet. The only possibility therefore was, that Moses should forsake Egypt.

Pharaoh sought to slay him, and his flight out of Egypt was no more an act of unbelief than was the flight for much the same reason of Joseph and Mary, as recorded in Matt. ii.

These points we submit to the reader for careful consideration, believing that many an action may be really “by faith” which, casually judged, may seem the product of some baser motive. We will reserve Moses’ last act of faith, ‘the passover’, together with Israel’s faith in passing through the Red Sea, with which it is so clearly connected, to a further article.

No.51. Faith and the better thing (xi. 28 - 40). pp. 221 - 229

We now reach the concluding pair of characters in the sevenfold series of Heb. xi., viz., Israel and Rahab. The key thought is “deliverance from destruction”.

Moses is linked with Israel in the keeping of the passover, “lest He that destroyed the firstborn should touch them”. Israel pass unscathed through the Red Sea, “which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned”. “Rahab perished not with them that believed not”.

The faith of Moses is very comprehensive, and at either end of the record in Heb. xi. it overlaps and includes the faith of others. In both it was a preserving faith, and connected with birth:

“By faith Moses, when he was born” (verse 23).

“By faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest He that destroyed the firstborn should touch them” (verse 28).

There is no warrant for the change of expression from “by faith” to “through faith” in verses 27 and 28. It was the same faith acting in the same way that actuated Moses throughout. There is a real distinction intended between “by faith” and “through faith” in Rom. iii. 30. Here, however, it is a variation in the English version only, and no doctrinal difference is intended.

The passover.

Several items of interest are given concerning Moses and the passover. “By faith he *kept* the passover.” The word “kept” here is *poieo*, and in its true translation has a wider significance than “kept”. It is used of the sprinkling of blood just as much as the passover, and it would be hardly true to say, “he kept the sprinkling of blood”. Paul follows the LXX version here, which in its turn faithfully translates the Hebrew. “To do the passover” (Exod. xii. 47, 48) does not seem good English, and it is not suggested as an alternative, but it points out the meaning, which is expressed in Exod. xii. 50:

“Thus *did* all the children of Israel; as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron, so *did* they.”

The faith that kept the passover found its warrant in the Word of God. We cannot too insistently bring this forward. All sorts of things are said to be done by the Lord’s people “by faith”, but it is difficult sometimes to find any warrant for their actions in the Word. Heb. xi. 1 declares faith to be the substance of things hoped for; Rom. x. 17 declares the Word of God to be the substance of that faith. The passover in Exod. xii. is of divine institution. Moses simply “did” what he was told. “And the Lord spake unto Moses . . . saying Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel” (Exod. xii. 1-3). The whole passage (Exod. xii. 1-20) is the actual spoken Word of the Lord. Without break or introduction verses 12 and 13 say:

“For I will pass through the land.”
“When I see the blood.”

The sprinkling of blood.

It is perhaps pardonable for the English reader to link these passages with the others in Hebrews that speak of “sprinkling”. We have:

- (1) The sprinkling of the water of purification (Heb. ix. 13).
- (2) The sprinkling of both the book and the people (Heb. ix. 19).
- (3) The sprinkling of the Tabernacle and its vessels (Heb. ix. 21).

These find their fulfillment in:

- (1) “The blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb. xii. 24).
- (2) “Our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience” (Heb. x. 22).
- (3) “Sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (I Pet. i. 2).

All these references use the word *rhantizo* or *rhantismos*. The word used in Heb. xi. 28, however, is *proschusis*, a word occurring nowhere else in the N.T. Believing that the choice of words to express the truth is a part of that inspiration of God which characterizes the Scriptures, we feel that it is fatal to profitable exegesis to confound what God distinguishes. We have, however, the key to the problem. Elsewhere we have sought to show the distinction that must be made between *redemption* and *atonement*. Now all the passages cited above have reference to a people *already redeemed*, whereas the passover speaks of the great act of redemption itself. There is no reference to cleansing, dedicating or service in the passover. It speaks of deliverance; consequently the record uses a distinct word. Instead, therefore, of linking Heb. xi. 28 with Heb. xii. 24, we have to make the following comparisons:

The passover and its sprinkled blood (Heb. xi. 28) must be compared with such a passage as I Pet. i. 18, 19: “Ye were, redeemed .. with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot”. The redeeming Sacrifice, and its sprinkled blood, must be placed in contrast with “the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb. xii. 24), which refers rather to worship.

Faith versus assaying to do.

The active faith of Israel begins with the crossing of the Red sea:

“By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned” (Heb. xi. 29).

There is a lesson here regarding faith that may well detain us for a moment. By comparing the faith of Joseph with that of Moses, as given in Heb. xi. 22 and 24, we learned that the selfsame faith in different circumstances may produce very contrary actions. Faith led Joseph to occupy the throne of Egypt. Faith as certainly led Moses to turn his back on it. Now in the case before us we have two peoples performing the same act. Israel ventured to cross the Red Sea, and the Egyptians ventured to do the same. Externally the acts were similar; internally they were wide apart. Israel’s faith rested upon the Word of God: “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward” (Exod. xiv. 15). Egypt’s following of Israel, though the same act, was not by faith but through hardness of heart: “I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them” (Exod. xiv. 17). Is there no “assaying to do” on the part of the Lord’s people, that ends in disaster?

An outstanding example of faith in modern times is that of George Muller. Doubtless many have thanked God for that noble witness, but does it follow that because George Muller passed through that Red Sea of difficulties triumphantly, all should or could? The Lord’s will has as much to do with faith as with *obedience*. He wills that one should suffer weakness, while He wills that another should be divinely healed. He wills to one pecuniary straitness, while to another He wills a full and plentiful supply. Faith will never seek to override these divine appointments. If it is His will that one should be poor, it will not be “faith” but an Egyptian “assaying to do”, if that one seeks to alter this, however plausibly he may speak of the triumph of faith that can move mountains. Let us see to it that our Red Seas are crossed at the Word of God; *that* will be by faith. Let us have an holy shrinking from any act that looks like faith, but is a counterfeit.

Between Heb. xi. 29 and 30 lies a tragedy of unbelief. Marah, Manna, Meribah, Kadesh Barnea are passed over in silence. In the reckoning of faith they do not exist. There is no recorded gap between the triumph of the Red Sea, and the overthrow of Jericho forty years afterwards. Alas, we all know too well what these driftings and doubtings mean on the pilgrim path and they *are* recorded in chapters iii. and iv.

The faith that accomplished the overthrow of Jericho rested upon the Word of God:

“The LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho ye shall compass the city six days and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him” (Josh. vi. 2-5).

Here is the basis of the faith of Heb. xi. 30. We do not attempt a fuller exposition of Josh. vi. in this series, as that comes in its proper course in the studies entitled *Fundamentals of Dispensational Truth*.

We saw in an earlier analysis that the seventh in the double list of witnesses in each instance is a woman. Sarah's faith is positive. Rahab's faith is negative: "Rahab perished not with them that believed not" (Heb. xi. 31).

A great deal of unprofitable discussion has taken place over Rahab. Some contend that the Hebrew word *zanah* (harlot) may mean just an innkeeper. Schleusner, with many commentators, would derive *zanah* from *zun*, "be fed", but the laws of language will not permit this derivation. There is no necessity to soften down the language of Scripture. The grace that can save Saul the Pharisee, Matthew the publican, and the like, can save Rahab the harlot.

"His mercy is free,
'Twas given to Mary, Manasseh and me."

Another difficulty that some have is the fact that Rahab told lies in defending the spies. Of this the New Testament record takes no notice. It neither minimizes her condition as a harlot, nor enters into any justification of her words and deeds. What it does fix upon is that, sinful, erring, ignorant and immoral as she was, she believed in God and His Word.

"I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us
. . . . we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you the
Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath" (Josh. ii. 9-11).

We can well leave Rahab's morals to grow and expand under the illumination of the law of God. Harlot though she was, and untruthful as she was, she believed God, which is the beginning of all morals and all truth. There is one thing to be said of Rahab's false statements concerning the spies. She did not bear false witness *against* them. She did not *save herself* from the charge of lying at the expense of the life of the spies who had put themselves into her hands.

Josh. ii. and Heb. xi. 31 are not written to justify Rahab's morals, but to bear witness to Rahab's faith. She is included to emphasize the many-sidedness of faith, the way in which it is exhibited by those who differ widely in other ways. Sarah and Rahab are in many points at extremes. Moses and Jacob have few points in common, yet each is bound to each by the common bond of faith.

We have now passed in review the fourteen great witnesses to faith that is the substance of things hoped for. We have seen faith in many aspects leading men and women in many ways, *but ever resting upon the Word of God*. Each example named has been associated with some particular aspect of faith. Before the apostle concludes, he enumerates yet another series of seven, but this time attaches no particular example of faith to any one of them:

“And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets” (Heb. xi. 32).

It seems that we should honour this abbreviation, and not spend time in examining the life and doings of Gideon, Samson, and the rest. We shall only be side-tracked from our theme if we stay to discuss the problem of Jephtha’s daughter, and it would take a volume adequately to deal with the faith of David and the prophets. Nevertheless the very mention of these names impresses upon the mind the length of the list of witnesses to faith found in the Word; but we pass on, with the apostle, to consider his own summary. He gives an impressive list of witnesses, the first set being the positive acts of faith, and the second, faith’s endurance. The very tabulation of these acts of faith is solemnizing.

Eleven positive acts of faith.

- A | Subdued kingdoms.
- B | Wrought righteousness.
- C | Obtained promises.
- D | Stopped the mouths of lions.
- E | Quenched the violence of fire.
- F | Escaped the edge of the sword.
- G | Were made strong out of weakness.
- H | Waxed valiant in fight.
- I | Turned to flight the armies of the aliens.
- J | Women received their dead raised to life again.
- K | Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance.
That they might obtain a BETTER resurrection.

Eleven negative acts of faith.

- A | Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings.
 - B | Of bonds and imprisonment.
 - C | They were stoned.
 - D | They were sawn asunder.
 - E | They were tempted.
 - F | They were slain with the sword.
 - G | They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins.
 - H | Being destitute.
 - I | Afflicted.
 - J | Tormented.
 - K | They wandered in deserts, in mountains,
in dens and in caves of the earth.
- God having provided some BETTER thing for us.

Without attempting that which the epistle sets aside as beyond the scope of the eleventh chapter, we can point out some obvious connections in these lists with the seven names given in verse 32. David subdued kingdoms, as Moab, Ammon, and Edom. The note of triumphant faith is sounded by him in Psa. lx.: “God hath spoken in His holiness; I will rejoice Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe

. . . . Through God we shall do valiantly”. *God had spoken*; that was the basis of David’s triumphant faith.

Gideon supplies us with a wonderful example of weakness being made strong, and of turning to flight the armies of the aliens. When we read of the stopping of the mouths of lions and the quenching of the violence of fire, it is difficult to deny a reference to Daniel and his three companions. The women who received their dead raised to life must include the widow of Zarephath (I Kings xvii. 22-24), and the Shunammite (II Kings iv. 36).

The better resurrection.

We now come to the crux of the passage. By consulting the arrangement of the subject-matter set out above, it will be seen that “the better resurrection” and “some better thing” are focal points.

What is the better resurrection, and how does it harmonize with the balancing clause, “some better thing”, the teaching of Heb. xi. in particular, and of the epistle in general? It is sometimes said of the articles in *The Berean Expositor*, that they are somewhat condensed in character, but lest any should fail to realize what has been suggested as our line of study, we will repeat ourselves in more formal fashion.

This “better” resurrection evidently has something to do with the “better” thing provided by God. We must endeavour first to see what this connection may be, then what the relation of this passage is to the teaching of the eleventh chapter as a whole and finally how far the teaching concerning “the better resurrection” is supported by the general drift of the whole epistle.

The first thing we propose is to visualize the whole context with these “better” things in view.

Hebrews x. 19 - xii. 25.

- A | x. 19-24. Exhortation. “Let us.” Priest.
- B | x. 25, 26. Warning “No more sacrifice”.
- C | x. 27-31. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy,
how much more
- D | x. 32 - xi. 40. Faith, and the better thing.
- A | xii. 1-4. Exhortation. “Let us.” Perfected.
- B | xii. 5-24. Warning “He found no place of repentance”.
- C | xii. 25. They escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth,
much more

Such is the broad outline, making x. 19 - xii. 25 one large section. This will be useful as we proceed, but for the time being we are more concerned about the relation of the subject-matter with Heb. xi., viz., “faith” and the “better thing”.

We accordingly amplify the member D | x. 32 - xi. 40, setting it out as follows:

Faith and the better things (x. 32 - xi. 40).

- A1 | x. 32-39. The better substance in heaven.
- B1 | xi. 1-12. Faith. Abel's offering and others.
- A2 | xi. 13-16. The better and heavenly country.
- B2 | xi. 17-35. Faith. Abraham's offering and others.
- A3 | xi. 35. The better resurrection.
- B3 | xi. 36-38. Faith. Unnamed believers and their sufferings.
- A4 | xi. 39, 40. The better thing foreseen.

The section (x. 19 - xii. 25) begins with exhortations in view of what Christ has done, "Let us draw near", "Let us hold fast". It ends with fuller exhortations in view of what Christ has done, "Let us lay aside", "Let us run". Christ's sufferings and death have, in the first case, consecrated for us a way into the holiest, and in the second set us an example for the race and the crown. In the first He is seen as Expiator, in the second as Exemplar. He is first Priest, then Perfecter.

The remainder of the structure is an alternation between faith and the better thing. There are four descriptions of this better thing which we must consider:

- (1) The better and enduring SUBSTANCE in heaven.
- (2) The better and heavenly COUNTRY.
- (3) The better RESURRECTION.
- (4) The better THING provided.

It is evident from the context of the first passage that the better substance is something in the nature of a reward. This is implied in the list of sufferings given in Heb. x. 32-34, and expressly stated in the sequel: "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath *great recompense of reward*" (x. 35), a feature that is repeated in xi. 26, and in a similar context.

The second passage sets before us something which the patriarchs had in view that enabled them to be content to become strangers and pilgrims on the earth: "Now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city" (xi. 16). This city is the "city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem", of Heb. xi. 22, closely associated with the spirits of just men made perfect, and the portion, not of sons merely, but of *the firstborn*, which we shall see as we read this chapter.

There is nothing said in the Old Testament about this heavenly country and city so far as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are concerned, yet they had it in view, and when Scripture says: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off and embraced them" (xi. 13); it is but saying what in other language is expressed in the two remaining occurrences, namely, resurrection and future entry.

“These all *died* in faith”, implies resurrection. “Having seen them afar off” implies “having foreseen some better thing”.

The better resurrection is something distinct. Because of it and its excellence some endured torture and refused deliverance. Now it was the hope of the whole twelve tribes that there should be a resurrection (Acts xxvi. 7, 8) quite apart from torture or endurance, quite apart from “giving up” and acting like Abraham or Moses. We are here facing a parallel with the “out-resurrection” of Phil. iii., which is not the *hope* but the *prize* of our high calling, and closely involved with “perfecting”, “perdition” and the heavenly citizenship of Phil. iii. 12, 19 and 20; “destruction” being the same word as “perdition” in Heb. x. 39, and “conversation” being literally “citizenship”. The long waiting, the far-off promises, the dying without receiving, are all explained by the fact that God had planned that all these overcomers should enter their reward together. Abel and Noah, Abraham and Moses, the suffering saints of the apostle’s day, and the last one to endure under the economy of grace pertaining to the Hebrews, shall not “prevent” one another, but “together with them” shall enter into this better thing, this better country, by way of this better resurrection.

We have seen the relation between the better resurrection and the better thing, we have seen their relation with Heb. xi.; there remains only the general theme of the epistle to be considered. In this epistle we have Christ as a Captain, leading *faithful* Joshuas and Calebs unto their promised possessions. In this epistle He is seen as Melchisedec the Priest Who blessed the *overcoming* Abraham. The historic background is the failure of Israel to go on by faith, and the warning is the possibility of drawing back to perdition. The Hebrew believers are exhorted to run with patience, and reminded of Esau. Their position is to be one of rejection now, “without the camp”, for theirs is soon to be the added glory of the overcomer, because though they have no continuing city, they seek one to come.

Ponder the double line of endurance (verses 32-38) and set your mind on things above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

The seven-fold witness.

We believe it will be of service to repeat the structure already given.

- A | Faith in connection with DEATH—Abel and Enoch.
- B | Faith in connection with INHERITANCE—Noah and Abraham.
- C | Faith in connection with PILGRIMAGE—Isaac and Jacob.
- D | Faith in connection with RESURRECTION—Sarah and Abraham.
- C | Faith in connection with BLESSING—Isaac and Jacob.
- B | Faith in connection with EGYPT—Joseph and Moses.
- A | Faith in connection with DELIVERANCE—Israel and Rahab.

Faith in its perfectness is seen in but one Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, but we may appreciate that perfect faith better if we can see it analysed for us in the eleventh chapter of this epistle.

The Interpretation of the Scriptures.

No.1. Governing Principles for Correct Interpretation. pp. 188 - 192

One of the most important subjects within the orbit of Christianity is the science and art of Biblical interpretation or hermeneutics. The word “hermeneutics” is ultimately derived from Hermes, the Greek god who was supposed to bring the messages of the gods to mortals, and was the god of science, speech, writing and art. It has a connection with the Greek word *hermeneia*, interpretation, and its verbal forms: *diermeneuo* to interpret, or explain; *methermeneuomai* to interpret, to translate; *dusermeneutos* difficult to interpret; *diermeneutes* interpreter.

God has spoken to men through the Holy Scriptures, but what has He said? What is the meaning of His Words? If we cannot be sure of His meaning, of what practical use are the Scriptures to us? How can we receive Divine understanding unless the meaning of the Word of God is clear to us? It is the aim of hermeneutics to ascertain what God has said in His Word and to determine its meaning. This is a high and holy task and needs to be approached in deep humility. Upon the correct interpretation of the Bible rests our doctrine of salvation, sanctification, Christian living and future hope, and it is our solemn responsibility to get to know what God has said with reference to each of these, and in fact all His Truth as far as we are able to receive it. Not only this, but if we do not know the correct method of Biblical interpretation, we shall confuse the voice of God with the voice of man. In every place where our interpretation is at fault, we have substituted the voice of man for the voice of God, and are getting error instead of truth. Most of the doctrinal variations and disagreements in Christendom are due to differences in interpretation. Thus it is practically impossible to over-estimate the importance of correct hermeneutics, for from this flows correct understanding.

After His resurrection, the Lord Jesus appeared to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and in Luke xxiv. 27 we read:

“. . . . beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded (interpreted, *diermeneuo*) unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

And later on, to the eleven He said:

“. . . . all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures” (Luke xxiv. 44, 45).

It is helpful to see the important place that understanding has in the parables of the kingdom of heaven. Israel’s unbelief and failure inevitably led to a non-understanding heart (Matt. xiii. 15), and in such a condition the human mind is especially open to the devil’s activity (verse 19). He that received seed into the good ground is he that heard the word and *understood* it (verse 23).

At the end of His discourse, the Lord asks: “Have ye *understood* all these things?” and the favoured disciples were able to answer: “Yea Lord” (verse 51). In the Acts of the Apostles we find Philip asking the Ethiopian eunuch:

“Understandest thou what thou readest?”

and his reply was: “How can I, except some man should guide me?” (Acts viii. 30, 31). There is no doubt that Divine understanding is the need of us all, but we are not in a position to receive this if our method of Biblical interpretation is at fault. We are prompted to ask the question, “Is there some way of interpreting the Word of God so that human opinion is ruled out and Divine understanding given?” We believe there is, hence the supreme importance of this study.

Someone may object and say that anything can be proved from the Bible. We have to face the fact that the most extraordinary ideas and fantastic notions are backed up by quotations from the Scriptures. Edward White writes:

“There is no folly, no iniquity, no God-dishonouring theology for which chapter and verse may not be cited by an enslaved intelligence. Under these circumstance, it is impossible to express in adequate terms the importance of a correct estimate and exposition of the Bible” (*Inspiration*, p. 153).

There is no need to list the many vagaries that the Bible has been used to bolster up, but in each case these have been due to a distorted exposition and understanding of the passages concerned. No apology then need be given for a consideration of the science of correct interpretation of the Scriptures. To begin with we shall need to give attention to the following points:

(1) There is a need to bridge the gap between our minds today and the minds of the Biblical writers of over 1900 years ago. People of the same culture, age and location, understand one another easily, but we are separated culturally, historically and geographically from Bible times. Language is different; Hebrew, Chaldee and Greek are far removed from modern language. Habits and manner of living are entirely different. Abraham’s treatment of Hagar may seem rather shabby unless we know the customs and laws of his time. The background of the Scriptures is therefore important. Every part of Scripture had a **reason** for its being written. Some human need called it into being through the power of God. It is for us to try to ascertain what this was, and it will greatly assist us in the correct understanding of the portion under consideration.

(2) No one is in a position to interpret the Word of God (no matter how educated or scholarly they may be) until they are saved and regenerate. The Lord Jesus said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot *see* the kingdom of God (John iii. 3). In other words he is spiritually blind and is not in a position to understand or interpret the holy Scriptures whose context is spiritual. One reason why Christ continually gave physical sight to the blind was because this condition is illustrative of man spiritually, and what the Lord can do for men in the natural sphere, He can surely do in the spiritual.

The apostle Paul wrote:

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (I Cor. ii. 14).

A regenerate mind then is an absolute essential to understand the Bible.

(3) There must be a passion to know God’s Word. A lukewarm heart will never discover Scriptural truth. The searcher must be in dead earnest; the search for Truth must be priority number one.

(4) There must be a reverence for God and His Word and an unquestioned faith in both. The Scriptures are called holy, and must be treated as such (II Tim. iii. 15).

(5) There must also be absolute dependence upon the Holy Spirit to enlighten. He is the Author of the Word and the only One Who can give opened eyes and an understanding mind. We should be careful not to confuse inspiration and illumination or enlightenment. We talk about works of art and beauty being inspired, but this is not the way the Bible uses the term. In the Biblical sense, inspiration finished when the canon of Scripture closed and the New Testament was complete. No other writings since this time are “God-breathed” or inspired in this way. What we need now is not inspiration but illumination, and this is what the Holy Spirit is prepared to give to those of the redeemed who honestly and painstakingly search the Word. This is something that education and cleverness, by themselves, cannot command. The profound scholar has no monopoly of enlightenment. In fact his scholarship and education may be a bar to the discovery of truth if he is not a humble believer in Christ, and willing to give his education second place to the revealing power of the Spirit of God. There is one further thing that must be stressed here and that is that Divine illumination goes as far as Scripture reveals, not beyond it. Angus and Green write:

“The Spirit of God does not communicate to the human mind any doctrine or meaning of Scripture which is not contained already in Scripture itself. He makes men wise up to what is written, not beyond it.”

(6) To be a sound interpreter of the Scriptures a knowledge of the original languages God used is invaluable. Basic doctrine cannot be settled from translations, however good they are, if only for the reason that no translation can fully represent all that the original contains. We should be surprised if one who claimed to be a specialist in the interpretation of Greek tragedy could not read Greek. This may stimulate some who read these words to commence the study of Greek and Hebrew, which would be a good thing. Such however should bear in mind that it takes more than a few months study to be in a position to lay down the law in the translation and interpretation of the Greek or Hebrew Scriptures. No one can be proficient in a language until they can write it as well as read it, and that is why composition plays such an important part in learning a language. A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing, and we have seen bad slips in doctrine made by amateur Greek students.

(7) If there is one statement that is fundamental to the understanding of the Bible it is this: **God means what He says and has a meaning for everything He says in His Word.** If this is not so, then all search is useless and we can never be sure of what He wishes to convey to us. To put it another way, we must approach the Bible from the literal stand-point. This word “literal” can be ambiguous. What do we mean by it? We can define it in this way: the customary, socially-acknowledged designation of a word is the literal meaning of that word. If we were to put our own special meaning on words, no one could understand us. This is surely obvious. But it does not mean that figures of speech, symbols, allegory and type are to be ignored or taken literally. These are a study in themselves and will be considered later on. But let it be said here that behind all figures of speech is literality, otherwise they could convey no certain meaning to us at all. The literal meaning of a word is the basic, customary meaning of that word, and therefore to interpret literally is nothing more or less than interpreting words in their normal customary and proper designation, and only in this way can divergences of opinion be eliminated, and the authority of Scripture honoured.

When we read a book, we presume the sense is literal, for this is the only conceivable method of communication. If we had to weigh over every word of a book to find some other meaning than the literal, we should soon be forced to give it up in despair. If God wishes to communicate with man, He will do it in words whose meaning men can understand and accept, otherwise His message would never reach the human mind. Therefore we must ever keep before us this great guiding principle: that we approach the Scriptures literally, using that Word in the sense already explained. This cannot be overstressed and failure to do this is largely the cause of so much division that we see all around us in Christendom.

A large part of the Bible makes significant sense when literally interpreted. All the great basic doctrines of God’s Word rest clearly on literal exposition. The historical books make sense only when so interpreted, and geographical terms likewise. The opposite of this is spiritualizing or the allegorical treatment of Scripture. This is not the same as making a spiritual application of a passage of Scripture or recognizing real allegories therein. This is legitimate. Rather is it treating the majority or the whole of the Bible in this way which is quite another matter. We shall have more to say about this later on. Meanwhile, let us thank the Lord that He has been pleased to stoop down to reveal His Truth to us in human words that we can receive and understand under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in consequence rejoice in the eternal riches contained therein.

No.2. The History of Interpretation. **pp. 211 - 215**

Having seen that the only safe approach to Scripture is that of the literal, with due consideration being given to symbols, figures of speech and types, it may be helpful to give an outline of interpretation in the past, because this will show up wrong conceptions which have led to the misunderstanding of God's Word, and so will help to guard us against similar errors. To trace past interpretation in detail from Ezra's day right down to the present time would be an enormous task and not possible within the limits of *The Berean Expositor*. To those who wish to do so, we recommend Dean Farrar's *History of Interpretation*, which, in spite of his liberalism, is an outstanding work on this subject. Other volumes which may be consulted with profit are the *Bible in the Church* by R. M. Grant; *Prophecy and Authority* by K. Fullerton; *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* by B. Smalley.

The Greek School of Allegorism.

Inasmuch as the Greek allegorical method was adopted both by Jew and Christian at the beginning, it is necessary to commence here. The Greeks had a religious heritage in Homer and Hesiod. To question or doubt them was considered an irreligious or atheistic act. Yet the stories of the gods were often fanciful, absurd, or immoral, which was an offence to the philosophical mind. How was this tension to be resolved? The answer is, by allegorizing. The stories were not to be taken literally, but a secret underlying meaning was to be sought. The important thing to notice is that this Greek allegorical method spread to Alexandria, where there was a large Jewish population and eventually a Christian population of considerable size. The Alexandrian Jew was bound to face up to Greek philosophical tradition which held sway there, especially that of Plato, and for him the problem was to reconcile this with his own national Scriptures (the Old Testament). His solution was identical with the Greek. Dean Farrar writes:

"The Alexandrian Jews were not, however, driven to invent the allegorical method for themselves. They found it ready to their hands" (*History of Interpretation*, p. 134).

He continues on page 135:

"By a singular concurrence of circumstances, the Homeric studies of pagan philosophers suggested first to the Jews and then through them to the Christians, a method of interpretation before unheard of, which remained unshaken for more than fifteen hundred years."

Apparently the first writer in this Jewish allegorical way was Aristobulus (B.C.160). He asserted that Greek philosophy borrowed from the Old Testament and that, by using the allegorical method, the teachings of Greek philosophy could be found in Moses and the prophets. The outstanding Jewish allegorist was Philo (about B.C.20-54A.D.). He had strong leanings toward the philosophy of Plato and Pythagoras. By an elaborate system of allegorizing, he reconciled his loyalty to his Hebrew faith and his regard for

Greek philosophy. Philo did not regard the literal meaning of Scripture to be useless, but rather an immature level of understanding. He likened the literal sense of Scripture to its “body”, and the allegorical to its “soul”, the literal being for the immature and the allegorical for the mature. He had around twenty rules which indicated that a passage of Scripture was to be treated allegorically. A few of these were sound, but most of them led to interpretation that was fantastic and erroneous. Philo’s conceptions are a good example of what happens when the grammatico-historical method of interpretation is abandoned. Spiritualizing becomes a slippery slope down which it is well nigh impossible to stop.

The Allegorism of the Fathers.

This system, which sprang from the pagan Greeks and was copied by the Alexandrian Jews, was then adopted by the professing church and largely dominated the interpretation of the Scriptures until the Reformation, with the exception of the school at Antioch and the Victorines of the Middle Ages. The apostolic Fathers had as their Bible the Septuagint, i.e. the Greek translation of the Old Testament. They saw that the Old Testament prefigured Christ in type and symbol, and that the New Testament was full of direct and indirect references to the Old Testament. In other words, they perceived that the Old Testament could never be fully understood apart from the New Testament. This they sought to emphasize by allegory and spiritualization. The motive was right, but the method wrong. What they apparently did not realize was that the New Testament is the commentary par excellence on the Old Testament and does not need any propping up by such methods, which only throw the door wide open to personal fancies and excesses.

There was a lack of historical sense in their method of exposition; they usually ignored the setting and background of a passage of Scripture. They considered the Scriptures to be full of enigmas and riddles which could only be satisfactorily explained by allegorisation. They confused the allegorical with the typical and thus blurred the correct interpretation of the Old Testament. They professed to see Greek philosophy in the Old Testament, and claimed that it was the allegorical method that discovered it. The pity of all this was that it obscured the true meaning of the Word of God. K. Fullerton writes:

“When the historical sense of a passage is once abandoned there is wanting any sound regulative principle to govern exegesis The mystical (allegorical) method of exegesis is an unscientific and arbitrary method, reduces the Bible to obscure enigmas, undermines the authority of all interpretation, and therefore, when taken by itself, fails to meet the apologetic necessities of the time” (*Prophecy and Authority*).

No wonder the Gnostics of the second century found this method so handy to propagate their false doctrine!

Roman Catholic Allegorism.

It is true to say that, for the most part, Scriptural interpretation of the Middle Ages was allegorical. The Roman Catholic Church has maintained the validity of the allegorical method, though there is evidence that later on, some of their scholars saw the excesses

that resulted from this in Patristic theology, and were prepared to admit the importance of the literal meaning of Scripture. Roman Catholics accept the Latin Vulgate translation of Jerome as the authentic version for public lectures, disputations, sermons and expositions.

This church thus puts itself into the awkward position of basing its doctrines on a translation instead of the original languages of Hebrew, Chaldee and Greek. This is a great weakness, for no one translation, however good, can adequately set forth the truth of the original. Moreover the Roman Catholic expositor is forced to accept obediently whatever the church specifically decrees on the authorship of the books of the Bible, and some twenty verses have been officially interpreted and may not be deviated from. Actually the number is more than this, because many of the official documents require definite interpretations of certain verses. Roman Catholic exegesis became summed up during the Middle Ages in three rules:

- (1) A passage may have an allegorical or mystical meaning.
- (2) It may have an anagogical or eschatological meaning, that is, it may prefigure or anticipate the church in glory.
- (3) It may have a tropological meaning, that is, teach a way of life, or in other words, convey the moral significance of the passage.

With its often excessive usage of types, the Roman Catholic diverges from the Protestant. Thus the manna in the wilderness, the passover, the bread and wine of Melchizedek are made types of the Eucharist, thus ignoring the controlling guide of New Testament usage. Such exposition can never be accepted by the honest searcher for truth. It is reading into Scripture what is not there, and is the fruit of the allegorical method of interpretation, which is used to bolster up this sacramental and sacerdotal approach to the Bible. Further, the Roman Catholic believes that to his church alone has been entrusted the Deposit of Truth in a two-fold form, (1) the oral form (tradition) and (2) the written form (the Scriptures), and this written form, the Bible, is obscure and needs an official interpreter, which must be the Church of Rome, to whom alone, he believes, it has been given by God. To him the oral tradition is of equal authority with the Word of God because he believes that both have come from God, and are complementary. Furthermore, no passage of Scripture can be interpreted to conflict with Roman Catholic doctrine. It is therefore obvious that the Protestant expositor is always at a disadvantage when disputing on doctrinal matters with a Roman Catholic. Whereas the former will take his stand solely on God's Word, the latter can always retreat and bring in his oral tradition, which he believes to be as much God's truth as the Bible. The more one studies the Roman Catholic position, the more one is thankful for the great liberating effect of the Reformation. Believers today have largely forgotten what they owe to God for this great movement: freedom of conscience, and approach to Him through the Lord Jesus Christ alone, and not through any human sacerdotal system with its inevitable bondage.

The Jewish Schools.

When Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, they were separated from the Temple and its regulations, and could no longer practice their religion as outlined in the books of Moses. This state of things finally led to

Judaism with its synagogues, rabbis and traditions. The vast system of Jewish interpretation that resulted is a separate study in itself, and it is practically impossible to sum it up adequately. Various schools emerged with opposing ideas. The Karaites were the literalists and the Kabbalists the allegorists. The Palestinian Jews of post-captivity days started off well with a literal approach to the Scriptures, but they often failed to put into practice the rules they laid down. In Kabbalism excessive literalism was allied to allegorism with grotesque results. They used gematria to endow words with numerical values which became the basis for interpretation that was absurd or pernicious.

While we believe that certain numbers are used in Scripture with intent, such as 6, 7, 12, 13, 40 and so on, we need to take warning and keep this under control. We have seen some extraordinary interpretations of Scripture result from those with a mathematical inclination who have let their minds run riot along these lines.

The Syrian School of Antioch.

It has been asserted that the first Protestant school of interpretation commenced at Antioch of Syria, and had it not been crushed by orthodoxy for its supposed heretical connection with the Nestorians, the course of church history might have been very different. It produced such prominent names as Lucian, Dorotheus, Diodorus, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Chrysostom. This school fought the allegorists and maintained the importance of the literal and historical interpretation of the Word of God. They insisted on the reality of Old Testament events, and accused the allegorists of doing away with the historicity of much of the Old Testament, and leaving behind a shadowy world of symbols. Their approach to the Bible was Christological, and they rightly blended together the historic and Messianic elements of the Scriptures. The result was that they produced some of the finest expository literature of ancient times. R. W. Grant points out that this school had a great influence in the Middle Ages and became the pillar of the Reformation and their method the principal exegetical method of the Christian Church.

Another interesting school was that of the Victorines which came into being at the Abbey of St. Victor in Paris in the medieval period. They likewise stressed the historical and literal approach to the Scriptures. They insisted that the spiritual sense could not be properly known until the Scriptures had been literally interpreted.

No.3. pp. 229 - 232

We have considered some of the essential rules to be observed if we are to get a correct interpretation of the Word of God. One of the most important is that we should approach the Scriptures from the literal standpoint, making allowances for figures of speech, symbols, and types, and avoiding the allegorical system of spiritualizing, which is destructive of true understanding, we should note that this does not mean spiritual *application* cannot be made. This can be done safely only when the primary, basic and literal interpretation of the Bible has been settled. There is only *one interpretation* of a passage of Scripture, but there may be a number of *applications* of that passage; these are secondary to the interpretation and must be kept so. Roman Catholics find their sacramentalism by allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament and its ritual. Christian Science, Swedenborgianism, Theosophy and other cults can find their basis in the Bible only by excessive spiritualizing and all this leads to hopeless contradiction. Why? Because first account has not been given to the literal exposition of Scripture. To rest one's theology on a secondary meaning of the Bible is not interpretation, but imagination, and human opinion, and in such a procedure the real meaning of God's Word is bound to be lost. The only certain way of obtaining a correct understanding is to anchor interpretation to literal exposition in the sense that we have explained the word "literal". Another reason for the importance of this method is that it acts as a check upon the imagination of men; in other words, it is a principle of *control*, which enables human opinion and error to be avoided. The failure of the spiritualizing or allegorical method of exposition was made evident in the first centuries, when the early Christians sought to take a stand against antichristian Gnosticism. The Gnostics claimed to have special knowledge and revelation, and when they touched the N.T. Scriptures they excessively spiritualized them. Unfortunately, the early Fathers, men of piety, and sincere as they were, did the same with the Old Testament, and therefore had little effective answer to such heresy, for the Gnostics had as much right to spiritualize the New Testament as the Fathers did the Old. What was right for one part of Scripture was surely valid for another. The fact is that with both, the method of approach was wrong.

Cultural Background.

We mean by this the total ways, manners, tools and institutions by which a people carry on their existence. What a word or expression literally means can only be understood by knowing the background of the people who used it. We are not concerned with what a word means today in the twentieth century, but what it meant in century one, when it was used. Language is always in a state of flux, losing meanings and gaining others, and so we should be prepared to take the trouble to go into past history and explore the background of Bible times.

Geography.

The seeker after truth should study Bible geography. Most Bibles have maps at the end, but how often are they used? Geography is, as it were, the spatial background of Scripture as history is its temporal one. In order to understand properly the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan or, let us say, Paul's missionary journeys, we obviously cannot ignore geography if we are to appreciate fully their importance. We read in the Bible of Tyre, Sidon, Chittim, Hamath, Anathoth and a host of other places. If we know nothing of Bible geography, how can we correctly understand the passages where these are used? And moreover, these places must be taken literally. If the Egypt of Bible times is not the literal land, what is it? Who can be sure of what it represents? Once one has left the normal literal meaning of a word, the door is thrown wide open to any idea, however far-fetched, and uncertainty and error can only result. God's revelation is set in an historical and geographical context, and involves historic personages and events.

H. H. Rowley writes:

“A religion which is rooted and grounded in history, cannot ignore history. A historical understanding of the Bible is not a superfluity which can be dispensed with in Biblical interpretation, leaving a body of ideas and principles divorced from the process out of which they were born” (*Relevance of Biblical Interpretation*).

Moreover, not only the understanding of the Scriptures, but their truth, is bound up with history. If it could be proved that Pontius Pilate was not a historic personage, the truth of the Bible falls to the ground. Another thing must be stressed in the matter of interpretation and that is, the priority of the original languages of Hebrew, Chaldee and Greek. Inspiration in the Biblical sense applies only to these, and does not extend to the hundreds of translations that have been made, however good they may be. Consequently it is useless to base any argument on a translation without verifying the original.

The Accommodation of Revelation.

It must be constantly borne in mind that the Scriptures are the truth of God accommodated to the human mind for its instruction and assimilation. This must be so, because God, infinite and limitless, is seeking to reveal Himself to man, circumscribed and finite. Humanity cannot reach up to Him, but He can, in His goodness and love stoop down to us, and this is what He has done in His Word. To have any meaning to us, God's revelation had to come in human language and human thought forms, referring to objects of human experience. Revelation for us must of necessity have an anthropomorphic character. Anthropomorphism simply means ascribing human characteristics to God. The understanding of God and the spiritual world is by this means and by analogy. So we have God's almightiness spoken of in terms of a right arm, because among men, the right arm is the symbol of strength and power. Similarly the glory of heavenly things is described in the Bible in terms of human experience, such as gold, silver and jewels. Such is the description of the heavenly New Jerusalem in the book of the Revelation. Seisenberger, in his *Practical Handbook for the study of the Bible*, puts it this way:

“It is with a well-considered design that the Holy Scriptures speak of God as a being resembling man, and ascribe to Him a face, eyes, ears, mouth, hands and feet, and the sense of smell and hearing. This is done out of consideration for man’s limited power of comprehension and the same is the case when the Bible represents God as loving or hating, as being jealous, angry, glad, or filled with regret. This shows that God is not indifferent to man, and his behaviour, but notices them well. Moreover the Bible teaches that man was made in the image and likeness of God, and therefore in the Divine Being there must be something analogous to the qualities of man, though in highest perfection and sin excepted.”

When we study the Scriptures we must always bear these facts in mind and remember that, in them, God has graciously stooped down to our limited intelligence, using things that we do know, to explain in a measure those that we do not, because they are infinite and beyond us.

This accommodation is very different from the way that the liberal theologian uses the term. The modernistic critic not only believes in accommodation of form, but of matter and content. Thus he asserts that the atonement of Christ, as a sacrifice, was only the manner in which the first century Christians thought of the death of Christ, but this idea is not binding upon Christianity today. In other words the sacrificial element in Christ’s death was only the opinion of the early Christians. This sort of accommodation we utterly reject. We might as well shut the Bible up for good if this sort of thing is true, for we could never be sure just what is, or what is not divine revelation.

Interpretation and Application.

Although Scripture basically has one meaning, there are moral applications that can be made. The apostle Paul wrote:

“. . . . whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for *our learning*, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Rom. xv. 4).

That is, the Old Testament Scriptures, though primarily referring to Israel, can have a message for us. The strict interpretation of them is to the Jew, but there are principles in them that can apply to us today. In another passage (I Cor. x. 6, 11), Paul states that the things which happened to the Israelites during their wilderness journey were for *our examples*, and in II Tim. iii. 16 we are instructed that all Scripture (and this has primary reference to the Old Testament) is for our profit with regard to doctrine, reproof, correction and education in righteousness. However, we must always bear in mind that such applications are not interpretations, and must not receive that status; nor must we ever misinterpret a passage in order to derive an application from it that appears attractive to us. Furthermore a true application can be made only if it fits in with revealed truth for this present age of grace; if it does not, it becomes error, however appealing it may appear.

In the Anglican morning service, the congregation quote Psalms li. 11, as a prayer: “Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.” That is wrong application, John xiv. 16 makes clear:

“And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever.”

The Holy Spirit can be grieved by the believer (Eph. iv. 30), but there is no statement in the church epistles that He is ever taken away from the children of God. Such praying, Sunday by Sunday, is needless and quite ineffective. *The first thing to do with any passage of Scripture is to settle the interpretation, or its basic meaning, and not until then are we in a position to make any application.*

Todd, in his *Principles of Interpretation* writes :

“Only after the meaning or interpretation of a passage has been learned is one in a position to apply it to the life of an individual or of a company. The application is quite a distinct thing from the interpretation. Much has been lost in the study of the Bible by using it almost entirely by way of application, without enquiring into its literal meaning. Specially is this true of devotional study. Sometimes lessons are drawn from Scripture which are, to say the least, very far fetched, and not really warranted by the passage.”

We can therefore state as a guiding principle that there is one interpretation of God's Word, but there may be several applications. It is most important to keep these two things distinct and in this order, and in so doing it becomes another check on human ideas and peculiarities. The correct interpretation of the Bible takes note of the people to whom it is addressed, and the background or need that called for its writing. It is like the address on the envelope of a letter. The contents of the letter belong solely to the one to whom it is addressed (this is interpretation), but it may contain statements that are not only true of the owner, but of people in general (this is application). The failure to distinguish between these two things has been the cause of wrong doctrine and confusion, and everyone who wishes to handle the Word of God aright and to receive its riches will take care to avoid doing this.

Meditations on Psalm LI

No.10(?). The Historical Setting of the Psalm. pp. 139, 140

While the Psalms have their primary interpretation and dispensational setting which must ever be the first and fundamental approach to their study, there is something so personal, so true to the experience of believers in all ages, that it is not surprising to find in the record of the N.T. itself continual reference, quotation and application of the Psalms, from Matthew's Gospel to the Book of the Revelation. Even where the actual quotation of any specific Psalm already written in the O.T. is not applicable, the spirit or Psalmody will be found. Consequently, though Paul when writing to the Ephesians or the Colossians does not say 'as David said', or 'as it is written in the book of Psalms', he nevertheless includes the singing of the Psalms as a real part of that melody of grateful worship which flows from the heart of those who being 'filled by the Spirit' (Eph. v. 18) and in whom 'the word of Christ' dwells richly (Col. iii. 16), sing with grace in their hearts to the Lord.

In the course of our exposition of the Scriptures under the heading 'Fundamentals of Dispensational Truth' we had hoped to deal with the Psalms as a whole. In this article we have a lowlier aim, yet we trust none the less blessed and helpful. We desire to ponder the experiences that are recorded by David in Psa. li. in order that we may gather comfort and encouragement as we too, walk through the wilderness of this world.

The way in which this Psalm is printed in our A.V., has in effect blotted out the first verse of the original and relegated it to a note, which is practically never read or understood as an integral part of the Psalm. When I open my Hebrew Bible, I discover that the verse numbers do not agree with those in the English Version, and that the words:

"When Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba",

constitute the opening verse of the Psalm.

Hengstenberg says, "We swim in mid-air so long as we do not perceive the reference to the discourse of Nathan". We must therefore acquaint ourselves with that passage of II Samuel which records the occasion when Nathan the prophet became instrumental in bringing about the repentance of David the king. The passage is II Samuel xii., which follows close upon the record of the death of Uriah at the instigation of David, and upon David's taking of Bathsheba, Uriah's wife. II Sam. xii. 1-14 tells us how Nathan, by means of the parable of the two men, the one rich, the other poor, led David to condemn himself by saying, "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die" (II Sam. xii. 5), and reveals the dramatic moment of David's conviction as Nathan replied to David's outburst of righteous anger, "Thou art the man Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife" (II Sam. xii. 7-9).

David's reply is one for which we must all be glad, for what added tragedy might not have accrued had David not repented:

“And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord.”

In response to this confession came the words of forgiveness:

“The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.”

David, however, held too high a position in Israel for his sin to have no consequences. His sin was put away, he was assured that he would not die as a penalty, yet Nathan added:

“Howbeit, because of this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die” (II Sam. xii. 13, 14).

Such is the background of Psa. li. David, the man after God's own heart, the Shepherd of Israel, the sweet singer of Israel, the glowing type of the Saviour, the one who gives his name as a title of the Christ 'The Son of David', this royal man, this great king, this intrepid warrior, is revealed as guilty of the sins of adultery and murder! The bearing of these great facts upon the doctrine and practice of all ages is contained in Psa. li. and we trust that meditation upon so profound a theme will minister true spiritual grace to not a few.

On the Threshold

p. 20

“Wherefore we labour, that we may be accepted of Him” (II Cor. v. 9).

The first nine verses of this chapter are very much misunderstood, briefly, the Apostle does not desire death, but resurrection, not to be *unclothed* but *clothed upon*, that mortality may be swallowed up of life. Paul, however, is no dreamer; much as “that day” attracts him, he has the present pressing upon him, just as in a similarly difficult and perverted passage Phil. i. 22-26, where although he desires the “*return*” translated “depart”, yet if that cannot be, he will gladly labour and suffer here. In our verse the word “labour” literally means, “we love the honour”, or are “ambitious”. The Apostle uses it again elsewhere “ambitious to preach the gospel in the regions beyond”, and to the saints he wrote, “be ambitious to be quiet and mind your own business” (Rom. xv. 20; I Thess. iv. 11). Surely it should be the ambition of every saved one, that, when in resurrection glory they stand before the Lord Jesus, they should be accepted, not with regard to salvation, but service. The word “accept” occurs in Rom. xii. 1, 2; “acceptable” xiv. 18; Eph. v. 10; Col. iii. 20: “well pleasing” Titus ii. 9; Heb. xi. 5, 6; xii. 28; xiii. 16, 21. If these passages are prayerfully considered, they may be of help in really understanding our verse.

On the Threshold

pp. 99, 100

*“If any man will come after Me,
let him take up his cross and follow Me” (Matt. xvi. 24).*

There is an important omission in the verse as quoted above. Before the statement to taking up the cross, comes the injunction to “deny self”. As in all things, we must begin at home. Little things indicate the direction of the current. Both the actions are voluntary. Let *him* deny himself, and *take up his* cross. There is much talk of following the Lord amongst us, but where is either the denying of self or the taking up of the cross? It is noticeable that this statement comes in the section which speaks of *Christ’s sufferings*, (Matt. xvi. 21), and glory (verse 27 and xvii. 1-3). The denial and the cross are but for a time; glory is ahead, and as Christ has suffered in our stead, no wrath can be ours. Our cross is not the curse of a broken law. Phil. iii. 1-12 seems to give a similar thought, the denial of self, counting all things as loss and the *fellowship* of His sufferings, with resurrection in view. May we not “follow afar off” as Peter did who *denied* his Lord, but follow closely by *denying self*.

*“That ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;
being filled with the fruits of righteousness” (Phil. i. 10, 11).*

In verse 9, abounding love leading to knowledge and judgment and discernment, leads right on to the day of Christ, when we shall stand before Him. We know that so far as our eternal salvation is concerned, we shall be without blemish (Eph. v. 27 & Phil. i. 6). Phil. i. 6 says *what the Lord* will do until the day of Christ comes but i. 10, 11, *what we are* to seek to be till that day. The word translated ‘sincere’ means ‘tested by sunlight’; our every action and thought will be laid bare. Oh to remember this! The word is suggestive; it teaches us to avoid any appearance of sham, all must be genuine to please the Lord. “Without offence.” This includes two things: (1) that we shall be able to stand before the Lord, and receive His “well done”, and (2) that we have not caused our brethren to stumble. How difficult is the path, and how can we even commence this life of consistency? Verse 11 gives an answer—*filled with the fruits of righteousness*. We, as Christians, have reckoned to us the righteousness of God through Christ, and this secures our entrance into the joys of eternity, but to be *rewarded, not to be ashamed*, to avoid *suffering loss* with regard to the Judgment Seat, sincerity and fruitfulness are required. Note it is the “fruits” of righteousness. Blessed be God, *He has planted the tree*. May we not hinder the bringing forth of much fruit (Eph. ii. 10; Hosea xiv. 8 “From Me is thy fruit found”).

The Plan of God.

*(Being a series of studies in the Scriptures, made for broadcasting in America.
They have the beginner and even the unbeliever in mind,
and are an attempt to present the Truth of the Scriptures in the simplest possible way.)*

No.1. pp. 11 - 16

We wish to write about the greatest Book in the world. We wonder what your estimate would be; what do you think is the greatest book in the world? The answer is surely the Bible. We realize, of course, that people regard the Bible in all sorts of ways. Some think it is dry and boring and uninteresting so they never read it. Others say it is quite incomprehensible if you *do* read it, that nobody can really understand it, so they do not read it either. And yet there *are* people who find this book intensely fascinating, the most interesting and vital of all books. And not only that, but in past history some have even been willing to die for it and have given their lives gladly! There must be something about this Book then, that makes it absolutely outstanding. We want to give this a further consideration.

The Bible took something like 2,000 years to write, and since its completion nearly another 2,000 years have gone by, yet it is not only still here but is the world's best seller. That is an extraordinary fact, but it is true. The next thing to note is this, that it is the Textbook of the Christian profession. Now every profession has its textbook, one or more, and of course, if anyone wants to be proficient in their particular profession then they must have the textbook or books at their fingertips; they cannot afford to ignore them. Without doubt, the Bible is the textbook for all who profess the Name of Christ. If we are at all interested in Christianity, or if we are searching for truth (and we believe many are), then we just cannot ignore the Bible, if only for the reason that Christianity means *Christ*. If we could sanction the pronunciation of it as "*Christ-ianity*" and the word "Christian" as "*Christ-ian*", it would be a very good thing, because it would remind us that a Christian obviously is related to *Christ*, and yet how often is that word used without Christ personally being thought about. There is something radically wrong with this. *Christianity must relate to Christ*. Now the only book that makes Christ known is the Bible. If we have a closed Bible we shall never know anything about the Lord Jesus Christ: and that is why all the various denominations, the churches and the chapels, must finally come to terms with this Book. This does not mean to say, of course, that they all interpret it in the same way or put the same value upon it, but they certainly cannot afford to ignore the Bible. It makes stupendous claims, and one of the most stupendous is this, that it is the *Word of God* although it was written by the pens of men. In the O.T., those who gave it spoke with Divine authority and they could say "Thus saith the Lord". If only we had a revelation like that today, if only people could speak in this way! Should we not have something secure to rest our faith on? This is the greatest need of our age; we need authority, we need something secure upon which we can place our faith and that is exactly what the Bible was to the early Christians.

The Apostle Paul, when he reached the end of his life, penned his last letter, the second Epistle to Timothy, and in the third chapter he wrote, “And from a child thou hast known the holy Writings (the holy Scriptures), which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God”, literally, all scripture, all that which is written, is “God-breathed”. Human beings were using the pen and yet Paul made the astounding assertion that the breath of God was on all their writings. And so Scripture is not just the writings or opinions of men, but the very Word of God and is “profitable for doctrine (for teaching), for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly, or thoroughly furnished unto all good works”. At the end of his life another great Apostle wrote in similar vein. That was the Apostle Peter, and in his second letter, chapter i. 19 and 20, he writes: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; unto which you do well to take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts. Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation”, literally—it does not unfold itself. “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”. You will notice that the Apostle Paul has mentioned God’s Word “written”, “all scripture is given by inspiration”. The Apostle Peter deals with speech, “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”. So both these faithful servants of God stress these two great truths at the end of their lives, and men of character do not trifle at such a time. So this Book then is a unique Book; and it makes unique claims. These claims are so startling they either must be true or else they are just fabrications and not worthy of our consideration. There cannot be any middle position here; it must be one or the other.

We want you to consider some more facts concerning this book we call the Bible. Think of its unity; it took something like 2,000 years to write, and what a diversity of people were used to write it! They were not educated people only. One writer was a cattle-keeper, a herds-man—Amos. Others were simple fishermen, like Peter and John. There were, of course scholars, such as the Apostle Paul. He sat at the feet of a noted teacher, Gamaliel, and his home town was Tarsus whose University which was a very well-known centre of learning in his day. Two kings were used, Solomon and David. Now will you think of a book that took 2,000 years to write, all sorts of people from the highest to the lowest making a contribution to it. What sort of book do you think it would be when completed? Would it not be a ‘hotch-potch’? Could you expect it to have a complete unity, with a complete theme running through it? But *that is what you will find with the Bible*. It is an astounding fact, but it is true!

Another point we do well to consider: the Apostle Peter has already told us that we have “a more sure word of prophecy”, and some parts of the Bible are prophetic, that is to say, they are looking ahead to the future. Peter describes them as “a light that shines in a dark place”. This is like a searchlight piercing the darkness and picking out, infallibly, things ahead, perhaps a long distance away. Some may say such prophecies are just guesswork, but this is very foolish because, mathematically, it can be proved that these things, described with such exactitude, could not have happened by chance. Let us think of this for a moment. We know as a historical fact that the Lord Jesus Christ was born at

Bethlehem, yet that had been written centuries before by one of the minor prophets, Micah, and Bethlehem, he tells us, was so small it was least of the thousands of Judah; in its district it was smallest, the least-known. When Joshua made a survey of the land centuries before, it was not even mentioned. And yet out of that obscure place, that tiny village, came the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who would be “the Governor of My people Israel”, whose goings forth have been from everlasting”. How did Micah know this, centuries before, infallibly pin-pointing the place? When you read Psa. xxii. you have there a graphic description of death by crucifixion, but death by crucifixion was not practiced by the Jews in David’s day.

Not only that, but do you realize that in the twenty-four hours leading up to the crucifixion, there were at least thirteen prophecies, written in the O.T. centuries before, and fulfill to the last letter on that day? The O.T. definitely stated that His disciples were to forsake Him, and the N.T. tells us that this was a fact “His disciples forsook Him and fled”. Then the O.T. had foretold us that He was to be dumb before His accusers—so He was! It was stated there that He was to be wounded and bruised—and this was so from the terrible lashings and scourgings that He underwent. The O.T. foretold that His hands and His feet were to be pierced (Psa. xxii.), and they were so literally, and yet no bone of Him was to be broken. When the soldiers came to break the legs of the thieves crucified with the Lord, you may remember how they hesitated and stopped when they came to the Lord Jesus Christ. What made them stop do you think? Did these Roman soldiers know anything about what had been written in the O.T. centuries before? Certainly not! but God had written it and God saw to it that His Word was fulfilled to the letter “not a bone of Him shall be broken”.

Then it was stated that He was to be crucified with thieves; so He was, one on either side of Him. He was to pray for His persecutors, and so He did: “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” The people were to come to mock and ridicule Him, so they did, the leaders especially! “Let Him now come down from the cross, He can save others let Him save Himself”, that is what He had thrown in His teeth by them. And then the O.T. foretold that they were to cast lots for His coat. It was evidently a coat of great value; all in one piece, we are told. The soldiers said, “Don’t let us tear it; let us cast lots so that one has it in one whole piece”. Did they realize that they were fulfilling Scripture that had been written centuries before? No, but they were! “They cast lots for my vesture”, the O.T. had predicted. The very words which He cried on the cross had been written in Psa. xxii., “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me”. He was to have gall and vinegar offered Him to drink and they did offer it to Him, literally. His side was to be pierced: instead of breaking His legs the soldiers pierced His side. And the O.T. had stated that He was to be buried in a rich man’s tomb. Now we want to remind the reader that all these things were fulfilled literally in twenty-four hours, and they were all written hundreds of years before the event! One of those predictions thus fulfilled, would have been remarkable, but when one realizes that there were at least thirteen of them fulfilled to the letter it surely becomes overwhelming to any reasonable mind that here we have not just clever human guesswork, but the sure Word of God. Only God knows the future infallibly and only He could communicate these things to the O.T. writers, and that is exactly what we find happened.

Then consider the Bible's indestructibility, and of the opposition this Book has had. It has been well said that if any human book had had only a fraction of the opposition the Bible has received it would have been swept to oblivion. But this Book still flourishes in spite of atheists and opponents; it is the world's best seller! Note, also, how it marvelously endures translation. There are over one thousand translations of the Bible existing today, and when you translate from one language to another you are bound to lose something, yet in spite of this it still speaks with power and authority; it still has something supernatural in it that changes people's lives. What is it that this Book has that other books have not? Nothing less than God's infallible Truth, and the power of God to quicken into life.

Then think of the testimony of archaeology and the things that men have dug up from the earth. Has there been anything found to disprove the Bible? Never! Everything that has been dug up from the soil confirms its claims. Just one point we would like to bring to the reader. It used to be said that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch because writing was unknown in his time, but if you go to the British Museum you can see there the Tel-el-Amarna tablets which were unearthed by archaeologists and prove most definitely that writing *was* known a hundred years before Moses lived! Everything that is dug up from the earth confirms this fact—*that the Bible is true*.

The last thing we would mention, and this is really the most important, what was the witness of the Lord Jesus Christ? What was His attitude to the O.T. scriptures that existed in His day? There are many who profess and call themselves Christians—*Christ-ians*—followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we faithfully follow the Lord Jesus Christ, His attitude must be our attitude, otherwise we are not true *Christ-ians*. He said, as it is recorded in the fifth chapter of John, "Had ye believed Moses ye would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me". Mark you, this is the Lord Jesus Christ speaking and asserting that Moses, centuries before, wrote of Him. But how did Moses know about Christ in the O.T. days? But Christ said he did—"he wrote of Me". Furthermore, He added, "If you believe not his writings how shall ye believe My words?" If you cannot believe the first five books of the Bible written by Moses, He said, you certainly cannot believe Me. So you see the importance Christ puts on the Pentateuch. He also said this: "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled (Matt. v. 18); not the smallest Hebrew letter, not the smallest crest on a letter, would pass unfulfilled, He said. On another occasion He sated, "the scripture cannot be broken". Still further, in John xvii., in the prayer to His Father in heaven, He declared, "Thy Word is truth". There are people who say that when the Lord Jesus walked the earth He accepted the current Jewish notions of His time; some of them were mistaken, they tell us. But in resurrection with no such limitations, He declared (Luke xxiv. 44), "All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning Me". This was the three-fold division of the O.T., and the Lord underlines its truth. You will not find one incident or one saying of Christ which belittles the O.T. scriptures or suggests they were wrong in any way whatever; rather His approach was always with reverence and giving them their proper place as the Word of God. If we profess, and call ourselves Christians, if we want truth, then our attitude must

be His attitude. He said “I am the truth”, so how could He mislead us over this? If He misled us in this matter He cannot be the truth—but this is impossible. He has set His seal upon the O.T. as being the Word of God, and what is true of the O.T. is surely true of the N.T. because they are interwoven. All evidence, then, shows that this book *is* what it claims to be—the very Word of God.

Now we are going to suggest to the reader that we search it together. This is surely the greatest of all quests—the search for truth. It may take trouble, it may take time, but surely it is worth it! Meanwhile may God give us His aid so that we may make great discoveries for ourselves as we read the Book which He calls His Word, and have the abiding assurance and peace that will surely follow.

No.2. pp. 34 - 37

In our last study together we were speaking about the Bible and were considering what a marvelous and unique Book this is. It has all sorts of features that lift it right out of the ordinary, and when we ponder them carefully and without any bias, we surely must come to the conclusion that it is what it claims to be—the very Word of God. And if it is the Word of God, then surely it is a sure basis for our trust, for our faith, for our hope. We have in it a sure foundation that we can rely on, and instead of looking around us for any sort of human source to place our faith upon, how much better to rest it on a Divine Foundation!

Now the next point we must consider is this: what did Christ come for? What need was there for the Lord Jesus Christ to ever come to this earth? Again, we are not going to pass on our opinions, or the opinions of anybody else; we bring before you what He Himself said was the purpose of His coming: “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke xix. 10). “I am come, a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness”. “I came, not to judge the world, but to save the world” (John xii. 16, 17). Now if we think on these words, surely we can understand what the Lord meant! Christ came to dispel darkness and doubt and to give light; He came, not to condemn but to save. In another statement He said: “They that are whole”, that means healthy, “need not a physician”; they do not need a doctor. You never go to the doctor when you are healthy or well, do you? But the Lord goes on to say “they that are sick”. “I came”, here is the expressed purpose, “not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance”. So there is a sickness that men and women are suffering from; it is a terrible disease which is universal, that of sin and death. Some may not agree but at least they will have to acknowledge that death is universal. There is no one that is born into this world but that will have to face death and it makes no difference as regards rich or poor, high or low, this one event happens to all. Why did death come? Death is not a friend; it is an enemy, and the Bible says it is “the last enemy”, and therefore it cannot spring from anything good; it can only come from something that is evil. God said to the first human beings, Adam and Eve: “In the day

that you eat you shall surely die". The universality of death proves the universality of sin, if we will only face up to it. We must be absolutely honest here, otherwise, in our great quest for truth, we shall never get anywhere. It is silly to indulge in wishful thinking or try to gloss over and not face up to facts.

When the Saviour said "I come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" He is really describing me and He is describing you, and we hope the reader will not be offended by this statement. You may reply, "I am a good-living person; I am trying to do the very best I can and God cannot expect more than my best". We have to tell you that He does expect more than your best. God demands a hundred percent, and even if we do not like to admit that we are sinners, we shall all have to confess that not a single living person is absolutely perfect a hundred percent; perhaps some may get somewhere near it, but all fall short of such an exacting standard.

Why do we say that God demands a hundred percent? It is because in the great plan that is revealed in the Bible, He is working back to a restored and perfected creation, just in the way it started. When God created the universe, and we are told in Gen. i. 1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth", the whole of it came from His hand as a work of absolute perfection, and then it was spoiled by sin and failure. Now God could do one of two things; He could either patch it up and make it better or, He could make a fresh start and make a new creation, a new heaven and a new earth spotless and perfect as the first, and that is what the Bible says He is going to do. And in that new heaven and new earth there will be a "hundred percent" beings—ninety-nine percent will not do. For that reason God cannot lower His standards, He can not have one sinner in it, or any blot whatsoever, otherwise His end will never be attained. It is not a question of doing our best; we cannot make ourselves utterly and absolutely spotless and sinless; we cannot make ourselves a hundred percent perfect. And because of that, the Lord Jesus Christ came to put away sin and death righteously, so that we can be a "hundred percent", if we will only accept Him, God's unspeakable gift, Who alone can give us the perfection we lack.

"I have come to call sinners to repentance", Christ said, the great need of every sinner is a Saviour. Can anyone save himself; can he be his own saviour, can other human beings be his saviour? No, the Bible says, "No man can redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him". We cannot save or redeem anybody, not even our closest friend, however much we would like to be able to do so. If God had not come to our aid in the person of Christ, the future of all of us would be absolutely hopeless. We should be outside His perfect Kingdom for evermore. But let us note, the same Saviour said this: "I am the door; *by Me*, if any man enter in *he shall be saved*". He said, in effect, I am the entrance to this hundred percent state. If you have stepped through Me, like a door, you will have all you need—I will actually put you in the position of being perfect, spotless and complete.

Of course, one may try to by-pass God's way but, again, hear Christ's Word: "He that entereth not by the door", that is, through Himself and trusting what He has done for us on Calvary's cross, "but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber",

and we have just seen that no imperfect being can ever get into God's new creation and spoil it: God can not and will not have sinners, thieves or robbers there. Again the Lord said: "I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father *except by Me.*" There is one way into God's perfect Kingdom and one way only, and it is through the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why He came to this earth to make this possible. He came to make the way open for sinners to step through by faith so that God could at last deal with their sins righteously and blot them out, the things that are separating them from Him and spoiling them from having any position whatsoever in this glorious creation at the end.

"God hath made Him", that is Christ, "to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him". He takes our sins, and in exchange we receive His righteousness or perfection. Now that is the very thing we want, and we must have if we are to be a "hundred percent". This righteousness is the complete thing; this is the "one hundred percent state" that must be ours if we are to have a place in the restored and spotless new heaven and earth to which God has done everything necessary for us—and this becomes our own possession as we simply take Him by faith or trust. Not only that, but we have the gift of eternal life and immortality: "The wages of sin" says the Epistle to the Romans "is death but, the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"; so the moment we receive Christ, the moment we commit everything to this ever-living Saviour, we receive the certainty of eternal life. This is a fresh start; we become a new creation, old things have passed away, and we are now in a position, when we have received Him, *to understand His truth*. It is here where we have all got to "toe the line". It is useless to talk about the Bible and all the wonders therein if we have not made this necessary start with this new life and outlook. The unsaved cannot have spiritual understanding; such are not in a position to understand the Bible. This can only come through Christ as Saviour and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.

Christmas-time we know is the time for receiving gifts, but let us not forget that Christmas is really 'Christ-mas', the birth of Christ. We do this because of God's great Gift. His beloved Son. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift." You do not try to *earn* gifts, do you? If you are given a present you take it thankfully; you surely do not spurn it and send it back, do you? What are you going to do with God's greatest Gift, the Lord Jesus Christ? are you going to ignore Him, refuse the Gift or will you take Him by faith? Do not forget that eternal life or eternal death hangs upon this. We trust that every reader will have the wisdom to stretch out the hand of faith, simply, like a child, and take Him as Saviour and sin-bearer. Just say: "Lord Jesus, I take you to be my own personal Saviour, to be the bearer of my sins, past, present, and future, and I look to you for all hope of immortality, eternal life, and all strength needed now at the present time to live as you would have me live." This is the experience we must all have if we are to go exploring together the wonders of revelation of God's Word and receive the Truth. Ahead of us there lie untold riches for us to discover and to explore together in the Bible. "He that hath the Son *hath life*, he that has not the Son of God *hath not life.*" Which will you have—eternal life or death? Everlasting joys and riches beyond dreams—or perishing eternally? He is yours for the taking, for the trusting. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32).

No.3. pp. 54 - 57

In our last article we were writing about the necessary steps that must be taken if we are to go on with the great quest of getting to know God and His truth.

We must accept Christ as our personal Saviour and then the next thing to realize is that we are on a journey; we are going home to Christ in glory. This is the Christian pathway the Bible puts before us, and our great quest now is, how can we keep to this pathway—not deviating to the right or to the left, because if we do, if we get off the track, it will result in disillusionment and sorrow. How can we keep on this track with our faces turned toward heaven, towards Christ and towards glory? And how can we retain the wonderful joy and peace that we surely shall know when we have committed everything to Him, and call Him our own Saviour? The Bible again guides us here as in all things.

One thing we must first see is this, that when we accept the Lord as our Saviour He gives us a new nature, and this is what the Apostle Peter speaks of in his second Epistle and the first chapter; “According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature”. We have something that we never had before; God has given us part of His own holy and most wonderful nature. We have still the old sinful nature, alas! But, thank God, there is another nature now, His nature, and if we will only heed its dictates then indeed we shall find our feet keeping to this Christian pathway. We shall find too that peace and that joy which is the gift of Christ and it will be ours day by day until, at last, the journey is finished and we are at home with Him who has loved us and given Himself for us.

So the Bible talks about ‘spirit’ which is this new nature. It also speaks about the flesh—not just the human body, but the old nature we inherit from fallen Adam. Calvary, as we shall see, has dealt with the old nature, and God’s precious gift to us is this new nature, to control, to guide, to help, to lead, to strengthen, to do everything that we shall need to live lives that God would have us lead, in joy, happiness and fruitfulness and witness for Him to others. So you see, we now start off with new birth, new life; and just as we start the natural life with babyhood, so we start this new spiritual life in this way. And just as the goal for the natural life is to grow up from infancy to adulthood and become mature mentally and physically, so it is the same goal spiritual for the child of God—God wants us to grow up and leave babyhood behind and become full-grown spiritually.

How can we do this? Roughly speaking, the laws that pertain to growth naturally are the same spiritually. What do we need for natural growth in ordinary life? We want the

right food and nourishment to begin with; and then we must have light—there is no growth apart from light. And then we must have the right environment and training. If a child has those three things, it will grow naturally and come to normal adulthood. It is just the same spiritually; we must have the right spiritual food. This new nature that God has given can only assimilate one type of food and one only, and that is the Word of God. We shall be wise if we do not try to feed the new spiritual nature with anything else, such as the things of the world, and the temporal things around us for it cannot assimilate these things, and if we do not feed this nature with its proper food, the Word of God, it will weaken, instead of growing strong. We need, then, constantly to come before God's Word, and as it were, feed on it, Jeremiah said: "Thy words were found and I did eat them"—he likened them to food! In ordinary language we talk about digesting a fact; that is we are receiving it into our minds, and God wants us to receive the truth of His Word in this way like food and make it our own. Thus, as we feed upon God's Word day by day, we grow spiritually, and realize this as we keep in close touch with Him. He can supply all our needs through His Word. We go along then, day by day, in complete trust in Him, handing over everything to Him to control; for we have become His property; the price has been paid, and this was nothing less than the life and the death of His Beloved Son. What a tremendous cost! "You are not your own" wrote the Apostle Paul, "You have been brought with a price". If we do not do this we are really cheating our Saviour of His possession and we cannot expect peace and happiness or progress in the knowledge of God's Truth.

The next thing is this. As we explore this book together we shall need some principle to guide us. We also want, as far as possible, to be rid of human opinion, because, directly we introduce the human element we have the possibility of fallibility and error. But how can we keep out human opinion, with its failure and mistakes?

In order to do this there are certain principles that we must keep well in view. These are really nothing more than common sense; but it is very easy when we take up a book like the Bible to even let our common sense desert us, and that is a pity. In order to avoid human opinions and ideas we want to know exactly what God says; and we must therefore be accurate in our reading of the Bible. It is extraordinary, how sometimes we find ourselves putting in words that are not there, or leaving out words that are there! We shall never get the fullness of truth unless we read accurately what God has written. If, of course, we have any means of getting to know the original languages in which the Bible was written—Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek—so much the better. But possibly many are not in a position to do that, in which case the best thing to do is to get hold of more than one good translation. You have the Authorized Version. There is the Revised Version and others like Weymouth, an up-to-date English Version, and Rotherham; get these and compare them side by side.

The second point: make sure about the Bible's background and its setting. God's Word had a meaning, originally, to the people that He sent it. Note to whom He sends His Word, what was the circumstance surrounding it; that is very important. Do not think first of all "What does it mean to me?" that will come later, but "What did it mean to those to whom God sent it?" Get that settled clearly in your mind.

Third point: For the most part the Bible is to be read literally and in its simple meaning. Do not treat it as though there is always another meaning to the plain natural sense: if you do that you will never hear God saying to you “Thus saith the Lord”, and there will always be the person who will come along and say, “Ah, but it doesn’t mean that, it means this”, and so the flood of human opinion comes in and all divine revelation goes! However, someone may point out that it cannot always be taken literally. No, perfectly true. We will amplify the previous statement, then. Take it literally and in its simple meaning unless it contradicts other Scriptures or definitely known facts; in which case you can know that a figure of speech is being used. But even a figure of speech is only a vivid way of giving literal facts. Never think that if you have a figurative passage there is not a literal meaning underlying it; literality is there all right. You must not, of course, read the symbols or the figure literally, but find out the literal fact these symbols or figures represent. In other words, do not spiritualize God’s Word; people who do that will never let the Word mean what it says, they are always trying to find some other meaning and this is *not* the way to get Truth, but opens the door to error. There is of course a legitimate spiritual application of the Bible. Once you understand the literal meaning and its proper setting, then you may be in a position to make an application of it: that is to say, if it is in accordance with the truth for today and the gospel of God’s grace. We shall find that God’s Word is like a letter; it has an address on the envelope, and your name and my name, so to speak, is not always there. We are Gentiles who have been saved by God’s grace, and quite a lot of the Bible was not primarily written for or to Gentiles. Most of it was written primarily to God’s earthly people, the people of Israel. Their name is on the envelope, but as we read it we can often find things that are true of us as well. That is making an *application* of Scripture to ourselves; but we can only do this safely if it corresponds with what God’s Word teaches us concerning the position of saved Gentiles now. Remember this always; that *God means what He says and has a meaning for everything that He says*, otherwise the Bible can be made to mean anything and is emptied of all its divine authority. All the varying sects with their differing doctrines go to the Bible as their basis, but many do not allow it to speak its own message. Contexts are ignored and the Word gets twisted till it is unrecognizable.

Fourth point: compare Scripture with Scripture, search God’s Word, and in doing this you will need help and this will be the help of a good concordance. We ought to thank God for the work of men like Robert Young who laboured all their lifetime to give us an implement, as it were, to dig into God’s Word. This is like a spade or a fork, and just as you cannot do gardening without such tools so you cannot dig into God’s Word properly without a concordance; it saves you many hours of wasted time. Get a good concordance—and I strongly recommend Young’s *Analytical Concordance*. Cruden’s is good; but it only deals with the English; Young’s deals with the original, and you do not need to be a Hebrew or a Greek scholar in order to use it.

If we keep these things well in our minds, we can honestly say that it is a reverent and sane way to treat God’s Word so that God may speak to us and teach us without human interference or human opinion, that is the all important point. We cannot get Truth by

merely listening to what this or that sect believes or teaches. We need a “Thus saith the Lord” and then we have something eternally secure upon which to rest our faith.

The Bible is a book of a tremendous and most wonderful plan that God is working out. It is not just a haphazard collection of books; it has something linking it all together, making it one great continuous unfolding of a marvelous purpose. So, shall we go on, shall we search together? May the Lord help us to be teachable; this is essential. We also must be emptied of all preconceived opinions and just be willing to sit at His feet, as it were, and learn of Him. May He help us with this in view.

No.4. pp. 72 - 77

In our previous study together we have seen that it is necessary for us all to come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ if we are ever going to get any understanding of, or have any part in the great revealed plan in God’s Word, the Word of Truth that we can pin our faith to and rely on absolutely. God, in His love, has seen our need, and sent His Beloved Son. Through Him, this Word tells us, “we have redemption through His Blood”, through the offering of Himself on Calvary’s Cross, and His bearing our sins in His own Body on the tree, so that we shall never have to bear them. The word ‘redemption’ means that we have been ‘purchased’, we have been bought by God; He has paid the price, and we are His property.

This is the start of a new life, a spiritual life; we start it just like we do our natural lives, as new-born lives, as new-born babes. Peter brings this forward in his first Epistle where he says: “As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby.” Babies commence with milk, then as they grow, they can take something more solid. The goal, of course, is that they shall grow up to adulthood and become mature in body and mind; and that is the great goal now for every true believer in Christ, spiritual maturity, to grow up and leave spiritual babyhood behind. Again, in our last study, we saw that the only way we can grow spiritually is by feeding on the only food that our new spiritual nature can receive, that is, God’s precious Word.

What we want to point out to you before proceeding further is that salvation not only touches the sin problem, and that of death that would separate us from God for ever, but it also touches the *mind*. One of the most tragic things that happened when Adam fell and passed on sin and death to the rest of mankind, was the effect that it had on his mind. Man can be very clever and brainy in things within the human sphere, yet when he goes outside this sphere into the things of God he is right out of his depth; he can know nothing of God merely by cleverness or his human intellectual attainments. No wonder the Apostle Paul wrote: “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.”

So God, in salvation, first touches the mind and understanding and then, at last, we can begin to see things in a measure as He sees them, we can begin to see our utter need met by the Lord Jesus Christ, which we could not do before. We can see something of the beauty and the wonders contained in God's Word, the Word of Truth, and we can begin to understand them. This is the commencement of the understanding of the Bible and there is no other way to obtain it. To approach it as an interesting book can never give real spiritual understanding. You can only get it when you have a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and He has given you this new mind. You must then rely on the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of your understanding as you read it, and we trust that this may be the experience of us all as we study this wonderful Book together.

Now the Bible is a unity. It is not just sixty-six books put together in a haphazard sort of way, of which one can read bits here and there, picking out those that are most interesting and leaving the rest. This, alas is the way that many Christians seem to regard it. Rather the Bible is the revelation of a great plan concerning God's creation. The very first words of it start like this: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth". There was a reason for God doing that. He did not do it just as a whim, or because He wanted something to do! There was a great and wonderful purpose lying behind that creation. Let us read together a verse from the Epistle to the Ephesians which stresses this question of God's plan revealed in the Bible. In chapter iii. 2 the Apostle is talking about God's manifold wisdom teaching principalities and powers by the church, and then he writes this: "According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." The word 'purpose' is the word 'plan', "according to the plan of the ages", literally, "which He planned in Christ Jesus our Lord". The ages are the great span of time, sub-divided into epochs and upon this great platform of time God is working out a great redemptive purpose which is centred in the Lord Jesus. To regard it apart from Christ will never give us understanding; in fact, there would not be a plan at all, the whole thing would collapse if it was not resting solidly upon the Person and work of the Saviour. But it *is* planned in Him. It embraces, then, all creation, heaven and earth, and its being worked out in time, the ages, and it is centre in redemption because the creation has been spoiled by sin and death and therefore it must be redeemed. It has to be dealt with in this way, otherwise it can never come to a glorious fulfillment.

The same epistle tells us in chapter i. that "God works all things after the counsel of His own will". There is an irresistible force, God's omnipotence, behind this plan. Are we not thankful that this is a fact? Otherwise the plan would most surely founder. It will never founder because of lack of power or wisdom; the Lord has unlimited power and wisdom and what He determines finally must be accomplished. It may be lengthened out, because He is not just dealing with inanimate objects like the sun, moon and stars which immediately obey His behest automatically. He is dealing with men and women who are moral creatures having a measure of responsibility which enables them to say "yes" or "no" to Him. When men say "no" to Him, God, in His mercy, very often waits, but He will not wait for ever. He is indeed a God who is long-suffering and patient and that may explain to us why this plan is taking so long to work out. The wonder of it is, that in this gigantic purpose taking in all creation, heaven and earth, the individual is not lost in it!

Let us read another verse in Paul's second Epistle to Timothy, chapter i. 9: "God who hath saved us and called us with (or to) a holy calling. Not according to our works (not because of any merit on our part) but according to His own purpose (according to His own plan)". Your salvation and mine is part of this wondrous plan of God! Rom. viii. put it in this way: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose"—called according to His plan. II Tim. i. says we are saved according to the plan; Rom. viii. says we are called according to this great plan.

The best thing for us to do now is to look at this plan in the large and then to come to our part as individuals in it. Going back to the beginning, to the first verse of Gen. i., we find God creating heaven and earth, and please note that heaven comes first! Heaven not only a place but heavenly beings, angels, principalities and powers. We may not understand fully *why* He created these heavenly beings. Then He created the earth with the intention of it being inhabited. In Isa. xlv. 18, we read: "For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it. He hath established it; He created it not in vain, *He formed it to be inhabited.*" So here is the first light brought before us on the purpose behind creation. God made the earth to be inhabited by a race of beings, who were fashioned in His image.

Alas that plan was soon to be spoiled because Satan fell from his perfect state and Adam and Eve had not been very long on the earth before this fallen being came and did his deadly work in the garden of Eden, and so in fallen Adam and Eve, and all the human race, you find God's image marred. Sin and death follow, and these are the great enemies which spoil what God had in mind. The fact that every human being dies, and there is no exception to this, proves that every one is a sinner. Death is not the result of something good, but of something evil. "The wages of sin is death." It is useless for men and women to seek to evade the fact that they are sinners when death stares them in the face every day of their lives. Heaven has become ruined, and now earth has become ruined. What a tragedy! How is God going to deal with this? Is He going to let His plan be frustrated? No—He "works all things after the counsel of His own will", as we have seen. God's purpose is one of *redemption* and this is going to be sufficient to put things right and undo the work of sin and the devil. But how will God bring it to bear upon the world in its darkness and death? Will He speak to each individual separately? He could do that; for He is almighty. The very fact that He could speak to an idolater proves this, a man named Abram, in Ur of the Chaldees. There was no Bible there, no missionary, no human intermediary at all, but God spoke to him, and Abram heard and responded. If God has done it once He could do it a thousand or a million times. Is He going to work that way, or, will He work through a channel and reach the whole world through this channel?

It is the second way which is the way God chooses. And so, when later we come to chapter xi. in the book of Genesis, we read of the whole of the nations in disorganization and conflict at Babel; and then in chapter xii., God brings this man Abram into the land of promise, the land we now call Palestine, and He makes certain promises to him. This

is what it says in Gen. xii. 2: “I will make of thee (Abram) a great nation and will bless thee and make thy name great and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee; *and in thee, shall all families of the earth be blessed.*” Let us try and understand these words because we are coming back to them again and again in our studies. Later on in the N.T. we shall find that this promise is also taken up by the N.T. writers.

Now who was this “seed of Abraham”? We know that Abraham had a son, Isaac, and Isaac had a son, Jacob: Jacob had twelve sons and from these came the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, the Jewish race as we now know it. They are the literal seed of Abraham; but more than that, someone else was in mind Who also was a Son of Abraham, and he was the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. i. 1). Was *He* in mind when God said “and in thy Seed shall all families of the earth be blessed”? Most certainly, because Gal. iii. 6 says: ‘Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made.’ “And He saith not, and to seeds (plural) as of many, but as of one. And to thy *Seed* which is Christ.” We are therefore right in saying that the Son of Abraham is the Lord Jesus Christ, but should we be right in saying that He exhausts the prophesy concerning the seed of Abraham? No, because at the end of the chapter we find others who are also called Abraham’s seed (verse 29) “And if ye (the Galatian believers) be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed”. So then Christ is Abraham’s Seed and these Galatian believers were Abraham’s seed as well and ‘heirs according to the promise’. Here is no contradiction because they are “all of one” as the epistle to the Hebrews expresses it. Christ and the literal seed of Abraham whom He had redeemed by His precious Blood are looked on as one, a unity, in the plan. We are only getting half the truth if we say that it refers only to Christ personally, or if we say that it refers to the people of Israel only.

Now not only do we read in the Scriptures about Abraham’s seed, but also that they are given by God an earthly home. So back again to the book of Genesis, this time to chapter xiii. 14-17. Verse 14 says: “The Lord said to Abraham, 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 I give it and to thy seed.*” Verse 17 says: “Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it *for I will give it unto thee*”, and it is described later on, geographically, in chapter xv., “from the river of Egypt (the River Nile) unto the great river, the River Euphrates”. One cannot spiritualize a literal piece of land like this (Gen. xv. 18). And we find God not only made this promise to Abraham, but to Isaac. In Gen. xxvi. 3 and 4: “Sojourn in this land and I will be with thee and I will bless thee; for unto *thee* and unto *thy seed* will I give *all these countries.*” Verse 4: “I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven and *will give unto thy seed all these countries*”, now note: “and *in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed*”. So here is the same promise repeated to Isaac, and then to Jacob in chapter xxviii. Jacob greatly valued this and planned to get it by any means possible, whether fair means or foul, but God does not need help like that, and in the end he got it not by deception but by sheer grace. This is what it says in Gen. xxviii. 13, 14: “Behold the Lord stood above it” (where this man was laid down to sleep), and he saw Him (the Lord in a vision)—“I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: *the land whereon thou liest to thee will I give*

it and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth and thou shalt be spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south”.

Will you continue with me in searching out this great plan from the Word of God? May He make us teachable and then we are going to make some thrilling discoveries!

No.5. pp. 81 - 85

We have seen that the Word of God is a Book of purpose. It is the revelation of a plan that is dealing with God's great creation in two parts. The Divine plan for the earth occupies much of the Bible, but we are going to see that there is a revelation of His plan for the heavens as well, and one that can touch us very intimately indeed. Now, of course, God can reveal Himself to anybody at any time without any aid whatsoever, in the same way as He spoke to Abraham. This He could do again and again, but it would seem, from the Scriptures, that He has not chosen to work this way. Rather He uses redeemed human beings as means to make His truth known. This fair creation of God, heaven and earth, has been spoiled by sin and by death; and so God is telling us in His Word what He has done to take away this blot, and then what He is going to do so that there may yet be a creation of beauty and perfection. The present creation needs a Redeemer, someone who can take away sin and death. Possibly some may think that they can eradicate sin, but is anybody so foolish as to imagine they can abolish death? We are apt to forget death, are we not? God's plan, the wonderful scheme that He had in mind at the very beginning can never come to pass where there is death, for this spoils it entirely. The Bible calls it “the last enemy”, “the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (I Cor. xv. 26). So, in the very beginning of the Bible we are told how God is going to reach and save sinful humanity, not by speaking to each one separately, but by using a human channel. Thus He lays hold of Abraham, a pagan idolater, and takes him over from Ur of the Chaldees to the place we now call Palestine, then reveals Himself to him and makes wonderful promises concerning his descendants; and through his descendants, his seed, God says He will bless *all* families of the earth.

Now in our last study we saw that there was a literal piece of land that God gave to Abraham; not only a promise of a seed, but a home for them to live in, and that cannot be spiritualized! It is not possible to spiritualize the statement ‘from the great river, the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates’ because these are geographical points. The land in between, God said to Abraham, I will give to your seed. So, if the land is literal, and it must be, the seed must be literal too. This is fulfilled in a twofold way, the Lord Jesus Christ as the great Seed of Abraham, because Paul, when he wrote Galatians, definitely asserted that Christ was the Seed; but He Himself does not exhaust that prophecy, for the descendants of Abraham are his seed too (Acts iii. 25) and they are linked with Him in this great plan. God looks at them and the Lord Jesus as *one* in this great purpose. So we find He makes the same promise to Abraham's son, Isaac, concerning a *seed*, his descendants, and the *land*, and the promise the assurance that ‘in thy seed shall families

of the earth be blessed!' The same is repeated to Jacob, as we saw, in Gen. xxviii. 13, 14: and from Jacob's twelve sons come to the people of Israel.

Now we must keep this well in mind; it is very important to understand as we trace out the Divine purpose in the Bible. God reveals that He is going to use them, the Jewish race, so that He might reach world wide with salvation and blessing. The light of the knowledge of the gospel and the truth is going to spread to all families of the earth through this seed. But we stress this, there is one thing that God cannot do, He can not use unredeemed, unclean channel. So this nation, this seed, needs redemption; they cannot be used as a channel of blessing to all the earth until their Redeemer has come and died for them. They must be saved and cleansed and then they will be in a position to be used by God in this way. Note, geographically the land of Palestine, and Jerusalem its capital are right in the centre of the earth, and Jerusalem is yet to be the world's most important city, both commercially and spiritually.

We expect you have uttered the so-called Lord's prayer many times. You have said: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This is asking God to bring in this kingdom on the earth and one day it will be fulfilled through the redeemed Jewish nation. We must not confuse this with the heavenly part of God's great purpose. There is a literal kingdom that is coming on this earth, otherwise why pray this prayer? It is most surprising how so many people utter this prayer yet deny there is a possibility of God's kingdom ever coming on the earth in this way! It is surely coming to pass, otherwise the whole thing is a mockery.

But it will only come by reason of the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ has died to make it possible, died to save this channel, the people of Israel, so that they can take the knowledge of truth to the ends of the earth; then the kingdom will come. That is the way it is going to work out. In the fullness of time, Scripture tells us "God sent His Son". The Lord Jesus comes to His earthly people, this seed of Abraham, as their great Priest-King; in this twofold capacity we have Christ's relationship with the people of Israel. He was their Priest, He was their King, and in that order. Sometimes it is reversed and we say, King-Priest but this is the wrong way round. One of the O.T. prophecies, the prophecy of Zechariah, looking forward to His coming said this: "He shall be a *Priest* upon his *Throne*." Note the priestly side is put first: He cannot be king—until His work as Priest and Offering as well. Only in this way can the sin of Israel and that of all His people be dealt with so that a holy God can use them. In other words, His great redemptive work on the Cross has to be accomplished first, before that kingdom can be set up. Israel must be redeemed; Christ must die for them, as He must die for you and me if we are ever going to have any part in this glorious and wonderful purpose. John i. 11 reads in this way: "He came unto His own but His own (Israel) received Him not. But as many as received Him to them He gave the power (right) to become children of God". As many as received Him, we wonder if you are one of these? Have you received the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you committed everything to Him, have you believed Him, in that sense? To such He gave the privilege of becoming children of God, of being members of His family. You are not a child of God therefore unless you have received Christ as Saviour. It is not true to say that every single human being by natural birth is a

child of God. They may have a relationship to God as Creator but not as Father. The tragedy was that the earthly channel that God was preparing to reach the whole world, the people of Israel, rejected Him, and He came to them, primarily, at His first coming, He said: “I am not sent *but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*” Note He calls them “*lost sheep*”. That shows they needed a Redeemer, before God could use them and the divine plan for the earth cannot be realized until this is accomplished.

When He called the twelve apostles, we are told in Matthew’s Gospel that *He limited their ministry to the same people.* In x. 5, 6 we read: “Go not into the way of the Gentiles and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”: in other words, their ministry was exclusively Jewish, and unless we understand the plan we shall be puzzled here. Someone may say, “I thought God wanted to bring in a world-wide kingdom; I thought He wanted to reach all families of the earth, and now when Christ comes, He ministers only to one nation and forbids the Apostles to go any wider than this. How is the gospel every going to spread over the earth if the message is limited in this way?”

But you see, the human channel must be got ready first! God has not abandoned this way to bring in the kingdom; this earthly people must be laid hold of, redeemed and prepared by His grace. Thus the attention is focused on them to begin with, and when they respond, and are saved, then they shall be the means used to take the knowledge of the Lord to the ends of the earth. The Bible asserts that “The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea”. When God concentrates upon Israel, He has not forgotten this, but is preparing them so that one day this prophecy may be gloriously true. So Christ must die for them; He must become their Priest, their Offering, their Saviour, before He can be their King and before they can be the channel through which this great kingdom can be brought into being.

There is something else that we must add. While the death of Christ was a necessity, foreknown by God in this great plan, we must not for one moment think that God forced the people of Israel to crucify Christ. That would be a terrible thing. If God forced them to do this, they have no responsibility for it. Peter could never have proclaimed publicly as he did, after the day of Pentecost and accused his own people, saying to them: “You with wicked hands, have taken and crucified Him.” Their hands would not have been wicked at all, for they would only have been doing what God intended they should do. Here appears to be a dilemma: Christ must die to be the Offering for sin, because “the wages of sin is death”. He must die for us or all of us whether Jew or Gentile, must die eternally, one or the other. We may resolve the difficulty if we read a verse in John’s Gospel. He said: “I lay down my life that I might take it again: no man taketh it from me.” Will you note that? So Israel did not really take it from Him unless He had been willing; they did not force Him to go to the Cross—“No man taketh it from Me, I lay it down of myself”. I decide when I am going to die, He said, “I have power to lay it down, I have power to take it again”. No ordinary man could talk like that! You know quite well that you have no power to decide the moment you are going to die, unless you commit suicide, of course, and if you did that you certainly have no power to take it up again; you could not raise yourself from the dead. But Christ asserted that He had the

power to do this very thing. So even if Israel had been ready to receive Him, He still would have died; He would have voluntarily laid down His life and become the great Sin-bearer: He would have taken it up again, as He said, after three days. And then, instead of waiting centuries, the kingdom could have come in to being straight away because Israel would have been redeemed and the whole plan for worldwide blessing could have gone forward.

But it did not happen like that. Is it not tragic the way sin and failure has postponed and hindered God's plan? At the same time we must realize that it cannot finally frustrate it, otherwise we have no hope, no assurance at all. We should have no message of joy to proclaim if that were true. But God is not dealing with puppets; He is dealing with responsible people who can refuse and reject, so that God's purposes for the time being can be delayed. That is why it has not come to pass yet; that is why, nearly two thousand years after Calvary that the kingdom on the earth is not yet in being. And as we look on world conditions we seem to see it receding farther and farther away; but when we have got the Divine Plan in our minds we can realize that God has got everything under control; He is still 'working all things after the counsel of His own will'.

Now the next point is this: the great Sacrifice for sin having been made, God thus over-ruling as He did the people of Israel murdering their Messiah, the Gospel can now be preached to the people who first needed it, the murderers, the Jewish nation. And unless God has changed the plan and discarded Israel, and is going to use some other channel to reach all families of the earth, that is the very thing that must happen. The book of history that follows the Gospel records makes the continuation of the purpose clear. That book, of course, is "The Acts of the Apostles". It shows that God's longsuffering, even after the climax and sin of crucifying Christ did not run out for the Jew. The plan was still in the forefront and so, during the thirty-five years, roughly speaking, which that book covers, God waits in His longsuffering for Israel to repent and turn back to Him. The gospel is preached to them by Peter and the twelve, and he waits to see whether they will respond in this way. Later on, when Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans; he wrote concerning his own people, the Jew, "my kinsmen according to the flesh". This can only be the literal Jew. He said: "*God hath not cast away His people which he foreknew.*" Now there are some systems of theology that tell us that He *did* cast them away at the Cross: but Paul said He had *not* done so. In effect he said, "Look at me—I am an Israelite and He has not cast me away". That is the argument of Rom. xi., and the Scripture goes on to say this: "The gifts and the calling of God are without repentance." God does not change his mind; if this is the plan He is not going to alter it because of man's failure and sin. So beware of any interpretation of the Scriptures that says there is no future for the Jew as a nation, the gifts and the calling and the plan of God are without repentance on His part. Paul goes on to say, "As touching the gospel they are enemies for your sakes, but as concerning *the election they are beloved* for the fathers' sakes". So you see, after Calvary, God takes up His dealings with this same people, and He prepares the twelve for this great ministry to them.

In His character He is the same God today. He is still the unchangeable God Who keeps His Word. Upon this all our assurance is based. If He breaks His promises to the fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, how do we know that He will not do so to us? Let us be thankful that “this God is our God”, utterly dependable, upon Whom we can venture for time and for eternity.

No.6. pp. 111 - 115

We have seen that, in order to fulfil God’s plan for world blessing through Israel, the Lord Jesus had to be manifested as the Priest-King. The priestly aspect of His work deals with *sin* and its *removal* righteously, while the Kingly side relates to *rule* and *government*.

Let us consider the latter in more detail: In the O.T. days, God had made it clear to David that one of his descendants should be this great King.

Let us turn to Psa. lxxxix. This is the great psalm of God’s faithfulness; the word occurs seven times. Here is the God who never breaks His promises, so this gives us a great ground of assurance, does it not? If God plans to do a certain thing, you may be sure it is going to be accomplished. Human scheme often fail because men have not the wisdom or the power to carry out what they plan. You may have had that experience, but this cannot happen with God Who is both omnipotent and all-wise.

Now He says (verse 3) “I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant”. God is going to make a promise concerning the seed, saying very much the same thing as He did to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: “Thy seed will I establish for ever”; He is going to guarantee them an existence in perpetuity, and then God adds “and build up thy throne unto all generations”. Read the whole psalm; we cannot quote the whole of it here. We will note a few verses in the middle. God comes back to the seed, David’s son, in verse 29: “His *seed* also will I make to endure for ever and his *throne*”, the two things again, the *seed* and the *throne*, the leader, the ruler, “as the days of heaven”. Now God says, if they forsake My ways, I will judge them, I will discipline them. “I will visit their transgressions” (verse 30) “with the rod and their iniquities with stripes”. Nevertheless, because the Lord has made a promise He cannot break it. So we read, “Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him nor suffer my faithfulness (my unchangeability) to fail. My covenant *will I not break nor alter the thing that has gone out of my lips*”. Will you note that? God says, I will not break My Word, nor will I change it.

There are some interpreters of the Bible who say that He *has* changed it, that there is no future for the Jew; rather God has now given all the promises to the Church which they call spiritual Israel. In that case God *has done* what He said He would not do, He has *altered His Word*. But that cannot be, “I will not alter the thing that has gone out of

my lips". "Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not *lie* unto David." Again we have the seed and the throne, "His *seed* shall endure for ever, and his *throne* as the sun before Me: it shall be *established for ever* as the moon and as the faithful witness in heaven". Surely, words cannot be clearer! This promise to David was fulfilled, of course, in the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the literal descendant of David, as His genealogy given in Matthew's Gospel shows.

Shall we now turn to the prophecy of Isa. ix.? Some of us know verse 6 because it is so often quoted at Christmas time: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given and the government shall be upon His shoulder." Here is the Seed of David, the King of Israel, "and the government shall be upon His shoulder. And his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God". Yes, the helpless Babe, born in Bethlehem, the Son given, is "The Mighty God"!

"Great is the mystery of godliness", wrote the Apostle Paul centuries later, "God was manifest in the flesh", in human form. "The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father", better, "the Father of the ages", the One who has created the span of time, the One Who is the origin of the ages. The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us this in chapter i.: "By Whom He made the ages", "the worlds" in our A.V. but "ages" in the original. He is also "The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end"; "there shall be no end upon the throne of David". This is the throne that Psa. lxxxix. speaks about, "and upon his kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth", for how long?, "*for ever*"! Who is going to bring it to pass and how is it going to happen? Listen! "The *zeal* of the Lord of Hosts will perform this". God's zeal, God's intense passion to finish His plan will bring it to pass, will accomplish this mighty purpose. The government, the rule of the world and all creation, will be on His shoulder; it is not yet, otherwise we should not have the terrible confusion and trouble that we see all around us. The Epistle to the Hebrews says: "We see not yet all things put under Him." He is still rejected of men; perhaps He is still rejected by someone who is reading these lines. But there is a day coming when the government, all rule, shall be on His shoulder, when, at last, as Phil. ii. tells us, "Every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth", every knee, no exception, and at last He will be acknowledged by all to be the Lord, the great Jehovah of the O.T. Here is then the promise concerning the Leader, the King of Israel, and the throne of David.

How is the theme picked up when we actually come to the birth of Christ? Let us turn to the Gospel of Luke, chapter i. Here is the angel talking to His mother, Mary and this is what he says: "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him *the throne of his father David*", just as Psa. lxxxix. foretold and Isa. ix. spoke about. Here is the fulfillment of the promise. "And he shall reign over the house of Jacob", the people of Israel, "for ever". This is just Isaiah asserted, "of his kingdom there shall be no end". Later on in this chapter, we come to Zacharias, who was "filled with the Holy Ghost" (verse 67), and being filled with the Holy Ghost he was not giving us his own opinions. This is what he says in his song

(verse 68): “Blessed be the Lord God *of Israel*, for He hath visited and redeemed His people”, the people of Israel, “and hath raised up for us an horn of salvation in the house of *His servant David*”. This “horn of salvation” is David’s Seed, the King. Then in verse 72, “To perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant”. What is this covenant? It is ‘the oath which he swore to our father Abraham’. So we are thrown back again to the unconditional promises that God made to Abraham. God said to him, “I will I will I will” without any conditions! So centuries later, we find Zacharias under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gathering all these things up, and they still revolve around the Seed of David, and David’s throne, Someone who is going to be King over His people Israel and then later King of the world.

We are not surprised, therefore, in Matt. ii. to find the question asked, “Where is He that shall be born *King of the Jews*”? It does not say King of the Church, or King of any Gentile nation. The time has not come for this.

Then note, the chief priests and scribes, we are told, were gathered together by Herod; He demanded of them (verse 4) where Christ should be born, and they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judaea”. How did they know it? Because God’s prophetic word in the O.T. had pin-pointed the little place of Bethlehem, so small that it was hardly noticed. When God comes to the earth He does not come to Rome, the mistress of the earth, as one might think; He comes to one of the least-known places in the land of Palestine, so lowly and so humble. We read (verse 5) “In Bethlehem of Judaea, for thus it is written by the prophet. And thou, Bethlehem in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule *My people Israel*”. They are still in the centre of God’s great plan!

But what about after Calvary and the rejection of the Lord by Israel? What do we find? In the book that carries on the message, the Acts of the Apostles, we discover this nation is still prominent. If they were cast off by God at the Cross, they could not occupy the place they do in this book.

What we find in the Book of the Acts is this: that God starts to prepare the eleven for further ministry to this nation. In His mercy He is going to hold back judgment on this sinful people and command them once more to repent and turn to Him. He is not yet going to lay them aside in unbelief.

It will be helpful if we see the overlap that Luke makes between his Gospel and the Acts, so we will turn back to Luke xxiv. Here is recorded one of the appearances of our Lord to the eleven, and He eats in their presence. They give Him a piece of boiled fish and some honey (verse 42) and then in verse 44, He says to them, “These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you that all things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the psalms concerning Me” (the whole of the O.T. points forward to Christ). Now, He says, they all *must* be fulfilled. Will you specially note what verse 45 says: “Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the scriptures.” Now it may be true to say that up to this point they did not understand the Scriptures. The Lord had said on more than one occasion that

He was going to die by being crucified and the third day He would be raised again. He did not say it once, but several times to them. They did not understand; and understanding is of fundamental importance. We must be *given* understanding, otherwise we shall never comprehend the Bible and its purpose. If we desire this very much and go in humility to the Lord, He will give it us. The One who has made the plan, the One who has written the Book can explain it to us and, praise God, He has promised to do it. It is not primarily a question of braininess or education. It is a question of *enlightenment*, and the only One who can give us light on the Word is the Holy Spirit. He alone can open the eyes of our understanding. Do not let us be deceived on this point. No man or church can give it us. It is God's prerogative alone.

In this passage in the Gospel of Luke we are assured that the *disciples have divine understanding given them* so they are not likely to make mistakes.

Turning now to the book of the Acts, the first chapter, we are told the Lord "showed himself alive to them after His Passion" (verse 3) to the Apostles whom He had chosen 'by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God'. So here is the Lord instructing them from the Scriptures for quite a long time; it is over a month, forty days, on and off. What a favoured position they were in! They had been given understanding by Him and they heard Him expound His own Word. What wonderful Bible expositions those must have been! Now after forty days of such unique Bible teaching, what would you think would be the first thing they would ask Him? We realize what most people might think they *ought* to have said, but let us read what they actually *did* say. Verse 6 commences with "therefore", linking back to the forty days instruction, because of what they had heard in the Lord's exposition of the O.T. Scriptures. *Therefore* they ask Him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time *restore again the kingdom to Israel?*"

Now some say they should not have been asking that. They should have known that God had cast off Israel at the Cross and they ought to have been asking Him about the Church. But the folk who talk like this have evidently not got the divine understanding the apostles had! They think they are in a better position to know than these divinely instructed disciples!

This is nothing less than spiritual pride and there is no sin more likely to blind our minds. May the Lord keep us humble and emptied of human opinion, and may we make the Word of God alone the basis for our belief's at all times.

No.7. pp. 131 - 136

We saw in our last study that, after the resurrection, the Lord Jesus Christ expounded the O.T. Scriptures and we have the record in Luke xxiv. 45 “Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures”. He gave them divine understanding. And then, in the opening verses of the Acts of the Apostles, written by the same writer, Luke, He shows Himself for forty days and gives them further instruction from the Scriptures. He shows and speaks of things pertaining to the Kingdom of God and, because of that, which is the meaning of the word “therefore” of verse 6, they ask Him a question. As a result of all this teaching they say to Him “When will you restore this Kingdom?” So the Lord must have been talking about the Kingdom and its restoration, which naturally led to this question. He did not say that such a question was wrong, or that the restoration of the earthly Kingdom and its realization was impossible at that time. What He did say was, “It is not for you to know the *times* or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power”. There was a very good reason why the Lord could not tell them when it was going to take place. It was because God’s longsuffering was yet going to be lengthened out towards the people of Israel for something like 35 years; and they were going to be once more commanded, through the lips of Peter speaking for God, to repent and turn again. This was not an offer of the Kingdom, but a definite command to repent and turn again, with wonderful consequences, but we find them disobedient once more and they remain so right until the end of the book.

The next thing we find in this opening chapter of the Acts of the Apostles is that the eleven are concerned to make up their number to twelve because Judas the betrayer had fallen out. Christ had chosen twelve men and now there were only eleven. One may ask, is this important? The answer is “yes”, because the Lord Jesus had said: “When the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon *twelve* thrones judging the *twelve* tribes of Israel” (Matt. xix. 28). That is one reason at least why the Lord picked twelve apostles, because they were going to be the judges of the twelve tribes, but the falling out of Judas would have made the realization of this promise impossible. So it was important whether there were twelve apostles or not, and this is why, at the beginning of the Acts they are so concerned about it, so they ask the Lord for guidance so that the right one may be chosen.

There is another reason, too, which we must not pass by; there was the question of *witness*. The Lord had said to them that they should be witnesses unto Him, “eye-witnesses”, that is, they had to have *seen* the things that happened. Let us see this in Acts i. 21. Peter is saying to those assembled: “Wherefore of these men which have companied with us *all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John*”, that is, the beginning of the Lord’s public ministry, “unto that same day that He was taken up from us” (the Ascension), “must one be ordained to be a *witness* with us of His resurrection”. It must be someone who was with them at the start and went right through to the end and saw it for themselves, an ‘eye-witness’ in other

words. There are people who apparently think they know better than these early disciples who had the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit and the understanding given them by the Lord Jesus. They say “these made a big mistake, they should never have done this. If only they had waited just a little longer, Paul would have been the choice to fill the place of Judas”. But Paul could not have been the choice, because he never saw Christ in the flesh. He could not have been a witness ‘from the baptism of John until the time that He was taken up’. Paul was a witness for the ascended Christ, a most wonderful witness, but not of the earthly Christ, and His earthly ministry, for that is the point here. Let us see what the Lord Himself says. Turn to John xv. 27; He is speaking to these same men, “And ye also shall bear witness, *because you have been with Me from the beginning*”. In other words they had seen everything all the way through and were in a position to be true witnesses. So was Peter right or wrong when he said “beginning at the baptism of John until the time that He was taken up”? He was right and obviously along the lines of the Lord’s will. That rules out the Apostle Paul! So next time you hear anyone talking of the mistakes of the early disciples, just remind them of that, will you? They had received their instruction from the Lord; they had been given an ‘opened understanding’ by Him; they had the enduement of the Holy Spirit; and yet these critics of today, without such and living Divine qualifications, nearly 2,000 years after these events, have the temerity to say they were wrong!

Again, there are those who say that the disciples should not have used anything so carnal as the ‘lot’ to ascertain the will of the Lord. But we read in the Word that “the lot is cast into the lap but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord” (Prov. xvi. 33). That was the way God made known His will in O.T. days, and these were people who had only the O.T., mark you; the N.T. was not yet written. There was no indication that God had changed His command in this respect, so there are no grounds for complaining in that way. God made His will known by this method and the man He chose was Matthias.

But there is still another point while we are considering whether the eleven made mistakes or not. “When the day of Pentecost was fully come” (ii. 3), “there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire and it sat upon each of them and they were *all* filled with the Holy Ghost”, and Matthias was one of them! The cloven tongues sat upon *each of them*; Matthias was not excepted. He was filled with the Holy Ghost equally with the other apostles. Now did the Holy Spirit make a mistake? That is what the critic should face up to. In making this charge against the eleven, these critics actually include God Himself! There is surely no need to say any more. Where the error lies is obvious. Now on this great day of Pentecost we find Peter stands up and speaks publicly. Not the impetuous Peter now; not the one who was afraid of criticism and denied his Lord. Here is the restored Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost. He could speak now with all the authority of God behind him and he says in effect: “Do not think these men are undergoing this experience because they have been drinking too much wine—not so”, verse 16: “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel” and he quotes the second chapter of Joel. Now I wonder how many who seek to study Acts ii. and want to know what its real teaching is, ever go back to the prophecy of Joel and consider the passage that Peter quotes? Should we not honour the Word of God and do this? Let us therefore turn back to Joel ii. and we shall find that its setting is very much like the Acts

passage. The disciples had been asking about restoration: “Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” and in the prophecy of Joel their ancestors come under judgment in chapter i.; then there is the wonderful reversal for them in chapter ii. God says in verse 25: “I will RESTORE to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm”, descriptive of a plague of locusts, “My great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and My people”, that is the people of Israel, of course, “shall never be ashamed”. They at last come into their own. Note the “never”; they are not going to respond now and then fall away again at some later date. “They shall never be ashamed”; they shall be completely restored. “And you shall know” (verse 27), “that I am in the midst of Israel”. God is there in their midst, He is with them; “I am Jehovah your God and none else”. The Lord repeats once again “My people shall never be ashamed”. Obviously, if we look at the Jewish race, this has not yet taken place. Israel has not been in a position where they never will be ashamed. This will not be experienced until there is a direct relationship with them and God and when God says “I am in the midst of her”. This nation will then be once more in the centre of His purpose for the earth. But it is in this setting of *restoration* we get this reference to Pentecost (which Peter quotes under the guidance of the Spirit) “And it shall come to pass afterwards” (verse 28), “that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit”.

And not only that, there are going to be physical signs in the earth and heaven (verse 30), “And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great terrible day of the Lord”. The whole passage is quoted by Peter. So unless we get the conception that Pentecost has to do with the *restoration of Israel*, we have lost the key! And this is a fact we must constantly keep in mind.

Not only that, but Pentecost itself is one of the feasts of Jehovah, not merely a feast of the Jews. In Lev. xxiii., God Himself institutes this feast, among others; and in the feasts of Jehovah that are recorded in that chapter there is a wonderful sketch, drawn by God, of His purpose for the earth. It starts off with the Sabbath, because that is where God starts, in His purpose, with perfection and rest. That is also where He is going to finish, with the Sabbath age, when everything is brought back to perfection—rest again. “There is a Sabbath-keeping for the people of God” (Heb. iv. 9)—the reality. Man cannot start here in experience; you and I have to commence in experience with the next feast, which is Passover. “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us”; so wrote Apostle Paul centuries later (I Cor. v. 7). We know that has been fulfilled at Calvary, where the Lord Jesus Christ died in the stead of His sinful people—“Christ our Passover”. Unleavened bread follows, directly connected with Passover and not to be separated from it, and this pictures the Christ-like life which should follow. The Apostle Paul describes it as ‘purging out the old leaven’, that is discarding the old sinful life and its ways. After Unleavened bread, comes Firstfruits, and the N.T. tells us that this typifies the

resurrection of Christ (I Cor. xv. 20, 32). “Christ the firstfruits, afterwards they that are Christ’s at His coming.”

Then there comes a gap of forty-nine days and after this, Pentecost. Now Pentecost is just the Greek word for fifty. Fifty days are numbered from Passover to Pentecost. Again you will notice it is linked with *firstfruits* (Lev. xxiii. 17): “Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals.” God was dealing with Israel and Judah. “They shall be baken *with* leaven”, for these were certainly not sinless like the Saviour and leaven is always a type of sin in the Bible. Now note: “they are the *firstfruits* unto the Lord” (xxiii. 17), and this gives us another clue as to the true purpose of Pentecost in the N.T. It was the gathering out of a “firstfruits”, a *firstfruits of this great earthly kingdom*. Had the whole nation of Israel repented and turned back to God under Peter’s ministry, a harvest would have followed! The Kingdom could have been realized *then*. Those who were saved on the day of Pentecost were a firstfruits, an earnest of the kingdom that could have come at that time had the whole nation responded. But, alas, they were not ready. What a commentary on their hardness of heart and their disobedience!

Going further, we read Acts ii. 5 “And there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven”; they were called the Jews of the Dispersion. They lived outside the boundaries of the promised Land. These faithful Jews came up to Jerusalem to keep the feasts. They came up to keep *this* feast, the feast of Pentecost, and no Gentile, even if he had wanted to, would ever have been allowed there. The reader probably knows that no Gentile was ever permitted inside the Temple, under pain of death! There was the Court of the Gentiles outside and beyond that they could not go. There was therefore no Gentile at the feast of Pentecost; the people of Israel only are at this feast. It was not until the Ethiopian eunuch and the response of Cornelius that we find the purpose widening and the Gentile comes into blessing. And even then that was obviously out of the reckoning of the Apostle Peter, and certainly out of the reckoning of the early church.

Let us turn on to chapter x. Peter here gives an explanation as to why he went to Cornelius and, remember, he had to have a very special vision to go there. He had to have a very definite “thus saith the Lord” to disobey the command of Leviticus concerning eating and having direct contact with the outside Gentile world. But God now showed him that His plan was widening. He had said to Abraham “In thy seed shall *all* families of the earth be blessed”. God never intended that the Jew should be first *and last*; that he should be the first, to be the channel, yes, but not the last. We have the explanation in the N.T. as to why He did it; it was to provoke this nation to jealousy, to wake them up spiritually (Rom. x. 19; xi. 11).

So after Peter had gone to Cornelius, and he had responded, we read—(verse 45): “They of the circumcision which believed *were astonished*, as many as came with Peter”. What made them astonished? “Because that on *the Gentiles* was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.” This was something new; showing that it did not happen to any Gentile on the Day of Pentecost. And not only that, but Peter had to go to the mother

church at Jerusalem and go over the whole matter again and then *they were astonished and upset too!* “And when the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that *the Gentiles* had also received the word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, *they that were of the circumcision contended with him*, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised”—(i.e. Gentiles)—“and did eat with them” (xi. 2, 3). God had willed in the past that they were to be separated from the Gentile nations around. And so Peter had to go over it all again to explain to them why, at this point, the Gentile had been brought into blessing and the sharing of Israel’s spiritual things (Rom. xv. 27).

This assembly most evidently knew nothing of the Church, the Body of Christ, where the Jew ceases to be a person with covenant privilege with God, and the Gentile an equal sharer of spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. iii. 6; i. 3).

No.8. pp. 152 - 156

We have seen that the opening chapters of the Acts of the Apostles continue the earthly Kingdom purpose of God. The eleven disciples are instructed for 40 days by the Lord Himself from the O.T. Scriptures, and this leads them to be concerned with the restoration of Israel. Then Pentecost follows with the Divine explanation taken from Joel’s prophecy, which likewise is connected with the same restoration. We noted that there could not have been any Gentile present or saved on the day of Pentecost, and that Peter had to receive a special vision from the Lord to go to the Gentiles at all. Not only this, but the mother church at Jerusalem knew nothing of *Gentile* salvation and Peter had to give an account to them of his action in so doing. In other words, these early believers knew nothing of a redeemed company where neither Jew or Gentile existed and all were one in Christ both doctrinally and dispensationally, and this in spite of the opened understanding that the Lord had given them and the filling of the Holy Spirit they had received.

Now we must pause and consider the Scriptural usage of the word ‘church’, because, if we get wrong ideas here, we shall not be in a position to understand the fullness of God’s great plan revealed in the N.T. This word is used in various ways. It can mean a place of worship; it can also mean a denomination or a sect. It can mean professing Christendom as a whole (and this is the way it is usually used in Christian circles); or, Scripturally, it can designate a called-out company of the redeemed, quite irrespective of what earthly label they may have. Now the N.T. never uses this word in those first three ways. There were no buildings called churches in N.T. days. Believers met together in the home, and that is why the home and its conditions was so important; it was the meeting place for the local church. There were no ecclesiastical meeting places in the early Christian centuries. Either it meant a local assembly of believers, or a group of believers designated as the church of God or the Body of Christ. We must thus be careful that we are getting a Scriptural idea of this word.

The word 'church', although it occurs often in the N.T., really has its roots in the O.T. and occurs frequently there, though not in our English translation. Over and over again we have the word 'congregation' in the O.T.; "the congregation of the people of Israel" are words of quite frequent occurrence. Now in the Greek Bible (and, after all, that was the Bible which was current in the Lord's day; it was the O.T. translated into Greek, for Greek-speaking Jews, which the Lord and the Apostles used) this word 'congregation' is the word 'church', and it occurs at least 70 times. So when you read in our English Bible "the congregation of the people of Israel", the Greek version reads 'the church of the people of Israel'. The nation of Israel, in the Scriptural sense, was a *church*; and this is how it is first used in the Bible, and not in the sense of the Gentile church of the N.T.

So we can quite understand why Stephen, in his speech recorded in Acts vii. refers to the nation of the Israel as 'the *church* in the wilderness'.

The Greek word *ekklesia*, Church, means a called-out company of people, and that is just what Israel was, a nation separate from all others.

God has, therefore, an *earthly* church, that is His earthly people—the people of Israel.

God also has a *heavenly* church, the Body of Christ, whose calling, status, and destiny have no lasting link with the earth. It is entirely heavenly in character and destiny. So it is Scripturally true to say that there is more than one church in the Bible. There is of course only *one Body of Christ*, but that is another matter.

In the period covered by the Acts, we have a saved Jewish remnant to which later on, Gentile believers were added. God was, in effect, reaching out to the Gentile in advance of His plan revealed in the O.T., where Israel was to be the channel of blessing to all families of the earth. The N.T. has told us why. Rom. x. 19, xi. 11, 14 teaches that these Gentiles were saved to *provoke Israel to jealousy*, to stir up this nation that was dying spiritually and becoming so hardened in their heart, and so rebellious still against the Lord and His offer of mercy and grace. When they saw the blessings being received by Gentiles whom they despised, they would possibly be stirred up, and provoked to emulation and salvation. This is the reason that the N.T. gives as to why *Gentiles* were being saved in the Acts period, very different from the usual teaching that they were being redeemed to form part of the Church which is Christ's Body.

We will now consider the third chapter of the Acts. This chapter is exceedingly important, the appreciation of which is one of the keys to the understanding of the N.T. First of all we notice that Peter heals a cripple. "And certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple" (Acts iii. 2). This is just a picture of what God was waiting to do for the nation of Israel, crippled with their unbelief. They had just committed the climax sin, of sending their great Priest-King to the Cross. After centuries of preparation and instruction by God, what was the result? They would rather have a murderer than their Saviour and King! They would rather have Barabbas than Christ! And in spite of this God was waiting to heal them! They were

lame and impotent, like the cripple, and utterly useless to be that great channel of blessing to the world. So Peter demonstrates before their eyes what God is willing to do for them if they would only repent and turn back to Him, and he brings the message home to them in verses 19-26, “Repent ye, therefore, and be converted”. The word ‘repent’ just means a change of attitude, a change of mind; not to be confused with the similar sounding word ‘penitence’. It may include that, (that is sorrow for sin) but its primary meaning is *a change of mind*. It was the clarion call of John the Baptist to this people—“Repent”. It was the call of the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh, to them likewise: “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (has drawn near). Now Peter, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, gives them this same command—“Repent ye, therefore”—change your attitude of mind. It is important that we should realize that this is a *command* of God to Israel. God is not so much *offering* them anything as *commanding* them to repent and to turn.

In the O.T. this was a key-word in God’s dealings with them. When they left the Lord and slipped back into idolatry and sin, as they did very often, this was the call of the prophets: “Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you” (Zech. i. 3). Not only Zechariah, but you will find the same command in Nehemiah, and also in the Books of Deuteronomy and Chronicles, the word ‘convert’ which Peter uses is the very word used in the Greek Bible in each of these cases. So God is saying just the same words through Peter’s lips that the O.T. prophets had brought to this people, and the result of their repentance would be, that their sins would be blotted out. This means nothing less than redemption, the blotting-out of sin. God cannot use this people until they are redeemed. He was prepared to do this for them if they obeyed His command, and the result would be that “the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And He shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached unto you” or, as the R.V. puts it “hath been appointed for you” (Acts iii. 19, 20). The Lord Jesus was appointed in the days of His flesh for the people of Israel. He said so, “I am only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”. And He would only allow the twelve, in the conditions that He gave them, to go to the people of Israel and not to the Gentile world. He was certainly appointed for this earthly people, and here is a tremendous promise, that if they will turn and repent, *Jesus Christ will be sent back to them*. This is nothing less than the promise of His Second Coming! Yet how few seem to see this. We must get this quite clear in our minds because without it we shall never properly understand the N.T., especially the Epistles which were written during the time covered by the Acts. As we look at these Epistles, we shall find that all of them, practically without exception, stress the Lord’s Second Advent as being imminent or near. The modern critic, not understanding this passage (Acts iii. 19-26) says that the early apostles, although they looked for the Lord’s return, were over-zealous; they made a mistake and later give it up. Is this the truth? No indeed! The Second Advent was a possibility *at this time*, depending upon the response of Israel. If anyone objects to this, we would remind them that God is not dealing with automatons, but moral beings with the power of obeying and disobeying, and He is willing to make allowance for this in His purpose. Think of how this worked out in Jonah’s day. Within 40 days Nineveh was to be overthrown according to God’s warning, but this did not happen for at least a century! Why? Because of the *repentance* of the Ninevites!

So here, momentous events hung upon the response of this key people and we only blind ourselves if we ignore this. Coming to verse 21 we read, “Whom the heaven must receive until the times of *restitution* of all things”, but if you read the R.V.—“*restoration*”. Here again is this important word “restore”. Now restoration is not the commencement of something new; it is the bringing-in of *something old, to bring it back again*. So this is what we find Peter emphasizing to his own nation “the *restoration of all things* which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His Holy prophets since the world began”. This is the testimony, Peter said, of all the O.T. Prophets. So we miss much of the meaning of the O.T. prophecies unless we get this clearly. He quotes Moses: “Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed”. Thus he gives a very solemn warning to this nation, that if they would not be obedient, there will be destruction. “Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.” They are prophetic of this very time. “Ye”, he says, “are the children (the sons) of the prophets”, and now we are going back to Gen. xii. again, “and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in they seed shall all the kindreds (families) of the earth be blessed”. So God has not forgotten His plan which He announced to Abraham—it is still in the fore front at this point! And it is still possible of being carried out if Israel will heed this divine command to repent and turn back to God. “Unto you first”, continues Peter (if they are the appointed channel they must have the message first), “Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities (or sins)”. God was waiting to save them. So you see that this was very crucial indeed. We shall have to come back to this chapter from time to time.

In our next study, we must look at the epistles that were written during the Acts period and see whether the Lord’s coming was indeed imminent, and when we have done this we shall realize that their combined testimony is overwhelming.

The complication and slowness of working of God’s great purposes are because of the devil and the powers of darkness antagonizing the purpose of God, and also because of the sin and frailty of the human instruments that God graciously uses. We have no stones to throw at the people of Israel. Of ourselves, all of us are sinful and failing, and if God demanded perfection for service He would not use anyone. The fact that He does only shows His great longsuffering and patience. We trust that, all who have followed so far, will realize their great need, and if they have not already done so, take this great and necessary first step in receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as their own personal Saviour and Sinbearer so that, with all sins forgiven and God’s righteousness reckoned theirs, they may have a glorious place in the perfect creation and kingdom to which God is slowly but surely working.

No.9. pp. 172 - 175

We have seen that there was the possibility of the Lord's early return to the earth, depending upon the repentance of Israel (Acts iii. 19-26). We wish now to show that this is reflected in all the earlier epistles. Let us open the Book at I Thess. i. Here the Apostle Paul is commending the believers at Thessalonica; he says in verse 9: "For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to *wait for His Son from heaven.*" They could wait for an event that is yet future even to us today, nearly 2,000 years later. It must have been a possibility *then*. In the fourth chapter we are told that some had lost loved ones and the Apostle wrote to comfort them: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will *God bring with Him.*" So the Lord is coming back! Yes! "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord" So even he was expecting, at this time that there was a possibility of his being alive, *and* the Thessalonian believers at the Lord's Coming, "shall not prevent (shall not get before) them which are asleep".

II Thess. i. 7: Some were going through persecution and tremendous difficulty and this was also written to comfort and sustain them. "And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels." The second advent of Christ with the angels from heaven was something which these persecuted saints were directed to hold fast to, because, when that happened, they would experience rest from persecution. So the Lord's Coming was a possibility then, in their lifetime, otherwise it would not have been a comfort to them under trial. Chapter ii. 1: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by (or concerning or touching) the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." Their 'gathering together unto Him' is connected with His coming.

In I Cor. i. 7 the Apostle here refers to the spiritual gifts that had been given to the Corinthian church, "So that ye come behind in no gift; *waiting for the coming* (or the revelation) *of our Lord Jesus Christ*". Now on to chapter vii. Certain problems had arisen concerning marriage, but note what the Apostle says in verse 29: "But this I say, brethren, *the time is short*: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none." He is saying, in effect, the time is so short that marriage need not be considered. And yet we find that, after the Acts period, the Apostle Paul urges the widows to marry! But at *this time*, the time was short because the Lord's return was near, and I Cor. xvi. 22 emphasizes this: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema. Maran-atha." These are two Aramaic words: "Let him be accursed", Maran-atha = "The Lord cometh". So here again the Apostle stresses the early return of the Lord Jesus.

Let us go back to Rom. xiii. 11, 12: "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for *now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.* *The*

night is far spent, the day is at hand". And in xvi. 20 he writes this: "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet *shortly*." The Greek word is 'quickly'. Now the bruising of Satan under the redeemed's feet could not be by any action of theirs. Neither they, nor you or I, can ever vanquish this great foe of the Lord, but the Lord Jesus will, at His Second Advent. So again this great event was brought before them as being nearer.

Now let us turn to Heb. x. 36. These Hebrew believers were undergoing trial and affliction, as the context makes clear. And then in verse 36 we read, "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a *little while*, and He that shall come, will *come and will not tarry*", only a little while. Friends, He hasn't come yet! Was God playing with them, was He tantalizing them through this writer? No—He meant what He said. The possibility was that the Lord would return in 'a little while'; His coming then was near. It would have been pointless to have held out as an encouragement to these believers under persecution the Second Advent, yet future to us, nearly 2,000 years later!

We turn now to the next epistles, James v. 8: "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts, for *the coming of the Lord draws near*." Again the nearness of this Coming! "Grudge not one another brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the *Judge standeth at the door*." Next to I Pet. iv. 7: "But the *end of all things is at hand*" (the end of everything is near). "Be ye, therefore, sober, and watch unto prayers." Was he exaggerating, do you think?

Turning now to I John ii. 18: "Little children, *it is the last time*"; but the Greek says "It is the *last hour*". "And as you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now (the time when John wrote) there are many antichrists, whereby *we know it is the last hour*." So John adds a similar testimony to the other N.T. writers.

Let us go back to the first epistle to the Corinthians and this time to the tenth chapter. The first part is a warning dealing with the people of Israel and the way they provoked the Lord in the wilderness journey to Canaan and how God judged them. The Corinthians are warned not to murmur as their fathers did (verse 10): "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them for ensamples (or types); and they are written for our admonition, *upon whom the ends of the world are come*". But a more literal rendering would be "the consummation of the ages has arrived", an astounding statement, showing how near to the end things were. Do we want any more testimony that all these N.T. writers looked on the coming of the Lord as being imminent, or possible, in their lifetime? There can be no doubt about this whatsoever—or were they mistaken? Some do not hesitate to say they were. They assert that the early church *did* believe that the Second Advent was near but, of course, they were too enthusiastic, and, of course, they were wrong, for the Lord did *not* come as expected. But they were *not* wrong if only such people would read and ponder Acts iii., they would have the key to the problem. The Lord's early Coming was linked with the repentance and conversion of Israel (Acts iii. 19, 20). Because the nation of Israel did *not* obey the command to repent and turn, the Lord did not come back then. We shall find that the Epistles which are written

after Acts no longer refer to the imminent return of the Lord because the necessary conditions were gone. The nation of Israel was laid aside in unbelief; that is how they have been for nearly 2,000 years, and that aspect of the Lord's Coming and of God's kingdom upon earth, of which they were to be the channel and the centre, has been postponed because they were blind, deaf and hardened in heart and so completely unusable.

Let us go on, to the fourth chapter of the Acts and read together verse 32: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common"—all things shared. This is true communism. Communism is sharing; but what we know as communism today is Satan's travesty of the real thing; it is sharing, *with the Lord Jesus Christ left out*. The sharing of Acts iv. 32 is with the Lord Jesus Christ in the centre, and it makes *all* the difference in the world. The Lord Jesus was the Redeemer, the Saviour, the Centre of this group of His people and as far as earthly possessions went, they shared, they had all things in common. This is called "the Apostles' doctrine" which we will look at more closely later on.

As we read chapter v., we find there were two believers, Ananias and Sapphira, who did not conform to this. They had a possession which they sold, and then kept back part of the price, and they told a lie about it. One may think that this was not a very bad sin, but it was a serious thing, because *this lie cost them their lives*. Peter said to them (verse 3) "Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price?" And at the end of verse 4 Peter speaks of lying to God: "You have not lied unto men but unto God." Again, one may find this difficult to understand. Christians, alas, may tell lies, but God does not judge them in this way for sin amongst His children for telling lies? It would indeed be a terrible thing, and someone has said that the undertakers would not be able to cope with the problem. That might be true. But here, in the Acts of the Apostles, God is still dealing directly and judging for sin. The age of grace, as we know it, had not yet started. When God brings in this earthly kingdom sin will not be allowed to spread like a festering sore. God will deal with it directly every day "Morning by morning will I uproot all the lawless ones of the land, that I may cut off out of the city of Yahweh, all the workers of iniquity" (Psa. ci. 8, Rotherham).

Let us be thankful that today we live in an age of abounding grace and longsuffering of God. *Grace reigns* (Rom. v. 21) and if we are found "in Christ", then we cannot come into condemnation (Rom. viii. 1). We trust this is the happy experience of all who read these lines.

No.10. pp. 196 - 200

In our last study of the Acts of the Apostles we went through all the epistles written during this time, and found that every single one without exception stressed the near coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. God was not mocking His people when He promised this; He meant it. The Second Advent could have taken place during the Acts period, but it did not do so. Not because God was unwilling but because Israel were not obedient; they did not repent or turn back to Him. At the point we have reached (chapters iv. & v.) they are still being tested. What was the first reaction then, of this people, the leaders especially, to this wonderful promise? They just kicked all the harder against God; they imprisoned the apostles thus attempting to muzzle them and their message of salvation and restoration. And then God delivers His servants from prison and they stand before the leaders again. There is an important passage to which we must now refer in the fifth chapter. "Peter answered them, we ought to obey God rather than men" (verse 29). This is the fearless Peter, not the vacillating man who, before the crucifixion, denied his Lord. Now he stands, enabled by the grace of God and by the enduement of the Holy Spirit, and he says quite frankly to the leaders of Israel, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted at His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour", for there can be no ruling as a prince or king without the question of sin being dealt with by redemption. Now note: "for (in order) *to give repentance to Israel*; and forgiveness of sins." God was prepared to forgive Israel's sins and to give them repentance and so fulfil His promise of restoration and the return of Christ to them.

It is difficult to overstress the importance of the resurrection of Christ because this is the great foundation stone of Christianity. The Apostle Paul makes that clear in his first letter to the Corinthian church. "If Christ be not risen" he said "your faith is vain Ye are yet in your sins" (I Cor. xv. 14-17). And when he writes later to the Romans he deals with One who "was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification" (Rom. iv. 25). We wonder if all who are reading this have entered into the joy of this glorious fact? We have now a living Christ, One who ever lives to make intercession, to aid, to assist all His redeemed people. But in Acts v. we have an aspect of the resurrection of Christ which is little stressed or understood today. When did we last hear any Christian speaker or writer point out that Christ's resurrection was "to give repentance *to Israel*"? So concerned are evangelicals with the idea that the Body of Christ commenced at Pentecost and Israel were rejected at the Cross, that Israel's repentance at this point and its consequences means nothing to them. A change of heart for the nation of Israel was still a possibility. We must keep that well in our minds, otherwise how can we understand God's great plan revealed in the N.T.? How can we get an accurate knowledge of God's will for us today? Later on we are going to see that the Apostle Paul is going to say something similar. He is going to confirm that the people of Israel are still there, an important factor in this great plan concerning world blessing, with Gen. xii. in mind, the promise to Abraham that 'in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed'. We shall see that he constantly ministers "*to the Jew first*".

Now going on in fairly large steps, we come to the witness of Stephen. He was well-named, because his name means “a crown”—*Stephanos*. He was the first martyr in the N.T. who gave his life for the truth. His speech was part of God’s witness to the leaders of the people of Israel, and how they hated it! It might have been used to their repentance. Doubtless many believers prayed that would happen, but the leaders became all the harder in their opposition, and it ended with Stephen giving his life for his Saviour. And yet, how wonderfully God works! That offering-up of life was not in vain, for surely it was *one* of the factors, at least, in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. He stood there; he held the clothes of the people who were battering out the life of that saint of God; he saw that face “like the face of an angel” (Acts vi. 15). What a testimony, for a man to die like that! It must have been something that Saul never forgot. How could a man go through all that, give such testimony and look so radiant? It was one of the things, evidently, that Saul of Tarsus tried to stifle, but in the end, of course, it contributed to *his* conversion, *his* right about turn to the Lord, on the road to Damascus.

Passing over now to chapters x. and xi., we come to the conversion of the Gentile Cornelius. We note the reluctance of the Apostle Peter to go to a Gentile; and we must not put that down to the fact that Peter was a bigoted Jew. No! he was a faithful man, and was only doing what God’s regulation in the O.T. enjoined as regards his relationship to the Gentile world. That was the only light that existed up to that point, but now God begins to show him that His purpose is widening and that the blessing is going out to the Gentile. That was abnormal, because God’s plan was that His truth should go out to the Gentile *through the redeemed nation of Israel*, and they were anything but saved at this point—opposing, rejecting, blinding their eyes, deafening their ears and hardening their hearts. But here God, as it were, acts before the time, and saves a remnant of Gentiles; and the N.T. gives us the reason. It was, humanly speaking, to stir Israel up and to “provoke them to jealousy” (Rom. x. 19; xi. 11). This should have roused them to realize their great privileges were fast slipping from them through their blindness and hardness of heart. Peter had to have a special revelation from God to go to a Gentile outsider and then he obeys. The next thing to notice is the astonishment of the Jewish believers when they saw a Gentile receiving blessing, which shows us quite clearly that with the exception of the Ethiopian eunuch, there had been no Gentile saved up to this time, otherwise they would not have been astonished if this had been a regular occurrence. Chapter x. 44: “While Peter spake these words the Holy Ghost fell on all them who heard the word, and they of the circumcision which believed *were astonished* as many as came with Peter *because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.*”

And that was not the end for Peter, because he had to go to the mother church at Jerusalem and go over the whole matter again and explain how it was that he had dared to go and minister to one outside the fold of Israel, an uncircumcised Gentile! Now is it not obvious that these early Christians knew nothing about a church where there is no Jew or Greek? They cannot have known anything about the Body of Christ, for that was a secret still hid in God till revealed to the Apostle Paul and made known through his later prison ministry (Eph. iii. 1-11; Col. i. 24-27). And so Peter goes over and rehearses the whole

matter again from the beginning (chapter xi. 4) and explains how God had made this new Gentile ministry clear to him.

Now we come on to chapter xii. where is recorded the miraculous deliverance of Peter from prison. This particular type of miracle goes right through this book. If it is ever our lot to be thrown into prison for our faith, and no-one can say that will *never* happen to us, can we expect an angel to come and open the door and let us out? Hardly! Which only shows that some of the conditions of the Acts period are not true today. The local church had been praying for Peter's release, but they forgot to watch for the answer! Fancy praying to God for the release of their leader, and when God answered the prayer they were astonished; they would not believe it when at last he knocked at the door! But then you and I have no stones to throw, because doubtless that has been true of *us* as well. We have prayed but have not watched, and when the answer came we have been surprised. May God keep us, not only praying along the lines of His will, but watching as well. The Lord has enjoined us to "*watch and pray*".

Now you will notice at the end of chapter xii., the record of what happened to Herod sitting upon his throne; and it makes one wonder why this is inserted. "And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout saying, It is the voice of a god (or, it is the voice of God) and not of a man. And immediately an angel of the Lord smote him, and he gave up the ghost" (xii. 21-23). So here is another direct judgment, like we have seen occurred to Ananias and Sapphira. God is still judging directly for sin in the Acts. But there is another reason for this insertion about Herod taking divine honours. If we know the Word of God we shall remember that the Apostle Paul told the Thessalonian believers there would arise someone called 'the man of sin' who would sit in the temple of God, showing himself and *claiming that he is God* (II Thess. ii. 3, 4). And so the stage, as it were, was already being set for this to happen and had the people of Israel repented, the wonderful prophecies of the Book of the Revelation concerning the end time could have run their course. A time that could produce a Herod, who could take divine honours; a time that could produce a monster like Nero, could certainly produce those represented by the wild beasts of the Book of the Revelation (chapter xiii.). And while Herod and Nero did not fulfil the prophecy, there it was, all shadowed forth at the time, only waiting for Israel to repent and turn to God and His prophetic Word would have been fulfilled to the letter. That is why Peter did not hesitate in Acts ii. to link Pentecost with the great time of judgment at the end, the Day of the Lord (Acts ii. 19-21).

We come now to the second section of the Acts of the Apostles which deals with the commission and ministry of the Apostle Paul. Chapter xiii. records his first public speech at Antioch. First we have Saul and Barnabas being separated by the Holy Spirit for service (verse 2 and onwards) and then comes the record of Paul commencing his ministry with a miracle, just as Peter did, but with a difference! Peter heals a Jew; Paul does the opposite and blinds a Jew. "And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew" (xiii. 6). In the Acts we have pictorially two sides of God's truth for Israel. He was willing to heal them if they repented and forgive their sins, and send Christ back to them. But if they were

disobedient still and would not repent, there was nothing but spiritual blindness for them. You will notice that this type is true to the letter; they are not blinded for ever. Verse 11: “And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun *for a season*”. “Blindness in part is happened to Israel *until*” Is not that what the Apostle Paul wrote later on in the Epistle to the Romans (xi. 25-29)? This blindness upon this nation is a terrible reality, but it is not going to last for ever. So Israel has the two sides: blessing and warning of judgment rehearsed in front of them in miracle form.

Next the Apostle goes back over their history very much like Stephen did, and later on he deals with the resurrection. In verse 33 we read, “God hath fulfilled the same”, the promise of the resurrection of Christ, “in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee”. Now we have already seen that the Lord was raised to give repentance to Israel. The Apostle goes on to say (verse 34), “And as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give you *the sure mercies of David*”. What is the meaning of the “sure mercies of David”? Would this have any meaning to the pagan world? No, because it did not concern them. The “sure mercies of David” are referring to the covenant mercies that God made with David. The covenant that God made with Abraham and the one that He made with David are two more important factors in the out-working of His redemptive plan for the world through the people of Israel. We want to get a clear understanding of this. Let us go back for a moment to the prophecy of Isa. lv. 3: “Incline your ear and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you (Israel) even the sure mercies of David.”

Now, God willing, in our next study, we will consider what were these covenant mercies that were promised to David and his seed, the people of Israel. We have had the resurrection of Christ to give Israel repentance, and now the same mighty event is brought before us in chapter xiii. to fulfil God’s covenant mercies to the same people. Again we say, here are two extremely important aspects of the resurrection of Christ which are largely ignored by evangelical Christendom today.

May the Lord give us that continued interest and understanding of the *whole* of His revelation, so that we may realize just what *our* place is in the great purpose of the ages which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. iii. 11).

No.11. pp. 207 - 211

In our last study, we came to Paul's first public speech in chapter xiii. of the Acts and there we found he brought forward the truth of the resurrection in a special way, as Peter had done, *bearing upon the people of Israel* and not upon the world generally. He says (xiii. 32), "We declare unto you glad tidings how that the promise which was made unto the fathers". The promise that God made to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, was it real—did God mean it? Yes, Paul said, He *did* mean it and He has fulfilled it by raising Christ from the dead. "He hath fulfilled the same unto us their children in that He hath raised up Jesus again", and he quotes the second Psalm to prove that: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead. "Now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you *the sure mercies of David.*" So here is the resurrection of Christ with the purpose of giving these 'sure mercies of David' to the people of Israel. What does that mean? It was a quotation, first of all, from Isa. cv. 3, but to understand it properly we must look back at Psa. lxxxix. This is the psalm of God's faithfulness, seven times mentioned. Verse 3: "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant", concerning his posterity (his seed) and his throne—he was a king—"to all generations" (verse 4). Now these are the sure mercies of David, concerning his seed, the people of Israel, and his throne. The promises that God makes are so definite and so clear, that surely, nobody should fail to understand them! Let us come to the middle of the psalm, verse 29: "He seed also will I make to endure for ever and his throne as the days of heaven." So here is a promise that God will not allow the seed of David ever to become annihilated, nor will He allow his throne to perish, although the psalmist warns this people that if they do not walk in God's ways there will be Divine chastisement (verse 31): "If they break My statutes and keep not My commandments, then will I visit their transgression with the rod."

But in contrast He says (verse 33) "Nevertheless (although I have to chasten), my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him nor suffer (nor allow) my *faithfulness* to fail". He is the God of faithfulness, the God of truth. Again in verse 34: "My covenant will I not break, nor alter *the thing that is gone out of my lips.*" In view of this we cannot accept any scheme of Biblical interpretation that makes God change His plan for world blessing and reject the people of Israel. God has said He will not alter it, so there must be a future for this people, sinful though they may be. "Once (verse 35) have I sworn by my holiness that I will not *lie* unto David." Look what language God is using! He has put the onus on Himself—"I have sworn. I have promised", and this cannot fail, no matter what Israel does. Verse 30: "His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon and as the faithful witness in heaven." These precious and definite promises are 'the sure mercies of David'. Now, the Apostle Paul says, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ has made them possible for Israel. He was raised so that He might take His place as the true descendants of David and sit on David's throne.

Now let us note what is said in connection with the Lord's birth and see how it all fits in with this great plan. In Luke i. 31 we have the record of the angel speaking to the Virgin Mary before His birth. "And, behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and *the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David.* And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." This is "the sure mercies of David". He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever! Now the house of Jacob is not a title for the Church which is His Body. This Church has no connection with the man Jacob, or his posterity. Surely it ought not to be necessary to stress that! Jacob is the name given to his descendants, the people of Israel. here then we have David's throne, the Lord fulfilling that promise, the One alone who could reign over the house of Israel.

Let us go back to the record of Matt. ii. 1. Wise men came from the east asking this question: "Where is he that is born *King of the Jews?*" the One that was to be born to sit on David's throne. And the leaders told him that He was to be born at Bethlehem, because Micah had prophesied this centuries before. Verse 5: "And they said to him, In Bethlehem of Judaea for thus it is written by (or through) the prophet, And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda art not the least among the princes of Juda, for out of thee shall come a Governor *that shall rule my people Israel*". He came to be Israel's King, their Priest-King after the order of Melchisedec: He was the only One Who could combine those two things, both absolutely essential for the bringing-in of this kingdom, because the question of Israel's sin had to be dealt with before this was possible. That is the word of the Priest, and the Offering, and once this had been accomplished, then the glorious reign could have been realized and the promise of sitting on David's throne fulfilled. Christ is the King of Israel; He is the King who is going to rule over the house of Jacob.

There is one other Scripture to note before we go any further. Let us turn to the first chapter of John and read of Nathaniel's confession to the Lord Jesus Christ. "Nathaniel answered and said unto Him (to Christ), Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art *the King of Israel*" (i. 49). That is true; He is not the King of the Church—He is Israel's King. This was the title that was put over the Cross in mockery, but it was true. He *is* the King of the Jews.

Coming back to the Acts: Peter stresses the Lord's relation as King to the people of Israel and in chapter xiii. Paul does the same thing, showing that they are still right in the centre of God's purpose. His plan has not changed. It is still possible for them to repent, still possible for their sin to be blotted out; still possible for the Lord to use them to take the knowledge of His truth and gospel to the ends of the earth. Still it is possible for that kingdom to come in, and then Christ would reign over the house of Jacob, as foretold at His birth.

Before he finishes his speech at Antioch, the Apostle Paul gives the Jews serious warning: "Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets", and he quoted from Hab. i. 5: "Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and

perish.” The possibility of perishing lay ahead of them for refusing to believe the gospel instead of realizing the sure mercies of David. What was the result; did they heed that warning? Look at verse 45: ‘But when the Jews saw the multitudes they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.’ How often this was Israel’s attitude, opposing God instead of thankfully accepting the role He had planned for them! It didn’t seem to have the slightest effect upon this people. What a dreadful state they must have been in! And yet God’s longsuffering waits. What a marvelous thing this is! “Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, it was *necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you*” (verse 46). Why? Why must they have the message first? Because the divine plan is still possible at this point for the Jew to be the centre of blessing to the whole earth if only they will repent and believe the gospel. “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” If that is so, they must have the message first; they must be right with God first if the world is going to get the blessing through them and God is going to work that way. Now that is what Peter said in chapter iii. “Unto you first”, he said to the people of Israel. So both Peter and Paul, in their public ministry, show that the Jew has not been cast aside by God but that they are still in the centre of this plan. They must have the message first, and God is graciously waiting upon their response. Paul goes on to tell the Jew, “But seeing ye have put it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles”. Some have thought that this is the point where Israel is rejected. But this cannot be true, because we shall find that every new place Paul goes to, the first thing he does is to go to the Jewish synagogue. So it was only a *local* turning away at Antioch. Note chapter xiv. 1: “And it came to pass in Iconium that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews”, so back he is again with them although he had said “lo, we turn to the Gentiles”. Again we see the opposition of this people: ‘But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas and expelled them out of their coasts.’ The warning was unheeded. The nation still persisted in their fanatical opposition and blindness.

We come now to chapter xiv. and will take bigger steps and just get the drift of God’s revealed purpose in this book. In doing so we may have to pass over much that is interesting. We now have another miracle of healing. Peter had healed a crippled Jew and now Paul heals one. Israel were a people of type and symbol. In the O.T., their prophets sometimes had to ‘act out’ the truth in front of them. So here, what God could do physically He could do for this people spiritually. Israel were crippled with unbelief, in no position to go to the ends of the earth with the message. The man, we are told, leaped up and walked (verse 10), and that shows, typically, what God was prepared to do for this nation if they would only repent and believe.

Now we come to chapter xv.; this is a very important chapter. We are told that “certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses ye cannot be saved”. Now here is one of those awful half-truths; this rite of circumcision was part of God’s law in the O.T., there is no doubt about that. If anyone did not observe it they were cut off from covenant relationship with God. But here we have got a mixture of two opposing things, and when

you get that, you always get error! God had never said that going through any rite could *save* anybody; that is what so many people still think. Oh, the thousands who think that if they go through some piece of ritual, some ceremony, that this puts them right for heaven, and God will accept them! Nothing could be further from the truth. There is only One who can save, and He is the Lord Jesus. And this salvation only becomes personal, to the person concerned, when it is received by faith in Him, the one and only Way. There is only one Name given under heaven whereby we must be saved (Acts iv. 12). But we do well to realize that the early church had a problem with the coming-in of Gentiles who, after all, were pagans brought up in the utmost darkness. It is difficult for us to realize just what the pagan world was like in Paul's day. It was appalling, a sink of iniquity, immorality and darkness; yet God's wondrous grace was saving such and then they were brought into relationship with believing Jews. Think of the different upbringing of an orthodox Jew to a pagan and then, by the grace of God, they are brought together, to live together, to walk together, and to witness together. Can you not see the tremendous problems that would be involved? If there was to be any sense of unity there would have to be some giving from the standpoint of the Jew, and certainly a change round on the part of the Gentile. What would happen for instance, concerning the law of Moses, all the rites and ceremonies, the fasts and the feasts, and their relationship to the saved pagan? Would they be binding upon such? That was the problem; so a meeting of the leaders was arranged at Jerusalem to discuss this problem. The Apostle Paul was there; Peter was there; James, the leader at Jerusalem, was there. And so they came together to seek the Lord's will as to what should be done with the Gentile believer and the law of Moses. This is the problem that we must consider in our next study.

No.12. pp. 232 - 236

We have seen, when we were looking at chapter xv. of the Acts, that the early church had the great problem of how to bring in the pagan who had been saved into harmonious relationship with the saved people of Israel, who had been the custodians of God's light and truth. Since the Exodus their standard of living and walk were so utterly and absolutely different to the unsaved Gentile that the church had to face up to this fact and decide the relationship the converted Gentile had to the law of Moses. Some of the Jews had come up and said, "Unless you are circumcised, unless you keep the whole law, you cannot be saved". They should have known enough of the truth to realize that was wrong, because salvation is by grace, by faith in Christ. And so, at this most important meeting at the centre at Jerusalem we find the Apostle Paul speaking; we find Peter speaking, and then follows James, the Lord's brother, the overseer of the church at Jerusalem. Let us note what James said, in verse 13 and onward, "And after they had held their peace James answered saying, Men and brethren, listen to me—hearken unto me. Simeon (that is Simon Peter) hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name". The people that was taken out from the Gentiles were linked to and only blessed through the people of Israel. Up to this point

there was no question of the possibility of Gentiles blessed apart from the people of Israel. They could come in and share Israel's blessings if they came in as proselytes; or, at this point they could come and be partakers of Israel's spiritual things through salvation; but to get this apart from the Jew—no! That is not possible yet; so let us always think of the Gentile who was saved in the Acts as linked to the people of Israel with the idea of stirring them up spiritually, remembering, of course, the Jew's narrow conceptions that God was only going to use *them*; that He shared and kept all His light and blessing for *them* and *them only*. How erroneous, how absolutely wrong! Now the purpose is widening; the Gentile is being brought in, just a representative number, to provoke Israel to emulation, to prevent, if humanly possible their sinking into complete unbelief and spiritual death. This, said James, is in harmony with the O.T.: "And to this agree the words of the prophets."

The word "agree" in verse 15 is the word 'harmonize'. You will note that he does not say this *completely fulfils* what the O.T. predicted, but it is going along *in harmony* with it. There was nothing secret about God's intention to bless the Gentile world! That had been clearly revealed in the O.T. Scriptures. It was part of the glorious part that we have been considering so much. So James quotes from the prophet Amos, chapter ix. 11, "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen and close up the breaches thereof, and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old". Now what is this but restoration? God says I am going to *build again*, I am going to restore: and we have just seen in the previous study that the tabernacle of David and the throne of David are very vital things at this point in God's purpose. Christ was raised from the dead to occupy that very throne, and God had made a promise, a covenant to David that He would not break it. And although things had gone badly in Israel's history because of their transgression, God declares there is coming a time when He will restore all that pertains to David's throne. This word 'restore' was a Key-word at the beginning of the Acts: "Lord, wilt thou at this time *restore* again the kingdom to Israel?" (i. 6). And then in chapter iii. of the Acts, the times of *restoration* (R.V.) are promised by God upon the repentance and conversion of the Jewish nation (iii. 19-26). This restoration of the earthly kingdom is part of O.T. prophecy and was no mystery, or secret such as is connected with the Body of Christ. So you see its all of a piece, its all together.

We read a little further on in Amos, verse 13: of blessing when restoration comes. The blessing on their land, material blessing, because they are an earthly people and have earthly blessings to go with their earthly calling. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed: and the mountains shall drop sweet wine and all the hills shall melt, and I will *bring again the captivity of my people Israel*". God is going to restore this people. He is going to do away with their captivity "And they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine thereof. They shall also make gardens and eat the fruit of them, and I will plant them upon their land and they shall *no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them*". Could you have plainer words? The land—remember how He promised it to Abraham?—is going to be theirs for ever and they will never be dispossessed. There was nothing in the Acts so far that

contradicted this. All was in harmony with it as long as God's longsuffering held out to this people. It agreed with what Amos had written.

So the church at Jerusalem singled out four necessary things—four only—out of the law of Moses which they would ask saved Gentiles to keep in their walk and practice. Verse 20: “But that we write unto them that they abstain from pollutions of idols (idolatry, meat offered to idols and so on, one of the great problems of the early church), and from fornication, and from things strangled and from blood (because God claimed the life which was in the blood).” But the inference is that the Jewish believer would keep the whole ceremonial law. Look at the next verse: “For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogue every Sabbath day”, not just four points of the law, but the law in its entirety. Now I ask you, could that make for perfect unity in daily walk and practice? This could never be while there were two standards of conduct in the same community. How very obvious it should be that here we are not dealing with the Body of Christ, where there is no Jew or Gentile as such and no ceremonial law to regulate the daily life and witness!

There may be some who will assert that this decision regarding the four necessary points of conduct for the Gentile believer was merely the opinion of men even though they were Christians. But let us read verse 28: “For *it seemed good to the Holy Ghost* and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things”—these four points. So God did agree with it; you will have to charge the Holy Spirit with making a mistake if you think this was not the Lord's will.

Now in chapter xvi. you find those deputized to take these four necessary things to the churches and these are called “the decrees” (verse 4). “And as they went through the cities they delivered them *the decrees* for to keep that were ordained of the apostles and the elders which were at Jerusalem.” Now when we come to the truth revealed for the Body of Christ through Paul's later ministry—his prison ministry—we are told there distinctly, in the second chapter of Ephesians, that we have been delivered from all these decrees (or ordinances); they were against us, and in this company of the redeemed they do not exist any longer. Colossians talks about the ordinances that were against us, and how Christ has finished them; they have been nailed to His Cross. So, you see, we cannot be dealing with this church in Acts xv. where these decrees were necessary.

We must now go in fairly big steps. Let us turn to chapter xvii: The Apostle comes to Thessalonica, and though he had said “lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (xiii. 46), he still goes back to the Jew; so that turning away at Antioch was only a local one. As long as the Jew is in covenant relationship with God, he must have the Word first. So we read in Acts xvii. 1, “Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, *as his manner was*” Now that is important because it gives us what Paul did habitually. As his custom was, whenever he reached a new place, he went straight to the synagogue, to the chosen people, to the Jew, to give them the message first. “As his manner was he went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures.” He was dealing with a people to whom had been given the O.T. Scriptures, so what better

than to go to the Word of God? You will notice that, when he went to the unenlightened Gentile who had no scriptures at all, he does not refer to them! He approaches them in quite a different way; and when you and I want to be used of God, let us see to it that, in wisdom, we find some point of contact with the people we are trying to help. At this point shall we turn to the Epistle to the Romans, to a verse that is so often misunderstood (Rom. i. 16): “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ for it is the power of God”—literally, “the miracle of God”. God still works miracles; not the same perhaps as in the Acts period, but this is a glorious miracle, the salvation of the sinner, “the miracle of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, *to the Jew first*, and also to the Greek”. Now that is why it was necessary, Paul said, that the people of Israel had the message first; and he goes to the Jew first, all through the Acts. As long as there is the possibility of Israel repenting and taking their rightful place, the Jew has priority. Now Romans was written during the Acts of the Apostles, so we read “to the Jew first”. Now, not only is this true for the gospel, but it cuts the other way; not only for blessing, but for judgment: “But unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath. Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, *of the Jew first*” (Rom. ii. 8). The next verse continues: “But glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good, *to the Jew first.*” So we must keep in mind the Scriptural reason why the Jew had the message first.

Coming back, then, to Acts xvii. 4 we find the Apostle carrying this out again in practice and the sad, but continual opposition of the chosen people to his message of salvation and restoration. “And some of them believed and consorted with Paul Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar.” Every new place to which Paul goes and gives the glorious message of the gospel to the Jew, he gets this treatment! The result is that he has to go away by night; and he goes on to Berea. It says (verse 10) “And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea, who, coming thither, went into the synagogue of the Jews”. Now a very important thing is said about these believers of Berea. They were “more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so”. There are two very important things here that we should consider. Do we really want truth? If we do there are two essentials. The first is *readiness of mind*, but that does not quite give its meaning. There are a number of modern translations which render it more vividly “eagerness”, “good speed”, “great eagerness”. Are we like that; so keen for truth that it’s a thing we are most eager about? If we are half-hearted about truth, we shall never progress in the knowledge of it. People can be keen on anything these days and be looked on as being normal. But if they are keen to get to know God or His truth they are often looked on as cranky! Are we willing to be thought a crank or abnormal for the sake of the tremendous privilege of getting to know God’s truth? The next thing is, are we willing to search the Scriptures and test all we hear and read by them? This is the only safe ground that we have, to check everything by the Word of Truth rightly divided. If Christians would only do this, what chance would error have today? Very little! It is because God’s children are either too indifferent, or too lazy to do this that false doctrine makes such headway. We must not

begrudge time in looking into the Word of God, but be willing to search it; keen and eager to do so. This is the only way to get light and blessing: and to get to know the wonders of God's revelation today.

The Pleroma

No.17. The title Head, and its relation to the Fullness. pp. 31 - 34

The highest title ascribed to Christ in any dispensation other than that of the Mystery is that of "A Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec". This Priesthood is superior to that of Aaron. It functions at the right hand of God, its sphere is the true Tabernacle which God pitched and not man, namely "heaven itself", and it combines the two offices of King and Priest. Just as water cannot rise above its own level, so no calling can rise above that set by Christ, and thus the calling that recognizes Him as King-Priest is itself 'a kingdom of Priests', "A holy nation and a royal priesthood". It is significant that throughout the Prison Epistles Christ is never called either 'King' or "Priest", even as it is equally true that the church of that calling is never called a kingdom although not outside the Kingdom of God or a priesthood, but is called the Body of Christ. Argument from the absence of terms, like arguing from a negative is in most cases suspect, but in this particular it cannot be said that a 'kingdom' is never mentioned in the Prison Epistles. We read in Eph. v. 5 of "The kingdom of Christ and of God", in Col. i. 13 and iv. 11 of "The kingdom of His dear Son" and of "The kingdom of God", and in II Tim. iv. 1 and 18, "His appearing and His kingdom", and "His heavenly kingdom".

In the epistles of Paul other than the four great prison epistles, a "kingdom" is mentioned nine times, but the only passage where Christ can be said to have the title King is I Tim. vi. 15, where however the exhibition of the title is spoken of as a future event "Which in His times He shall show, Who is that blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords", yet even this passage can only be spoken of as of Christ by inference. The epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians contain passages that seem to demand the work of a Priest, such as 'acceptance', 'access', 'made nigh', 'offer', yet there is not a single reference outside of Hebrews to Christ as a Priest. In epistles before and after Acts xxviii., Christ is represented as 'seated at the right hand of God', yet never, outside of Hebrews is the office of priest mentioned. If a 'dominion' and a 'coronation' are indications of the presence of a king, then Adam was a king. The 'dominion' given to him is the translation of the Hebrew *radah*, a word translated elsewhere 'reign' and 'rule' and used of Christ "the King's Son" in Psa. lxxii. 8. The word translated 'crowned' in Psa. viii. 5 is the Hebrew *atar*, which is the verb form of *atarah* "the king's crown" (II Sam. xii. 30). Adam, however, is never once spoken of as a king. He was a figure of Him that was to come, and can be spoken of with propriety as HEAD of the human race, and as such he embraced all that kingship can mean, *but much more*. Noah not only had dominion in his degree (Gen. ix. 2) but he offered sacrifices with acceptance (Gen. viii. 20, 21). The word 'sweet' which is used of the savour of the sacrifice offered is employed throughout the O.T. to indicate the 'savour' or 'odour' of sacrifice. We should therefore not be surprised to find that Noah was called a priest. Yet he is never so called. He can be, however, designated as Adam was before him, head of the race of which those delivered from the flood were the progenitors. Abraham was the father of 'kings' (Gen. xvii. 6) and even of THE KING, the Lord Himself, Who was,

according to the flesh, both son of Abraham and son of David, yet Abraham himself is never called a king.

Abraham not only built an altar at the beginning of his pilgrimage upon which the only sacrifices permitted would have been those taken from the herd or the flock. He came nearer to the heart of all true sacrifice when he was called upon to offer his only begotten son Isaac, yet Abraham is never called a priest. Like Adam and Noah, Abraham is more than king, more than priest, he is the father of Israel, to which he stands without contradiction as *head*. Even when we leave the chosen people, and turn our attention to the first great king whose reign commenced the times of the Gentiles—Nebuchadnezzar, he too is spoken of by Daniel as “This *head* of gold” (Dan. ii. 38). Each one of the great outstanding figures that have foreshadowed the *pleroma*, or fullness, were ‘heads’ and in this they foreshadowed more than the office of King, Priest or Prophet alone, or together, could set forth. Even though Christ be never called either Prophet, Priest or King in the epistles of the Mystery, the church of the One Body loses nothing if Christ is its Head. He is more than King and Priest and Prophet to the church, for headship covers all.

With this preparation, let us turn to the Epistles of the Fullness, the prison epistles of Paul, and observe the way in which this title is employed. The Greek word *kephale* is used here seven times, and the verb *anakephalaioomai* once. Let us look at the usage of this verb, which means ‘to head up’. It occurs in Eph. i. 10 where it is translated ‘to gather together in one’ in the A.V., ‘to sum up’ in the R.V., and in Weymouth’s translation “of restoring the whole creation to find its one Head in Christ”, and by J. N. Darby, ‘to head up all things in Christ’. It is in connection with the *pleroma* of the seasons that the figure of ‘heading up’ is used, no other term being so appropriate or so complete. When that ‘fullness’ arrives, Christ will be infinitely more than King or Priest, He will be “Head”. The references to Christ as ‘Head’ in the prison epistles are limited to Ephesians and Colossians (Eph. i. 22; iv. 15; v. 23; Col. i. 18; ii. 10; ii. 19).

These six references to *kephale*, expand the promise of Eph. i. 10, the church of the present dispensation being the most complete foreshadowing of the goal of the ages that the Scriptures contain. To turn back to the types and shadows employed in earlier Scriptures is to turn by comparison from substance to shadow, although the substance here must necessarily be but in its turn a shadow of the reality yet to come. The first passage brings us back from the day when all things in heaven and earth shall be headed up in Christ, to the present period when in a day of rejection, confusion and darkness, an elect company acknowledge that Christ is *to them*, what He will be universally in the future.

“And gave Him to be Head over all things TO THE CHURCH” (Eph. i. 22). Christ is not yet recognized as ‘Head over all things’. The day is future when ‘every knee shall bow and every tongue confess’, but what will be true then in its widest sense is true now ‘to the church which is His Body’. In the glorious future God will be all in all (I Cor. xv. 28), but that day has not yet come. Today “Christ is all and in all” (Col. iii. 11). In the glorious future ‘all things’ are put under His feet (I Cor. xv. 27) but as in Hebrews, even though we say today “we see not yet all things put under Him”

(Heb. ii. 8), we can recognize that His ascension ‘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 the fact that He is already Head over all things to the church, is a most glorious anticipation of this universal subjection of all to Him. This Eph. i. 22 demonstrates by joining together the two themes:

- (1) “And hath put all things under His feet.”
- (2) “And gave Him to be the Head over all things to His church.”

This church is in a unique position. It anticipates as no other calling and company has or can, the goal of the ages. It is meet therefore that this should be set forth, and the Apostle follows the passage already quoted by revealing that the Body of Christ is something more; it is ‘the fullness’ of Him, Who in His turn is the One that ‘filleth all in all’ (Eph. i. 23). All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily, the church which is His Body and in Whom He dwells (Eph. ii. 22’ iii. 17) is His fullness. What Christ is to the invisible God, this church is to Christ. What Christ is to the whole purpose of the ages, the church of the One Body is in the heavenly realm. Eph. i. 10 is here illustrated, foreshadowed and anticipated, and this of itself is a glorious position to occupy, quite apart from all the other wonders of grace and glory that are associated with this high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Rotherham translates Eph. i. 23:

“Which indeed is His body, the fullness of Him Who the all things in all is for Himself filling up.”

Moffatt reads:

“Filled by Him Who fills the universe entirely.”

Possibly the rendering given by Cunningham is nearest the truth.

“The fullness of Him Who all in all is receiving His fullness.”

The fullness of Him that filleth all in all is the most blessed anticipation of the day when God shall be all in all (I Cor. xv. 28).

**No.18. The title Head, and its relation to the Fullness.
pp. 69 - 72**

The largest section of the Epistle to the Ephesians is in the practical portion, and occupies the whole of chapter v., and nine verses of chapter vi. This great section falls into two parts. (1) A threefold walk; (2) A threefold relationship.

The threefold walk

- a | v. 2. Walk in love.
- b | v. 8. Walk as children of light.
- c | v. 15. Walk circumspectly.

The threefold relationship

- a | v. 22, 23. Wives and husbands.
- b | vi. 1-4. Children and parents.
- c | vi. 5-9. Servants and masters.

The first thing to observe is that if Eph. v. 22-33 teaches that the church is “The Bride” or “The Wife”, then by parity of reasoning, we must continue the analogy and say that the church is also a ‘child’ and a ‘servant’, but that would be untrue in this connection, for while individuals believers are ‘children of God’ and many of the Lord’s children are also His ‘servants’ that is very different from teaching that the church in its dispensational aspect is itself either child or servant. This is not true. The church of the Mystery is categorically called in the doctrinal section “The Church which is His Body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all”, and to forget that Eph. v. and vi. deals with the practical outworking of the truth in the daily life of the individual believer is to make an initial mistake, the consequences of which are far reaching. While we are dealing with this aspect of the subject, let us deal with another, which is allied. It is sometimes taught that seeing that the word ‘Church’ is feminine that Eph. v. 25 should be translated ‘As Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for HER’, but this is to confuse gender with sex. In many languages both ancient and modern, things are often expressed in either the masculine or the feminine gender, but this is in reference to the language employed, not the thing itself. The very word we have before us “The Head” is the Greek *kephale* which is feminine, consequently the same argument that demands ‘her’ in Eph. v. 25 would demand that we use ‘she’ when speaking of Christ the Head! Peace and forgiveness are feminine, but blessings and will are masculine. This has reference only to their grammatical form. The reference to “The Head” which is the reason for turning to Eph. v. is found in verse 23:

“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and He is the saviour of the body.”

It is evident that this passage is part of an argument, an argument that develops from the closing statement of verse 21:

“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God (or of Christ).”

Observe that it does not say, wives submit to husbands, or husbands submit to wives, but 'submitting yourself one to another'. This 'submission' flows out of the position of the Lord and the Church's relationship with Him. The Greek word *hupotasso* 'to submit' or 'to be subject' is used in Eph. i. 22 where we read 'And hath put all things under His feet'. It is evident, however, from the same passage that the Church which is His Body, is not put in subjection *under His feet*, for the near context speaks of this same company as 'seated together' in the heavenlies. The first occurrence of the Greek word *hupotasso* is Luke ii. 51, where it speaks of Christ as a lad of twelve years of age, who returned with His parents to Nazareth 'and was SUBJECT unto them'. Can we not enter into the next sentence "But His mother kept all these sayings in her heart"? The last reference to *hupotasso* so far as fulfillment is concerned is I Cor. xv. 28:

"And when all things *shall be subdued* unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself *be subject unto* Him that *put* all things *under* Him, that God may be all in all."

Between the first occurrence and the last, we have the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, with all things being placed under His feet, first as Head of the Church of the one Body (Eph. i. 22, 23), then over 'the world to come' whereof Paul speaks in Hebrews (Heb. ii. 5-8), of which the heavenly section is dealt with in this epistle, and the earthly in such prophecies as Psa. ii. and Psa. cx., and Rev. xi. 15. These successive subjections were set forth in type when Adam was created, given dominion, and commanded not only to replenish the earth but to 'subdue' it (Gen. i. 28). In the light of the age-purpose, in the light of the submission of the Son of God Himself, all resentment, all sense of humiliation, all argument concerning equality or rights or any other objection that arises in the human breast, falters and dies in the presence of such utter devotion to the glorious purpose of redeeming love. What husband or what wife, having seen such a grace and condescension manifested for their salvation and peace, would not gladly and willingly co-operate with such love that passes knowledge, and count it a joy and a privilege to have the smallest place in the outworking of such a purpose? Both the husband and the wife are in the first place types and shadows. The husband is a type of the Headship of Christ, the wife a type of the Church which is His Body. Neither the one nor the other is superior or inferior, both are essential to the completion of the figure. Wives are called upon to submit themselves unto their own husbands 'as unto the Lord'. Husbands are called upon to love their wives 'even as Christ loved the church'. This is an entirely different plane than that of human affection. In the ordinary way of life one expects a husband to love his wife, and where there is such love, there is usually no argument as to who is head of the family. This is taken for granted in Eph. v. The Apostle is not instructing husbands and wives in things they already know and feel, he is concerned with the type 'as unto the Lord', 'As Christ also loved'. In verse 23, there is an addition or clause. After the parallel is complete "for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church" the Apostle adds "And He is the Saviour of the body". There is but one reference to the Saviour in Ephesians, and but one in Philippians, and both deal with the Body. In Ephesians, the Body, the Church is in view; in Philippians (iii. 21) the transfiguration of the body of the believer in resurrection is in view. The words appear to be added in Eph. v. 23 for several reasons:

- (1) No human husband can be called 'The saviour of the body' whether 'the body' refers to himself, his wife, the church, or the resurrection.
- (2) The reference to 'the body' seems to be included here, and in verses 28 and 30, to prevent the idea forming in the mind that the church here can be looked upon as the 'wife'. The husband is to love his wife as his own body.
- (3) The quotation from Gen. ii. 24 follows, but lest we should think that Gen. ii. is speaking of that which was a mystery at that time 'hid in God' and so be self contradictory, the Apostle adds:
- (4) "This is a great mystery", i.e. the fact that in true marriage a man and wife become 'one flesh'.
- (5) This he differentiates from the relationship of Christ in the Church by saying immediately 'But I speak concerning Christ and the church'. Then leaving once again the type, the Apostle returns to the obligations which devolve upon both husband and wife saying 'Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself, and the wife see that she reverence her husband'.

The fact that the exhortation to husband and wives are an integral part of a threefold exhortation that includes children and parents, servants and masters, must be kept before the mind throughout the reading of this chapter. Even if there had been no revelation which indicated the relationship of the church with Christ, it would still have been necessary to remind husband and wives of their relationship one to another, and to the need to express in their mutual love and relationship the doctrine already given. That relationship having been given as that of a 'Body' with the 'Head' cannot be altered simply because some believers in that company happened to be married, any more than the constitution of the one Body could be modified, simply because other believers in that company were masters or slaves. The blessed truth which can easily be lost sight of in this argument is that the highest revelation of doctrine, the highest of all callings, the most wonderful of all spheres of blessing, are not too high but that they may be exemplified in the daily life in home and business of the humblest member. The exhortations of Eph. v. and vi. are but a part of the demand made by the Apostle that all believers should walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they had been called, the 'walk in love' with which Eph. v. opened, being most clearly exemplified by the love of the husband to the wife. If every Christian home could but be run on these lines what a witness it would be both to men and to angels. In the light of the Saviour's own selfless love, and subjection for our sakes, such relationships should be nothing more than our 'reasonable service'.

**No.19a. The title Head, and its relation to the Fullness.
pp. 119, 120**

The next reference to the Headship of Christ, and its relation to the 'Fullness' is found in Col. i. In this passage two creations come into view, the old and the new, and in both, Christ has the pre-eminence. This twofold feature is not only true of Col. i., but of the epistle as a whole, as will be made manifest if the corresponding sections Col. i. 13-23 and iii. 5-15 are set out before the eye:

i. 13 - 23 and iii. 5 - 15.

- G | i. 15, 16. The Creator. The Image.
- H | i. 20. Reconciliation of heaven and earth.
- I | i. 17, 18. Christ pre-eminent. All in Him.
- J | i. 20. Peace and forgiveness of sins.
- K | i. 22. Holy, blameless, unreprouable.

BEWARE—Col. ii. 4 - 23.

- G | iii. 10. Created after the Image.
- H | iii. 11. Reconciliation of Jew and Greek.
- I | iii. 11. Christ is all and in all.
- J | iii. 13-15. Peace. Forgive quarrel.
- K | iii. 9, 12. Put off, put on, holy and beloved.

The reader will realize that a complete structure which would avoid transposing Col. i. 20 as we have done, would necessitate a much more elaborate framework, but would not be of any greater assistance to us in our present enquiry. The two sections obviously echo one another, and that is all we desire to demonstrate at the moment. When we come to build a doctrine upon a structure of any passage, then any such accommodation is ruled out there must never be the remotest suspicion that any verse or feature has been displaced for ulterior motives. Consequently before we go further we must present the actual literary structure of Col. i. 13-23 without reference to the evident parallels that exist in chapter iii.

Col. i. 13 - 23.

- A | 13. Translation *methistemi*.
- B | 14. Redemption and forgiveness of sins.
- C | 15-17. | a | Image of invisible God.
 - b | Firstborn of every creature.
 - c | CREATION. "By Him."
Heaven and earth.
 - d | He is before all.
 - e | In Him all things consist.
- C | 18-20. | a | The Beginning. Head of the body, the church.
 - b | Firstborn from the dead.
 - d | In all things pre-eminent.
 - e | In Him all the fullness dwells.
 - c | RECONCILIATION. Through blood of cross.
Earth and heaven.
- B | 21, 22. Reconciliation. Presentation.
- A | 23. Not moved away *metakineo*.

Christ is set forth in verse 15 under two figures "Image" and "Firstborn". He is the Image of the invisible God, which is a revelation of truth similar, even if more advanced, to that found in John i. 1-18, where as 'The Word' He declares Him Whom no man hath seen at any time. He is set forth as the 'Firstborn of all creation' because He is the Creator of all things even as in John i. 1-8, as 'The Word' He made all things.

We have already seen that *ta panta* 'the all things' indicates the universe as redeemed and reconciled, and may not necessarily include 'all things' *panta*, that indicate the universe without reservation of any kind. This recognition compels us to stop at Col. i. 16. The A.V. reads "For BY Him, were all things created", but the R.V. reads "For IN Him were all things created". Some have objected to the 'pantheism' that permitted this rendering to enter the R.V. but such an objection can hardly be laid to the charge of Alford or Bishop Lightfoot who follow the R.V. here.

**No.19b. The title Head, and its relation to the Fullness.
pp. 128 - 131**

There is an evident connection between the title “Firstborn” and the subsequent statement ‘For’ and ‘Because’ in Him were all things created. John employs the title ‘Word’ or *Logos* which was much in use among the Alexandrian philosophers, Paul uses the title *prototokos* “Firstborn” in much the same way. This title is found in Psa. lxxxix. 27 “Also I will make Him My Firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth”, and in the Rabbinical writings the title ‘Firstborn’ (Hebrew *bekov*) was used as a recognized title of the Messiah. The sense of priority which this title assumed, was intended in its use of Israel ‘Israel is my son, my firstborn’ (Exod. iv. 22), for by no stretch of imagination or argument can Israel be shown to have existed before any other nation on the earth, their priority being not one of time but of dignity. So entirely removed from the idea of birth had this title become, that Rabbi Beshai, when writing on the Pentateuch, actually gives the title “Firstborn of the world” to God Himself. Other examples of this use and meaning are Job xviii. 13 ‘The firstborn of death’ and Isa. xiv. 30 ‘The firstborn of the poor’. Christ is shown to be the Firstborn of all creation by the fact that He created everything that is in heaven and in earth. The word ‘for’ being the Greek *hoti* means ‘because’, and “it is added to a speaker’s words to show what ground he gives for his opinion”. The Apostle gives the grounds for his opinion that Christ was the Firstborn of every creature, by immediately adding ‘Because by (or in) Him were all things created’. The Greek phrase *hoti en auto* “because in Him comes twice in this section, and in perfect structural balance.

C | c | CREATION. *ta panta* “Because in Him.”

C | c | RECONCILIATION. *ta panta* “Because in Him.”

In what way does the creation prove that Christ was Firstborn? If we translate “For BY Him” we see no connection, and we rob ourselves of the parallel reference in verses 19, 20. If we translate “For IN Him” we open the way to further teaching. *Ta panta* is used both of creation (16) and of reconciliation (20). In verse 16 *ta panta* moreover is said to be “For Him” *eis auton*, so in verse 20 *ta panta* is said to be reconciled ‘unto Himself’, where the Greek is identical *eis auton*. Further Christ is set forth in this passage as ‘The Firstborn from the dead’, indicating that whatever relation He had to the original creation, He holds to the New, and moreover, we are not left to make our own deductions, for the Apostle immediately explains in what way Christ is the Firstborn from the dead, by saying “In order that (*hina*) He might have the preeminence”, a phrase that is even more suggestive when read in the original. He is ‘Firstborn’ PROTOKOS, in order that He may have the ‘pre-eminence’ PROTEUON (first place). Yet this is not all. As the firstborn from the dead He is ‘The Head of the Body the church’. In Him as Firstborn, that creation which is denominated *ta panta* had its origin and being. It included things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, and the whole hierarchy of glory. This creation, *ta panta* was not only created IN Him, but on account of Him, and for Him. Moreover He is before all, in Him this universe consists,

or is held together. In II Pet. iii. 5 this same word is used of the material creation where it is translated 'standing' in the A.V. and 'compacted' in the R.V. Recent scientific researches into the composition of the atom and the release of atomic energy enables us to perceive something of the mighty power that is involved in holding the elements of creation to their appointed place. In the year 1927 a fountain pen was given to me by a friend of *The Berean Expositor*. For over thirty years that pen has written many thousands of words, and is writing this sentence at the moment. Think of the power that has held the particles that compose the nib in place all these years. Then think of the whole fabric of creation upheld, and held together by the power of the Saviour. When we have in any measure comprehended this, then let us transfer our wondering thoughts from the material creation of II Pet. iii., to the spiritual creation of Col. iii. 17, and worship as we realize that it too is held together by a power that nothing can disturb or dissipate. The unity of the Spirit is held together in the bond of peace, and this is only one of many ways in which this most blessed fact is expressed.

"IN HIM" all things were created (Col. i. 16).

"IN HIM" all things in the new creation are held together (Col. i. 17).

"IN HIM" it was well pleasing that all the fullness should dwell (Col. i. 19).

In the new and spiritual creation Christ is not only 'Firstborn' or 'Pre-eminent', but He is 'Head', for this new creation is a 'Body', and as Head all fullness dwells in Him, and as a Body, this new company is the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. Before the overthrow of the world, this church was chosen "IN HIM" (Eph. i. 4). "IN HIM" they have redemption (Eph. i. 7), "IN HIM" they are made nigh (Eph. ii. 13), Christ is all and in all to this company. Colossians, like Ephesians is devoted to the teaching and revelation of the Mystery, and the references to creation at the beginning and to reconciliation at the end, have this dispensation of the Mystery in view. This dispensation is intimately associated with the creation of *ta panta* "the all things" (Eph. iii. 9). The Greek verb *ktizo* 'to create' occurs 14 times in the N.T., seven of which occurrences are found in the Prison Epistles. The limitations indicated by the words *ta panta* show us that, like the term 'all Israel', we must limit the extent of this creation to those who were viewed 'in Christ', just as we must limit the term 'all Israel' to those who were called 'In Isaac'. In the Firstborn of all creation this company were chosen, and in the fullness of time they, though fallen, were redeemed and reconciled. He Who was the Firstborn of all creation now becomes the 'Firstborn from the dead', and as such is Head of the Body the church. The 'fullness' the *pleroma*, that which nullifies all rents and divisions occasioned by sin of the past, whether human, angelic or satanic, is at last achieved and God becomes all in all. It is the privilege of the church of the Mystery to anticipate that great consummation, and here and now to hold Christ the Head and confess that He is 'all in all' to them.

A seed was known to God at the creation of Man. That seed was attacked in the earliest times. The conflict of the ages has been the conflict of the two seeds. Nevertheless, He Who upholds all things by the word of His power, in Whom all things consists or are held together, brings that chosen seed, *ta panta*, whether earthly or heavenly, whether human or angelic, gloriously and triumphantly through to victory. In

order that the Headship of Christ may be seen to include principality and power we turn to Col. ii.:

“For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power” (Col. ii. 10).

These are the principalities and powers who are said to have been created ‘in Him’ in Col. i. 16. That there are other principalities and powers who are not included in Col. ii. 10 is made evident by reading on. In verse 15 He ‘spoiled principalities and powers’, making a show of them openly, triumphing over them by His cross. These, like the principalities and powers of Eph. vi. 12, are associated with the rulers of darkness of this world, and are called ‘spiritual wickednesses’ over which Christ is not Head. The one reference left, namely Col. ii. 19, takes us back to the position already indicated in Eph. iv. 15, 16. “Not holding the Head” is the signal for disaster, even as ‘Not after Christ’ is the index of all that is untrue (Col. ii. 8). Here in this last reference to Christ as the Head, we are brought back to the church of the One Body with its many members, and with it we must close our examination of this great title, a title that is not only peculiarly characteristic of the dispensation of the Mystery, but a title which we have seen gathers up into itself all other titles by which the Christ of God and the purposes of grace associated with Him, have been unfolded down the ages. We who live at the end of time, who see with our own eyes the approach of prophetic days, have been highly favoured among the redeemed, in that Christ to us is more than Prophet, Priest or King, He is Head, and we are more than subjects of a kingdom, more than a royal nation or a holy priesthood, more than the Bride of the Lamb, we are the very ‘members of His Body’. Let us therefore heed the exhortation ‘Hold the Head’, that we may ‘increase with the increase of God’.

“Fullness” looks to ‘Emptiness’ as its opposite, and both terms are ones of Christ. Indeed before all the fullness could dwell in Him as the one Mediator and Head, He emptied Himself for our sakes, that we through His poverty might be rich. ‘Fullness’ is the glory of Ephesians and Colossians, but ‘Self-Emptying’ is equally the glory of Philippians. “He made Himself of no reputation” (Phil. ii. 7) translates the Greek word *kenoo*. For a detailed examination of Phil. ii., see the book entitled *The Prize of the High Calling*.

No.20. The title Head, and its relation to the Fullness.
pp. 192 - 196

We have seen that the title 'Head' gathers up unto itself, all that the separate titles 'King', 'Priest' and 'Prophet' imply, with ever so much more than either of these titles taken separately, or all together can ever teach or contain. That church of which Christ is Head not only lacks nothing, but is infinitely more blessed, is in a closer relationship with Christ, and anticipates the goal of the ages in a way that no other company could ever do. We have seen that Eph. i. 10 finds its expansion and anticipation in Eph. i. 22, 23, and we now pass on to the other references to Christ as the Head as they occur in the epistles of the Mystery. The next reference to Christ as Head occurs in the practical section of Ephesians:

"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ" (Eph. iv. 15).

Practice grows out of doctrine, and doctrine deals with calling, sphere of blessing, and standing in grace. What is stated as a fact before God in the revelation of the doctrine of Ephesians, awaits experimental realization in the practical section. Let us see this in the large, before concentrating our attention upon the detail of Eph. iv. 15.

As a consequence of the Saviour's exaltation 'Far above all' in Eph. i. 20-22, He is seen as Head over all things to the church, which is called 'the fullness of Him that filleth all in all'. Turning to Eph. iv., we find that the ascension 'far above all' is restated, and the 'fullness' indicated as a goal:

"He that descended is the same also that ascended up FAR ABOVE ALL heavens, that He might FILL ALL THINGS" (Eph. iv. 10).

It is this ascended One Who gives the ministry that has as its goal 'the perfect man'. It is evident from the language of Eph. iv. 8-13, that here we are presented with the *outworking* of the truth set out in chapter i.

Coming now to Eph. iv. 15, we observe that the words of the A.V. 'speaking the truth in love' are a somewhat free translation, there being no equivalent in the Greek for the word 'speaking'. The A.V. margin puts as an alternative 'being sincere' and the R.V. margin reads 'dealing truly'. The Greek word under consideration is *aletheuein*, of which Alford, in his commentary, says 'it is almost impossible to express it satisfactorily in English' and suggests the translation 'being followers of truth', but says of this, "The objection to 'followers of truth' is that it may be mistaken for 'searchers after truth'—but I can find no expression which does not lie open to equal objection." The only other occurrence of *aletheuein* is Gal. iv. 16, where the A.V. renders it 'because I tell (you) the truth'. It is not possible in English to say 'truthing in love' we must say 'being sincere', 'being true and truthful' or 'speaking the truth'. None of these expressions however exactly present to the mind what the verb *aletheuein* does. The LXX of Gen. xlii. 16 employs this word where we read, 'Ye shall be kept in prison, that your

words may be proved, whether *there be any truth* in you; or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies'. In Isa. xlv. 26, the LXX employs *aletheuein* to translate the word *shalam* 'perform', but when the same Hebrew word occurs again in verse 28, it is there translated by the Greek *poiein* 'to make or to do'. If we can imagine a word in English that conjures up to the mind a person whose whole life is truth, whose very breadth and atmosphere is truth whose desires, will, plans and activity are truth, we may perhaps approach the meaning of Eph. iv. 15. This utter regard for truth, however, is kept in balance, for it must be 'in love'—without which, such zeal in present circumstances would lead to fanaticism and to a persecuting spirit. This utter regard for truth held in love is the greatest accessory to growth, 'may grow into Him in all things'. Growing up into Christ in all things is the practical echo of the basic doctrinal fact that has already been revealed concerning the constitution of the church of the One Body in Eph. i. 22, 23. Not only so, but it is the practical & experimental echo of the truth revealed in Eph. ii. 21.

"In Whom all the building FITLY FRAMED TOGETHER (*sunarmologemai*)
GROWETH (*auxano*) unto an holy temple in the Lord."

The word *sunarmologemai* is repeated in Eph. iv. 16 where it is translated 'FITLY JOINED TOGETHER', and the words *auxano* and *auxesis* are found in Eph. iv. 15, 16 "May GROW UP (*auxano*) unto Him", "Maketh INCREASE (*auxesis*) of the Body". Not only do these words recur, but just as the church of the One Body is the fullness of Him that filleth ALL (*ta panta*) in all, so this growth of Eph. iv. 15 is unto Him in ALL THINGS (*ta panta*). Most translators supply the preposition 'in' before 'all things' in order to make easy reading, and this reading may give the intention of the Apostle, namely, that the Church should grow up into Christ in every particular, in all ways, in all things. Nevertheless, the mind will return to the fact that what the Apostle actually wrote was *auxesomen eis auton ta panta*, which rendered literally reads, "We may grow into Him the all things", which while it does not read well and is not good English, leaves in the mind a different conception from that of the A.V. Can it be that Paul intends us to understand him to mean, that by holding the truth inviolate in love, we shall be encouraging that growth into Him, which the N.T. speaks of as *ta panta*, some specific, blessed totality of glory, in which Christ is now *ta panta* "the all things" in all? (Col. iii. 11) anticipating the goal of God, when God shall be *ta panta en pasin* 'the all things in all' (I Cor. xv. 28).

Before, however, such words can have their true effect, it becomes necessary that we pause here, in order to place before the reader the peculiar usage of the phrase *ta panta*, for the phrase 'the all things' sounds strange to our ears. *Pas* is an adjective, translated either 'all' or 'every' in the majority of cases. The plural *panta* 'all things' is used with or without the article, and these two forms must be distinguished. We cannot very well translate *ta panta* 'The all things' for that has an un-English sound but a survey of the usage of these two forms *panta* and *ta panta*, may enable us to reach some agreed rendering that will satisfy every claim, and present a fair translation of the inspired original. The two forms are found in Rom. viii., and their choice is easily recognized by reason of the context of each form. There is a good deal of suffering in Rom. viii., induced both by the failure and frailty of the believer himself, and coming upon him by reason of his fellowship with Christ, his place in a groaning creation, and the attack of

enemies. In consequence, he is sometimes at a loss to know what to pray for as he ought, but he does know, in the midst of all life's uncertainty, that 'all things work together for good to them that love God' (Rom. viii. 28). Here 'all things' is *panta*, all things whether good or evil. Later in the chapter the Apostle says:

"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32).

Here 'all things' is *ta panta*, some specific 'all things' namely those things which come under the heading of Redemption, and which constitute the goal and consummation of the ages. *Panta* without the article is unlimited, *panta* with the article is restricted to the realm of redeeming grace. Rom. xi. does not teach that 'all things' without limit or restriction owe their origin, persistence and final blessing to the Lord.

"For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are *ta panta*" (Rom. xi. 36),

that conception of the universe that embraces all in heaven and in earth which come under the grace and power of the Redeemer. The advocates of universal reconciliation, while recognizing the presence of the article in Rom. xi. 32 use this verse to support their doctrine and omit the articles in their translation. It is not the teaching of Rom. xi. 32, that "God hath concluded ALL in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon ALL" but as the A.V. renders correctly, at least the first clause, and as the whole verse should be rendered:

"For God hath concluded THEM ALL in unbelief, that He might have mercy on THEM ALL" (Rom. xi. 32).

Where universality is intended in Rom. ix. 5, the article is omitted, GOD is over ALL without limitation and reserve. In the verse that follows Paul uses ALL without the article with this same discrimination, "For they are not all Israel (*pantes* without the article) which are of Israel", the 'seed' were called 'in Isaac' (Rom. ix. 6, 7). We must therefore read the words "And so all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. xi. 26) in the light of Rom. ix. 6, 7. The 'all' that are to be saved being those who were 'In Isaac'—a type and shadow of the greater company of the saved at the end. In case the reader should expect to find the article here we point out that the word 'all' does not here stand alone and without qualification, *pas* Israel, 'all Israel' is already limited and does not need the article 'the'. Let us note the use of *panta* and *ta panta* in Ephesians, and by this we do not intend every single occurrence, for such phrases as 'all spiritual blessings' do not come within the scope of this inquiry. That which is to be "gathered together in one" is *ta panta* (Eph. i. 10), not *panta* without the article. That which is 'put in subjection under His feet' is *panta* all things including enemies (Eph. i. 22). He is also Head over all things *panta*, good as well as evil, to the church which is His Body (Eph. i. 22), and He is the One who fills *ta panta*, that special company in all, without limit and reserve. The second reference to 'all' is without the article, and *en pasin* has been rendered 'everywhere', 'in every way' and 'in every case'. The creation of 'all things' *ta panta* of Eph. iii. 9 is limited, because it is directly associated with the Mystery which had been hid in God. Where the words "One God and Father of ALL, Who is above ALL, and through ALL and in (you) ALL" (Eph. iv. 5) occur, the word used is *panton* and *pasin*

without the article. This is universal, because the subject is already limited to ‘the unity of the Spirit’, and the insertion of *humin* ‘you’ in the text followed by the A.V. shows that this sense was clearly understood. J.N.D. adopts the reading *hemim* ‘in us all’ which has been rendered by some ‘and in all TO YOU’, making the passage balance Eph. i. 22, where Christ is not revealed as Head over all in the fullest sense yet, but as Head over all TO THE CHURCH.

One passage in Colossians must be included. Paul speaks of the new creation ‘where there is neither Greek nor Jew but (*ta panta kai en pasin Christos*) the all things and in all Christ’ (Col. iii. 11). Here ‘Christ’ is put in a position to ‘the all things’, He Himself sums up in Himself the entire new creation. Of this He is the Head, it is in His image that all will be renewed, and where all other categories of worth and privilege are lost and put aside. So also in Eph. iv. 15 *ta panta* ‘the all things’ is in opposition with the “Head, even Christ”. The ‘fullness’ that embraces this ‘all things’ is Christ and His church, not Christ alone, and certainly not the church alone. Of both Christ and His church is fullness predicated, but only as Head and Body making One blessed company. True growth presses on to ‘the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ’ and in this dispensation, the growth of the One Body up into Him Who is the Head, is the great example and exhibition of what the day of glory will reveal in its perfection. Christ as Head is our theme, and here we see the first unfolding of that which is in germ in Eph. i. 22, 23. As we prosecute our studies we shall learn that other phases of this growth and perfecting are associated with Christ the Head until we hope, when the survey is complete, every reader will concur with our proposition, that whatever blessings are to be associated with the great titles of King, Priest and Prophet, they are all absorbed, filled and taken to their true end, in the one great title given to Christ in the epistles of the Mystery “The Head”.

The First Epistle to the Thessalonians.

No.1. pp. 16 - 20

The epistles to the Thessalonian church are among the earliest of Paul's writings. The older Bible scholars placed these epistles first, but with the added light from Sir William Ramsay's researches we believe Galatians to be the first letter that the Apostle wrote and these Thessalonian epistles the next in order.

Paul's initial visit to Thessalonica, probably in the summer of 50A.D., is narrated in Acts xvii. 1-9. This formed part of his second missionary journey, the ministry of which commenced at Philippi (xvi. 12-40). He refers to his coming to Thessalonica after the persecution and shameful treatment he had received at Philippi with Silas, in I Thess. ii. 2.

There, according to his custom, he visited the synagogue for three successive sabbaths and reasoned with them out of the Scriptures concerning the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, proving that He was and is the Christ. As a result, some of the Jews believed, together with a large number of God fearing Gentiles, but as a result of further Jewish opposition, an uproar was started which spread over the whole of the city. Jason, Paul's host, and other friends of the Apostle, went bail for him and Silas, and finally sent them away by night to Berea (Acts xvii. 1-10).

The young church, which they were forced to leave behind at Thessalonica, was therefore exposed to active persecution which gave Paul great concern for their spiritual welfare, specially as his sudden departure prevented him from giving them all the instruction he could have wished (I Thess. iii. 10). From Thessalonica he went on to Berea where further Jewish opposition caused him to go on to Athens (Acts xvii. 14, 15).

Meanwhile he sent Timothy back to inquire of their spiritual state and to establish and comfort them (I Thess. iii. 1-3). When Timothy returned to him, he was able to report that they were standing fast in spite of the persecution, and more than this, that they were actively propagating the gospel themselves (I Thess. iii. 6, 7; i. 8).

But there were several matters concerning which they desired further enlightenment. Among these was the return of the Lord Jesus and specially what would be the position of those believers who had died, in relation to this great event. The Apostle was obviously overjoyed and comforted at the good news Timothy brought of their spiritual welfare and wrote at once to encourage and strengthen them. This is the epistle we are now studying. It is well to remember that every epistle has a human background and a reason for writing, and while all are inspired by God, the reasons concerned can only contribute to our understanding of their content.

Thessalonica (modern Saloniki) was originally called Therme, but was refounded by Cassander about B.C.315 and renamed Thessalonica after his wife, who was a step-sister of Alexander the Great. It was an important city in Roman and Macedonian times and the Romans made it the capital of Macedonia in B.C.164. The city has always had a large proportion of Jews among its inhabitants.

The first epistle which Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church revolves around the three graces of faith, hope and love (I Cor. xiii. 13). It is significant that the Apostle frequently groups them together in other epistles.

Thus we have faith followed by seven gifts in Rom. xii. 6; love in seven aspects in xii. 9, and hope with seven consequences in xii. 12. In Col. i. 4, 5 we find them grouped together again as also in Heb. x. 22-24. It should be noted that in verse 23 'faith' should read 'hope'.

Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. xi. 6). We are saved by hope (Rom. viii. 24) a hope that does not make ashamed (v. 5) and the love of God which is poured out in our hearts is the greatest of all gifts and includes them all.

So in I Thessalonians we have the 'work of faith, and the labour of love, and the patience of hope'. These are gathered up again in the last chapter.

"But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of *faith* and *love*;
and for an helmet, the *hope* of salvation" (I Thess. v. 8).

Chapters i. and ii. are largely introductory, the real theme being reached in chapter iii. and onwards. There the three graces form the framework of this section—thus:

Faith iii. 1-10.
Love iii. 11 - iv. 12.
Hope iv. 13 - v. 11.

We now give the outline of the two opening chapters.

I Thessalonians i. and ii.

- A | i. 2-10. | a | Remembrance without ceasing.
 - b | The gospel came not in word only.
 - c | Result. Ye became followers.
 - d | End. Deliverance from wrath.
- B | ii. 1-12. How the gospel came to Thessalonica.
- A | ii. 13-16. | a | Thanks without ceasing.
 - b | The Word received—not as the word of man.
 - c | Result. Ye became followers.
 - d | End. The opposers. Wrath to the uttermost.

Chapter i. has its own structure which is as follows:

I Thessalonians i. 2 - 10.

- A | 2, 3. | a | Work of faith.
 - b | Labour of love.
 - c | Patience of hope.
- B | 5. “For”—the gospel’s coming—not only
 - But also } \ How
 - What manner /
- C | 6. Followers.
- D | 6. The Word and much affliction.
- C | 7. Examples.
- B | 8. “For”—The Word’s sounding out—not only
 - But also } \ Where
 - What manner /
- A | 9, 10. | a | Turned to God.
 - b | To serve the living God.
 - c | Wait for His Son from heaven.

By observing the members marked “A” we shall see that faith, hope and love are resolved by the faithful Thessalonian believers into action. The work of faith is exhibited by the fact that they turned away from idols to God and put their faith in Him. Their labour of love was shown in their service to the living and true God in contrast to their former service to dead idols, the work of men’s hands.

Their patience of hope was manifested in their waiting for the Son from heaven. Christ was their hope—as He is the Hope of all believers, but this hope did not leave them with their heads in the clouds; it made them intensely practical in service and devotion to the One Who had so gloriously saved them. They had become examples to believers all over Greece for their faithful witness and through them the gospel had spread not only through Greece but beyond (i. 7, 8).

No wonder Paul, in his opening remarks, gave thanks to God always for them and constantly remembered them at the Throne of Grace (verse 2). We cannot help noticing that, wherever possible, the Apostle gave commendation, praise and encouragement. Even when he had to correct departure from Truth, he usually finds something to praise first. He did not look for faults, rather he sought and found the fruits of the Spirit wherever he could. “Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely” He *reckoned* in others (Phil. iv. 9). What an example to all of us! How much easier would the work of the Lord be if believers would constantly manifest this spirit instead of the critical, harsh attitude that is sometimes found in Christian circles.

The Apostle continues ‘knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God’. The A.V. margin reads “or, beloved of God, your election”, and with this agrees the R.V. This is more in harmony with the natural flow of the Greek.

How did Paul know their election? Had he some special access to Divine counsels which gave him this knowledge? While it was true that this great servant of the Lord had many revelations from God, some of them peculiar to his ministry, there is no reason to believe that this was the case here. Verse 5 supplies the answer. It commences with the Greek *hoti* translated 'for', but better rendered here 'because'. He knew their election *because of the manner* in which the gospel came "in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" and also by the *practical effect* on the Thessalonian believers. "Ye became imitators (followers) of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost" (verse 6).

For every effect there must be a cause, and such manifest results as the Apostle saw could only spring from the fact that there had been a real work of the Spirit among them which proved their election. The *root* of a tree is invisible, but its *fruit* can be seen by all. Election is like the root and the practical effect in the believer's life, the fruit.

The gospel proclaimed by Paul had become something more than words. There had been abundant confirmation by the Holy Spirit, and during the Acts period, this was manifested by supernatural gifts (I Cor. xii.).

While there is no mention of such gifts in this context, we need not rule them out. This confirmation was not only *external* but *internal*. The gospel came with 'much assurance' (verse 5). The Greek *plerophoria* occurs four times and only in Paul's epistles. Col. ii. 2 refers to "*full assurance* of understanding". Heb. vi. 11 to "*full assurance* of hope" and in x. 22 "*full assurance* of faith".

This is a magnificent word and a corrective to those who are always doubting and fearing and who regard assurance as being something parallel with pride. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye *may know* that ye have eternal life" wrote the Apostle John (I John v. 13). Assurance is God's will for all His children and this comes when His Word is accepted and believed apart from anything else in the way of feelings or other attitudes of mind. A doubting believer is a contradiction and a paralyzed man. He is incapable of any real witness for the Lord. Not in this way did the believers at Thessalonica receive the Word of the Lord preached by His servant Paul. They regarded it as the *Word of God* which energizes (worketh effectually) them that believe. This is the only source of spiritual power for Christian witness. It always has been and ever will be so, and practically the last injunction that Paul gave was "preach the Word" (II Tim. iv. 2). Where the Word of God is not honoured as the Word of Truth and fully proclaimed as such, there is powerlessness, spiritual deadness, and lack of response. This is what we see largely around us in Christendom. It is useless to complain of the lack of lasting results in Christian witness when God's Word is not given its proper place.

Believers at Thessalonica had received the gospel not as the word of men, not as Pauline doctrine although preached by Paul, but as it is in Truth, the Word of God. When they had done this, results followed! And this was no surface stirring, for much affliction immediately occurred which failed to move them or shake their "much assurance" (i. 6).

Let us all remember that we have received the Word of God as a stewardship; that God has promised to honour and work through His Word by the Holy Spirit, and if we want to see a lasting effect in Christian witness we must minister that Word in all its purity and then look to him to “give the increase” (I Cor. iii. 6).

No.2. i. 6 - ii. 16.
pp. 37 - 40

After commenting upon the work of faith, labour of love and patience of hope of the Thessalonian believers, the Apostle declares that they had become imitators of him and of the Lord. This had led them through much tribulation and persecution for their faithful witness, but through it all there had been joy of the Holy Spirit to more than compensate.

The result was that they had become “ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia” (i. 7). The critical texts read the singular number “ensample”. This is the Greek *tupos* which gives us the English word *type*. Paul stated that he had been an example or pattern to them in his behaviour, by working night and day so that he would not be chargeable to them (II Thess. iii. 8, 9). Again he holds himself up as a pattern to the Philippian saints (Phil. iii. 17). Both Timothy and Titus are exhorted to be “examples” or “types” (I Tim. iv. 12; Titus ii. 7). The church at Thessalonica had become a pattern to the whole of Greece and beyond (i. 7). The Apostle could hardly give higher commendation than this. Their Christian testimony sounded out far and wide and so the Truth spread abroad.

The need for bold and fearless witness is not the less needed in our day. We all should show clearly Whose we are and Whom we serve. There are far too many secret disciples, those who are afraid to let the light shine. Specially is this so concerning the deeper truths revealed in Paul’s prison epistles. Many keep quiet because of the fear of man that bringeth a snare even when these are believers. They are afraid of the price they will have to pay. May we all be so strengthened and inspired to “shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life” (Phil. ii. 15, 16) and so avoid being “ashamed of the Lord and His prisoner” (II Tim. i. 8).

In view of the practical effects that accrued from the outstanding witness of the Thessalonian saints, the Apostle states that he had no need to speak anything; rather the people of Macedonia and Achaia reported what manner of entering in he had to them and with the results that had glorified the Lord so much.

The closing verses of the chapter strike a dispensational note. Believers at Thessalonica were awaiting the Lord Jesus from heaven. This can only mean that they expected, as their hope, the return of the Saviour in their lifetime. The Apostle also identifies himself with this hope in the phrase in chapter iv. 17, “we which are alive and

remain”. The early coming of Christ is not only a feature of this epistle, it is common to all the epistles written during the period covered by the Acts.

There are two classes of people who disregard this truth. One is the modernist, who plainly states that in his opinion, Paul and the early converts were quite sincere in their belief that Christ would return in their lifetime, but they were mistaken. The other is the more conservative believer, who, not seeing the epistle’s dispensational setting, yet confronted with the fact of its stress upon the imminence of the Lord’s Return and that this has not happened though nearly 2,000 years have passed by since it was written, seeks to resolve the difficulty by explaining that “a thousand years is as one day” (II Pet. iii. 8) and therefore scarcely two days have passed in the Lord’s reckoning!

But this is forced and unnatural and in any case Peter reverses the statement by saying “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years”! The epistles to the Thessalonian church were two of the earliest of Paul’s writings and had their origin in the Acts period when the possibility of the Second Advent hung upon the repentance of Israel and their turning back to God (Acts iii. 19-26). Believers in this church and elsewhere were instructed that practical faith was to turn away from idols to God; practical response was to serve the living and true God; and for a practical hope, they were to “wait for His Son from heaven” (i. 9), being rescued from the coming wrath, so graphically and solemnly described later in the book of Revelation.

The Apostle now begins a long section in which he defends his conduct towards them. It was unlike Paul to give prominence to himself unless he had been deliberately misrepresented and the truth made known through him brought into danger. It is obvious that this was the case, otherwise he would not have denied the charges of deceit, uncleanness, and guile (ii. 3) or of flattering words and covetousness (verse 5), or of seeking glory for himself (verse 6) if these insinuations had not been made.

The tactics of the enemy are ever the same: smear the messenger and seek to ruin the message. It is splendid to realize that Paul did not hit back and render evil for evil. Rather he reminds them of his gentleness among them as a nurse carefully looking after her children. He had been willing not only to make known the gospel to them but to give himself to the limit for their sakes (verse 8). He had worked night and day so that he would not be chargeable and a burden to them (verse 9). He had behaved like a loving and wise father exhorting and consoling them (11), and from this context we have brought before us the ideal leader who combines the tenderness of a mother with the strength of a father. One without the other may lead to undue hardness or softness of character. Would that we all could emulate the Apostle in his balanced witness in these respects.

The epistle continues with Paul’s commendation of the way the Thessalonian believers had received his message. He makes a tremendous statement by saying that they received it not as something human, just the word of a man, but, as it is in truth, the *Word of God*. They must have been persuaded that Paul was not giving them his opinions. There could not have been any in this assembly who regarded the message as

just “Pauline theology”. It was as though God Himself had spoken to them and therefore what they had heard through the Apostle’s lips was regarded as God’s Word. If only this was the attitude of the churches today, what a difference we should see in faith and practice! It would start to work as it did in the Thessalonian believers:

“Ye received it (the message given through Paul) as it is in truth the Word of God *which effectually worketh also in you that believe*” (ii. 13).

Effectually work is the translation of the Greek *energeo* from which we get our word *energize*. Lasting practical results followed such a reception of the Truth and would do so today if it was faithfully proclaimed and made known. The message would not return void to God and be barren of results. It is our responsibility to sow the seed of the Word of truth. It is the Lord’s promise to “give the growth” (I Cor. iii. 7).

In the case of the Thessalonian church, the reception of the Truth had not been without cost:

“For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews” (ii. 14).

The churches of Judaea had been formed by the dispersal of the mother church at Jerusalem through persecution (Acts viii. 1). They had suffered from the bitterness and venom of the unbelieving Jews and it was this means that Satan used most of all at this time to antagonize the purpose of God and to frustrate His will. Over and over again the Apostle suffered at the hands of his own nation as the record of the Acts clearly shows. They dogged his footsteps wherever he went, seeking all the while to stir up strife and enmity. Not only did they do this to him, but they vented their spite on all those who believed the gospel and made a faithful stand for the Lord. No wonder he went on to write:

“Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost” (ii. 15, 16).

Terrible words, but a true commentary on the attitude of Israel during the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles. No wonder Rom. x. 22 was written of them later, describing the attitude of the Lord:

“All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.”

Turning away from the bitter opposition of the Jew, Paul now declares his longing to revisit Thessalonica and be united with them again. He writes:

“But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire” (ii. 17).

“Being taken from you” is a translation of the Greek *aporphanisthentes* which literally means *to be bereaved* and shows us how keenly the Apostle felt his forced absence from

the Thessalonian Christians. He desired to visit them, but the enemy hindered all his plans.

Just how far Satan can delay the plans of God and obstruct His servants is not possible to say. We do know that his power and that of the hosts of darkness under his control is very great. He was able to hold up an angelic messenger to Daniel for three weeks (Dan. x. 12, 13), and there is no reason to believe that his power is lessened in any way today.

The conflict of the ages still goes on and but for the glorious redemptive work of our Saviour we should certainly not be on the winning side. The purpose of his saving grace is that we should be “more than conquerors through Him that loved us” (Rom. viii. 37). Meanwhile may we seek to put on the whole armour of God (Eph. vi. 11) and clad in this way, we shall be safe from all the malignity and enmity of the foe.

No.3. ii. 19 - iv. 2.
pp. 57 - 60

The next section of this epistle commences with the words:

“For what is our hope, our joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His Coming? For ye are our glory and joy.”

When the Apostle talks of a ‘crown’, he is not dealing with foundation truths, but with the subsequent faithful ‘working out’, resulting in reward, which is given when all service is tested by the Lord at His Bema or Award Seat. In his final summing up of his life’s witness he said:

“I have finished my course henceforth there is laid up for me the *crown of righteousness*, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day”
(II Tim. iv. 7, 8).

This is but a figurative way of speaking, not just of *living* with Christ in glory, but being associated with His *Throne*, or *reigning* with Him (II Tim. ii. 12).

Faithful service earns this crown, and in that day there will be practical evidence of this in the presence of all those believers who have been saved through his devoted labours for the Lord. The Thessalonian saints would then be “his crown of rejoicing (boasting)”, even as the Philippian believers were (Phil. iv. 1).

There are two words which are translated ‘boasting’ in the N.T.: *kauchema* and *kauchesis*. They are obviously allied. Dr. E. W. Bullinger in his Lexicon says:

Kauchesis, reason to boast, denoting the act.
Kauchema, a subject of boasting.

Paul uses the latter word exclusively, and also the former word excepting one occurrence in James iv. 16.

The verbal form *kauchaomai* occurs 33 times in the N.T., 31 of them being found in Paul's writings.

His boasting or rejoicing was in his Lord or what his Lord had done through him. He had learned to avoid the emptiness of boasting in himself or of his own achievements. Even in the famous passage where he does boast, it was forced on him by his detractors, and then he makes it clear that his labours and sufferings were on account of his devotion to Christ (II Cor. xi. 16-31).

The boasting in the Thessalonian saints would be at the Lord's Coming. The word is the familiar *parousia* and together with the word *apokalupsis* gives us the hope of the churches formed during the Acts period. We have considered this word before and noted its connection with Matt. xxiv. There is no need to invent a "secret coming" as some have done. This is only a confession of inability to see the difference between the hope of the believer during the Acts of the Apostles compared with the revelation of the Mystery in Paul's prison epistles later on.

Chapter iii. commences with the connection link "wherefore" (*dio*). Because of the close link between the Apostle and his Thessalonian converts, when he could no longer forbear, he sent Timothy to them, being unable to go himself. "Forbear" is the Greek *stego* and is used 4 times and only in Paul's writings.

The word means to cover or conceal, and doubtless refers to his anxiety for them, as he knew full well the persecution they were enduring and wondered whether their faith was steadfast through it all.

Only those who have been used by the Lord in the salvation and building up of others know the intimate connection that exists between them. Every blow aimed at the convert affects the leader and all such can well understand Paul's deep concern for all the believers he had been forced to have at Thessalonica. When he could conceal his anxiety no longer, he sends Timothy, whom he describes as his "brother and God's minister in the gospel of Christ" (R.V.).

We have now arrived at the heart of the epistle, all else up to now being introductory. In our opening studies we pointed out how the whole of this letter revolves around the three graces of faith, hope and love. We now commence a section dealing with *faith* and set out the middle section of the epistle as a whole:

FAITH iii. 1-10. |

Comfort you concerning your faith (2).

I sent to know your faith (5).

Timothy brought good tidings of your faith (6).

Perfect that which is lacking in your faith (10).

LOVE iii. 11 - iv. 12. |

Abound in love (iii. 12).

Concerning brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you (iv. 9).

HOPE iv. 13 - v. 11. |

Sorrow as others which have no hope (iv. 13).

Hope expanded in doctrine of the Lord's Coming.

There are four references to faith in the first section, iii. 1-10. The Apostle had sent Timothy to comfort and encourage them concerning their faith, so that the severe afflictions they were undergoing would not move them away from the Truth. Paul had warned them beforehand of the inevitability of their faith being tested by suffering (4). What was a problem in O.T. days concerning the suffering and trials of the righteous now became the normal experience of God's people and they were taught to accept this joyfully as the will of God for them. It was indeed a precious thing, as Peter asserts in his first epistle (I Pet. i. 7), for it had a refining effect and took their faith out of the realm of theory and transplanted it into the realm of certainty and fact, so that they were in no doubt of its reality.

Paul had been anxious lest the Tempter had used these difficult experiences to turn them away from the faith (verse 5) and spoil his work, but the return of Timothy with the reassuring news of their steadfastness, greatly cheered him, as it did to learn that they longed to see him again. He had been concerned lest his enforced departure from Thessalonica had been used by Satan to break the link between them, but he was now overjoyed to know that his fears had been groundless.

“For what thanksgiving can we render again unto God for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith?” (I Thess. iii. 9, 10 R.V.).

He continues to pray that the way might be opened for him to revisit them; meanwhile he asks that their *love* may increase toward each other and verses 11 to iv. 12 expands the theme as it touches Christian practice. Overflowing love would so touch their hearts and lives that it would lead to their strengthening and establishment, resulting in an unblameable walk before our God and Father (verses 11-13). The Greek *amemptos* translated ‘unblameable’ occurs 4 times in Paul's epistles:

“That ye may be *blameless*” (Phil. ii. 15).

“The righteousness which is in the law, *blameless*” (Phil. iii. 6).

“Stablish your hearts *unblameable*” (I Thess. iii. 13).

“If that first (covenant) had been *faultless*” (Heb. viii. 7).

As an adverb it occurs twice in the epistle we are studying. The Apostle had lived out the Truth before them, for he could write:

“Ye are witnesses, how *unblameably* we behaved ourselves toward you that believe” (ii. 10).

In chapter v. 23 we have:

“I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved *blameless* unto the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul’s prayer for these believers was not only that they might be preserved alive until the near return of the Lord Jesus, but that they might be found to His approval when this great event took place.

Chapter iv. starts with the Greek *to loipon*, literally ‘for the rest’, hardly ‘finally’ as the R.V. The “furtherance” of the A.V. seems nearer its meaning, the Apostle continuing the theme of brotherly love as it works out in practice:

“We beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, even as ye do walk, that ye abound more and more” (iv. 1 R.V.).

Note the phrase “even as ye do (or are) walking” in the R.V. which is added by reason of the best Greek texts. Even though their standard of walk was so exemplary, Paul would have them not rest on their laurels, but ‘abound’ more and more. *Perisseuo* translated ‘abound’ is a typical Pauline word being used by him some 26 times. In this epistle its occurrences are:

“The Lord make you to increase and *abound* in love” (iii. 12).

“So that ye would *abound* more and more” (iv. 1).

“We beseech you that ye *increase* more and more” (iv. 10).

We never get to the limits of practical love in the Christian life. This greatest of all gifts is best shown in spending and being spent for others, pouring ourselves out, as it were, in the loving service without stint for fellow-members of the Body of Christ. This will be not just love—but *overflowing* love which is such a characteristic feature of God’s unfathomable love to us. It was this that Paul urged the Thessalonian believers to evidence more and more. What opportunity has the world, the flesh or the devil, to enter into a gathering of God’s people where such a spirit is manifest?

The Apostle refers to the commands he had given them verbally ‘by the Lord Jesus’. Later on in the chapter he speaks of details concerning the Lord’s *parousia* or Coming which he had ‘by the word of the Lord’ (15). This does not necessarily mean, as some assume, that these matters are entirely *new*, but Paul received his commission and all it involved in revelation “not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father” (Gal. i. 1). It was not necessary to refer them to anything that God had revealed through the Apostles of the Circumcision or by Christ when on earth. Paul’s revelation from the Lord was complete in all points, and whether some of it characterized truth given in other callings or not did not matter; it was “by the Lord Jesus”, now Risen and Ascended, and conveyed through himself, an earthen vessel.

Just what this involves we must leave to the next article.

No.4. iii. 12 - iv. 14.
pp. 65 - 69

Before we go any further, let us examine the structure of the passage before us:

I Thess. iii. 12 - iv. 12. *The labour of love.*

- A | iii. 12, 13. | a | Abound in love.
 - b | One to another.
- B | iv. 1. | c | Walk and please God.
 - d | Abound (*perisseuein*) more and more.
- C | iv. 2-8. | e | Commands of the Lord Jesus.
 - f | Sanctification, not lust.
 - g | The brother defrauded.
 - g | The Lord the Avenger.
 - f | Not uncleanness, but holiness.
 - e | Rejecting God.
- A | iv. 9. | a | Brotherly love.
 - b | Love one another.
- B | iv. 10-12. | d | Abound (*perisseuein*) more and more.
 - c | Walk honestly to those without.

The stress, not merely upon love, but on love that *overflows* or *abounds* is obvious, and such love will have a very marked effect upon the practical walk of the believer, as the context shows. The Apostle reminds the Thessalonian believers of the charge (R.V.) he had given them “through the Lord Jesus” (R.V.). As we have seen, this once more confirms the independent ministry of Paul who received this ministry and all it involved directly from the Risen Christ and not from the Twelve, nor can it refer to the words spoken by the Lord when on earth, for these the Apostle never heard, and even if he had, as unconverted Saul of Tarsus, the Christ hater, they would have conveyed little.

This charge had to do with their sanctification, or separation to God by redemption, and their separation from all that the flesh and the world involved. The moral laxity of the time made it necessary to stress purity of living.

What does Paul mean when he says, “That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour that no man go beyond (transgress R.V.) and defraud (wrong) his brother in *the* matter (not ‘any matter’ as A.V., but the matter under discussion)”? There are two different views held by expositors as to the interpretation of this passage.

- (1) The “vessel” refers to the body, and the injunction is to self-control.
- (2) The “vessel” refers to a “wife”, and the need for faithfulness to the marriage bond.

The Greek word *skeuos*, vessel, occurs 22 times in the N.T. It is used of a receptacle (John xix. 29), a person's possessions (Matt. xii. 29; Mark iii. 37), the believer as a channel which God can use (II Cor. iv. 7; II Tim. ii. 21). Not only this, but in I Pet. iii. 7 it is used of a wife:

“Likewise, ye husbands giving honour to the wife, as unto the weaker *vessel*”

“How to *possess* his vessel.” The word ‘possess’ is *ptaomai*, which means, not so much to possess, but to ‘gain possession of’, to ‘acquire’ or ‘purchase’:

“Now this man *purchased* a field with the reward of iniquity” (Acts i. 18).

“Thou hast thought that the gift of God may be *purchased* with money” (Acts viii. 20).

“With a great sum *obtained* I this freedom” (Acts xxii. 28).

In what sense can the body be acquired or possessed? Moreover the sense of the next verses does not connect well if the word ‘vessel’ is given this meaning.

On the other hand, if *skeuos* means ‘wife’, then to ‘acquire a wife’ can be understood, and with this sense it is rendered by a number of translations.

“. . . . that each man among you shall know how to procure a wife who shall be his own in purity and honour” (Weymouth).

So also Alford, Moffatt, Cunnington, Twentieth Century Version, Goodspeed, Williams, and Berkeley Version. Leaning to the first view are Bloomfield, J. N. Darby, Rotherham and F. F. Bruce. Both views express truth, but the second fits into the context more naturally. The Apostle again stresses sanctification in verse 7:

“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto sanctification (holiness A.V.).”

However, love is still the dominating theme of this section and now the saints at Thessalonica are reminded that one practical aspect of Christian love is to “study to be quiet, and to do your business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you”. Evidently there were some who were wrongly regarding the nearness of the Lord's return. Such were refusing to work, with the result that, instead of being occupied by their own affairs, they were prying into the affairs of others and causing disturbances.

“For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that work not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread” (II Thess. iii. 11, 12 R.V.).

Both in this epistle and in the context we are considering, there is a stress on being “quiet”. *Hesuchazo* means to be silent, to be tranquil, as opposed to excitability which has a bad effect on others. The verb translated ‘study’ is *philotimeomai*, ‘to be ambitious’ literally, and the phrase almost means ‘be ambitious to be unambitious’. “Make it your ambition to live quietly and to mind your own concerns (do your own things, literally), and to work with your own hands”. Such a walk would be a good witness to the outside world and moreover each believer would then lack nothing (12).

To this very day, the doctrine of the Second Advent has had a similar effect on some. We have heard of those who have given up their homes and businesses to wait for the Lord's return, forgetting that the best way to be ready is to do what He Himself commanded "occupy, till I come" (Luke xix. 13). To do nothing, to be idle is to open the door to the Adversary and this was happening at Thessalonica, hence the Apostle's warning. By example as well as by precept, he taught them to be busily engaged in doing the Lord's will, whether in the home, trade, or in the Lord's work.

We now enter upon a new section of the epistle which revolves around the question of hope and accordingly we set out its structural outline.

I Thess. iv. 13 - v. 11. *The patience of hope.*

- A | iv. 13. I would not have you ignorant concerning them that sleep.
- B | iv. 14. First reason—Resurrection and sleep.
- C | iv. 15. Second reason—Living shall not go before them that sleep.
- D | iv. 16, 17. Ever with the Lord.
- E | iv. 18. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.
- A | v. 1-3. You know perfectly concerning the day of the Lord.
- B | v. 4-6. First reason—Let us not sleep.
- C | v. 7, 8. Second reason—Those that sleep in the night.
- D | v. 9,10 Live together with Him.
- E | v. 11. Wherefore comfort yourselves together.

It is evident that some had lost dear ones and they were deeply concerned about them in view of the Lord's early return. Would they be left behind? Would those that are alive be taken and those who had died be left in their graves until a later period? To these problems Paul now turns and seeks to give them comfort and instruction.

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep" (iv. 13).

In five other places the Apostle states that he did not wish believers to be ignorant or without knowledge of certain vital truths. In Rom. xi. 25 he is dealing with the secret of Israel's blindness lest they should be wise in their own conceits and imagine that God had cast off the unbelieving nation forever and exalted the Gentile to take their place. In I Cor. x. 1 he reminds the Corinthian church that, while all Israel at the Exodus were 'baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea', and were typically redeemed and linked with all that Moses stood for in law and ceremonial type and shadow, yet all did not enter the promised land, for with 'many of them God was not well pleased' (x. 5). They lost their prize, that is, entering into the inheritance of Canaan. In the same epistle Paul uses the phrase again and states that he would not have them ignorant concerning spiritual gifts (xii. 1). Detailed instructions were necessary so that these gifts should be used in an orderly fashion and to the edification of the local assembly.

When we writes his second letter to the church at Corinth he says that he would not have them ignorant of the trouble he had endured in Asia. So great was it that he

despaired even of life (II Cor. i. 8). This led him away from self-trust or self-confidence. “But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead” (9). In his letter to the Roman saints the Apostle stated that he had often planned to visit them but had been hindered. He was concerned that they should not be ignorant of this, or misunderstand his inability (Rom. i. 13).

In each context where this phrase is used, something important is being stressed and so it is in I Thess. iv. To the sorrowful saints who were mourning the loss of dear ones, Paul does not attempt to inculcate a Stoic indifference. Such could not help sorrowing in these circumstances. At the same time they could remember for their own comfort that the Saviour Himself was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He stood beside the grave of a beloved friend and wept, and was deeply moved at the havoc and loss that death brings. One thing that we are apt to forget is that redemption not only delivers from sin, but from the penalty of sin which is *death*.

“I will ransom them from the power of *the grave*; I will *redeem them from death*;
O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction” (Hosea xiii. 14).

So that while we sorrow, we sorrow not as others who have *no hope*. This is one of the great differences between the saved and the unsaved. For believers, death is described in the Word as a sleep, an interlude before the real life starts in resurrection glory. This figure is never used for the unbelievers. For him the ‘sting of death is sin’ and this sting has not been removed as far as he is concerned. Such a person is without Christ, without hope and of all men most miserable (I Cor. xv. 17-19). Regarding the state of death, no one, of themselves, can have any real or sure knowledge of what it is like. No ordinary mortal has come back from the grave to give us any information as to its character, saving those who in Bible times, were raised from the dead, Lazarus being a case in point. Thus it is that we are shut up entirely to the revelation of God’s Word for any knowledge we can have.

When God wishes to describe to us what the state of death is, what illustration will He use? And at least we must admit that his illustrations are always *apt*. Consistently in O.T. and N.T. He uses the figure of *sleep*, and if we will only consider what healthy sleep is like we shall know all that God has revealed on this subject. We are not aware of any Scripture that talks about death as the sleep of the *body*, the *soul* or the *spirit*, separately; it is the sleep of the *whole person concerned*. Likewise the Word does not speak of the resurrection of the *body*, that is what human creeds do. It treats of the resurrection of the *dead* (I Cor. xv. 12, 13, 16, 20, 21). If Christians would only carefully keep to Scriptural language, what trouble and false doctrine would be avoided! We should not hear then of such senseless and unscriptural phrases as ‘soul-sleep’. The trouble is that so many Christians are not content with what God has revealed. They much prefer to indulge in wishful thinking and add their own faulty and misleading ideas concerning a subject that they can know nothing of themselves. Tradition and man-made creeds add their quota of error and the whole subject gets leavened with false notions which are very difficult to throw aside. How often has one heard the phrase “I like to believe my loved ones are in bliss; it is comforting”, which only goes to show that personal preferences are made the basis of belief, instead of the revelation of the Word of God.

There are two words in the Greek for sleep, *katheudo* ‘to get to sleep’, referring to normal slumber, and *koimao* ‘to fall asleep involuntarily’, which in the passive is used in the N.T. of the sleep of death. In verse 14 we have the phrase ‘those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him’. The word ‘in’ is the preposition *dia* ‘through’, ‘by means of’, “those who are laid to sleep by Jesus”. The thought underlying these words is extremely beautiful. Just as a parent lays his little child to rest at night time, so the Saviour does for His children, and resurrection is the morning of glory when He will say “wake up”.

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which *all that are in the graves* (not heaven, or merely their bodies in the grave) *shall hear His voice*, and shall come forth” (John v. 28, 29).

“I am the Resurrection and the Life” (John xi. 25).

Realizing this, Bishop Ken (1692) wrote in one of his hymns:

Teach me to live, that I may dread The grave as little as my bed.

Believers, taught by God’s Word, will know that death is no more to be feared than going to sleep at night time. It is sleep in Christ (I Cor. xv. 16-18). After the death of Lazarus, the Lord said to His disciples, “our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may *awake him out of sleep*” (John xi. 11). This is just what death and resurrection is for the believer, and one would have thought that, to all such, these words of the Saviour would be sufficient; but alas, to so many who name the Name of Christ, it is not so. They are determined to keep their own traditional ideas on the subject. May we be found among those who believe what God says and reveals, rather than the opinions of men.

No.5. iv. 14 - 18. **pp. 95 - 99**

We have seen that the Apostle Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, brings the teaching concerning resurrection and the Lord’s Coming before the Thessalonian believers who were experiencing bereavement.

“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, that are left unto the Coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (I Thess. iv. 15-18 R.V.).

The Apostle stresses the fact that he is writing “by the Word of the Lord”. This doubly emphasizes the truth of the passage we are dealing with. We can find no reference to such teaching in the Lord’s earthly ministry, but as Paul received the gospel and all subsequent truth by revelation (Gal. i. 11, 12; Eph. iii. 3), there is no difficulty in understanding the source of the truth expressed here. He now explains the effect of the

Lord's Coming during the period covered by the Acts (Acts iii. 19-26), and this epistle was one of the Apostle's earliest writings. We will say more of this later on.

The word 'coming' translates the Greek *parousia*, which means 'presence' (R.V. margin) or 'arrival' rather than the motion of coming. This *parousia* had been fully explained by the Lord in Matt. xxiv. in response to the disciples' question as to what should be its sign and when it should take place. There the Lord Jesus had said:

"Immediately *after* the tribulation of those days then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (xxiv. 29, 30).

Here we are on sure ground. From this statement we know that the *parousia* must take place *after* the Great Tribulation and not before it. We know that some, in order to get out the difficulty of the believer going through this awful time of trouble, invent another *parousia*, a secret one. But where is the passage of Scripture that clearly teaches this? Such are not helped either by the usage of the word *apokalupsis*, revelation. Where in the N.T. do we get a secret *apokalupsis* of the Lord for believers? *Apokalupsis* and *parousia* are used inter-changeably during the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles and must refer to the same event. These words are not used in the Prison Epistles for the hope of the Body of Christ, which is distinct from the Coming of the Lord to the earth to destroy the man of sin and the antichristian kingdom of the end-time and to end the Great Tribulation, which is a time of Jacob's (Israel's) trouble, although it involves the whole earth in a measure.

It may be helpful here if we observe the united testimony of the early epistles on the imminent Coming of the Lord.

". . . . so that ye come behind in no gift; *waiting for the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (I Cor. i. 6, 7).

". . . . *the time is short*; it remaineth that both they that have wives be as thought they had none" (vii. 29).

"Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the *ends of the ages are come*" (x. 11 R.V.).

"Maranatha: *the Lord cometh*" (xvi. 22 margin).

"The God of peace *shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly*" (Rom. xvi. 20).

"The night is far spent, *the day is at hand*" (xiii. 12).

"*For a yet little while* and He that shall come will come and will not tarry" (Heb. x. 37).

"Ye turned to God *to wait for His son from heaven*" (I Thess. i. 9, 10).

"We which are *alive and remain to the Coming of the Lord*" (iv. 15).

"I pray God your whole spirit, and soul and body *be preserved blameless unto the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (v. 23).

"To you who are troubled *rest with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power in flaming fire*" (II Thess. i. 7 R.V.).

"Now we beseech you, brethren *by our gathering together unto Him*" (ii. 1).

"*The end of all things is at hand*" (I Pet. iv. 7).

"*The Coming of the Lord draweth nigh*" (James v. 8).

"The Judge *standeth before the door*" (v. 9).

"It is the last time (hour) *even now* are there many antichrists *whereby we know that it is the last time (or hour)*" (I John ii. 18).

This is an impressive list. Not only is it clear that believers at this period expected to be alive at the Lord's Coming, but *that Coming was looked upon as imminent*, and yet nearly 2,000 years have passed and still this great event has not taken place. This is surely one of the major problems of the N.T. and it is not resolved by assuming that the early Christians were mistaken in their beliefs. This would raise the problem of inspiration, enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and the very basis of the Christian faith. If they were mistaken here, they could be mistaken anywhere in their doctrine and all assurance would vanish. Nor can we accept the explanation that 'a thousand years is as a day with the Lord'. God has written His word to instruct us who are creatures of time and when He deals with time, *it is time as we know it*, that is of ordinary days, months and years. When He says 'quickly' He means quickly. It would be mockery to ask believers to hold fast under fierce persecution with a view to the Coming of Christ, if that Coming was not possible for another two millenniums.

Speaking generally, evangelical Christendom has ignored or bypassed this great problem, and its great Scriptural importance has been missed. The Divine promise to Israel, given through Peter's lips in Acts iii. 19-26, that, if the nation of Israel repented and turned to God, their sins would be forgiven and blotted out, the Lord Jesus would be sent back to them and the times of restoration and setting up of the earthly kingdom as revealed through the O.T. prophets would come to pass, is the key to this difficulty. In view of this, no wonder believers looked on the Lord's Second Coming as being a possibility in their lives and all the passages we have quoted reinforce this fact. The so-called orthodox position, having set Israel aside as being cast off by God at the crucifixion, throws away the key to the understanding of the Acts of the Apostles and then wonders why it has no Scriptural answer to such far reaching statements as that of Peter, 'the end of all things has drawn near', or John ". . . we know it is the last hour . . ." (I John ii. 18), or Paul "the ends of the ages are come" (I Cor. x. 11 R.V.).

All these statements were completely true at the time they were written (i.e. during the Acts period), and clearly indicate that the end of the age was near and the return of the Lord Jesus was imminent, all, humanly speaking, depended upon the repentance of Israel. The fact that they were not going to be 'converted' or 'turned' to God at this time, was known to Him only, and no believer could have had any idea what God would do in such a circumstance. The temptation is great to read into these portions of Scripture future events and the condition of things *after* the Acts. If we do this, we nullify truth, blind our own minds and lose a correct understanding of the purpose of God. Always we must seek to put ourselves in the place of those to whom the portion of Scripture we are studying was given, and to go as far as the truth was explicitly revealed to them and no further.

If only believers could see that the near Coming of Christ was a possibility during the Acts period and will be truth again when God's prophetic clock starts once more and He resumes His dealings with Israel and Daniel's 70th week of years runs its course, they would then be in a position to consider and understand the Scriptures that deal with the *interval between these events* and reveal what God has been doing during this time. In other words the truth that covers *this age* would then stand out sharply in all its clearness

and speak to heart and mind, giving Divine illumination and guidance as to where believers stand today in the Divine purpose of the ages, their calling and the practical response in testimony and service that the Lord is requiring from them.

Coming back to I Thess. iv. 15-18, we note that the Apostle again stresses that what he is teaching is the “Word of the Lord”. There is no room here then for his own ideas. This is Christ’s revelation on the hope of the believer then obtaining. He assures the Thessalonian believers that those who are living when the Lord returns will on no account precede (prevent—old English of the A.V.) or realize their hope before believers who have died. There was no need for them to worry about loved ones who had fallen asleep. They would not be left behind but would rise from their graves first and then those who are living would be caught away to join them in the clouds and so—IN THIS WAY, and only in this way, would they *be with the Lord Jesus* for ever.

Together they would meet the Lord as He descends to the air. The word “meet” is the Greek *apantesis*. It has the thought of meeting with the idea of *returning*. Such is its meaning in Matt. xxv. 6, where the midnight cry exhorts the ten virgins to go out and *meet* the Bridegroom as he comes: also in Acts xxviii. 15, where the brethren go as far as the Apii Forum to *meet* Paul and return with him to Rome.

“When a dignitary paid an official visit or *parousia* to a city in Hellenistic times, the action of the leading citizens in going out to meet him and escorting him on the final stage of his journey was called the *apantesis*” (F. F. Bruce, D.D.).

This is all in line with the hope of the Acts period. The one hope that dominates this period is Israel’s hope (Acts xxvi. 6, 7; xxviii. 20). Rom. xv. 12, 13 links this hope with the millennial chapter of Isa. xi., making quite clear that it is to be realized *on the earth*. What more natural then, that those who share in it should return to the earth with the returning Lord and the holy angels, at the *parousia* He revealed so clearly in Matt. xxiv. 27-31?

I Thess. iv. 15-17 does not teach that these saints are on the way to heaven. There is not the slightest hint here, that, after descending into the air, the Lord takes them back to heaven or the heavenly Jerusalem, yet this idea is often supplied in the minds of believers who are not careful to check their conceptions with what God has written and revealed.

The Lord descends with a “shout” *keleusma*. This means ‘the word of command’ and note its one occurrence in the LXX (Prov. xxx. 27). “With the voice of the archangel.” Scripture gives us his name—Michael (Jude 9) and in Dan. xii. 1 he is linked with Israel (the children of Daniel’s people) and the Great Tribulation and this definitely fits the time described by the Lord in Matt. xxiv. and Israel’s hope as we have seen. This is again confirmed by the next statement “and with the trumpet of God”. I Cor. xv. 51-53 links the believer’s hope in the Acts period with resurrection at the *last* trumpet. Now ‘the last trumpet’ presupposes a series, and *the only series of trumpets in the N.T. are in the Book of Revelation*. The ‘last trumpet’, the seventh, leads us to the same point as I Thess. iv., the realization of the kingdom of the Lord on the earth (Rev. xi. 15), which most clearly takes place at His *parousia* or Second Coming.

It is pathetic to see the efforts of some expositors who seek to dissociate ‘the last trump’ of I Cor. xv. from the seventh trumpet of the Revelation. This is obviously because they are confusing the ‘things that differ’ and seeking to make the hope of the period covered by the Acts, the hope of the church *after* the Acts as revealed in Paul’s prison epistles, which is definitely not the *parousia* of Matt. xxiv. or I Thess. iv., with its *earthly* goal, but a hope that takes us to the glory of heaven’s holiest of all.

No.6. v. 1 - 28.
pp. 115 - 119

Chapter v. commences with the words, “But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you (or better as R.V. ‘that aught be written unto you’)”. Why? Because their calling and its hope had no connection with times or seasons? So some teach who see no difference between the position and hope of the churches formed during the Acts, and the church of the joint-Body revealed afterwards. But the reason given by the Apostle Paul is very different and perfectly simple—they knew already. “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.” This they had most probably learned from his oral ministry. That he had given them detailed instruction verbally concerning the prophetic period known as the Day of the Lord and such happenings as the rise of the man of sin II Thess. ii. 15 makes clear.

They knew that the Day of the Lord would come suddenly and without warning as a thief in the night. This most important prophetic time has its first occurrence in the Scriptures in Isa. ii. 12 and there are nineteen other occurrences in the O.T. The N.T. has three direct references (I Thess. v. 2; II Thess. ii. 2; II Pet. iii. 10) and if we include Rev. i. 10 “the Lord’s Day”, we have four. The main theme is the exaltation of Jehovah over all the earth and the abasement of man (Isa. ii.). Now God is silent and man has all the say—it is “man’s day”. When God begins to take a direct hand in government of this world, resuming his dealings with Israel and intervenes in history by the Second Advent of Christ, “the Lord alone will be exalted in that day” (Isa. ii. 11, 17) and all opposition of men will be silenced. This is the prophetic time following this age of grace.

“When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them,
as travail upon a woman with child: and they shall in no wise escape” (v. 3 R.V.).

Evidently the Apostle means the unbelieving world at large when he uses the word ‘they’. The crying need of the world is peace and safety and never more so than with the generation in which we live. The threat of war and the ever mounting weapons of destruction devised by man make these themes of paramount importance. The prophetic Scriptures make it clear that, at the end of this age, Satan will produce a spurious world peace.

“And the dragon (Satan) gave him (the Beast) his power and his throne and great authority and the whole world wondered after the Beast; and they worshipped the dragon, because he gave his authority unto the Beast; and they worshiped the Beast, saying who is like unto the Beast; and *who is able to war with him?*” (Rev. xiii. 2-4).

Satan now has authority over the air (Eph. ii. 2) and whoever can control the aerial regions, dominates the earth. The Beast receives this Satanic power at the end time and so is able to guarantee peace in exchange for world worship. This is all part of the gigantic deception which characterizes the close of this age—world peace without Christ! Paul, however, reminds the Thessalonians that the enlightenment of the Truth has saved them from such deception and darkness.

“But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief” (I Thess. v. 4).

He does not say this period would not overtake them, but that it would not find them unprepared and overtake them *as a thief*, which is a different matter. The Second Coming to the earth of the Lord Jesus would not only be the hope of the believer at this time, but would fall as a sudden catastrophic blow on an unbelieving world, just as Daniel portrays the stone cut without hands (the Lord Jesus) smashing the whole Image of Nebuchadnezzar (Gentile dominion) and destroying it completely. The Apostle goes on to remind them that they are ‘sons of light’ (verse 5 R.V.), and as such they must watch and be sober. He then once more brings in the three graces around which this epistle is woven.

“But let us, who are of the day, be sober putting on the breastplate of *faith and love*; and for an helmet, the *hope* of salvation” (verse 8).

This is only another way of ‘putting on the Lord Jesus Christ’ and making no provision for the flesh. There was no excuse for the instructed believer at this time becoming drowsy or unwatchful. He was exhorted to be on the alert continually and ready for the Lord’s arrival. The word ‘wake’ of the A.V. in verse 10 is the same as ‘watch’ of verse 6 and should be so translated. The goal is the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ so that the believer ‘should live together with Him’, and this living and being with Him is once more linked by implication with His Return and not with death.

“Wherefore encourage one another, and build each other up, even as also you are doing” (verse 11).

The Apostle lays great stress upon positive building up in the truth throughout his epistles (see Rom. xiv. 19; I Cor. xiv. 26; II Cor. xii. 19; Eph. iv. 11, 12, 15, 16, 29; Col. ii. 7). There can be no substitute for this, whether we are dealing with the Acts period or the present age. Where this is ignored, immaturity, spiritual weakness and ineffectiveness surely follow.

The Thessalonian believers are now exhorted to highly esteem their leaders.

“But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work’s sake” (verse 13 R.V.).

This is high commendation indeed, and it may be that the staunch and fruitful witness of this church was largely due to their faithful and enthusiastic leaders. Verses 14 and 15 may have been written for their guidance.

“And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all” (14 R.V.).

The word ‘disorderly’ (‘unruly’ A.V.) is *ataktous* which literally means ‘those who do not remain in the ranks’. Dr. F. F. Bruce’s note here is ‘or those who play truant’, referring to loafers (Moffatt) who neglected their daily duty and lived in idleness. Such would be a continual source of trouble and must be checked. There is a similar reference in II Thess. iii. 11, 12.

The Apostle now reminds them of the need for continual rejoicing, unceasing prayer and giving thanks, for this was the will of God for them, as it is for believers of all dispensations. This is the atmosphere in which the Christian life and witness should be lived and it is the only one in which it can flourish. The next injunctions relate specially to Pentecost gifts.

“Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things. Hold fast that which is good” (19, 20).

The special gifts which were peculiar to the Acts period are made clear in I Cor. xii. They were given by the Holy Spirit and distributed to believers as He willed. The gift of prophecy was one of them, hence it was not so much the Holy Spirit who could be quenched, but the special gift he had given. “The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (I Cor. xiv. 32). No one was compelled by irresistible power to use whatever gift had been given. It could be neglected and therefore ‘quenched’. The warning not to ‘quench the Spirit’ was specially related to believers living in the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles. Not only could these gifts be quenched, they could be counterfeited and so the Thessalonian saints are warned to ‘prove all things’.

These sign gifts were not an unmixed blessing, for they gave the Enemy an opportunity of doing his clever work of copying and imitating the work of God in order to deceive. Those today who long for them back should remember this and the dangers attached to them. For ourselves, we are thankful to realize that we belong to a calling where there are none, but every blessing is spiritual and connected with riches beyond dreams associated with the Lord Jesus at the right hand of God (Eph. i. 3, 18; iii. 16-19).

“Hold fast that which is good. Abstain from every appearance (form R.V.) of evil” (21).

These two commands are evidently complimentary. *Eidos* evil has at least two meanings: (1) outward appearance; (2) kind. The A.V. leans to (1); the R.V. to (2). Both meanings are suitable to the context. Holding fast that which is good must necessarily exclude all evil whether in appearance or fact.

The epistle continues:

“And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (23, 24 R.V.).

We have the God of peace in Rom. xv. 33, Phil. iv. 9 and in this context. Peace with God and the peace of God is wonderful, but the Giver must ever be greater than His gift! Here He is the Sanctifier, setting apart believers to His will, and guarding them, the Second Coming of the Lord being in view all the time, for, as we have seen this hope dominates the epistle. It is doubtful whether verse 23 can be interpreted as teaching a tripartite nature for man. Mark xii. 30 could be used to teach a fourfold nature for man, but would be straining the context so to do. The Apostle is not aiming to set forth a tripartite nature. His object is clear; he is desiring that each believer should be preserved alive and blameless to the Lord’s Coming back to the earth.

“Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do (or perform) it” (24).

Paul is assured of the mighty power of God who can accomplish all this. The epistle closes with a request for prayer by the Apostle for himself. He puts his own needs last, just as he does in Ephesians (Eph. vi. 19). It is so good to realize that this great servant of Christ was not so strong and independent that he could disregard the intercessory ministry of others on his behalf. Prayer along the lines of the Lord’s will, makes a difference as Phil. i. 19 and Philemon 22, clearly show. Here is service for the Saviour that is often disregarded perhaps because there is nothing to show for it *externally*. Those who assess Christian work by what they call ‘results’ may not be greatly drawn to such a hidden ministry. But a ministry it is and one of vast importance in whatever age we deal with. God’s people are not like mechanical toys, wound up, as it were, by Him and forced in all they do day by day. The private prayer life of each one of us reflects accurately our spiritual condition and practical response to God’s Truth.

Paul concludes by charging the Thessalonians that this epistle be read to all the believers in the assembly.

“I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (27, 28).

The word ‘charge’ is *horkizo* ‘to cause someone to swear or take an oath’. The R.V. following the critical Greek texts has the strengthened form of *enorkizo* translating it ‘adjure’. There was evidently an important reason why Paul uses this solemn word to urge that this letter be read to everyone belonging to the Thessalonian church, though it is difficult for us to decide today exactly what it was. Possibly the reason was for those who were unruly, so that they should hear his warnings.

And so we come to the end of the epistle of “faith, hope and love”, wherein is recorded a faith that was constantly growing, a hope that burned all the brighter because of the possibility of the Lord’s early return, and a love which showed itself by responding

and making the most of the time that was left in spreading the Gospel and the wonders of God's redeeming grace.

The SECOND Epistle to the THESSALONIANS

No.1. i. 1 - 9.
pp. 124 - 128

The second letter to the Thessalonians, like the first, is addressed to the church of the Thessalonians by Paul, Silvanus and Timothy. It was evidently sent not long after the first letter, possibly from Corinth. When the Apostle send a second letter to a church, it was normally to correct misunderstanding arising from the first letter, or an expansion of some aspect of truth that had not been fully understood. We have seen that the first letter revolves around the graces of 'faith, hope and love'. Both faith and love are mentioned in the introduction to this second letter.

“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your *faith* groweth exceedingly, and the *charity* (love) of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth” (i. 3).

But as we read on we find that *hope* is missing, and it was largely because some had misunderstood his teaching concerning the Lord's Second Coming, possibly being misled by a spurious epistle purporting to come from him (ii. 2), that the Apostle writes this second epistle as a corrective.

Before we go any further, we set out the structure of the epistle as a whole:

II Thessalonians.

- A | i. 1, 2. Grace and peace.
- B | a | i. 3-10. Bound to thank. Counted Worthy.
 - b | i. 11, 12. Prayer for you. Work of faith.
 - c | ii. 1-12. We beseech. Man of lawlessness, his coming and deception.
- B | a | ii. 13-15. Bound to thank. Obtaining the glory.
 - b | ii. 16 - iii. 5. Pray for us. Good work.
 - c | iii. 6-15. We command. Disorderliness.
- A | iii. 16-18. Peace and grace.

The outstanding section is B | c | ii. 1-12 dealing with the coming of the man of lawlessness, the son of perdition and the lying miracles whereby he accomplishes mass deception. The whole subject is compressed because Paul had dealt with it in detail when he was with the Thessalonian saints. He reminds them of this (ii. 15), and it is the compression of a complicated prophetic subject that makes this passage one of the most difficult to interpret in the N.T.

Coming back to chapter i., the Apostle highly commends them for their courageous endurance in persecution, which was a proof of the genuineness of their faith:

“. . . . we ourselves glory (boast) in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations which ye endure” (i. 4).

Anechesthe, ye endure, is in the present tense, *you are enduring*, showing that the persecution was still going on when Paul wrote. He was greatly cheered as he saw this practical demonstration of the reality of their faith, the faith that keeps steadfast under suffering. In the first letter he had reminded them that this was part of God’s will for them.

“that no man should be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto”,

so that they might be ‘counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer’ (II Thess. ii. 5). Tribulation is the translation of *thlipsis* which is used four times either as a noun or verb in this context (verses 4, 6 and 7). It is difficult to bring this over into English as we have no verb associated with the word tribulation. If we render *thlipsis* ‘oppression’, then somewhat literally we have:

“Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense *oppression* to those who *oppress* you. And to you who are *oppressed*, rest with us at the apocalypse (revelation) of the Lord Jesus from heaven with His might angels”

The R.V. preserves the insistence on these words by translating *thlipsis* ‘affliction’, “if so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense *affliction* to them that *afflict* you, and to you that are *afflicted* rest with us” There is an even-handed justice being worked out here. The suffering endured by the Thessalonian believers would be meted out by the Lord to their persecutors and this, said the Apostle, was a righteous thing. The Lord’s apocalypse or revelation is brought before them as the final solution of their sufferings. Then, after all the tension and affliction, there would be relaxation and rest.

“And to you that are *afflicted* rest with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power, in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (7-9 R.V.).

Anesis, rest, is a vivid word which means release from tension, a sudden ending to all the testing and persecution. This apocalypse is the same event as described in Rev. xix., Matt. xxiv. 25, 31, (see also I Cor. i. 7; I Pet. i. 7, 13). It is not possible to introduce a secret coming in any of these passages. Those who do so bring confusion into the context. Nor is it sound exposition to try and make the coming, *parousia*, the personal arrival or presence of the Lord detailed in I Thess. iv., different from His *revelation* here. In I Thessalonians believers are waiting for the Son from heaven and this is bound up with the *Parousia*. The same believers are told in II Thessalonians that they would obtain rest from suffering at the Lord’s *revelation* from heaven with His mighty angels, therefore these two terms must refer to the same event, which Matt. xxv. 31 links with His arrival on the earth with power and great majesty, the King of kings and Lord of lords of Rev. xix. The Thessalonian saints could not have had two different phases of the Lord’s descent from His present glory as their hope at one and the same time.

The revelation of the Lord Jesus not only meant deliverance and vindication for the saints of the Acts period, but judgment on their enemies, those who know not God and obey not the gospel. 'Taking vengeance' in verse 8 is literally *giving* vengeance. The R.V. translates *rendering* vengeance. *Ekdikesis*, vengeance, is a late Greek word from *ekdikeyo* to vindicate, or give justice. This is not the action of a revengeful God, but a God of *justice* bringing retribution upon those ensnared in the lie of Babylonianism at the end time, so graphically described in the book of Revelation. These shall 'suffer punishment', *diken tisousin*. *Tisousin* is the future of an old verb *тино* and occurs only here in the N.T. It means literally to pay compensation for a wrong done, to pay penalty. *Dike* is right or justice, and was the name of the heathen goddess of Justice or Nemesis. The phrase is therefore 'a penalty shall pay' and this is described as *olethron aionion*, literally age-long ruin.

Olethros occurs three more times in the N.T. and wise are we if we let these references colour our theology and not vice versa.

"To deliver such an one to Satan for the *destruction* of the *flesh* (not the whole person)" (I Cor. v. 5).

"When they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden *destruction* cometh upon them" (I Thess. v. 3).

". . . . many foolish and hurtful lusts which *drown* men in *destruction* and perdition" (I Tim. vi. 9).

In none of these cases can eternal conscious suffering be substituted. In the first case the 'destruction' only applies to the *flesh*, but the *spirit* is saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (I Cor. v. 5). The verse in I Thessalonians does *not* teach that hell-fire suddenly comes to those on the earth who say 'peace and safety'. The eternal future of such is settled later at the day of judgment. In the third reference Paul is warning *believers* against seeking to be rich and the snares that come from such a course of action. Note the figurative language used—*drown* not burn men in destruction. We must be careful to understand *olethros* as a *result* and not a process, and consider it in the light of such statements as "eternal judgment" (Heb. vi. 2 not eternal *judging*); eternal salvation (Heb. v. 9 not eternal saving). It is the eternal or better age-long *effect* of an act or state that is stressed. *Olethros aionios* occurs nowhere else in the N.T. but it is found in 4Maccabees 10:15 'the eternal destruction of the tyrant' i.e. Antiochus Epiphanes, which likewise does not support the popular conception of hell.

Concerning *aionios*, Dr. A. T. Robertson says "*aionios* in itself only means age-long and the papyri and inscriptions give it in the weakened sense of a Caesar's life (see Milligan)" *Word Pictures in the N.T.* We believe Dr. Weymouth did the right thing in his N.T. translation rendering *aion* and *aionios* as age and age-long, and this is in line with the contemporary Greek of N.T. times. Much light can be gained by seeing the revelation of the great span of time sub-divided into ages in the Bible, and all this is lost if eternal and eternity is substituted. In no way is our future as believers jeopardized, for such a future does not depend upon a word like *aion*, but rests on the glorious fact that the redeemed are permanently *united to the risen Saviour who can die no more*. "Because I live, ye shall live also", He said. "Christ being raised from the dead *dieth no more*; death

hath no more dominion over Him” (Rom. vi. 9). Nor is this limited meaning of *aion* and *aionios* invalidated because it is used of God and salvation. While the phrase ‘the eternal God’ sounds very majestic, and ‘the eonian God’ or the ‘God of the ages’ seems a poor substitute, yet this is nearer Scriptural truth, for this adjective does not touch or describe the being or attributes of God; rather that He is the origin or creator of the great span of time, during which He is working out His great redemptive purposes. Heb. i. 2 tells us that through Christ the *ages were made* (not ‘world’ as A.V.), and Isa. ix. 6 agrees with this, describing literally the Child that is born as the ‘Father (i.e. Origin) of the ages’, not ‘everlasting Father’ (A.V.). Christ is the God of the ages, the eonian God, and it is the ages that span the Bible. Because there are so vast and long that we cannot see their end, we have no right to assume they are the same as eternity.

Eternity can definitely be predicated both of God and the believer, but this is not explained in Biblical revelation, and it matters not how much the words ‘eternal’ and ‘eternity’ are rolled on the tongue, the fact is that we know absolutely nothing of the eternal state for the simple reason that God has not seen fit to reveal it. Evidently it is too much for our present limited understanding and we are far wiser to keep to the exact statements of Holy Writ and not let our imagination run away with us into idle speculation and guesswork.

There is a false argument based upon the word *aionios* that is sometimes used by evangelicals concerning Matt. xxv. 46, “And these (the goat nations living at the time of the Lord’s Return) shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal”. ‘Everlasting’ and ‘eternal’ here are translations of *aionios* and should be consistently rendered by one word as the R.V. attempts to do. The reasoning above mentioned is along these lines: the believer’s life is eternal; the same word is used of the unbeliever and therefore the punishment of such must also be eternal and this is usually held as meaning eternal conscious torment and suffering too terrible for the human mind to comprehend.

On the surface this may look like sound reasoning, but there are at least three fallacies underlying such a conception. (1) First of all it must be proved *from Scriptural usage* that *kolasis*, punishment, means eternal conscious suffering. See its only other occurrence in the N.T. in I John iv. 18 (‘torment’), and carefully note whether it applies to the saved or the unsaved. (2) This idea assumes that what a limited number of mankind receive at the Second Advent, i.e. certain nations living at this time, is true of *all* unbelievers from Adam onward and so makes this judgment God’s assize for all the unsaved, assuming the resurrection of the wicked, whereas no resurrection is mentioned in the context. This is confusing this judgment with that of the Great White Throne (Rev. xx.). (3) A false deduction is made from translating *aionios* as eternal, whereas in both cases *aionios* should be more accurately rendered *age-long*, leaving what is beyond in the hands of Him who not only made the ages, but who is bringing His ‘plan of the ages’ (so the literal rendering of Eph. iii. 11) with its age-long salvation, to a glorious finish, and then will follow the now incomprehensible wonders of eternity.

No.2. i. 10 - ii. 5.
pp. 145 - 149

After describing the apocalypse of the Lord from heaven to the earth with His mighty angels, a stupendous event which is referred to in Luke ix. 26, “. . . . when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels”, and also Matt. xxiv. 29-31, xxv. 31, the Apostle Paul refers to it as ‘rest’ for the believer, who belongs to the company of the saved of the Acts period, and age-long destruction or deprivation from the face of the Lord for those who know not God and obey not the gospel (II Thess. i. 9). Professor F. F. Bruce’s note here is “Everlasting destruction, i.e. the destruction of the age to come, with decisive implication of finality. It consists of exclusion from the presence of the Lord, with whom alone is ‘the fountain of life’.”

The next two verses are better given in the R.V.:

“. . . . when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day. To which end we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfil every desire of goodness and every work of faith, with power; that the Name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The glorifying and exalting of the Lord Jesus is the subject of this section. Paul longs that the Name of the Saviour shall be glorified in the present experience of these Thessalonian believers and not only this, but he directs their minds forward to His Second Advent when He shall be more fully glorified in them and marveled at by each one as they see Him at last in all His wonder and majesty returning as King of kings and Lord of lords to take control and be vindicated and exalted in the earth that once rejected Him. These words describe an overwhelming experience, as the realization of the hope of every calling of God’s people must surely do, and it was sufficient to enable these sufferings saints to hold fast and endure to the end and so practically exhibit the fact that they had been counted worthy of their calling and of the Kingdom of God for which they were suffering (verses 5 and 11).

In chapter ii. the Apostle comes closer to the difficulties that were troubling some of them, causing them to have a wrong conception of their hope and the events leading up to the Lord’s Second Advent:

“Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him: to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is now present” (II Thess. ii. 1, 2 R.V.).

Paul’s subject is still the Lord’s Coming, not ‘by the Coming’ as the A.V. but ‘touching the Coming’ as the R.V. translates. Here he uses the word *parousia* instead of *apocalupsis* of i. 7, showing that these words describe the same glorious event. By the overruling of the Spirit of God both these words are kept to the Gospels and the Acts and

the epistles written by the apostles of the circumcision, Peter and John. They do not describe the hope of the Body of Christ as revealed in Paul's prison letters. This church as a heavenly company, has a heavenly hope, one that is realized in the heaven of heavens where Christ is enthroned, and so the aspect of the Lord's return to the earth, described in the early Thessalonian epistles, is not its hope and we must not import into these epistles something that was going to be revealed through Paul the prisoner later on.

“Our gathering together unto Him” *episunagoge*. This word contains the word ‘synagogue’ in its make-up and occurs only once more in the N.T. namely Heb. x. 25. In its verbal form it occurs seven times (Matt. xxiii. 37; xxiv. 31; Mark i. 33; xiii. 27; Luke xii. 1; xiii. 34). The ‘gathering together’ here is a reference back to I Thess. iv. 17, the ‘catching away’ to meet the Lord in the air. The Apostle now puts his finger upon the causes which were misleading and upsetting some of the saints. He is concerned lest they are ‘shaken in’ their minds and ‘troubled’. *Saleuo*, shaken, means to agitate, to cause to totter like a reed (Matt. xi. 7), or the earth being shaken (Heb. xii. 26). *Throemai* (from *throos*, clamour, tumult) means ‘to be in a state of nervous excitement’ (A.T. Robertson). In both cases this state of mind played into the hands of the enemy who is always trying to undermine the peace and the confidence of the believer. ‘Either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us.’ Here were the means Satan was using—false revelation from evil spirits, travesty of the spiritual gifts of prophecy and utterance that had been directly given to some by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. xii.); or a supposed ‘word’ or remark by the Apostle; or a spurious epistle purporting to come from him. By these means the assertion was made that ‘the day of the Lord is now present’ (verse 2 R.V. with the best Greek texts). Not ‘the day of Christ’ as A.V. but the great prophetic Lord’s Day of the O.T., a day when God will intervene in this world’s affairs in judgment. The first occurrence of this prophetic period is in Isa. ii. 12, 17, 19 (see also Isa. xiii. 6-13; Jer. xlvi. 10; Joel i. 15; ii. 1, 2; iii. 14; Amos v. 18-20). Some commentators make the mistake of using the day of the Lord and the Second Advent of Christ as interchangeable terms. Consequently, because Paul here definitely teaches that the day of the Lord was not yet present and that certain prophetic events must first take place, they assert that the Second Coming of Christ was not imminent or possible, and that the Apostle did not teach such a thing. But he most surely did, and so did Peter, James and John in their epistles written during this period.

“The end of all things *is at hand*” (I Pet. iv. 7).

“The Coming of the Lord *draweth nigh the Judge standeth before the door*” (v. 7-9).

“It is the last time (literally the last hour), *even now* are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time (hour)” (I John ii. 18).

To these passages must be added the following in I Corinthians, Romans, and Hebrews:

“. . . . so that ye come behind in no gift; *waiting for the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (I Cor. i. 6, 7).

“. . . . *the time is short*; it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none” (vii. 29, Yet after the Acts period the Apostle urges widows to marry—I Tim. v. 14).

“Now these things happened unto them by way of ensample; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the *ends of the ages are come* (literally, *the ends of the ages have arrived*)” (x. 11).

“Maranatha: *the Lord cometh*” (xvi. 22 margin).

“The God of peace *shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly*” (Rom. xvi. 20).

“The night is far spent, *the day is at hand*” (xiii. 12).

“*For a yet little while* and He that shall come will come and will not tarry” (Heb. x. 37).

The combined testimony of these passages is clear and definite. Believers at this time were being exhorted to avoid anything that would entangle or become a weight in view of the nearness of the Lord’s Coming, even to the extent of avoiding marriage. They were encouraged to hold fast during persecution because it might be ‘only a little while’ and the Lord would come back and that would mean deliverance. No one would have been helped to endure the discipline of suffering at that time by being pointed to an event that is even yet future to us. They might have been pointed to the Lord’s *strengthening grace* to assist them, but hardly to *His Second Advent*, if that event was not going to be realized until some 2,000 years later! The Apostle did not assert that the Second Coming of the Lord was fixed in the counsels of God to take place in the lifetime of believers then living, but of its *possibility*, the only ‘if’ being the ‘if’ of Israel’s repentance and conversion (Acts iii. 19-26), which fact had been proclaimed publicly by the Apostle Peter. We need to avoid the two extremes of viewpoint, both of which are erroneous: (1) that neither Paul or the other N.T. writers taught that the Lord’s coming was imminent; (2) that the Second Advent would *definitely* take place at that time. Let us remember that what ‘draws near’ can *withdraw*, if the Lord sees fit and His conditions are not realized. As with the earthly Kingdom purposes, so with the visible Return of the Lord, which is so intimately connected with its setting up, this too could be proclaimed as being ‘near’, if Israel obeyed the Divine command to repent and turn back to God, or to be withdrawn if they refused to do so.

Paul now states that the prophetic Day of the Lord would not take place until certain events had first occurred. They are (1) the apostasy; (2) the revelation of the man of sin, the son of perdition. We must not make the mistake of thinking that a long time must elapse before this was possible, or that these happenings would occupy a long period in running their course. The stage was already set in the Acts period for such conditions to develop. An age that could produce a monster like Nero could surely produce the wild Beast of Rev. xiii. and the episode of Herod in royal apparel, taking Divine honours (Acts xii.), is only a picture of events that this chapter in the Revelation also describes. The Apostle wrote:

“Let no man beguile you in any wise: for it (the Day of the Lord) will not be, except the falling away (apostasy) come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshiped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God. Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things?” (II Thess. ii. 3-6 R.V.).

There commences now a passage of Scripture that is exceedingly difficult to interpret. It has been called by expositors ‘the little Apocalypse’ because it gives much of the teaching of the Book of the Revelation in compressed form, the reason being that Paul

had expounded the subject to them in his *oral* ministry and therefore there was no need for minute detail when he wrote to them. We of course have not the Apostle's spoken ministry which doubtless treated the subject fully, and in this we are handicapped. The only sure help we can get is by comparing Scripture with Scripture and seeking the Holy Spirit's aid in understanding, and if we have this we have all that is necessary, although we may not be able to fully understand all that is latent in this passage.

Just as the Lord Jesus, when dealing with events leading up to His Second Advent, as recorded in Matt. xxiv., warned his followers against being deceived (verses 4, 6, 24), so the Apostle here warns the Thessalonian believers lest they should be 'beguiled' (3). Prophecy has always been the happy hunting ground of the spiritual charlatan and utmost caution is necessary when we seek to expound or understand it. If we take care to keep exactly to what Scripture says we cannot go wrong. The theories of the various prophetic schools need not bother us provided that we have the solid ground of revealed truth, with due regard to context, under our feet.

Paul now states explicitly that the Day of the Lord cannot take place until the apostasy sets in. The words 'falling away' are a rendering of the Greek *apostasias* a late form of *apostasis*. The LXX uses it for 'rebellion' in Josh. xxii. 22. It is also used in the Apocrypha concerning Antiochus Epiphanes who was enforcing the apostasy from Judaism to Hellenism. The only other occurrence of the word in the N.T. is found in Acts xxi. 21,

“. . . . thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to *forsake* Moses”

The thought behind the word is 'revolt' or 'rebellion', a willful departure from truth and this is obviously in direct contrast to the conception that the world is going to get better and better before Christ returns. Practically every context in the N.T. that deals with conditions prior to the Second Advent, portrays these as being utterly dark and unrelieved in gloom and departure from the Lord and Christian standards. This accords too with the teaching concerning the Day of the Lord in the O.T. Such a condition, the Apostle stated, will set in *before* the Day of the Lord. The next event would be the revelation of the man of sin, the son of perdition. *Apokalupto*, to reveal, gives us the word 'apocalypse' and occurs in verses 3, 6 and 8. It is the same word that is used of the revelation of Jesus Christ, the Lord's Second Advent, either as a noun or a verb, by both Peter and Paul (I Cor. i. 7; I Pet. i. 7, 13; iv. 13). It literally means to 'unveil' and we see that all the great happenings connected with the Lord's Return are travestied by Satan, the Cross and the Resurrection (Rev. xiii. 3, 12; xvii. 8) and here the Second Coming.

The phrase, 'the son of perdition', has already been used by the Lord of Judas Iscariot (John xvii. 12) and some have taught that the man of sin is Judas Iscariot resurrected. We do not think there is sufficient Scriptural evidence for this, but the man of sin is possibly one of the two Satanic personages of Rev. xiii. portrayed there as wild beasts.

Some have interpreted this passage as relating to the Emperor Gaius, who in 40A.D. attempted to have his statue set up in the Temple at Jerusalem. However, this was only

one of the end-time characteristics of the Acts period which we have before sought to show. It certainly did not fulfil II Thess. ii. 4. In his great discourse on the mount of Olives as recorded in Matt. xxiv., one of the events described by the Lord Jesus as a forerunner to His Second Advent, is the 'abomination of desolation' (Matt. xxiv. 15). This marks the beginning of the great time of persecution, known as the Great Tribulation, and the faithful Jewish remnant are warned to escape to the mountains as quickly as possible.

Certain it is that the Satan inspired world dictator of the end of this age will seek Divine honours and will receive them from the majority of the world's inhabitants (Rev. xiii. 3, 4, 8), the book of the Revelation making it clear that it is Satan who finally receives this worship which he has been scheming for since his fall.

No.3. ii. 6 - 12.
pp. 175 - 179

We now approach a section of the second chapter of II Thessalonian which bristles with difficulties in interpretation. We give it in the R.V. (ii. 6-9):

“And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breadth of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of His Coming; even he, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.”

It is obvious from this passage that *someone* or *something* is restraining or keeping in check the revelation of the man of sin. There have been varying explanations of this, such as:

- (1) The Roman Empire,
- (2) The Holy Spirit,
- (3) The Jewish State.

Regarding (1) there is an element of truth in it. Early in the Apostle's experience, the imperial power had protected him rather than hindered his message. As we have seen, it was his own nation, Israel that continually opposed and persecuted him. On more than one occasion, Paul had reason to be grateful to the Roman authorities who restrained the forces which opposed the truth as proclaimed by him. But very soon Rome was to produce that monster Nero, who many of the early Christians identified with the Beast. Nero came on the scene before the Apostle Paul finished his witness, exhibiting the very traits of the godless dictator of the end-time, and so Rome could hardly be the *fulfillment* of this passage which deals with the *restraining* of the man of lawlessness and his fearful deeds. In any case the Roman Empire has long since passed away and the lawless one has not been revealed.

(2) The Holy Spirit. Some evangelical expositors adopt this view, but when one asks what Scriptural support exists for it, one is met with a blank, for there is none. It is assumed that when the Church is raptured, the Holy Spirit departs from the earth, but if this is true, it means that believer such as the faithful Jewish remnant, who will have to live through this dread period, are left without the Holy Spirit's aid! The Lord Jesus described it as a time of 'great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved' (Matt. xxiv. 21, 22 R.V). In other words, it is the most terrible and desperate time of trouble in all the world's history. If ever those who determine to be faithful whatever the cost, even life itself, will need the Holy Spirit, it is at such a time. We reject such an interpretation as completely lacking in Scriptural support and unthinkable.

(3) The Jewish State. B. B. Warfield adopts this view. He writes:

"So soon as the Jewish apostasy was complete and Jerusalem given over to the Gentiles the separation of Christianity from Judaism, which had already begun, became evident to every eye; the conflict between the new faith and heathenism, culminating in and now alive almost only in Emperor-worship, became intense; and the persecuting power of the empire was inevitably let loose." (*Biblical and Theological Studies*).

But, as we have seen, the bulk of the Jewish nation was no *restrainer* of evil, very much the opposite, 'All the day long did I spread out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people' (Rom. x. 21 R.V.) is God's comment on Israel's attitude to him and His attitude to them during the Acts period.

There is yet another interpretation of this difficult passage which has the merit of finding the explanation in the words of Scripture, which after all is the only safe way. First of all let us note that the verb translated 'withhold' in verse 6 and 'let' in verse 7 is the same in the Greek and is *katecho*. The R.V. renders it in each case 'restrain'. *Katecho* means 'to hold firmly, to hold fast', and occurs nineteen times in the N.T. We have not space to quote in full each of these references, but we give a representative selection, leaving it to the searcher for truth to investigate all of them by means of a concordance:

"Who *hold* the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. i. 18).
"Being dead wherein we were *held*" (Rom. vii. 6).
"And yet *possessing* all things" (II Cor. vi. 10).
"*Hold fast* that which is good" (I Thess. v. 21).
"Whom I would have *retained* with me" (Philemon 13).
"If we *hold fast* the confidence" (Heb. iii. 6).
"If we *hold* the beginning" (Heb. iii. 14).
"Let us *hold fast* the profession" (Heb. x. 23).

"Hold fast" is therefore a good rendering of this Greek word. But we may ask 'what is it that holds fast the man of sin, and who is it that holds something fast' (verse 7), for *katecho* is a transitive verb and must have an object. It is omitted by the Figure *Ellipsis*

and should be supplied to complete the sense. The answer to our first question is found in Rev. ix. 1, 2 and xi. 7. The man of sin, that Satan inspired personage, is held fast by the 'bottomless pit' or better 'abyss' as rendered by the R.V., until the 'appointed season' or time of his manifestation to the world.

The second question finds its solution in Satan, who holds fast to his possessions in the aerial regions (see Eph. ii. 2) until he is taken out of the way or removed. How this happens Rev. xii. 7-17 describes. There is war in heaven; Michael and his angels fight against Satan and the fallen angels under his control, and the Deceiver is cast down to the earth with terrible results, leading to the Great Tribulation. When this happens, as a last desperate throw, Satan calls up his man from the abyss, and for a short time he dominates the whole world, Satan receiving, as we have seen, world worship through the Beast.

All this Paul must have explained in detail to the Thessalonian believers, for he says, "Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things?" Taking note of what we have seen of the usage of *katecho*, the following verses may be rendered as follows with explanations in brackets:

"And now ye know what holds him (the lawless one) fast, to the end that he may be revealed in his own appointed season (this is the abyss). For the secret of lawlessness already works; only there is one (Satan) who now holds fast (to the aerial regions), until he is taken out of way (i.e. cast out into the earth, Rev. xii. 9-12) and then shall be revealed that lawless one whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the spirit (or breath) of His mouth, and bring to nought by the brightness (*epiphaneia*) of His coming."

The Apostle, describing the destruction of the lawless one evidently has Isa. xi. 4 in mind.

"He shall smite the earth (or the oppressor) with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips, shall He slay the wicked (one)."

It takes the glory of the Lord's Coming and His almighty power to destroy this superhuman being. We believe it will be beyond the capacity of man to do this. furthermore it explains why the O.T. Scriptures, such as the prophecy of Daniel, deal somewhat mysteriously with his end. In Dan. xi. 44, 45 R.V. we read:

"But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: and he shall go forth with great fury to destroy and utterly to make away many. And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the sea and the glorious holy mountain; *yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him*",

but the prophet does not describe *how* he comes to his end. That is left to II Thess. to reveal.

Paul uses the word *epiphaneia* here which gives us our English word *epiphany*. He uses it in an adjectival way with the word *parousia*, which, as we have seen, is the characteristic word to describe the hope of the Acts period, the Lord's arrival back on this earth in power and great glory. *Parousia* is not used again by the Apostle after Acts xxviii., but *epiphaneia* is, standing by itself from this point onwards, and usually

rendered 'appearing', to set forth the new hope of the Body of Christ which is connected not with the air, but with the glory of the highest heaven where the Lord is now enthroned, and this church is seen positionally in Him (Eph. ii. 6). II Thess. ii. 8 is the only occurrence of *epiphaneia* before Acts xxviii., and then it is not used in a parallel way, but as an adjective describing the magnificence of the Lord's Second Advent as He descends to the earth. The wonder of the revelation of His glory in heaven's holiest of all to which the hope of the Body is linked, is beyond the power of words to adequately describe. It needs the illumination of the Holy Spirit (Eph. i. 17, 18), for it is far beyond all things earthly.

We note that Paul, under the guidance of the same Holy Spirit, does not hesitate to use *parousia* for the coming of the lawless one.

"Even he, whose coming (*parousia*) is according to the working of Satan, with all power, and signs and wonders of a lie (literally)."

Satan is no creator, but he is a marvelous imitator. It could appear that he copies or travesties the basic truths of Christianity to ensnare and deceive the whole world at the time of the end. Christ's death, resurrection and coming again are copied by Satan acting through the Beast:

"And I saw one of his heads as though it had been *smitten unto death; and his death stroke was healed*: and the whole earth wondered after the beast" (Rev. xiii. 3 R.V.).

"The beast that thou sawest, was and *is not*; and is *about to come up out of the abyss* and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, they whose name hath not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was, *and is not, and shall come*" (Rev. xvii. 8 R.V.).

Even the word of II Thess. ii. 9 describing the advent of the lawless one are used directly of the Holy Spirit and His miraculous gifts:

"God also bearing them witness, both with *signs and wonders* and with divers *miracles* and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will" (Heb. ii. 4).

All these Satanic happenings are the climax of the evil system described in the Word of God as *the lie*, originating from the Deceiver at his fall, and in direct conflict with God and the truth as personified in Christ. The great battle of the ages now leaves its 'mystery' form or secret working and comes right out into the open. There are two mysteries or secrets allied to these opposing forces and both are resolved in a *person*. The Beast, when manifested on the earth in his appointed time, is Satan personified (Rev. xiii.), or Satan's Messiah, or the mystery of lawlessness revealed. In opposition to this we have the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Mystery or Secret of God (Col. ii. 2 R.V.). Those who think that miracles are necessarily a proof that a deed is of Divine origin are going to fare very badly at this period of history. Satan, to a certain point, can work miracles, but they are *lying* miracles with one object—to *deceive*. How great this deception will be can now be appreciated and the need realized, of the Lord's warning when He was dealing with this very time:

"For there shall arise *false* Christs, and *false* prophets, and *shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect*" (Matt. xxiv. 24 R.V.).

The Apostle confirms this with the words:

“And with all *deceit* of unrighteousness for them that are perishing; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie (Greek, *the lie*); that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (II Thess. ii. 10-12 R.V.).

Having been deceived by Satan’s miracles, these dupes willingly accept the lie, which is his system of evil directed against Christ, and they reject the truth and so bring themselves under God’s judgment. They act like the early nations ‘who exchanged the truth of God for the lie’ (Rom. i. 25). At last, Satan gets what he has been scheming for since his fall, the worship of the world, aspiring to the position of God, Who alone has the right to receive this.

But for what a short period he triumphs! At the most it can be 3½ years, the last half of Daniel’s 70th week of years, and then the return of the Lord Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords shatters this ghastly nightmare, destroys the man of sin and the Deceiver is taken and shut up for a 1,000 years (Rev. xx. 3) in the abyss. Such are the momentous events which must have been explained by the Apostle Paul in his spoken ministry to the Thessalonian believers. Today we can only piece it together by comparing Scripture with Scripture and seeking the Spirit’s guidance.

**No.4. ii. 13 - iii. 6.
pp. 215 - 219**

We now commence another section of the epistle which balances i. 3-10 in the structure thus:

B | a | i. 3-10. Bound to thank. Counted Worthy.

B | a | ii. 13-15. Bound to thank. Obtaining the glory.

The Apostle, as he thinks of the Thessalonian believers with their loyalty and zeal in making known the truth, says:

“But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (II Thess. ii. 13, 14).

Paul evidently felt a debt to the Lord of thanksgiving for this church’s wholehearted response to the truth. Then, as He thinks of God’s purpose, he goes back to the ‘beginning’ and forward to the end when their hope would be realized, ‘the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ’, at His Second Advent to the earth. J. Denney writes: “The thirteenth and fourteenth verses of this chapter are a system of theology in

miniature. The Apostle's thanksgiving covers the whole work of salvation from the eternal choice of God to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ in the world to come."

What does the Apostle mean by "from the beginning"? If he alluded to the earliest days of his preaching at Thessalonica we should have expected a phrase like 'the beginning of the gospel' (Phil. iv. 15). As it stands, he doubtless meant the choice of God at the beginning of His great redemptive purpose. However there is an alternative reading which is interesting. "From the beginning" is *ap' arches*. The R.V. in the margin says "many ancient authorities read 'as firstfruits'." This would be *aparchen*, which looks similar to *ap' arches*. *Aparchen* is adopted by the Nestlè Greek text and the meaning would then be in line with James i. 18:

"Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of *firstfruits* of His creatures."

Actually this describes just what the Pentecostal churches were, that is, a firstfruits of the earthly kingdom. The longsuffering of God was still waiting for the obedience of the people of Israel to "repent and turn again" as commanded through Peter's lips (Acts iii. 19-26). Those who did respond were an earnest of the coming kingdom. Had the whole nation been obedient, that kingdom could have come and the world blessed through Israel as the kingdom of priests, the Divine channel of blessing.

The word 'salvation' in this context cannot be restricted to salvation from sin. The Apostle links with it sanctification wrought by the Spirit, a separation from Satan's sphere of domination and deception which the previous verses have described, and he adds 'and belief of the truth'. This is in sharp contrast to the 'lie' and its outworking in the miracles and wonders performed through Satan's power by the man of sin, and those who are deceived and do not 'love the truth', but willingly reject it. The faithful Thessalonian believers would be preserved unto salvation at the Lord's Coming.

The Apostle continues:

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."

Therefore, *ara oun*, is the practical conclusion to the preceding verses. "Accordingly then stand fast." *Steko* which is derived from the perfect active of *histemi*, to stand, in its N.T. usage generally has the meaning of 'stand fast' and not wavering.

"*Stand fast* therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Gal. v. 1).

". . . . I may hear of your affairs, that ye *stand fast* in one spirit" (Phil. i. 27).

"So *stand fast* in the Lord, my dearly beloved" (Phil. iv. 1).

Krateo is often translated to 'lay hold on' (Mark iii. 21; vi. 17; xii. 12). It means to have a masterful grip on a thing and in this context 'to hold fast' to the traditions which the Thessalonian believers had been taught. *Paradosis* (tradition) has an ominous sound to many Bible students. The Lord Jesus solemnly warned the Pharisees of rejecting and

making of none effect the Word of God by their traditions (Mark vii. 9, 13). Both Paul and Peter knew its blinding power:

“I persecuted the church of God being more exceedingly zealous of the *traditions* of my fathers” (Gal. i. 14).

“. . . . your vain conversation *received by tradition* from your fathers” (I Pet. i. 18).

This thing is one of the most potent forces in Satan’s hands to blind the eyes and veil the truth from believers as well as unbelievers. How many of God’s children are accepting certain things as truth, not because they have personally tested them from the Word of God and found them true, but because ‘Christians generally believe such things’, or they are ‘taught by this denomination or that’, or their parents believed them and so on. Such is tradition, and often believers are not only prepared to receive such ideas as truth, but even antagonize those who have taken the trouble to search the Scriptures and test and have found so much of it to be sheer error. It holds many a believer in a vice-like grip, and as the Saviour said, makes void the Word of God and empties it of its real import. How we all need to pray to be redeemed from tradition! No progress in the knowledge of the Truth can be made while we are in such bondage.

However, in the context we are considering, tradition is used in a *good* sense. *Paradosis* and *pardidomi* refer to what is handed over to one. Closely allied to this is the Greek verb *paralambano*, “to receive in turn” and both words are used by the Apostle in I Cor. xi. 23:

“For I have *received* (*parelabon*) of the Lord that which also I *delivered* (*paredokia*) unto you”

Before the N.T. was completed, the early churches rested upon the *oral* ministry of the apostles which they in turn had received from the Lord Jesus, either in the days of His flesh, like the ministers of the circumcision, or from Him in resurrection as the Apostle Paul. There was therefore a continuity in the transmission of Truth. With the completion of the N.T., the Word of God as a whole becomes the one basis for the Christian faith, and any addition becomes merely the word of man or tradition, a thing to be avoided at all costs.

Before the epistle closes, Paul uses the word ‘tradition’ once more in a good sense:

“Now we command you, brethren, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly and not after the *tradition which he received of us*” (iii. 6).

It is obvious then that we must take care in our handling of ‘tradition’, learning to rightly divide between the true and the false.

The Apostle now interposes a prayer that the Thessalonian saints be comforted and established, reminding them of the eternal love and consolation of the Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, and the good hope that was theirs through grace (16), the fact of grace stressing that this was entirely undeserved on their part. Having prayed for them, he requests prayer for himself and his witness:

“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may have free course (run R.V.) and be glorified, even as it is with you” (iii. 1).

The tense of the verb ‘pray’ is present and means ‘keep on praying’. Spasmodic intercession for others is useless. Effective praying is a work, a labour, as Epaphras well knew (Col. iv. 12), and must be persisted in to be of lasting value. It costs both in time and strength. The Apostle Paul knew only too well the opposition of the evil one, working largely through his Jewish opponents, and so he asks that the Word of truth may ‘run’ (R.V.) unhindered and be glorified in carrying out the purpose of its Divine Author. This running reminds one of Psa. cxlvii. 15:

“His Word *runneth* very swiftly.”

In this context we get one more example of the blending of prayer with the outworking of God’s plan. From one angle we might say that surely it was God’s will for His Word to run and prosper and all hindrances to be removed. Yet Paul did not hesitate to call for prayer that this might be realized in practice. Such praying is greatly needed today, for the blocks that Satan seeks to put in the pathway of the Word of Truth are no less at the present time than they were at the beginning. Lightfoot translates the phrase ‘may run and be glorified’, ‘may have a triumphant career’. This had already happened at Thessalonica and so Paul could add ‘even as it is with you’. We note too that both the verbs in the verse under consideration are in the present subjunctive tense, ‘may keep on running and being glorified’, that is, a continual experience, and we too today can use this prayer effectively.

Paul now makes a second and more personal request:

“And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith” (iii. 2).

“Deliver” is *ruomai*, to rescue, which occurs so graphically in Col. i. 13 where we are said to be *rescued* (delivered A.V.) from the authority of darkness. ‘Unreasonable’ is *atopos*, literally out of place, and then comes to mean ‘perverse’. The Apostle is referring to his Jewish opponents who dogged his footsteps wherever he went and violently opposed the truth proclaimed by him ‘for all men have not faith’. This means either faith in Christ, or do not hold the faith—faith being equivalent to truth; either is possible. The last word in the sentence is *pistis* faith. The next word is *pistos* faithful, there being a play upon words to bring into contrast the faithfulness of the Lord. He can be relied on however perverse men may be. “Faithful is the Lord, who will confirm (establish) you and will guard you from the evil one.” The A.V. reads impersonally ‘evil’, but the R.V. the ‘evil one’, i.e. Satan, and this promise is for the comfort of the Thessalonian believers.

Paul is assured that they carry out his commands and will continue to do so (verse 4). Here is a note of apostolic authority, yet with love behind it.

“And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ” (iii. 5 R.V.).

The love of God can be regarded here either objectively or subjectively. If subjectively then it refers to God's love for His children, or if objectively, their love for Him. The R.V. regards the phrase the 'patience of Christ' as relating to the patience shown *by* Christ rather than the believers 'patient waiting for Christ' as the A.V. There is no word for 'waiting' in the Greek. The example of His unflagging patience was to be the prime source of inspiration to any who were troubled.

With verse 6 a new section commences, going on to verse 15. In the structure of the epistle this balances the section ii. 1-12 thus:

B | c | ii. 1-12. We beseech. Lawlessness.
B | c | iii. 6-15. We command. Disorderliness.

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (iii. 6).

The Apostle now deals with some in the church who were lazy and giving a bad witness to an unbelieving world. *Ataktos* disorderly, is a military word 'to break rank' or 'play truant'. It occurs as an adjective, as we have seen in I Thess. v. 14, where it is translated 'unruly'. The doctrine of the Second Advent was being misinterpreted by some and used as an excuse to give up working. The saying that 'Satan finds mischief for idle hands to do' was well illustrated here. Paul declares that such were not only refusing to work, but were busybodies, interfering in other people's affairs, and so causing trouble"

"For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly working not at all, but are busybodies" (iii. 11).

Again there is a play upon words in the Greek. Moffatt brings it over well into English by rendering: "Busybodies instead of busy." As a contrast to this the Apostle brings forward his own example, how he worked night and day so that he would not be chargeable to any one of them. How absolutely practical was this great man of God! Later on to the church at Philippi he could write:

"Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (iv. 9).

Only one who is living very close to the Lord could write like this without idle boasting. May it be the aim of both writer and reader so to combine doctrine and practice, that it can be said truthfully that we are living epistles known and read of all men.

No.5. iii. 6 - 18.
pp. 236 - 240

We are dealing with a section of this epistle (iii. 6-15) where the Apostle Paul has to reprimand some who were ceasing to work and interfering in the affairs of others. He could draw the attention of the Thessalonian believers to his own example:

“For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us, for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you. Neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you. Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us” (iii. 7-9).

The word ‘follow’ in verses 7 and 9 is *mimeomai* from *mimos*, an actor, a mimic. It only occurs elsewhere in Heb. xiii. 7 and III John 11, where the R.V. correctly translates it “imitate”. The Apostle could always draw attention to the way he combined doctrine and practice. He had set before the Thessalonian church a Christ-like example, working night and day at his trade of leather work, so that he might not be a financial burden to them. He had previously drawn their attention to this in his first epistle (I Thess. ii. 9, 10). At the same time he reminds them that he had the apostolic authority (power, II Thess. iii. 9) to be supported by them, but he waived it in order to be an example in all things. The Greek reads literally, ‘but that we might give ourselves a type to you’.

“For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly (*ataktos*), working not at all, but are busybodies” (10, 11).

The Apostle quotes what is apparently a Jewish proverb based on Gen. iii. 19. Those who refused to work, had no claim to receive food. Deissmann (*Light from the Ancient East*) sees Paul borrowing a piece of workshop morality, and it was plainly needed. There has always been a tendency to regard labour as a curse, something to be avoided as far as possible, and much of the labour trouble in the world today has its roots in this mistaken idea. But when Adam sinned, God cursed the ground *for his sake* (Gen. iii. 17), for the worst possible thing for a sinner, is to have nothing to do to occupy his time. Such a situation always results in boredom and further declension, and the Apostle is concerned that this should not spread any further in the church at Thessalonica. The imperfect tense of the verb ‘command’ shows that more than once he had urged such to diligence. Again he uses a play upon words, *ergazomenous alla periergazomenous*. Moffatt renders it well, “busybodies instead of busy”, that is, minding everyone’s business but their own, and this as a result of idling and sponging upon others.

“Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (iii. 12-15).

Note how Paul combines the note of authority with a certain amount of tenderness, 'we command and *exhort*'. The Apostle was no hard autocrat. He knew how to blend firmness with love and so to handle wisely such difficult situations that sometimes arise among believers. The words 'by our Lord Jesus Christ' indicate clearly that he was Christ's spokesman. It was as though the Lord Himself was speaking and commanding and so always ought we to regard the teaching given through Paul. Paul the man is only a channel, 'less than the least of all saints' (Eph. iii. 8), but as the Apostle (sent one) of Christ Jesus he speaks with all the Lord's authority. Would that professing Christendom could grasp this truth. They would then cease to talk of 'Pauline doctrine' or to set up the teaching given through Christ in the days of His flesh as being superior to that He gave through the Apostle. In both, the Lord Jesus is the Author of the teaching, but in each case it is received through a human channel. His ministry when on earth being mediated to us by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and His heavenly ministry through the witness of Paul to us who are Gentiles, and the twelve apostles to the circumcision (Jew).

In the case of the Lord's earthly ministry, we have it on His authority that it was limited to the people of Israel (Matt. xv. 24) and with this agrees Rom. ix. 3-5, xv. 8; also that the fullness of revelation was *yet* future, awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit (John xvi. 12-14) and the time when in Resurrection and Ascension He Himself would have no such limitations as to one people. The false idea that the 'words of Jesus' (the Gospels) give a higher revelation and are more authoritative than the epistles, are the cause of much of the spiritual blindness and stunted spiritual growth that we see around us today in the Christian world. This conception is a present exaltation in glory and the church's close association with Him there, from being realized and enjoyed by the believer. We who have had opened eyes in this respect need to combat such false ideas with all the energy and wisdom possible, for, until these are removed from the mind, any testimony concerning the unsearchable riches of Christ revealed in Paul's prison epistles will be practically valueless.

So we see that, in the context we are dealing with, the Apostle could command as from the Lord, and expect to be obeyed by the faithful. The indolent are charged to work with quietness and eat what comes from their own labour, and then he writes to the whole assembly. Paul exhorts them not to be 'weary in well doing', that is, the 'right of honourable thing'. This is the only occurrence of *kalopoieo* in the N.T., but it is used in the LXX, and the Apostle uses a like expression in II Cor. xiii. 7, *to kalon poiete* 'do that which is honest', Rom. vii. 21 'to do good' and very similarly to II Thess. iii. 13 in Gal. vi. 9 'let us not be weary in well doing'. A similar word *agathoerges* 'to do good' is found in I Tim. vi. 18.

Paul's last word to the idlers and busybodies is now given. All such are to be 'marked men' ('note that man'). *Semeioo* is from *semeion*, a sign, token or mark. The faithful are not to mix with (have company with) such, in order to bring the offenders to a sense of shame. Such discipline was remedial in its object and was not excommunication as verse 15 shows. Such were not to be regarded as enemies, but brothers who were erring, with the hope that they would repent and reform their ways. The professing church down the centuries has used the extreme discipline of excommunication far too

freely. Very seldom has the N.T. basis for such action been considered. Far too often the bad and narrow spirit of Luke ix. 49, 54 has been manifest and many of God's children cast out of fellowship because 'they followed not with us' and did not toe the line to every vagary of doctrine. Much heartbreak and sorrow could have been avoided if II Thess. iii. 15 and Gal. vi. 1 had been acted upon. The church of Rome has not been the only Christian group to exhibit this harshness. Professing Christians at the other extreme have been equally guilty and this is still going on in our own day with dire results to Christian witness.

The Apostle now draws to a conclusion with a prayer for their blessing:

"Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all. The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

In the first epistle he desired the God of peace to sanctify them wholly (v. 23). Now he requests that the same God, the Lord of peace, should give them peace 'at all times in all ways' (R.V.). This is comprehensive indeed, and the precious gift of peace is more and more needed today with its pressure, rush and bustle and distraction. The Saviour promised it to His followers (John xiv. 27; xvi. 33) and it comes when everything has been committed to Him (Phil. iv. 6, 7), so enabling the believer to remain unruffled and confident whatever turmoil surrounds Him.

The Apostle closes with a greeting in his own handwriting. We have noted that the enemy of truth had seen to it that spurious letters were circulating among the churches purporting to come from Paul. He now gives them a guarantee whereby they can know for certain the epistle was his. Having dictated it so far, he now takes the pen, and in his own handwriting, which they knew, he gives the benediction connected with the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a fact that every one of Paul's letters concludes with a reference to the grace of Christ and this is not the characteristic of the other epistles written by Peter, James, John and Jude. If any one draws attention to the Book of Revelation, then it must be pointed out that this is not an epistle, and if the late date generally assigned to it is true, it was written after Paul's day. It is noteworthy that the Epistle to the Hebrews also concludes with a similar benediction 'Grace be with you all', which must be given due weight when the controversial subject of the authorship of this letter is discussed.

It seems to be obvious that the Holy Spirit who inspired the N.T. writers, kept this particular conclusion to the Apostle Paul, and this was for the protection of the early groups of believers from Satanic deception. It would have been nullified had others used it, and while it may seem a trivial matter to us today, it was of vital import to believers at the beginning when the evil one was doing his best to counteract the truth and the outworking of God's purposes of grace.

The Apostle therefore concludes, in his own handwriting with his usual benediction:

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

This is similar to the first epistle and Rom. xvi. 20. So concludes two of the earliest letters of Paul. It should hardly be necessary to say that no doctrinal import can be placed on the *order* of the epistles given in the A.V. Though the Thessalonian letters come last in this grouping, no teaching can be deduced from this. To teach that these letters give the climax of revelation given in Paul's epistles because of this position is false. The Apostle was in the early stages of his ministry at this point and the climax was yet to come in his prison letters after the nation of Israel had been set aside in unbelief at the ends of the Acts period.

Those who hold the above mentioned view fail to understand the position of the people of Israel during this time and the relationship of I Thess. iv., with its emphasis on the return of Christ, to the purpose then being worked out. So much is usually *mentally* added by such to what is actually taught in this chapter that a distorted view is bound to result. How many who read the words, 'The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the air'" add in their minds the thought that these believers are then taken up to heaven? The addition of the word 'up' in our English version partly suggest this idea, but there is no warrant for it in the original Greek. There is no thought of *direction* in the verb *harpago*; it could just as easily mean 'caught downwards' as upwards. The immediate context does not deal with what happens after this 'catching away'. Only the remoter context and what had already been revealed can guide us here. It is the *descending* Lord that these saints meet and as both these letters deal with the Lord's arrival (*parousia*) there is nothing that need be added by ourselves in order to understand what iv. 16, 17 is teaching. Those who do so evidently have an axe to grind and this is not the way to get truth.

We have intensely grateful for these early epistles of Paul, showing us, as they do, his faithful concern for the well-being of the Thessalonian saints, their zeal as well as some of their problems which could only be resolved by understanding the purpose of God so far as it had been revealed at this time. May we have grace to imitate their practical keenness and outworking of the Truth, so that it can be said of us, as it was of them,

"Ye were ensamples to all that believe" (I Thess. i. 7).

The Epistle to TITUS.

No.1. pp. 6 - 9

It is always important to note when dealing with the epistles of Paul, the way they group themselves with relation to the dispensational dividing line at Acts xxviii. While Israel was still in covenant relationship with God, and this held good right through the Acts, Paul wrote seven epistles, Galatians, Hebrews, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, & Romans. After the Acts, when Israel became *lo-ammi*, not My people, that covenant relationship was broken and they were soon scattered in judgment throughout the world. The Apostle is then inspired to write seven more epistles, namely, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, I Timothy, Titus and II Timothy.

It is evident by what Paul said when he wrote to Philemon and the church at Philippi that he expected to be released from his Roman prison (Phil. ii. 24; Philemon 22). Then follows some five years in which he resumed his ministry as a free man.

During this time the possibility is that he realized his intention of visiting Spain and preaching the gospel there (Rom. xv. 23, 24). This view is supported by writers of the early church, such as Clement, first bishop of Rome, Eusebius and Chrysostom as well as the Muratorian Canon. Towards the end of the five years the Apostle evidently returned to Ephesus and found the predictions which he had long ago uttered to the Ephesian overseers were already receiving their fulfillment. People like Hymenaeus and Philetus were sowing seeds of error which were destined to bear deadly fruit in time to come. Jewish superstitions and erroneous teachings concerning the law, together with the baneful influence of the Gnostics, the self-styled aristocrats of knowledge, were already doing deadly work among the assemblies.

From the epistles to Timothy and Titus written about this time, we gather that Paul was prevented by other duties from staying in this region and hence he writes to these two fellow-labourers and gives them instructions how to meet this error in order to prevent its spreading and overthrowing the faith of believers.

Furthermore we must remember that after the truth of the Mystery had been revealed in Ephesians, local assemblies did not cease to exist. They embraced the new teaching as a whole and continued to function as before. Consequently at this time the Truth was still organized and leaders like Timothy would need guidance as to how to conduct themselves in the "house of God" which was the "church of the living God" (I Tim. iii. 15).

By the time that we come to II Timothy, which cannot have been written much later than I Timothy and Titus, we find a state of affairs which is anything but healthy. "This thou knowest, that all that are in Asia turned away from me" (II Tim. i. 15 R.V.) and in chapter iv. 16 we read "At my first defence no one took my part, but all forsook

me” (R.V.). The second statement may be a commentary on the first, but there may be more in it than just a company of Christians in Asia were afraid to stay by the Apostle in this time of danger. It appeared to be a definite act of repudiation on their part. Had the truth for which he stood been held tenaciously and worked out in practice by believers in Asia, such a situation could not have arisen despite the peril of the times. And when we remember the one other verse in this epistle that uses the verb ‘turn away’—we are led to believe that the Apostle is describing a falling away from the Truth that was then taking place. “For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine and they shall *turn away* their ears from the truth and shall be turned to myths. But watch then in all things” Paul is forewarning Timothy of conditions he would have to face, not of something that would take place centuries later.

When we bear in mind this departure from the ‘good deposit’ of Truth entrusted for this present age to the Apostle of the Gentiles, and also the leaven of false doctrine actively working before Paul’s death, we are not surprised that most, if not all that he stood for, was soon lost. The early Christian writers of the first and succeeding centuries exhibit little or no understanding of his distinctive ministry and a study of church history fails to show any general recovery of such truth. The Reformation was a beginning, but it was left to roughly 100 years ago for the Truth of the Mystery with all its wonder and glory, to begin to come to the forefront again. Not that this truth has been completely blotted out, for there must have been individuals all through the centuries who have believed God’s Word however dimly, regarding this distinctive heavenly calling. Coming back to the Pastoral Epistles, we see there that I Timothy and Titus were written after Acts xxviii. when the Apostle Paul had been liberated from his first imprisonment. Hence we find in them no references to prison, but definite instructions to two believers who were to take the lead at a time when the Truth was still organized in assemblies.

Concerning Titus himself we know little. The strange thing is that he is not once mentioned during the Acts by Luke and yet by Paul’s references to him he evidently stood high in the Apostle’s esteem. We know of no satisfactory explanation of this. In the second letter to the Corinthian church, he is referred to no less than nine times (II Cor. ii. 13; vii. 6, 13, 14; viii. 6, 16, 23; xii. 18 twice).

Paul had sent him to investigate and report to him the state of the church at Corinth, particularly after his first epistle had been received, and also to hasten the collection for the poor brethren in Judaea.

He was a Gentile converted under the Apostle’s ministry (Titus i. 4), and was taken by Paul and Barnabas to the council of the apostles and elders which was convened at Jerusalem to consider the question of the relationship of Gentile believers to the Mosaic law (Gal. ii. 1, 3). The reason was clear; Titus was uncircumcised and Paul was determined not to allow any act of ritual to mar the glorious doctrine of justification by faith in Christ apart from works.

We know little more of Titus than the above mentioned facts. He evidently visited Crete with Paul after his liberation and was left there to 'set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city' (Titus i. 5). He is bidden to come to the Apostle (After the arrival of Artemas or Tychicus—iii. 12). Paul had decided to spend the winter at Nicopolis and Titus is exhorted to join him there. The next reference is in Paul's last epistle, II Timothy. He has now been apprehended the second time from which he realizes there will be no deliverance and is prepared to give his life for his Saviour and Lord very shortly (II Tim. iv. 6). Only Luke is with him (II Tim. iv. 11). Demas has forsaken him, Crescens had gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia (verse 10). This is the last reference to Titus in the Scriptures. We cannot help noticing that he is mentioned and Crescens in the same breath almost as forsaking Demas. One is left wondering. Does this mean that Titus had also manifested the same spirit as Demas? Nothing definite is said, only the context is not an encouraging one. We can only hope he made the journey to Dalmatia at the advice of the Apostle, although Paul does not state this to be the case.

We may now ask what Christian witness existed in Crete at this time. We know from Josephus that it abounded with Jews of wealth and influence (Ant. 17:12,1). But how did the gospel reach there? In Acts ii. 11 Cretans are named among those who heard the utterance of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. It is more than likely that the Cretan churches owed their origin to the witness of those people who brought back a knowledge of salvation with them.

Two things remain to be noticed, the condition of the churches and the character of the Cretans in general. From the epistle it is evident that false teachers had crept in and were putting forward doctrines which were essentially antichristian. There is much that is parallel between I Timothy and Titus, for they had more or less the same errors to face. From the start Satan has never left the truth unchallenged. It is all a part of the great conflict of the ages and will not cease until the mystery of iniquity has been revealed and dealt with by the glorious Return of Christ to the earth and Satan is bound and cast into the abyss. In our day we must expect opposition to the proclamation of the Truth of a rightly divided Word and the sacred deposit committed to our charge. This opposition is more likely to come from *within* than from *without*, and we must not be unprepared to meet it.

Concerning the Cretans themselves, Paul apparently quotes one of their own poets, Epimenides who lived in the 6th century B.C. "Always liars and beasts are the Cretans and inwardly sluggish" (i. 12). So infamous were some of them for their habitual practice of falsehood that the Greek word *kretizein*, to act like a Cretan, was a proverbial term for telling a lie.

What unlikely and difficult material for the grace of God to work upon! Yet this but magnifies that grace all the more, reminding us that God has not picked the *best*, rather sometimes He has apparently chosen the *worst* to lavish His love and mercy upon with the object that He may have all the glory at the end. "God hath chosen the foolish things the weak things the base things and things which are despised that no flesh should glory in His Presence" (I Cor. i. 27-29).

No.2. The Epistle as a whole.

pp. 27 - 31

Before we proceed with the study of the epistle, we will set forth its structure so that we get the Divine outline to guide us as we seek to unfold its truth.

One thing stands out clearly is the six references to good works in the members marked B. In fact it would be true to say that the whole epistle revolves around the question of works, first of all in its relationship to those who are called to lead, like Timothy and Titus, and then to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ whatever their sphere of witness and work for the Lord.

The next thing we would draw attention to is the way the title Saviour is used in this epistle. It occurs six times and is distributed as follows:

- A1 | i. 3. Commandments of God our Saviour.
- B1 | i. 14. Grace from the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.
- A2 | ii. 10. Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.
- B2 | ii. 13. Appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ (R.V.).
- A3 | iii. 4. Love of God our Saviour.
- B3 | iii. 6. Through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

These occur in the members marked "A" in the structure and it will be noticed that they alternate between God and Christ.

TITUS* as a whole.

[* - This structure has not appeared in any previous publication.]

- A1 | i. 1-4. Hope of eternal life.
Commandments of **God our Saviour**.
Grace from the **Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour**.
- B1 | i. 5-16. Titus left at Crete.
Set right what is lacking (*leiponta*).
Unruly vain talkers, circumcision.
Every good work reprobate.
- C | ii. 1. TITUS. Speak (*lalei*) sound doctrine.
- B2 | ii. 2-8. Believers. Subject (*hupotasso*)
that Word be not blasphemed (*blasphemetai*).
A pattern of good works.
- A2 | ii. 9-14. Adorn the doctrine of **God our Saviour**.
Grace of God hath appeared (*epiphano*).
Blessed Hope. A glorious appearing (*epiphaneian*) of
our great God & Saviour Jesus Christ.
- B3 | ii. 14. Peculiar people. Zealous of good work.
- C | ii. 15 - iii. 1-. TITUS. Speak (*lalei*), rebuke, exhort.
- B4 | iii. -1, 2. Believers. Subject (*hupotasso*) to authority.
Ready to every good work, not speak evil (*blasphemein*).
- A3 | iii. 3-7. Kindness and love of **God our Saviour** appeared (*epiphane*).
Jesus Christ our Saviour.
Hope of eternal life.
- B5 | iii. 8-15. Striving about the law, heretick reject.
Zenas and Apollos set forward nothing lacking (*leipe*).
Maintain good work (verse 8, 14).

The occurrence in ii. 13 has given rise to debate. Those who deny the deity of Christ, insist that two persons are referred to, the title 'great God' not referring to Jesus Christ in their estimation.

"Awaiting the blessed hope of the appearance of the glory of the great God and of our Saviour Christ Jesus" (Moffatt).

"While we wait for the happy hope and the glorious manifestation of the great God and of our Saviour Christ Jesus" (New World Translation).

The A.V. likewise separates the two titles. But the R.V. reads:

"Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ",

putting the other reading in the margin. The R.V. translation was the view of the Greek orthodox Fathers and of the most ancient commentators. Professor A. T. Robertson, one of the greatest authorities on N.T. Greek, writes, "This is the necessary meaning of the one article with *theou* and *soteris*". There is a similar construction in II Pet. i. 1 which the R.V. correctly renders, "Our God and Saviour Jesus Christ" as against the A.V. "God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; see likewise in verse 11 'our Lord and Saviour Jesus

Christ', where again only one article is used. The structure given above, however, finally throws in its weight, for we have a definite alternation between the titles God our Saviour and Jesus Christ our Saviour. The occurrence in chapter ii. 13 we have taken from the R.V. to show the perfect balance which is completely spoiled if the A.V. and the modernist rendering be adhered to.

Nothing is clearer in the Scriptures that there is *one* Saviour, and that Saviour is God in the highest sense.

"I, even I, am Jehovah; and *beside me there is no Saviour*" (Isa. xliii. 11; xlv. 21).

God has never delegated the work of salvation to any created being, however great. The Apostle Paul, under inspiration, does not hesitate in the epistle to Titus to apply the title "Saviour" to God, and also to Christ, and if the Lord Jesus is not God in the highest sense and the one Saviour, then words are meaningless, and moreover to bracket a creature (if Christ be not God) with One Who is the great God as in ii. 13 would be blasphemy indeed. Moreover, we might ask what Scriptural foundation is there for a glorious appearing of the Father and Son together? There is absolutely none. We have one God, one Lord (Eph. iv. 5) and one Saviour (Isa. xliii. 11) and He is the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us. Anything less than this comes from the father of lies whose one aim is to dethrone Christ and usurp his place as God.

Before we pass on, we give Cunningham's translation of Titus ii. 13:

"Looking for the blessed hope and manifestation of our great God and Saviour's glory, Christ Jesus."

The next point of interest is the occurrences of the verb *epiphaino* and the noun *epiphaneia*. In ii. 11 we have the grace of God, salvation-bringing to all men, hath appeared (A.V.) or was manifested, and in iii. 4 the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared or was manifested, both being the same tense of the verb *epiphaino*.

Epiphaneia, the noun, occurs in II Tim. i. 10, 'the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ', all these references pointing to His first Advent. *Epiphaneia* is also used of the hope of the Church which is His Body.

"The Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the living and the dead at His *appearing* and His Kingdom" (II Tim. iv. 1).

"A crown of righteousness not to me only, but unto all them also that have love His *appearing*" (II Tim. iv. 8).

"Looking for that blessed hope and the *appearing* of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus ii. 13).

The word *epiphaneia* as a noun standing alone, is only used after Acts xxviii. to describe the new aspect of hope of the redeemed who form the church of the Mystery revealed in Eph. iii.

Its occurrence in II Thess. ii. 8 is not parallel. There it is used like an adjective to describe one of the aspects of the *parousia* which the Lord had revealed in Matt. xxiv. 27-30.

Thus, in the post-Acts epistles of Paul, it describes the giving of God's unspeakable Gift, His own Beloved Son and with Him the riches of His grace and surpassing love in choosing, saving and redeeming each member of the Church which is His Body, and also looks forward to the climax of their salvation, when His glory shall be revealed to the wondering gaze of heaven's principalities and powers and this church shall be manifested there with him, Head and Body united in heaven's Holiest of all (Col. iii. 1-4).

Another word which is characteristic of the Pastoral Epistles, and one which is greatly stressed, is the word doctrine *didaskalia*. It occurs fifteen times in these epistles, 8 times in I Timothy, 4 times in Titus, and 3 times in II Timothy. We now give a concordance of this word in these epistles:

***Didaskalia* in the Pastoral Epistles.**

- “if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound *doctrine*” (I Tim. i. 10).
- “giving heed to seducing spirits, and *doctrines* of devils” (iv. 1).
- “words of faith and of good *doctrine*” (iv. 6).
- “give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to *doctrine*” (iv. 13).
- “take heed unto thyself, and unto the *doctrine*” (iv. 16).
- “they who labour in the word and *doctrine*” (v. 17).
- “that the name of God and His *doctrine* be not blasphemed” (vi. 1).
- “the *doctrine* which is according to godliness” (vi. 3).
- “that he may be able by sound *doctrine* to convince the gainsayers” (Titus i. 9).
- “the things which become sound *doctrine*” (ii. 1).
- “in *doctrine* showing uncorruptness” (ii. 7).
- “that they may adorn the *doctrine* of God our Saviour” (ii. 10).
- “thou hast fully known my *doctrine*” (II Tim. iii. 10).
- “all scripture is profitable for *doctrine*” (iii. 16).
- “the time will come when they will not endure sound *doctrine*” (iv. 3).

That this is one of the key words of these epistles is obvious. The word ‘doctrine’ is often linked in the mind with something that is dry and uninteresting. If we substitute the word *teaching* we shall see the closer link with *teacher*, as *didaskalia*, doctrine, is linked with *didaskalos*, one who teaches. The epistle to Timothy and Titus were addressed to those who had been called to teach and to lead, hence the vast importance of the *subject or subjects taught*.

These believers could be sound teachers of the Truth, or like some of the Apostle's day and at the end time, teachers of myths, pleasing those who have itching ears (II Tim. iv. 3, 4). There is sound or healthy teaching (Titus i. 9) and in contrast the teaching of demons (I Tim. iv. 1). The former is linked with the One who is the Truth (John xiv. 6) and His Word which is Truth (John xvii. 17), and the other with the father of lies (John viii. 44).

From this it will be seen that the responsibility of the teacher is very great. What he teaches is either furthering the Truth or the lie. “My brethren be not many teachers (*didaskaloi*) knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation” (James iii. 1). The ministry of the teacher is therefore not to be sought lightly. The faithful teacher has one great subject, the Word of God, and the living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the last injunctions to Timothy by the Apostle Paul was this: “proclaim (preach) the Word” (II Tim. iv. 2), and a rightly-divided Word at that, as the previous chapter so solemnly stresses (II Tim. ii. 15). Merely quoting the Bible is not sufficient. The Judaizers undoubtedly quoted chapter and verse when they said to the early churches ‘except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved’ (Acts xv. 1). But they were not teaching truth, rather the grossest error, for they were lifting it out of its Divine setting and propagating the way of Cain which presumes to come to God as a sinner with works, thus nullifying the gospel of His grace.

All the creeds appeal to the Bible, but how many rightly divide the Word of Truth? How many are bringing over to this dispensation teaching which was true in a past dispensation but is not truth for today? Surely it is right to say that if the professing church had made known as its doctrine or message for this Gentile age the teaching of the Apostle of the Gentiles, and obeyed the commandment of II Tim. ii. 15, the present divided state of modern Christendom would never have happened.

Doctrine *does* matter. It is absolutely vital and those who have absorbed the glorious teaching of the ascended Christ through Paul will never lack a subject to expound and will never need to descend to the puerilities and errors of much modern preaching.

“Thou hast fully known *my doctrine*” (II Tim. iii. 10).

“Take heed unto thyself, and unto *the doctrine*; continue in them” (I Tim. iv. 16).

No.3. i. 1 - 3. pp. 48 - 51

We now commence our study of the epistle and turn to the first chapter. It reads: “Paul, a bonds slave (servant) of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ.” This is somewhat like his introduction to the Roman epistle. “Paul a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, a called apostle.” When he writes to the Philippian church he likewise describes himself, with Timothy, bonds slaves (servants) of Jesus Christ and omits any reference to his apostleship. Philippians is pre-eminently the epistle of *service* and this sets the tone of the letter straight away.

Romans, Philippians and Titus are the only epistles where Paul describes himself as a bonds slave in the introduction. Usually it is his apostleship, conferred by the ascended Christ, that is brought forward first thus stressing his divine authority. But here the champion of liberty presents himself as a slave! A seeming paradox, but one in which

the Apostle gloried. So much real doctrine is wrapped up in this word. It reminds us that, while redemption snaps the chains of sin and death, and leads us into liberty, yet that liberty is not without its Divine obligations. We have not been delivered from Satan, the flesh and the world system, to please ourselves and go the way of our choosing, but to acknowledge the lordship or domination of the One who has saved us by His precious Blood.

We are not our own, we are bought with a price and this nothing less than the life and death of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us (I Cor. vi. 19, 20; Gal. ii. 20). *We are His property, His slave*, and saving grace has simply changed masters for us, the Lord Jesus Christ instead of Satan, self and sin. Yet how many of God's people practically own this? Many know him as Saviour, who have never acknowledged His Lordship. Such could never call themselves, as Paul did, *bondslaves* of Jesus Christ, for a slave has no rights, no property, no will of his own; he existed solely for his master. The Apostle had laid everything at the feet of His Saviour without reserve, and we should face up to the fact that none of us can truly call ourselves "servants (bondslaves) of God", until we have done likewise. And then how wonderfully God is willing to accept such living sacrifices (Rom. xii. 1) and commence to do His work through them!

So Paul, writing to Titus who had been called of God as a servant, into which service the Apostle was about to guide him, likewise describes himself as a servant and an apostle (a sent one) of Jesus Christ.

This ministry and apostleship was "according to the faith of God's elect". *Kata*, the preposition used here with the accusative case, has the meaning of 'in harmony with'. We meet the truth of election at the beginning of this epistle, even as we do in Ephesians (Eph. i. 4). *Eklektos* is used in the Pauline epistles six times:

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's *elect*?" (Rom. viii. 33).

"Salute Rufus, *chosen* in the Lord." (Rom. xvi. 13).

"Put on therefore, as the *elect* of God" (Col. iii. 12).

"Jesus Christ and the *elect* angels" (I Tim. v. 21).

"I endure all things for the *elect's* sakes" (II Tim. ii. 10).

"According to the faith of God's *elect*" (Titus i. 1).

The noun *ekloge* is used of the Apostle himself by the Lord. "He is a *chosen* vessel unto Me", literally, he is a vessel of election unto Me (Acts ix. 15). The only other occurrences in Paul's epistles are in I Thess. i. 4, and four times in the dispensational section of Romans, each reference referring to Israel and the faithful remnant (Rom. ix. 11; xi. 5, 7, 28). The verb *eklegomai*, to choose or elect, occurs three times in I Cor. i. 27, 28 and the one reference in Ephesians before mentioned (i. 4).

It is clear then, that no one can believe the truth given through the Apostle of the Gentiles unless they accept the truth of election. But we must be careful here. In Scripture, election and predestination are definitely linked with God's *foreknowledge* (Rom. viii. 29; I Pet. i. 2) and Divine foreknowledge is as important as election and is indispensable in seeking to understand what election implies. Some have torn these two

truths apart and have in consequence put forward views which come little short of fatalism. This is disastrous to growth in grace and response to the revealed will of God.

Verse one continues 'and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness'. *Epignosis*, translated 'acknowledge' has not the meaning of full knowledge so much as *knowledge acted on*, that is *acknowledgment*. Paul is not only revealing truth here, but stressing its practical claims on the believer's life. The whole epistle revolving as it does around the subject of good works, is really an exposition of what the believer's practical acknowledgment should be. This truth is 'after godliness'. The word godliness is a translation of the Greek *eusebeia* and occurs ten times in Paul's writings, all of them begin in the Pastoral epistles. They are I Tim. ii. 2; iii. 16; iv. 7, 8; vi. 3, 5, 6, 11; II Tim. iii. 5; Titus i. 1. *Eusebeia* is composed of *eu*, meaning 'well', and *sebomai* 'to worship'. Perhaps 'God-fearing' comes nearer its meaning than 'godliness', remembering the O.T. phrase 'the fear of the Lord' which occurs fourteen times in the Book of Proverbs. This fear is not the same as fear in the sense of being afraid, but *reverence* for God, a strong desire not to do anything that will hurt or grieve the One who is our Heavenly Father. Such will 'well-reverence' Him and so exhibit the godliness that these epistles stress so much. Thus the word has a deeper meaning than piety and is closely linked with *true worship* which is at the heart of all truth.

Verse two leads on to eternal life; "in hope of eternal life which God, that cannot lie, promised before the ages of time". This is the 'promise of life which is *in Christ Jesus*' (II Tim. i. 1), hope and promise being often linked together in Scripture. Men, as sinners, are 'alienated from the life of God' (Eph. iv. 18) but 'life and incorruption' have been brought to light through the gospel of the grace of God (II Tim. i. 10, 11) ministered by the Apostle Paul. John in his first epistle tells us "God hath given unto us eternal life and this life is *in His Son* . . . he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (I John v. 11, 12).

From these Scriptures it is surely clear that living forever (divorced from Christ), is a delusion, but for the believer in the Lord Jesus this is absolute certainty, for it is based on a *promise* made by God and He *cannot lie*. How sure and steadfast this must be then! We can have indeed 'full assurance of faith' as we look beyond this present life which Scripture likens to a disappearing vapour (James iv. 14). Strictly speaking the word 'eternal' is the Greek *aionios*, eonian or age-long. There is a phase of this which relates to the earthly purpose of God through redeemed Israel and is featured in the Gospels. Another aspect of it is the basis of the hope of the Mystery. It is useless looking forward to being seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus and being shown the exceeding riches of God's grace in the ages to come (Eph. ii. 6, 7) unless we have the necessary life given us to enjoy it.

God's promise of life goes back "*before* the world began", or better, *before* the ages of time, which is nearer the original. This is linked up with the *plan of God* and His grace which also takes us back *before* time commenced, using the same phrase as here (II Tim. i. 9). Eph. i. 4 assures us that we were elected in Christ *before* the overthrow of the world. The Body of Christ is the only calling of the redeemed that reaches so far back into the past. Other callings have the time period "*since* the foundation of the

world” (Matt. xxv. 34). Some have sought to limit the phrase ‘eternal or age-long life’ to the Millennium and the restored people of Israel. This is unnecessary as, while the ages run their course, members of the Body, as we have just seen, will need life in the heavenlies. This still leaves intact the special usage of eternal life in the Gospels.

The Lord Jesus said in John vii. 6, 8, “My time (season) is not yet come”, but in Matt. xxvi. 18 it had come, for He now says “My time (season) is at hand (drawn near)”. This was the particular point of all time when He should offer Himself as the Antitype of the Passover Lamb, with the consequence that the gospel of His grace can be proclaimed and we can tell men and women that ‘now is the accepted time (season), now is the day of salvation’ (II Cor. vi. 2).

There is not only a season for truth, but also for the lie and its outworking. The Apostle in II Tim. iii. 1 warns of perilous times (seasons) to come in the last days of this age, a season when sound doctrine, the truth of God, will not be endured (II Tim. iv. 3). This will lead on to the time or season when Antichrist shall be revealed (II Thess. ii. 6) who will be destroyed by the revelation from heaven of the Lord Jesus (II Thess. ii. 8). There is a season and a fitting time to every purpose under the heaven (Eccles. iii. 1) and truth for this Gentile age, while Israel as a nation is laid aside in unbelief, is revealed by the ascended Christ through Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles. This completes the Word of God (Col. i. 25).

So in Titus i. 3 he refers to the proclamation (preaching) of the truth which had been entrusted to him according to God’s commandment. This was now manifested, because ‘its own peculiar season’ for its revelation had come with the rejection of Israel, the covenant people.

Paul uses the same phrase in I Tim. ii. 6, “There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all *to be testified in due time*”. The Greek reads literally ‘the testimony (concerning His work as Mediator) to be rendered *in its own season*’. That season had arrived and Paul was the channel through which it was made known. The essence of dispensational truth is that recognition of the fact that there is a *fitting time in the purpose of God for the revelation of truth*. This is decided by the all-wise God and confusion is bound to result if due recognition is not given to this fact. If we read future truth into the past, or past truth into the present or future, we shall cloud our own minds and those with whom we come into contact.

The witness given by the Lord Jesus Christ through the Apostle of the Gentiles, after Israel’s apostasy, is essentially *truth for the times*. *Now* is the fitting season of its revelation and the working out of that phase of Divine Plan which is made known therein. This concerns God’s purpose for the *heavenlies* and the Church of the Mystery which is the glorious subject of Paul’s Prison Epistles and the Pastoral Epistles written after Acts xxviii. Let us search this treasury of truth afresh and seek the Spirit of wisdom and *revelation* without which we can never get to know its unsearchable riches (Eph. i. 17, 18; iii. 8 9).

No.4. i. 1 - 9.
pp. 77 - 80

We have been considering the important opening section of this epistle, verses 1-4, marked "A" on the structure (see page 28). The Apostle addresses the letter to Titus, 'my own son'. The R.V. corrects this to 'my *true* child, after the common faith'. *Gnesios* is used as a substantive in II Cor. viii. 8 and is translated there 'the *sincerity* of your love'. In Phil. iv. 3 Paul addresses one whom he calls '*true* yokefellow'. He uses this same phrase of Timothy in I Tim. i. 2. This clearly indicates that both Timothy and Titus were saved under the Apostle's ministry, and while he may not have had children in the flesh, the Lord gave him true spiritual sons who followed in his footsteps, and in view of the nearness of the end of his witness and the growing false teaching which was endangering the truth, he concentrates in these pastoral letters his instructions and spiritual guidance so that they should stand fast themselves and encourage others so to do.

The salutation is 'grace and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus, our Saviour' (R.V.). We have before commented on the way these titles are alternated in this epistle. The structure shows this clearly, throwing into prominence the word 'Saviour', which is used both of God the Father and the Lord Jesus. We have one God and one Saviour and He is God manifest in the flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 5 continues 'for this cause I left thee behind in Crete that thou mightest set right the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded thee'.

It is obvious from this statement that Paul was not able to finish the work he had commenced when visiting the island after his release from imprisonment, and so he left Titus behind to 'set right' or 'correct' things that were still lacking. As to what these were the rest of the epistle makes clear. First of all there were no recognized leaders, and knowing the importance of true leadership, Paul gives this first place in his instructions to his son in the faith.

One must clearly keep in mind two things concerning the background of this epistle, (1) the character of the Cretans (see verses 12, 13) and (2) the false teaching which was spreading so insidiously into the assemblies and upsetting the faith of many. The leader had to be separate from all that this represents. Two words are used for such in the pastoral letters of Paul, *presbuteros* (elder) and *episkopos* (bishop). These designate one office (compare Acts xx. 17 with verse 28 where these words are used interchangeably). They occur again in the context we are considering (Titus i. 5, 7). It hardly seems necessary to say that these elders or bishops bear little or no relationship to those of the present day. There were no such distinctions as clergy and laity at this time, which came into being centuries later and are completely unscriptural. These overseers were humble

men, chosen for their character in the home and loyalty to the truth, and were thus able to take care of the church of God.

The Apostle now points out these characteristics to Titus and exhorts him to seek for such and appoint them as leaders. Such leaders must be blameless (verses 6 and 7), the meaning of which is expanded by the context and the items that follow, the husband of one wife, and having faithful or believing children, not under accusation of riot or disobedience. The phrase “the husband of *one* wife” can be interpreted in two ways: (1) the opposite of polygamy; (2) only marrying once and having one wife, so that in the event of the wife’s death, the husband must not marry again. Alford strongly contends for view (2) though it is difficult to see why a man should be better equipped in the Lord’s work by not marrying the second time, unless the Apostle had the principle of I Cor. vii. 32, 35 in mind. We know that polygamy was practiced by the Jews at the time of writing this epistle and it may be this that is what is warned against. The Greek can bear either meaning, but if the second is the teaching of the passage, then it would certainly rule out many prominent Christian leaders of the present time.

Verse 6 goes on to stress the character of the home, ‘having believing children, not accused of riot or insubordinate’. Paul had also stressed this in his first letter to Timothy. Chapter iii. 1-7 largely cover the same ground as the context we are considering. An overseer (bishop) must be ‘one that ruleth well his own house (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)’. The logic of this is inescapable. The manifestation of truth begins in the home, if a man cannot shine there, he cannot shine anywhere for the Lord.

It is interesting to notice the words which are common to I Timothy and Titus. *Sophron*, ‘of good behaviour’ (I Tim. iii. 2) Sober (Titus i. 8); *me plekten*, ‘no striker’ (I Tim. iii. 3; Titus i. 7); *hiloxenon* ‘hospitable’ (I Tim. iii. 2; Titus i. 8). In both cases “A husband of one wife” is stressed. Hospitality was an important Christian grace in early times. The church was often found in the house and traveling Christians could not resort to the houses of the heathen. The need therefore for hospitality on the part of those called to lead was obvious. This is still an essential part of Christian witness today. The burden usually falls more on the woman than the man, but in doing this as unto the Lord, a sister in Christ is rendering a valuable Christian act which is not unnoticed by Him. “Do not forget hospitality, for by this some entertained angels unawares” (Heb. xiii. 2). “Use hospitality to one another without murmuring” (I Pet. iv. 9). Any element of grudging or complaining spoils this important service in the Lord’s sight. It must be done willingly and gladly as unto Him.

The word *sophron* (sober) and its derivatives form a prominent feature of this epistle. We tabulate them accordingly:

Sophron

- i. 8. Sober.
- ii. 2. Temperate.
- ii. 5. Discreet.

Sophronos

ii. 12. Live soberly.

Sophroneo

ii. 6. Sober minded.

Sophronizo

ii. 4. Young women to be sober.

Sophron comes from two words, *sos* ‘sound’ and allied to ‘salvation’, and *phren* ‘mind’ and means *of a sound mind* as opposed to madness or even perhaps ‘salvation-minded’. *Sophronismos* occurs in II Tim. i. 7, “God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a *sound mind*”. This surely is one of the greatest of God’s gifts to His redeemed children. Of what use can we be to Him or to our fellow creatures, apart from a healthy balanced mind? We walk with our *minds* primarily, not our feet, and every conscious action is directed by the mind. Salvation starts internally with the *mind* and the Greek *sophron* describes this mind and its effects in action. It is difficult to find one word in English that will adequately carry its meaning over. Perhaps ‘discreet’ and ‘discretion’ come nearest.

Dr. E. W. Bullinger says of *sophroneo* in his Lexicon ‘to be of sound mind; think and act discreetly, to use sound judgment and moderation’. The rendering of the A.V. ‘sober’ is not good, as it is likely to be restricted in meaning to restraint in respect of wine, or to going about with a long face, a feature which some Christians seem to think glorifies the Lord.

It was essential that one who was called to be an overseer or bishop should practically exhibit this healthy, balanced and controlled outlook in word and action. This is attractive and would have a beneficial effect in every way on those who were in his charge. It is none the less essential today. If Christian beliefs do not lead to a wholesome sanity and balance, then they are of little use however high sounding they may appear.

A man truthfully so described would be a ‘lover of good, just, holy and temperate’ (Titus i. 8). He is called upon to ‘hold fast the faithful word’ and according to the instruction (*didachen*) in order that he may be able both to encourage with healthy teaching and to reprove (or convict) the gainsayers’. We give here a rendering that is nearer the original. The instruction referred to, was that pattern of truth given to Paul by the ascended Christ and now passed on to Timothy and Titus and all those who were called of God to take the lead in witness. Anything else would not be ‘truth for the times’. Such were reminded that they were ‘stewards of God’ (verse 7). *Oikonomos* translated steward, is allied to *oikonomia*, dispensation, which is not so much a period of time, but a *stewardship committed*, that is, truth that had been entrusted by God to use and proclaim faithfully and live out in practice. All members of the Body are in some measure dispensers of a dispensation. They must do it in view of God’s reckoning day when all will be asked by Him to ‘give an account of their stewardship’. Only two classes will exist at that time, good (just) stewards, and bad (unjust) stewards. How we should covet to be in the former class! Of what use will be any material or worldly gains then? Or the approval of men whether Christian or otherwise?

The healthy teaching the context talks about is linked with the healthy mind we have been considering, although the word here is not *sophron*, but a part of the verb *hugiano* 'to be well in health', and then with regard to doctrine, to be sound, having no mixture of falsehood. This healthy teaching has two ends in view: (1) to encourage the faithful and (2) to reprove the opposers of the Truth.

The word translated encourage gives us the English *paraclete* rendered Comforter and Advocate as applied to the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus Christ (John xvi. 7; I John ii. 1). All who are determined to walk the way of the Truth rightly divided, will need encouragement and how great this is when we go on to absorb the testimony of the Lord given through His Prisoner! (II Tim. i. 8). It leads to a full assurance of faith and hope and steadfastness.

On the other hand we shall not go far before we meet the opposers. Satan will see to this, for he has challenged God's truth right from the beginning and the battle is still raging. The only equipment which is sufficient for all needs is this faithful Word committed to us. To attempt to combat error in any other way is to meet it with the arm of flesh and court defeat. We should hold it forth in a spirit of love and meekness as we are enjoined in II Tim. ii. 25, knowing that the inspired Word is profitable for reproof and correction as well as for doctrine and instruction in righteousness (II Tim. iii. 16, 17).

Thus Paul enjoined Titus to instruct those who were called to be overseers. The qualifications were rigid. They must be faithful men who would cling fast to the faithful Word and proclaim it in season and out of season, whether it pleased or displeased their hearers. Only in this way could false teaching be successfully combated and the Truth made known. We shall, D.V., consider in our next article the nature of the opposition that existed in Crete at the time of writing this epistle.

**No.5. i. 10 - ii. 1.
pp. 85 - 88**

In our last article we considered the type of person that the Apostle Paul designated in chapter i. 6-9, who was fitted to be a bishop or overseer. We saw that the necessary qualities were homely and lowly ones rather than of education, scholarship or worldly position. An overseer in Crete had special difficulties to contend with, namely, the lax character generally of Cretans (verse 12) and the opposition to the Truth that was endangering the faith of believers.

This opposition Timothy had to face too, and this accounts for the similarity of warnings in both I Timothy and Titus. Paul describes the opposers as "many insubordinate and vain talkers and mind-deceivers, specially those of the circumcision" (i. 10). The word *phrenapatai*, translated deceivers, only occurs here and in verbal form

in Gal. vi. 3. It is the very opposite of *sophron*, the sound mind that we have already considered.

The mind of man is the battle ground between truth and error. Sin darkens and enslaves the mind and its thinking, whereas salvation and redemption snaps the chains, and the Holy Spirit renews the mind so that the things of God can be appreciated and received in each person's measure. Satan uses many and various means to get control of the human mind, but the object is always the same, namely its enslavement and subjection to himself. Even for the believer in Christ there is the danger of giving place to the Devil (Eph. iv. 27) and coming under his snare (II Tim. ii. 25, 26), and there is only one sure safeguard and that is to 'hold fast the faithful word' (Titus i. 9). Directly a Christian refuses to submit his thinking to God's revealed Word of truth he becomes a prey to error and bondage, however fair and good it is dressed up externally.

Those concerning whom Paul is warning Titus were in such a position. They were 'insubordinate' (unruly); they refused to submit themselves to that pattern of truth which had been committed to the Apostle and made known through him. They were chiefly Jews (i. 10) and while it may not be possible to say in detail what was the error they were propagating, one can judge from the references given in I Timothy and Titus that they were largely misinterpretations and additions to the O.T. Thus we have 'endless genealogies and fables (myths)' (I Tim. iv. 7; Titus iii. 9). They adulterated God's pure Word with their own fanciful and pernicious idea concerning descent, human or divine, so adding the 'commandments of men' (Titus i. 14) and destroying its truth. There were 'strivings about the law' (iii. 9) all of which the Apostle describes as 'unprofitable and vain' (verse 9) only leading to contention and disunity. Paul also refers to 'Jewish myths (fables)' (Titus i. 4). These were probably the seeds of Gnostic mythology already taking root and which were later on in the second century to bear such evil results. As we compare I Tim. iv. 3 and Col. ii. 16 22 it appears that these 'commandments of men' related to abstinence from meats and other things, seeking to promulgate a false standard of holiness (I Tim. iv. 3). To such the Apostle's reply was 'unto the pure all things (including the question of foods) are pure'. Those who have the sound healthy mind that the Truth brings can regard all legitimate things in this way. The differences in foods clean or unclean belonged to a past dispensation and their introduction here could only be a backward step that would lead to bondage and swerving from the good deposit which had been made known to Paul by the risen and ascended Saviour.

Those who were promulgating such teaching might 'profess to know God' (verse 16); indeed they did, hence the term 'gnosticism' which comes from the Greek word for knowledge, but this knowledge was not in accordance with the sound pattern of Truth ministered through the Apostle of the Gentiles. It was "knowledge falsely so called" (I Tim. vi. 20, 21). The reader must remember that the A.V. 'science' has no reference to the modern usage of the term. Here it is again *gnosis* (knowledge) but a knowledge derived from the lie (*pseudonumou*).

All error does one or both of two things to the Living Word and the Written Word. It either *adds* or *detracts*, in either case taking away from the *completeness* of the Lord

Jesus and the Word of God. The traditions of the Pharisees and of the present day are an example of the former, while modernism is an example of the latter.

As before mentioned, in Paul's day we have the beginnings of error which afterwards developed into what is known as gnosticism. Broadly speaking its basic ideas were that matter is evil and only spirit is good, but by special knowledge of a kind known only to the initiates, the spirit of man might be released from its material bondage and rise upward to God through various mediators of their own devising. Thus it denied the possibility of a real incarnation, for God, being holy, could not be regarded as coming into contact with evil matter such as the body. It also sets aside the *one* Mediator, Christ Jesus. So redemption by blood was ruled out and a blow struck at the very foundation of Christian Truth.

It is important to note too that John, in his first epistle, combats the same error, insisting that it was the spirit of antichrist that denied that Jesus Christ *had come in the flesh* (I John iv. 1-3; II John 7) and as the epistle closes, he reiterates the word 'know' as a challenge to the false teachers (I John v. 2, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20).

All this was what Titus and Timothy as instructors and leaders had to face, hence Paul's insistence on sound or healthy doctrine. "My doctrine", he calls it (II Tim. iii. 10), or the 'form of sound words which thou hast heard of me' which must be held fast (i. 13). It was the 'testimony of the Lord' passing through His prisoner (i. 8), and as such has been the standard of truth for this age against which all Christian witness and service must be measured.

Paul designates the opposers as 'abominable, and disobedient and unto every good work reprobate' (Titus i. 16). *Adokimos* is the word translated reprobate; literally 'not approved', the very opposite to the unashamed workman of II Tim. ii. 15. But in contrast the Apostle exhorts Titus to "speak the things that become healthy doctrine" (ii. 1). If the reader consults the structure of the epistle given at the beginning of this series, he will see that this member "C" balances ii. 15 - iii. 1, where again Titus is encouraged to 'speak, exhort and rebuke with all authority', and the context gives the same healthy doctrine dealing with the One who has redeemed us from all lawlessness and purified to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (verse 14). Sound or healthy doctrine occurs four times in the Pastoral Epistles as follows:

- A | I Tim. i. 10. Any other thing contrary to sound doctrine.
- B | Titus i. 9. Sound doctrine to convince the gainsayers.
- B | Titus ii. 1. Speak things which become sound doctrine.
- A | II Tim. iv. 3. They will not endure sound doctrine.

Doctrine or teaching is referred to four times in the epistle to Titus (i. 9; ii. 1, 7, 10). Sound doctrine is now expanded and brought to bear upon the conduct of those who are elderly both men and women (ii. 2, 3), then the young women and young men (4-6), and slaves with respect to their masters (9). The elderly men are to be sober. This is not the translation of *sophron*, discreet, but *nephalious* which comes nearer the English sober

than *sophron*. It means temperate specially in respect to wine. They are to be grave (*semnos*). The word occurs in I Tim. iii. 8, 11 and Phil. iv. 8 where it is translated *honest*. The noun *semnotes* is found in I Tim. ii. 2. It occurs in iii. 4, and Titus ii. 7 where it is rendered *gravity*.

This is as likely to be misunderstood as the word *sophron*, usually translated sober. It is derived from *sebomai* to worship or reverence, and it indicates a dignity or character that merits respect, not one that is long faced and miserable. Such would always be serious in purpose though not necessarily always serious in demeanour. They too must be ‘discreet, sound in faith, in love, in endurance’. The aged women in deportment are to be as becomes saints, not slanderers not enslaved to much wine but teachers of beautiful things (literally), that they may school the young women to be lovers of their husbands and children, discreet, chaste, workers at home, obedient to their own husbands, so that the Word of God be not till spoken of.

The A.V. translates the Greek *blasphemetai* literally, ‘that the word of God be not blasphemed’. This occurs twice in this epistle, which the structure throws into relief. Its second occurrence is in chapter iii. 2: ‘put them in remembrance to speak evil of no man.’ In English we keep the word blaspheme to impious words against God, but this context shows it is possible to *blaspheme one another*. Parkhurst’s definition of this word is “to hurt or wound a person’s reputation by evil reports”. Alas, what terrible damage the little member called the tongue can do if it is not controlled by grace! The Apostle James vividly portrays what unsanctified speech can lead to:

“Even so the tongue is a little member and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our member, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell the tongue no man can tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James iii. 5-8).

Paul knew what it was to suffer by the evil reports, spread about by others. In Rom. iii. 8 he declares he was ‘slanderosly reported’ (*blasphemoumetha*). He uses the word again when he says, ‘being defamed, we intreat’ (I Cor. iv. 130).

Growth in grace and progression to maturity or perfection (Heb vi. 1) is marked not only by controlled action, but by *controlled speech*.

“If any man offend not *in word*, the same is a *perfect* (mature) man, and able also to bridle the whole body” (James iii. 2).

The Lord Jesus said in a solemn context: “But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matt. xii. 36). The word idle is *argos* which means literally ‘not working’, or non-productive, that is, of good.

Again in James i. 26 we are reminded that:

“If any many among you seem to be religious, and *bridelth not his tongue this man’s religion is vain.*”

We do well, therefore, to take our words seriously especially of others, lest we blaspheme both God and man. The O.T. has also something solemn to say about this (Lev. xix. 16).

Love in action will mould speech as well as deeds and will endeavour to ‘cover a multitude of sins’ (I Pet. iv. 8). It will always seek to be just and fair and to give credit where it is due, encouragement and a word in season where it is needed. All this is wrapped up in the healthy doctrine of Titus ii. 1. We shall need the emptying of self and Divine strengthening in order that we can not only believe and accept such healthy teaching but seek to *adorn* it by a practical response in word and deed. In this way it will be made beautiful in the eyes of others who are watching our lives and witness (Titus ii. 10).

No.6. ii. 1 - 13.
pp. 108 - 111

The Apostle has explained the practical implications of healthy (sound) doctrine as it affects the elder and younger men and women, and also slaves with regard to their relationship to their masters. All this flows out of verse 11 of chapter ii.:

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed Hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.”

The carrying into effect of Paul’s “healthy teaching” is the ‘adornment’ of the wondrous revelation of God’s grace which instructs us so to respond and glorify Him.

The structure of the epistle brings out the two occurrences of *epephane*, ‘appeared’. Chapter ii. 11, the grace of God ‘appeared’, and in iii. 4 the kindness and love toward man of God our Saviour ‘appeared’, resulting in salvation for all who have responded to such exceeding grace. This takes us back to His first Coming. But in ii. 13 our minds are directed to the future Hope and here we have *epiphaneia*, appearing, which is derived from *epiphanes*, a related word. It is also used of the First Coming in II Tim. i. 10.

So we see that all practical Christian response resolves around the great doctrines concerning the first appearing of Christ in the flesh and His future appearing in glory.

As the word *epiphaneia* is so intimately connected with our hope, we must pause to give careful consideration to its usage and teaching. The verbal form, *epiphaino* means ‘to shine over or upon’, ‘to give light to’ (Luke i. 79) and in the passive, ‘to appear’ or ‘be manifested’. In this latter form the verb in Titus occurs in the two contexts we have mentioned. In classical Greek the word has the force of coming suddenly into view, and

epiphaneia, the sudden appearance of an enemy. Parkhurst points out that the Greek writers particularly apply this word to the appearance of some deity in splendour. In later Greek, the papyri show that it is used in the sense of manifestation, or any conspicuous intervention on the part of higher powers.

It only occurs twice in the Septuagint (II Sam. vii. 23 and Amos v. 22) but often in the Apocrypha (Maccabees 2) where it is used of God's supernatural appearances in aid of His people. Some English versions translate it as 'advent', but this word, through the Latin, with its meaning of 'coming', does not convey the real sense and therefore must be rejected. Moreover, if translated thus it is apt to be used as synonymous with the word *parousia* (also translated 'coming'), which it is not.

To sum up, *epiphaneia*, when connected with a person, means their sudden appearance, manifestation, or coming into view, after being hidden.

Let us now note the occurrences of this word in the NT. The Apostle Paul is the only writer who is inspired to use it, and with one exception, all the occurrences are in the epistles written *after* Acts xxviii.:

"That wicked one whom the Lord shall destroy with the *brightness* of His parousia (coming)" (II Thess. ii. 8).

"Thou keep until the *appearing* of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Tim. vi. 14).

"By the *appearing* of our Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Tim. i. 10).

"At His *appearing* and His Kingdom" (II Tim. iv. 1).

"To them who have loved His *appearing*" (II Tim. iv. 8).

"The *appearing* of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus ii. 13).

It will be noted that the one occurrence before Acts xxviii., namely II Thess. ii. 8, is not parallel with its usage afterwards. There it does not stand alone describing the hope of the church, but is used to add detail to the *parousia* of Christ (Matt. xxiv. 29, 30), Whose overwhelming and revealed power will destroy the man of sin. In the later occurrences it stands alone, bringing before us a new aspect of hope for the church which is His Body. Up to the end of the Acts, the *hope of Israel* has been dominant (Acts iii. 19-26; xxvi. 6, 7; xxviii. 20) and coloured the hope of the church of that period.

Now that Israel, the nation, has been laid aside in unbelief and hardness of heart, and the Mystery revealed concerning God's purpose to bless some of His redeemed children in the heavenly places where Christ is seated, a new aspect of hope is stressed and *epiphaneia*, standing by itself, is used by the Holy Spirit to describe the consummation of salvation for this church.

The word 'appearing' suggests that, in some way, the glory of Christ is now hidden. This is also brought forward in Col. iii. 2-4:

". . . . Seek those things which are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth; for ye died, and your life has been hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then also you with Him will be manifested in glory."

The word translated manifested is *phaneroo* and generally has the thought of bringing to light something that has been hidden (Mark xvi. 12, 14; Col. i. 26; I Tim. iii. 16).

Hope is the final *realization* of what we now hold by *faith*. By *faith* we are now seated together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. ii. 6); *realized hope* will take us actually there whether living or dead (II Tim. iv. 1). Then the stupendous glory of our great God and Saviour Christ Jesus will be revealed in the heavenly holiest of all. But this will not be the glory of Christ by Himself. It will be the revealed glory of Head and Body united for the first time. Or if we look to the tremendous goal of Eph. ii. 19-22 when this church will be completed and constitute a holy Temple, a 'dwelling place for God' in the heavenly places. Then the glory of our Saviour will fill it completely, as the glory of God did in the earthly type of Solomon's temple (II Chron. vii. 1, 2). It will be *manifested* there to all the heavenly host, and we shall have the highest honour of being living stones in that dwelling place of splendour, majesty and infinite joy.

This is indeed a 'blessed hope', one that words can only faintly portray. No wonder Paul prayed for the Ephesian saints that they should have enlightened eyes in order to know it for themselves (Eph. i. 17, 18). We are sometimes told that this is 'nebulous', 'ephemeral' or 'unreal'. People who talk like this want us to be able to describe this hope in earthly terms that our human senses can appreciate. They do not realize that this high calling, going far beyond the limitation of earthly things and earthly experiences, being related to a heavenly sphere that we know nothing about apart from the Scriptures is practically indescribable in human words. If we *could* so describe it, then it would not be the tremendous goal that the post-Acts epistles of Paul reveal.

The phase of the Second Advent that relates to the *earth* can be far more easily appreciated because we are within our own human sphere and can well imagine what the effect of such a Coming will be on earthly things and the activities of men. But the destiny of this church is so exalted that earthly terms utterly fail to adequately describe it. It is true to say that this highly favoured company will constitute the holiest of all itself. It will indeed be 'the *fullness* of Christ' (Eph. i. 23). In which case we can give humble and grateful thanks to the Father 'who has made us sufficient to be partakers of the holiest of all in the light' (Col. i. 12 contrast I Tim. vi. 14-16). What an exceeding work of grace was needed to do this! And what a change will be necessary for this body of weakness and humiliation! It will need nothing less than one fashioned like the body of His glory! (Phil. iii. 20, 21).

Some believers are greatly concerned as to *how* this will happen. In fact they seem to be more concerned with *how* they will get to glory than to appreciate the hope itself, the *certainty* of being there. The method has already been given in earlier epistles. It will be by change and rapture for those who are living and resurrection for those who have died. There can be no other way. We have no reason to believe that the hope of the Church which is the fullness of Him that filleth all in all, will be any less instantaneous than that of I Cor. xv. 51, 52. We shall know nothing about the process for it will be quicker than the 'twinkling of an eye'. The fact remains that *we shall be there in the glory with our exalted Saviour and Head as His Temple and dwelling place*. Surely then we can live,

looking for such a wonderful hope to be realized (Titus ii. 13)? The word translated 'looking' is *prosdechomai*. This is used (1) of things, to admit or to allow; (2) of persons, to receive kindly, to entertain as a guest and (3) of things future, to wait for, to expect with confidence.

In this third sense it is used in Luke xii. 36, "and ye yourselves like unto men that *wait for* their Lord" or of Joseph of Arimathaea who *waited for* the Kingdom of God (Luke xxiii. 51). So here in Titus ii. 13; we should 'live *waiting for* that blessed hope and the manifesting of the glory of our great God and Saviour Christ Jesus'. We shall certainly need divine patience to wait. This is one of the fruits of the Spirit which we all need so much, but it must be *practical* patience, not the patience of idleness. The best way we can practically manifest such an attitude is to continually seek His will in service and witness and then, by His grace and strengthening, to carry this out in deed and truth, all the while remembering that our eternal home is not here, but it already exists as a present fact in the heavens (Phil. iii. 20).

During this present life we have to deal with the things of earth in a measure, but wise are we if we do not allow these things to completely monopolize our thinking and outlook. The *bent of our mind* should be upon heavenly things where Christ is now enthroned (Col. iii. 1, 2) and where our life and citizenship now exist. To have the bent of our minds on earthly things is exceedingly dangerous, as Phil. iii. 19 warns us. Beware of any system of Bible teaching or theology that leans this way, even though it is dressed up attractively. We are a heavenly people with a destiny in the plan of God to carry out a phase of His purposes in the heavens 'far above all', just as redeemed Israel will be used on the earth. Our high calling has wonders beyond our dreams, safely treasured in Christ Jesus. Let us live with exceeding joy, anticipating the glories to come, which are as sure and certain as our Saviour Himself.

**No.7. ii. 13, 14 – iii. 6.
pp. 156 - 160**

We are still dealing with the wonderful context of Titus ii. 13, 14; having considered something of the magnificent hope which lies before every member of the Body of Christ, the manifesting of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ in the heavenlies. Verse 14 continues:

"Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works."

This redemption was not effected by God merely putting forth His mighty power on our behalf. It goes infinitely deeper than that. It needed nothing less than the Lord Jesus 'giving Himself', and in giving Himself, He gave everything; "the Son of God, Who loved me and *gave Himself* for me" said the Apostle (Gal. ii. 20). In the same epistle we

are told Christ ‘gave Himself for our sins’ (i. 4). Twice in Ephesians is this supreme Gift mentioned:

“Walk in love as Christ also hath *given Himself* for us” (v. 2).
“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and *gave Himself* for it” (v. 25).

Again in I Tim. ii. 6 R.V.:

“. . . . Christ Jesus, Who *gave Himself* a ransom for all; the testimony to be borne in its own times.”

The last reference is linked with the verse we are considering, for the verb *lutroo* translated ‘redeem’ in Titus ii. 14, is from *lutron* a ransom, ‘to deliver by the payment of a price’. Two distinct aspects of the redeeming work of the Son of God are brought forward here; ‘to *redeem*’ and ‘to *purify*’. In the O.T. types the Passover and the Exodus set forth the former, whereas the Tabernacle with its cleansing by water, or by the blood and ashes of a red heifer, show forth the latter. We not only need to be *set free* from the bondage of sin and death, but also to be *made clean* from their defilement. Iniquity is the Greek *anomia*, ‘not subject to law’, and therefore is better rendered ‘lawlessness’. The cleansing or purifying (*katharizo*) is brought before us again in Eph. v. 26:

“That He might sanctify and cleanse (*katharizo*) it (the church) with the washing of water by the Word”,

and how we can rejoice when we realize that not a spot or blemish remains after God’s cleansing! This, the Apostle tells us, relates to ‘a peculiar people, zealous of good works’. “Peculiar people” is *laon periousion*. The latter word comes from *perieimi*, to be over and above. As regards the Scripture it is found only in the LXX and here although there are examples of it in the papyri. The translators of the LXX seemed to use it in the sense of “one’s own possession”, and they use it to translate the Hebrew *segullah* ‘peculiar treasure’, referring to the people of Israel:

“Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a *peculiar treasure* unto Me above all people” (Exod. xix. 5).

It is used similarly in Deut. xiv. 2; xxvi. 18; Psa. cxxxv. 4; Mal. iii. 17 (jewels). The phrase ‘peculiar people’ in I Pet. ii. 9 is not the same. *Peripoiesis* is the word used in this context, but the thought is similar. It should be noted that these words are used of Jewish believers, the Israel of God, and so there is a link with the ‘peculiar treasure’ of the O.T. Neither of these terms are used of Gentiles independently of Israel till after that nation is laid aside in unbelief at Acts xxviii. Now the Body of Christ, the heavenly people, is the special treasure, a people for the Lord’s own possession, and they should be ‘zealous of good works’.

It is possible for us to be keen on many things, but can we honestly say we have a burning zeal for good works? Knowledge without zeal is barren and unfruitful. Zeal without knowledge can be dangerous. Some may be surprised that Paul stresses good works so emphatically in this epistle. While he is led to set aside completely any form of

good works or merit in obtaining salvation, ‘not of works, lest any man should boast’ (Eph. ii. 9), yet he immediately adds ‘for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*’ (10) and truth is not seen in balance until equal prominence is given to both these statements. There have been those who have so emphasized grace apart from works, that the need for righteous living has been overlooked. This is certainly not to the glory of God.

It will be helpful if we set out the occurrences of ‘works’ in the epistle to Titus:

- A | i. 16. In works they deny Him.
 - i. 16. unto every good work reprobate.
- B | ii. 7. Titus, a pattern of good works.
 - C | ii. 14. A redeemed people zealous of good works.
- B | iii. 1. (Cretan believers) ready unto every good work.
 - C | iii. 5. His mercy saved us, not by works of righteousness.
- A | iii. 8. Believers maintain good works.
 - iii. 14. Our (people) maintain good works.

The emphasis on the believer producing and maintaining good works is plain for all to see, and may the Lord give us all grace and strength so to do (see also II Cor. ix. 8; II Tim. ii. 21 and iii. 17).

Not only does the Apostle stress this, but he instructs Titus to follow his example:

“These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no man despise thee” (ii. 15 R.V.).

We find similar teaching in I Tim. iv. 11, 12.

The first verse of chapter iii. again mentions good works with the added injunction to be obedient to rulers. We give the R.V. rendering:

“Put them in mind to be in subjection to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready unto every good work.”

What should be the attitude of the believer to civil authorities? How wisely the Saviour expressed it when He said:

“Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matt. xxii. 15-21).

This does not mean that God approves of all that governments do, but a measure of organized government is essential if we are to avoid chaos and anarchy, and the Christian does not glorify the Lord by refusing to pay taxes or to comply with regulations which he finds unpleasant. On the contrary he is exhorted to ‘pray for kings and all that are in authority’ (I Tim. ii. 2). It is only when human rule takes to itself Divine prerogatives and seeks to compel believers to deny the Truth, that exceptions must be taken.

The Apostle continues:

“To speak evil of no man, not to be contentious, to be gentle, showing all meekness toward all men.”

As we have before pointed out, ‘to speak evil’ is *blasphemeo* to blaspheme, and it may come as a shock to some to realize that in the Word of God we are warned against blaspheming our fellow man as well as God. The word occurs twice in this epistle as the structure shows:

B2 | ii. 2-8. Believers. Subject (*hupotasso*)
that Word be not blasphemed (*blasphemetai*).
A pattern of good works.

* * * * *

B4 | iii. -1, 2. Believers. Subject (*hupotasso*) to authority.
Ready to every good work, not speak evil (*blasphemein*).

In Christian circles this is often not treated with the seriousness it has in the Scriptures. Some would not dream of stealing a fellow-believer’s possessions, but apparently they have no compunction in stealing away his character by untrue or unjust and prejudiced accusations. This has happened again and again by expositors who often have no first-hand knowledge of the people or writings they criticize. Such is sheer misrepresentation or blasphemy and cannot fail to come under the Lord’s displeasure, both now and at His judgment seat.

Amachos, not contentious, is literally non-fighter, and is rendered “no brawler” in I Tim. iii. 3. Our wrestling is ‘not with flesh and blood’ (Eph. vi. 12). “The servant of the Lord must not fight (strive)” (II Tim. ii. 24). The only weapon we are allowed to use is ‘the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God’ (Eph. vi. 17) and while this must be used faithfully, it should be in love, gentleness and meekness (Titus iii. 2).

The Apostle now looks back to the days when unsaved, just as he does in Eph. ii.:

“For we also were aforetime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another” (Titus iii. 3 R.V.)

Not that every believer necessarily exhibited all these vices, but this was the general picture, indicating the great need of God our Saviour:

“But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and His love toward man appeared” (4).

We are now taken back to the Lord’s first appearing and the rich blessings that flow because of his redemptive work at Calvary. *Chrestotes* kindness, is several times translated ‘goodness’, e.g., Rom. ii. 4; xi. 22. Love towards man is *philanthropia*, our English ‘philanthropy’, which only occurs twice in the N.T., here and Acts xxviii. 2. God’s philanthropy rises immeasurably above man’s. It is exhibited supremely in the gift of His Beloved Son. In this way was the fathomless love of God manifested (Jn. iii. 16), and it was absolutely undeserved:

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed (poured out) upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour” (5).

Not only do we experience God’s kindness and His rich love, but His pity as well, which realized the depth of our need.

What does the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Ghost mean? The word washing is *loutron* and many commentaries refer this to water baptism and see in it a reference to baptismal regeneration. If this is true, then it means that all who have not been immersed in water are unsaved. The general teaching regarding salvation by grace is perfectly clear in Paul’s epistles and is completely divorced from good works, merit, or participation in any sort of ritual. The very context we are considering has just insisted that no righteous deed on our part can save us. One would have thought that this very fact would have prevented expositors from reading any act of water baptism into verse 5. When the N.T. wishes to teach the type or shadow, it uses the word baptism. Paul did not say the ‘*baptism* of regeneration’. Had he meant this, he would have surely said so.

Loutron only occurs once more and that by the Apostle, so we have guidance in the way he uses it. This is found in Eph. v. 26 ‘the *loutron* washing of water by the Word’. The last phrase ‘by the Word’ shows us that literal water cannot be meant, but a figure is being employed. We are cleansed by the Word and the Lord Jesus taught the same truth in John xv. 3:

“Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you.”

Likewise in Titus iii. 5. In a dispensation where all the shadows are gone and each member of the Body is filled to the full in Christ (Col. ii. 10, 16, 17) and therefore has the complete and lasting spiritual reality, water baptism is not only unnecessary, it would be an intrusion. The Apostle is teaching the cleansing that accompanies regeneration, and he follows it with the renewing of the Holy Spirit. The genitive here is subjective and is better rendered ‘renewal *by* the Holy Spirit’. *Anakainosis* is used only elsewhere in Rom. xii. 2 ‘be ye transformed by the *renewing* of your mind’ and the verb *anakainoo* also occurs only twice in the New Testament, “the inward man is *renewed* day by day” (II Cor. iv. 16), and ‘ye have put on the new man, which *is being renewed* unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him’ (Col. iii. 10 R.V.). In each occurrence it is the work of the Holy Spirit in connection with the mind and its constant renewing. In this way it is also used in Titus iii. 5. This vital and necessary work of the Holy Spirit is no mere trickle. It has been ‘*poured out* upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour’. The glorious redemptive work of the Lord Jesus is the basis upon which this rich ministry of the Holy Spirit operates, putting each member of the Body into the position of being cleansed, and given a constantly renewed mind, which is then capable of receiving Truth and growing thereby.

No.8. iii. 7 – 15.
pp. 168 - 172

Having stressed the importance of the particular aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit in the cleansing and renewal of the mind, the apostle continues:

“That being justified by His grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

“That” expresses a purpose. It is *hina* “in order that”, showing us that the great work of salvation, cleansing and renewing has the object of fitting us for an *inheritance*. All God’s redeemed children must have an inheritance *somewhere* in the perfect new heavens and earth that will eventually come into being. “If children, then heirs” (Rom. viii. 17) is true for all time. The inheritance that lies before the members of the Body is no earthly one, but as Ephesians and Colossians make clear, is linked with the heavenly holiest of all. In other studies we have shown that instead of the word ‘saints’, we can translate the ‘holiest of all’ in Eph. i. 18 and Col. i. 12. Eph. i. 14 tells us that the Spirit of promise gives us the *earnest* or foretaste of this stupendous inheritance now, so this must be included in the ‘renewing of the mind’ we have just considered.

Justification is nearly always linked with faith in the N.T., but here it is *by grace* and grace definitely excludes works of any kind, as Rom. xi. 6 makes clear, and this again shows that the washing of regeneration cannot be referring to any act of ritual which can be added to salvation. The hope of eternal life balances chapter i. 2 in the structure of the epistle, and we have seen that there is a phase of *eonian life* to be enjoyed by the Body of Christ in the heavenlies while the ages run their course, which is not to be confused with the earthly kingdom during the Millennium.

“Faithful is the saying, and concerning these things I will that thou affirm confidently, to the end that they which have believed God may be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men” (iii. 8 R.V.).

Verse 8 is one of the five ‘faithful sayings’ of the Pastoral Epistles. We bring together the other occurrences, quoting from the Revised Version:

“Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief (or first)” (I Tim. i. 15).

“Faithful is the saying, If a man seeketh the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (I Tim. iii. 1).

“. . . . godliness, is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come. Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance” (I Tim. iv. 8, 9).

“Faithful is the saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him” (II Tim. ii. 11).

Some expositors have felt that these sayings are fragments of the earliest Christian hymns, as they exhibit a regular pattern, such as poetry or a hymn would furnish and

would tend to impress their truth upon the memory. Note the R.V. affirm *confidently* rather than the A.V. affirm *constantly*. *Diabebaioomai* only occurs elsewhere in I Tim. i. 7 where it is used of the dogmatism of the false teachers. The Apostle was insistent that the *balance* of truth should be constantly and confidently proclaimed by Titus as a leader; that is to say, while salvation is of God's free grace, apart from any human work, yet, once experienced, it *must be followed by good works* and Christ-like living as an external fruit of the internal work of the Spirit. There have been some in our day who have so stressed grace in the calling of the Body of Christ that the need for good works has been ruled out, hence the need is still to stress this most practical note, for how otherwise can we *adorn* or make beautiful the doctrine of God our Savior? (Titus ii. 10).

Ophelimos profitable is confined to these pastoral letters. I Tim. iv. 8 reminds us that bodily exercise profiteth for a little while, not that it has no value at all. In moderation it is necessary for health but it has to be continued for any lasting effect. Godliness, however, is profitable unto all things (I Tim. iv. 8). II Tim. iii. 16 asserts that the God-breathed holy Writings, the Scriptures, are 'profitable for teaching, reproof, correction and instruction which is in righteousness' (R.V.) and in Titus iii. 8 we have the profit of this continued emphasis upon the good works in daily life which practically exhibit the Truth connected with the Body of Christ. These must be *maintained, proistemi*. This word is used intransitively, 'to take the lead in'. The Apostle is concerned that believers should not only continue in good works, but *take the lead in them*, as examples to others. May God give us all grace to learn the proper place that this epistle teaches concerning good works and to keep this constantly in mind and practice.

"but shun foolish questionings, and genealogies, and strifes, and fightings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain" (iii. 9 R.V.).

These were opposite to the conduct previously enjoined. They were as unprofitable as the maintenance of good works was profitable. Timothy was warned by the Apostle in a similar way, for he had to face like opposition as Titus did:

"If any man teacheth a different doctrine he is puffed up, knowing nothing, but doting about questionings and disputes of words whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, wranglings of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth" (I Tim. vi. 4, 5 R.V.)

These were the Judaistic opposers that Satan was using to seek to wreck the progress of the truth.

"A man that is heretical after a first and second admonition refuse, knowing that such a one is perverted, and sinneth, being self-condemned" (iii. 10, 11 R.V.).

Heretical *hairetikos* from *haireomai*, to choose, really means a self-chooser, one who has decided to reject revealed truth and choose his own ideas. This word has often been used unjustly of those who have sought to progress in the knowledge and acknowledgment of the Word of God, specially when this has conflicted with so-called orthodoxy. Such have been forced to be 'non-conformists' in the truest sense. The Reformers were such, and going back to the beginning so was the Apostle Paul as judged by some of his fellow countrymen:

“After the way which *they call heresy*, so worship I the God of my fathers”
(Acts xxiv. 14).

There is only one standard of *true* orthodoxy and that is an acceptance and practice of the Word of God rightly divided. As long as this is our position we need not be afraid of such taunts. In fact we are in good company. All else is but the fallible opinion of men, however eminent or religious.

However, the Apostle instructs Titus concerning those who rightly come under the description of heretics, self-choosers, and dividers. Such were perverted. *Ekstrepho*, to turn inside out, to twist or pervert, is used only here in the N.T. They were to be given two warnings and then, if hot headed, were to be avoided. The A.V. ‘reject’ is somewhat too strong, for it sounds like excommunication, but this is not what Paul is enjoining. The R.V. translates ‘refuse’ and puts ‘avoid’ in the margin. Similar exhortations are given in the epistles to Timothy, “from such withdraw thyself” (I Tim. vi. 5). “Foolish and unlearned questions avoid” (II Tim. ii. 23). “From such turn away” (II Tim. iii. 5). The only hope for such backsliders is that “God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (II Tim. ii. 25).

The closing verses of the epistle have several personal touches. Paul gives instructions concerning Artemas, Tychicus, Zenas and Apollos. Of Artemas we know nothing, for this is the only reference in the N.T. to him, likewise Zenas, the lawyer. The designation ‘lawyer’ should be understood as one who was expert in the Mosaic law, not necessarily in ordinary civil law. Tychicus is the well-loved follower of the Apostle (Eph. vi. 21; Col. iv. 7; II Tim. iv. 12), also Apollos, the disciple who was ‘mighty in the Scriptures’ and who had been led on further into the Truth by the gracious witness of Aquila and Priscilla. Zenas and Apollos were possibly bearers of this epistle. They were to be given all facilities for their journey and this would doubtless include hospitality. The early Christians were taught to entertain and provide for Christian travelers, specially those who ministered the Word.

Titus is exhorted to hasten (give diligence) to come to the Apostle at Nicopolis, where he had decided to spend the winter. There were three cities which bore this name, in Cilicia, Thrace or Macedonia, and in Epirus. The latter is probably the one referred to. Augustus had built it to commemorate his naval victory over Mark Anthony in B.C.31. The title means ‘city of victory’, a fitting place for the close of the Apostle’s life; victorious in a very different sense to Caesar Augustus.

“And let our people also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful” (iii. 14 R.V.).

Paul cannot close the epistle without another reference to the importance of maintaining good works. If ever a portion of the N.T. clearly teaches the right and the wrong place for good works it is this letter. Much unbalance and wrong doctrine has resulted from this aspect of truth not being appreciated. Good works are likened to fruit. They are the outcome of a healthy root just as in the realm of nature. ‘Rooted and grounded’ in Christ is the basis for all spiritual growth and practical response, and

without this there is no possibility of producing works which will be acceptable to the Lord. The closing words are characteristic of the Apostle:

“All that are with me salute thee. Salute them that love us in faith. Grace be with you all” (iii. 15 R.V.).

Most evidently he valued the love of his friends, some of whom manifested it by staying with him to the end, as Luke did (II Tim. iv. 11). He concludes with his usual reference to grace as the mark of this being a genuine epistle from him (II Thess. iii. 17, 18).

This letter, together with the two of Timothy, throw a flood of light on the conditions these two overseers had to face, and the wisdom, strength and grace they would need to discharge their responsibilities to the Lord, and to those to whom they ministered. They are a word in season to all who are called upon to lead, for such will always have to deal with those who respond and others who reject and even oppose.

We are thankful for this epistle to Titus with its wholesome balance on doctrine and good works (practice) which should surely follow. It has vividly brought before us the two appearances of the Lord Jesus, the first accomplished nearly 2,000 years ago which provides the basis of all our salvation and calling, and the second which takes our mind to the future and the full assurance of hope that will be realized at the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour. Nothing is dated here; it is a moment known only to God, but there is no prophetic event to be fulfilled first, so we can “live looking” in joyful anticipation for it each day. For we know not when the last member of the Body will be gathered in and this may not be long delayed.

Meanwhile may we prove that this is not only a happy and a certain hope, but a very practical one as well, as enabling us to make the most of the time left in faithful witness and full response to whatever the claims of the Lord and His will are upon each of us.