

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS:

BEING

A SERIES OF ADDRESSES

DELIVERED AT

CONFERENCES OF CHRISTIANS

AT

CLAPTON HALL,

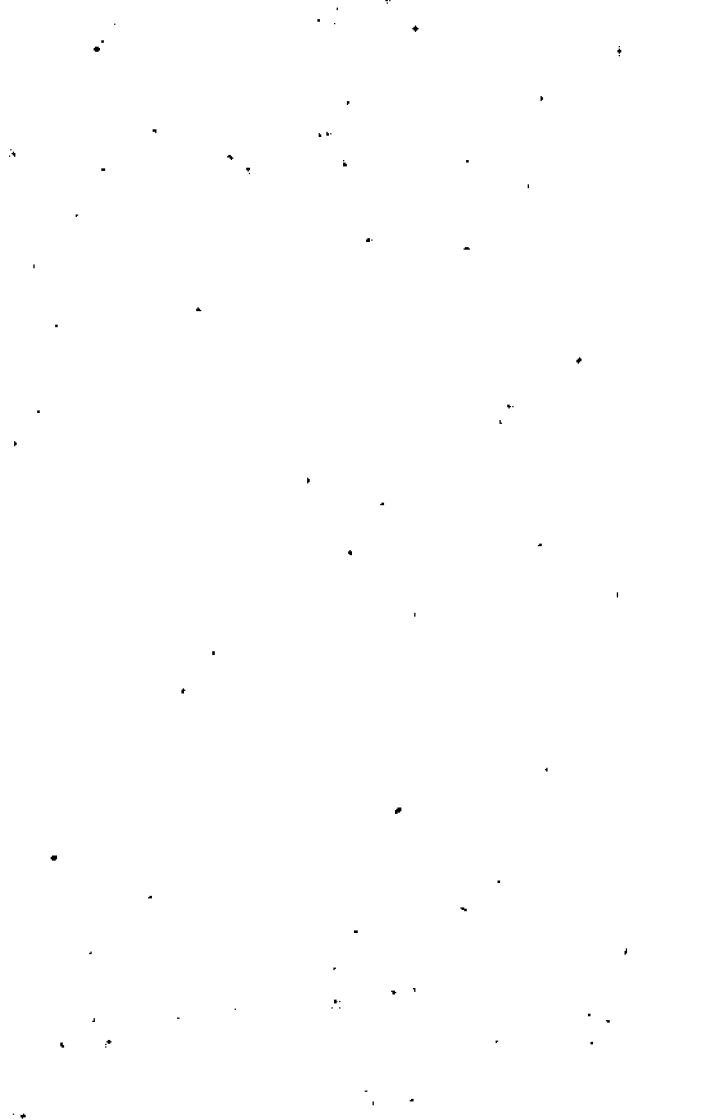
ALKHAM ROAD, STOKE NEWINGTON,

ON

WEDNESDAY, MAY 9TH, AND THURSDAY, MAY 10TH, 1888.

LONDON:

JAMES E. HAWKINS, 17, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.;
AND 36, BAKER STREET, W.





PREFACE.

IN presenting to the reader these Records of the interesting Conference recently held at Clapton Hall, we do so with a sense of deep gratitude to the Lord for permitting so many of His dear children to share the rich blessing realized throughout these memorable gatherings.

Therein we trace the accomplishment of desires that have been cherished for years, and the answers to many prayers; thus proving their conception and arrangement to have been of Him who ever delights to promote His people's edification and joy, and, as a consequence, their increased devotion of heart and life to Himself and His service.

Whether we consider the deep importance of the subjects considered, which have such definite relation to the character of the times through which we are passing, the deep interest shown therein by the large audiences that filled the commodious building on the mornings, afternoons, and evenings of these days, the generous hospitality of the beloved host and hostess and other local friends, the spirit of prayer and brotherly love that obtained amongst the assembled

guests, the liberty of the Holy Spirit graciously given to the speakers in their various utterances, or other circumstances that contributed to the successful issue of the Conference, we see abundant cause for praise to our loving God and Father, and fresh encouragement to count upon Him for still richer displays of His grace and goodness in the future.

On reviewing the Conference as a whole, and contemplating its possible results, we have been much impressed with the great opportunities for usefulness in helping the people of God and advancing the knowledge of Christ which lie within the reach of those who have been entrusted of the Lord with this world's wealth. God grant that such an example as this, set by Mr. and Mrs. Morley at Clapton, may be followed by others possessing similar means for furthering the interests of Christ's cause, spreading the knowledge of His truth and grace, and in promoting that godly fellowship amongst Christians generally, without respect to denominational names or distinctions, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

The addresses here reported have all been revised by their authors, and are now sent forth in the prayerful hope that to many who were not permitted to be present at the Conference they may prove an equal or even greater blessing than was vouchsafed to those who were privileged to hear them when delivered.

C. RUSSELL HURDITCH.

LONDON, *July, 1888.*



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PRACTICAL SANCTIFICATION.

Wednesday Morning, May 9th, 1888.

THE Conference was commenced with the hymn—
“Hail to the Lord’s Anointed !
Great David’s greater Son !”

Mr. J. G. McVICKER, after a few opening words, read Ezekiel xliii., 1 Cor. iii. from verse 11, and then led the assembly in prayer, followed by various other brethren.

Mr. McVicker read the following message from Mr. J. Denham Smith, who had been prostrated in a dangerous illness for several months.

MR. DENHAM SMITH’S MESSAGE FROM HIS SICK-ROOM.

Naomi said to Ruth, “*Sit still . . . until thou know how the matter will fall.*”—RUTH iii. 18.

Ruth was to *sit* waiting to *know* how the matter between her and Boaz would fall. We sit waiting to know how the matter will fall with our Divine Boaz. It is with the sure word of prophecy that we sit intelligently and knowingly. It tells us how the matter will fall relating to our Divine Boaz ; it tells us how the heavens and the earth will be filled with His glory ; it tells us how both will be associated in

the glory, as in Isaiah lx.; it tells us we are to be sharers of that glory with Him.

This sitting and knowing is our sweet attitude all the days of our life, so that living or dying we see beforehand how the events will be—what the history of our poor sin-stricken world, and how the many glories of Christ will be revealed.

A Christian does not want to live till then that he might "know how the matter will fall;" but in dying, and at the very gate of heaven, he may go in with his eye fully out upon it and his heart rejoicing in it all, knowing the wonderful future of the world he leaves, and the ineffable glory of the world he enters.

The hymn—

"Just as Thou art—how wondrous fair,
Lord Jesus, all Thy members are!"

was then sung, after which the first address was given by

Dr. NEATBY.

Let us read a few words from the epistle to the Hebrews. In verse 20 of the last chapter we read, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." It will be a word of exhortation rather than of teaching this morning. What I seek from the Lord, present among us, is that each of us may be drawn into immediate and earnest communion with Him.

What we have to consider is the question of personal and individual separation to Him—separation to Him as a vessel for His glory. May the Lord's good hand be upon us, and work effectually in all our hearts, that nothing may be allowed to hinder His full blessing. The thought of holiness runs through all the revelations and all the ways of God. A remarkable instance of it is, that there was borne on the head of the high priest, in the presence of God,

"Holiness unto the Lord;" and that same device will one day be written upon the "bells of the horses." As soon as Jehovah had gathered Israel as a people to Himself, He placed a mitre upon the head of its representative, bearing the inscription which so suited His character—"Holiness to the Lord." And when in the millennial days the ways of God are manifested in their perfection, there will be on the "bells of the horses" the same blessed device—a lovely manifestation of the character of God in all His creation! We are temples of the living God. What manner of persons ought we to be? The Holy Ghost dwells in every Christian within these walls—has dwelt there from the moment when our hearts were formed for Christ, and will dwell there until we are with Him above. If the Holy Ghost has made our body His vessel, holiness is not, thank God, a thing difficult of acquirement; for holiness is the natural outcome of the Holy Ghost dwelling in the soul. But there are many things that hinder and mar His work in us.

It is the pure in heart that are to see God. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Thank God, He has made us holy and "without blame before Him in love." Turn to Ephesians i. 4: "According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." This is, in fact, the nature and character of God—"Holy and without blame in love." God is infinitely holy, and He would have us answer to His holiness. He is blameless in all His ways, whatever man may say; He would have us blameless in all our ways. He is perfect love, and has shed abroad His love in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. This is God's purpose with regard to us. He is going to accomplish it before angels, before principalities and powers in the heavenlies. He is about to manifest us before the universe, according to His eternal counsels: "Holy and without blame before Him in love." Now,

as we are seen of God in Christ, this is accomplished; but the practical accomplishment of it is a thing that is going on, and I desire to press this upon my brethren. God knows I want it pressed upon my own heart. All God's dealings with you—every joy He gives you, every sorrow that He sends, every affliction He appoints; all these things are for one end—that we may be partakers of His holiness. We are the most blessed people in the world. God has set His love upon us. He loves holiness, and He says that He will make us holy.

In Romans viii. 29 we have God's purpose expressed in another form: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Such is God's purpose. One day that purpose will be accomplished. What a glad and happy day! God has had us in His hand, some of us twenty years, some thirty years, some forty years, for the accomplishment of this purpose. It is not accomplished, but He is accomplishing it; it is His settled purpose. God be praised! But if it is not accomplished, I must not settle down for a single moment. God has this, His blessed purpose, ever before His eye. I must have it before mine, because it is *in me* that God works out His purpose. The sorrow that comes in His providence, the joy that He gives, and the events that happen to us day by day here below are working together for the accomplishment of His purpose. We bless Him for it. But we must press on, and not settle down in present attainments, or in what we already know of His grace. Each day must witness progress. "They go from strength to strength."

Let us now turn to the passage that we read from Hebrews. This furnishes us with very clear light as

to the practical accomplishment of this purpose in us as individuals: "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep." The first thing that the soul needs to know—that a soul *must* know for the practical sanctification of his heart and life—is the God of peace. And the second thing that it needs to know is the peace of God. That God has reconciled us to Himself, and that He has revealed His nature in the way in which He has done it; that His inflexible righteousness and His perfect grace are no longer in conflict; that, in short, it is as the God of peace that He has brought us to Himself—this we need to know as the first step to practical sanctification. To be sanctified is to be made holy—to be made like God. He is infinitely pure. We must be pure in heart to see Him. He is infinitely holy. "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

He has settled the whole question of sin, and set us in perfect peace in His presence. Of course I do not dwell upon this, but it is necessary to refer to it, because if we are not established in grace we can make no progress in holiness. There is no progress at all until the soul knows the peace that Christ has made by the blood of the cross. We are "reconciled to God by the death of His Son." Our place before God is according to the value of the blood of Christ His Son. Whatever God thinks of the blood of Christ, in that measure of acceptance we stand before Him. Can you tell me *what God thinks* of the blood of Christ? He calls it, and faith clings to it as, "the precious blood of Christ." How unspeakably precious to the heart of God was that blessed obedience which the Lord Jesus accomplished in His death! It is by this obedience that we are made righteous. Then, beloved friends, "*by His own blood* He entered in once into the holy place." Of course, as Son of God, there is no question of title at all; but going into the holy place as the representative of His people, He went in in the

same blessed title as we stand before God. The blood of the cross by which He made peace is the title in which our High Priest entered heaven. The blood of Christ is our only but divinely-sufficient title in the presence of God. That has completely purged our consciences until God Himself says there is not a spot within: "For by one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

But now for the other thing. I said that it is necessary to know the peace of God in order to make progress in practical sanctification. It is well called "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." When the heart knows God ever so feebly, when it knows Him as Father—*my* Father, when it has learnt that He loves me a great deal more than I love myself, not to say my child, and it knows that He has all power and all wisdom to make His love availing, what peace dwells in the heart, what peace "that passeth all understanding" keeps the heart and mind in the midst of the waves and billows of this troublesome world! There cannot happen to me one thing that He has not ordered. I defy all the devils in hell to accomplish one thing with regard to me, feeble as I am, that my Father has not arranged. Is it a wonder that the peace of God should keep the heart? When one knows, in practical power, the love that passeth knowledge, and that the One who loves is the living God—then indeed the peace of Christ rules in the heart. Oh beloved, I feel my feebleness as I say it, but I dare not say less, and I pray God that we may prove the rule, the dominion of Christ and His peace in our hearts far more, for this is the object of our meeting. I do not want to make a speech, but I wish all our hearts to get more of Christ this morning, more of entire dependence upon God, more of entire giving up of all our will, of everything in our hearts to His authority, to His gracious and perfect will.

But to return to our text: "The God of peace, that

brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus Christ." It was a terrible work that God had to do when He hid His face from Him. Ah! if we knew something more of that, we should know better what sin is in God's holy eye. We should hate it more completely, we should flee from every trace of sin, every stain of sin, if we knew what it was for God to turn away from the Lord Jesus Christ. It was sin which caused that blessed One—who was the Son of the Father, who always did those things that pleased Him—the wail of anguish from the outer darkness, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" "Others have long forsaken Me because of perfect holiness and perfect devotedness, but why, why hast *Thou* forsaken Me?" You know the secret, I know the secret, blessed be God. My Saviour stood before Him, confessing, and bearing the things that, alas! for me, I rolled under my tongue, and in which I took my pleasure. But if God in righteousness hid His face from Him, what a joyful work it was to bring the Lord Jesus Christ again from the dead. All is now changed; sin is gone; the curse which God pronounced upon sin has been poured out, and now He is a God of peace. Yes, He is the God of peace, and the God of peace is at liberty, nay, it is but a manifestation of His perfect righteousness, to call that blessed One out of the tomb—to bring Him as the Head of a new creation before Him where all things are of God. That "new creation" is in the power of a risen and endless life. In it we are joined to the Lord Jesus Christ. We join Him as the risen One. In death He stood *for* us; in resurrection He stands *with* us, or rather we stand with Him. The union begins only in resurrection. Do I say the *union*? Yes; absolute, perfect, eternal. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." And now the secret of holiness is not difficult. It is that this Christ that God has called out of the tomb should live in us, should speak in our words, should be mani-

fested in our actions, in all our ways. That, in the spirit in which we do a thing, in the object for which we do it, Christ should be displayed in us. This is practical sanctification. "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." The Lord bring this home to our hearts with living power, and may it call forth a stronger cry to Him for practical purity in heart, for practical holiness to the Lord.

"Through the blood of the everlasting covenant." Yes, this is the foundation now of everything—"Through the blood." Practical sanctification must have as a blessed basis the righteousness of God displayed in the cross. Holiness in heart and walk must ever have as its basis "the blood," as it says here, "of the everlasting covenant." You know almost everything in the epistle to the Hebrews is "the everlasting," in contrast with the passing character of the legal economy—"eternal redemption," "eternal inheritance," "through the eternal Spirit." This, I doubt not, is the reason why the word is used here.

"Make you perfect in every good work to do His will." Now the Lord Jesus Christ is here as everywhere a blessed model for us; and this divine model is, by the Holy Ghost, the real power of sanctification. I mean this, that it is by being occupied with Christ in the Word and by the Spirit that we know what His walk in this world was; and the Holy Ghost is the power in us for a walk according to this heavenly model. Christ is the living object outside me which does give me power, but it is Christ ministered within me by the Holy Ghost. It is no use one seeking a forcing-pump to get the affection on things above. It is a mighty magnet there above that draws it. "Set your affection on things above. . . . For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God"—the Christ above brought from the dead as the great

Shepherd of the sheep. It is Christ above that is the magnet to attract the heart, the object to draw the Christian heavenward. He is the one blessed, all-absorbing object. In the course of the Lord Jesus Christ down here we have the most perfect model, the most perfect example. "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." That seems something very high. It is indeed. But if you leave yourself in His hands, if you have the eye upon Him, He will accomplish it in you. I say it to the weakest child of faith, I say it to myself, He will accomplish it if you leave yourself entirely in His hands—not carelessly, but earnestly. He works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. If we are oppressed by the thought of our own helplessness, let us remember that God is able to accomplish His good pleasure in us. He will do it perfectly by-and-by; He does in measure now. May it be an ever-growing measure!

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ coming into the world saith, "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God." Yes, it is written of Him in the scroll of that blessed book, where there is nothing written but of Him, "I come to do Thy will." Sacrifice had not done it. It has not purified one conscience. It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. "I come to do Thy will. . . . By which will we are sanctified;" i.e. separated as holy vessels to God. The will of God was our sanctification in this great and perfect sense. That was the thing near to His heart. Christ came to do God's will, and in His death upon the cross He did the great will of God. The work of atonement was accomplished then, and only then.

But it was not only on the cross that the Lord Jesus Christ did God's will. Blessed be His name! He could say, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." Now I mention that as a thing which should be,

which must be, which, by God's grace, shall be, true of us in our measure. We cannot work in ourselves, but God is able. His will is, that He Himself, who was glorified by Christ perfectly, should be glorified in us. May God accomplish that end in each heart before me that loves Christ. Every action of that life was entire devotion to God.

Turn with me to Isaiah 1. 3. There is in this chapter a most marvellous unfolding of Christ in the glory of His person, and I may say the glory of His humiliation. "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering." How refreshing to the heart that loves Christ to find such a word as this in the same chapter that tells of His lowly grace in giving His back to the smiters! It is the eternal God who has now received the tongue of the learned, and who hides not His face from shame and spitting. Amid the sufferings of Christ, or His blessed humbling of Himself; in the midst of His lowliness and grace, of His meekness and long-suffering, we find such a verse as this: "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering." How God loves to testify that the self-emptied One is Jehovah! There is not a heart here, I am persuaded, that would take the humiliation of the Lord and use it for His dishonour. No; the brightest glory of the Lord is, that He humbled Himself. He never more perfectly did the will of God than when He was made sin; and if, in His righteousness, God must hide His face from the One who stands in the guilty one's place, who is confessing the guilty one's sins, nevertheless the blessed Jesus is always in His person the Beloved of the Father. Now read the next verse: "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned" (that is the tongue of the learner, one who learns), "that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." I love that passage

for this reason: The Lord would not receive once and for all His commission from His Father; but morning by morning He would have His ear opened, to hear as a learner at Jehovah's lips. What a blessed model for me! I *must* receive the Word morning by morning; I am in the place of dependence; it is my place. But the Lord in grace took that place, and He has left in it the fragrance of His blessed name, for those to enjoy who tread after Him the path of entire dependence upon God. May we hang every day upon God, and wait until He opens the ear, until He touches the tongue, that we may speak a word in season to him who is weary. What! would not the Lord speak a word to him who was weary until He received it from God? No; and if you endeavour to speak a word to a weary heart, to a sad and sorrowful soul, unless you have received it from God, you had better keep your lips closed. It is the hardest thing in the world to speak a word in season to a weary heart. The Lord Jesus received it from His Father, and poured it into the troubled hearts He so loved to minister to in this world. Thus in life, as in death, it was the one object of the heart of Christ to do the will of God: "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me."

The application of this to ourselves is very simple. *Whatever* the will of God, it should be my heart's deep purpose to do that will. Christ did it perfectly, and He has left us an example that we should tread in His steps. The will of God is, that we should be sanctified through and through; inwardly in our thoughts, outwardly in our words and ways. If we would do the will of God, it must be written in our hearts. It was perfectly so in the Lord Jesus. "Thy law is within My heart." Is this too much for us? It is not too much for Christ in us. It is not too much for our God to work in each of His beloved children here. "I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in

their hearts." If He will do it one day for Israel and Judah, may He accomplish it *practically* in us! May we not be content with it as a lovely thing apart from ourselves. May it be wrought into our hearts, so as to be heard in our words, seen in our walk, and felt in our whole deportment. If Christ is dwelling in our hearts by faith it will be so. He was never surprised into a word of impatience. God forbid that anybody should suppose such a thing! His words were *always* with grace seasoned with salt. May ours be such! May we not be surprised into a word of impatience, into a word of evil speaking!

How perfect was our blessed Master! And shall not we live in dependence upon Him, that He may display His perfections in us, that His strength might be perfect in our weakness? May God work in us all, that we may be fully willing to be entirely in His hands. The corroding care that is in many Christian hearts is more dishonouring to the Lord than almost anything in the hearts of His own; it is rank unbelief. Give yourselves entirely to Him, that He may do what seemeth good to Him. Nothing but your present and eternal good is in His heart. Yield yourselves entirely to Him, that He may mould you, that He may fashion you according to His will. Do not be anxious whilst He, who is your Father, sitteth upon the throne of the heavens, not only for to-morrow, but eternally. Give yourselves unto the Lord, that you may be free from care. Have everything before His eye—your talents, your purse, your private ledger. Keep all your accounts "for the Lord's inspection." Let the Lord see everything. I know that we cannot keep Him from seeing everything; but let our hearts be in the thought constantly, "I am keeping this for the Lord to look at." Let not a penny be expended, except in the way that the Lord appoints. It is spiritual theft if you use a penny, except in the Lord's way. You have no money at all. I look upon a company that does not possess among

the whole of them a single penny. Money committed to our stewardship is the Lord's, and it is to be used for the Lord as He appoints. The Lord give us grace. Let me leave one word of Scripture on your conscience: "Ye are not your own: ye are bought with a price." May God speak in our hearts all that it means, and work it into our minds, into our hearts, and into our ways by His blessed Spirit, for His name's sake.

The hymn—

"What grace, O Lord, and beauty shone
Around Thy steps below!"

having been sung, the following address was delivered by

Mr. ALEXANDER STEWART.

I should like to read a few passages of Scripture, for of course all the light on this subject shines from this Book. First of all, in the book of Exodus xxv. 8: "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." You know that love cannot bear separation from its object; that is a principle well understood among the sons of men. And when God had redeemed and liberated the people, His next thought was to come down and dwell in their midst. He did not intend that He should be coming and going, but that He should come and abide among them. And no sooner had He taken up His dwelling, than it became necessary that He should be surrounded by a sanctified people. I start with this, because the ground and cause of our sanctification are in the nature of the God who is pleased to dwell among us and in us. The principle is in these words further on, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me." (Leviticus x.) God being holy, it is not an arbitrary enactment, but it is a blessed necessity, that all those that draw near to Him should be holy. You read in the Scriptures such words as these, "God is love." Well, then, he that loveth not knoweth not God. You

read, "God is light." Well, then, only the sons of light, in the light, can walk with Him. You read that "God is a Spirit," therefore it is a necessity that all those that worship Him should be spiritual persons. And you read that "our God is a consuming fire," and therefore only the holy can dwell in His presence. The character of God determines the state of those who approach Him, and among whom He dwells. Hence, after the sanctuary is set up, we hear of the consecration of the priests, and the cleansing of the leper. In Exodus xxix. 44 we read: "And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to Me in the priest's office." Then passing into the book of Leviticus viii. 5, 6: "And Moses said unto the congregation, This is the thing which the Lord commanded to be done. And Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water." Then he clothed them. Then, in verse 14 (I do not wish to read too many verses), he brought the bullock for the sin-offering; then, in verse 18, the ram for the burnt-offering; then, in verse 22, the other ram—the ram of consecration. Verses 23, 24: "And he slew it; and Moses took of the blood of it, and put it upon the tip of Aaron's right ear, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot. And he brought Aaron's sons, and Moses put of the blood upon the tip of their right ear, and upon the thumbs of their right hands, and upon the great toes of their right feet: and Moses sprinkled the blood upon the altar round about." God was dwelling in the midst of the people, and it was necessary that those who should enter into His sanctuary to worship Him should be consecrated for that service; and it was also necessary, as you remember we are taught a little further on, for the leper, who should find his place in the camp and among the congregation of Israel, to be dealt with in like manner. We have to bless

God that He has given us such an object-lesson (to call it by that name) as this on the subject, for the word *sanctification* often leaves very little impression on the minds of those that hear it. God does not deal in abstractions. His Book is full of form, and of colour, and of light. God shows us in this Old Testament picture that which teaches us, most deeply and practically, what our sanctification, according to His mind, must be. First of all, by that blood the man was touched on ear and hand and foot; and Moses thus claimed the whole man for the God of Israel. God gives all, and God claims all. "True," you say, "God gives all. He gave His Son." Yes, and God claims all. You would not bring that down any lower, would you? The moment you believed the gospel, and the precious blood was sprinkled upon you, God claimed you; and your answer to that, in all the days since then, has been the measure of your practical sanctification.

Of course, the order is most instructive. First, the ear touched with that precious blood. We have heard already, in Isaiah 1., these words, applicable to the Lord Jesus, and in which we have a blessed part: "He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." He lay down at night, often no doubt a wearied Man. He woke in the morning, and the light broke on His eyes, as it does on ours; and the first exercise of the Son of God was to hold up His ear to His Father. His day lay before Him, as our day lies before us; and the first thing in the morning was the communication from God that was to order the steps of the day. You know it is truly said, that as the rudder is set the ship will steer. I am speaking to many Christians, and I am sure the experience of all is this: If the day be begun with God, if the word of God command the ear in the morning, the day is blessed, and comes fruitfully to its close; and if it is otherwise, then we can say, I suppose,

like that Roman emperor, at the end of it, we have lost a day. It comes close to us, it comes practically home to us, that the first thing is the ear for God; and for this simple reason, that the word that comes in by the ear goes down to the heart, and commands the man. Why was it that that servant in Israel, who might have been free if he would, but elected to serve his master still, was brought to the door-post, and had his ear bored through with the awl? Surely it meant, "I give my ear to my master, to be commanded by his word for ever." And then the hand. You remember that passage which says, "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord;" and that verse which speaks of the faith which was once delivered unto the saints; that is, to the holy, sanctified persons. My friends, before we touch these holy vessels, before we handle these holy truths, let us look at our hands. And then the feet. Oh, how often in exercise, constantly going through the ways of this miry world, we need to look at the feet! Let us remember continually, that ear and hand and foot, in their activities, are claimed by God, and claimed by the precious blood of His Son.

Then you remember, as regards the leper, that where the blood went the oil went; and on ear and hand and foot, not only precious blood, but holy oil was placed. Now, while the blood of Jesus consecrates us to God, and cleanses us from all sin, we have to remember that it is not the blood that gives us power to carry out the will of God, of which we have been hearing, but the blessed Holy Spirit of God, who dwells within. I think that simple distinction might perhaps be helpful to us, to remember that—while the precious blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin, so that we are without spot before God—it is the Holy Spirit of the Lord who makes us practically victors over every sin, every temptation, just in proportion as we yield ourselves to God.

Now, the difficulty in speaking on such a subject as this is compression. There are other passages of scripture to which I should like to be permitted to refer. While the Holy Spirit is the power of our sanctification, let us remember that the instrument He uses is the truth of the living God. I do not suppose that, in such an assembly as this, I need to attempt to justify the practicalness of doctrine. It is by the great doctrines of the word of God that the Holy Ghost forms men after the image of Jesus Christ. I was speaking just now about the precious blood, and I said—what I hope will not be misunderstood—that it was not the blood, but the Spirit of the Lord, that gave us the power; but yet remember how mighty an engine, in the hands of the Holy Ghost, is the doctrine of the blood of atonement to make a holy man. As I was sitting there, since I came into the building, I was remembering those words—

“Talk they of morals, O Thou bleeding Lamb!
The best morality is love of Thee.”

I do not think any man dwelling on the precious blood of Christ will be a man found in the ways of sin.

It is not that there is merely an external application, so to say, as in those levitical days, but there is such a word as this in the epistle to the Hebrews, “Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.” I remember meeting with a man of God in the north of Ireland, and his describing how one day, being in a certain state of soul, he went to the hymn-book to find a hymn to fit it; but, he said, he did not find the hymn in the book. When I tell you what the hymn was, you will know the state of heart he was in. This was the hymn—

“Oh, for a heart to praise my God,
A heart from sin set free,
A heart that always feels the blood
So freely shed for me!”

Yes, the Spirit of the Lord mightily uses that blessed simple truth for the sanctification of men. The passage I had in my mind was this: "Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine whereto ye were delivered." (Rom. vi. 17.) I take that as the reading, and I suppose the meaning is just this: The man is looked at as a plastic lump, let us say, of clay or of wax; and the word of God, the doctrine of the Lord, is looked upon as the seal. When the man takes on the impression, and is fashioned by that which stamps him, he is a holy man, sanctified by the truth.

You know that, with the strongest desires after holiness, men have gone sadly wrong and far astray on that subject. It is not only necessary that men should be separated men, it is necessary that they should be separated after the pattern and in the way that God prescribes in His word. Here is a man with sincere desires after holiness; he will do as thousands have done—and one cannot speak of them surely with any harshness—he will separate himself, locally and bodily, from his fellow-men, will be a monk. Well, the very step that takes him into his monastery, takes him out of the only place in which he can carry out the will of God. "Ye are the salt of the earth, the light of the world." What is the use of salt in a sack? What is the use of the light under the bushel? You must bring the salt into contact with the thing that it seasons, or else it is of no use at all.

How many difficulties beset men whenever they take up with the subject of separation! The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God—all separate from sinners as He was, and must have been—was continually among men, and so ought we to be now.

I would like to say a great deal more; but one thing I ask to be allowed to speak about further is this—the truth taught in Hebrews xii. 5, 6, "Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening

of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him : for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." Now, why, and to what end, does this blessed God, who afflicteth not willingly, and does not grieve the children of men, why does He subject to chastisement every son? If there is a man or woman in this assembly who knows nothing of that, it takes that person outside the pale of God's salvation altogether. There is none of us, who are God's children, but is under God's discipline. Why? "For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness." (v. 10.) When you speak of sanctification by blood, you speak of something not progressive. On the moment, whenever you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, that moment you were not only justified by the blood of the Lamb, but you were sanctified to God by that blood. That is a sanctification which does not admit of degrees. But what of this?—Ah! my friends, surely we may say it is lifelong—"That we might be partakers of His holiness." Salvation transpires in one blessed moment; but character is not formed in a day. We are all subject to the chastening of the Lord; and this is to be the end of it.

Sometimes, you know, that chastening is retributive; we have done something wrong, and God is finding us out, and bringing us to confession-point, because of that something. But are there not many of us here who at one time or other could have said, "Such a thing has befallen me. It is very grievous, very bitter. I have gone into the presence of God and opened up all my heart and ways to the Lord. There, in His light, I have not been able in all honesty to lay my finger on one single overt act of sin which I could connect with the chastisement that has fallen on me"? Just so; then it was not retributive. Perhaps it was preventive. Why did Paul get the thorn in the flesh?

Not for sins committed, but for a terrible sin he was in danger of falling into. "Lest I should be exalted above measure," he says, "I got that thorn in the flesh"—twice it is said in the same verse. (2 Cor. xii. 7.) "There was given to me"—it was a grace from God that thorn in the flesh to Paul.

They say drunkenness is a great curse. No doubt it is so; but drunkards are not in the majority. You may meet a hundred men, and it will go hard if there are ten drunkards among them. But take any hundred men, and examine them on this point—ask if there is no stain, no taint of pride affecting them, and not one of them, I suppose, could escape you. We are all born in the purple, in that sense. Ah, my dear brethren, how much is needed just to keep us in the only place where God can bless us! and that is low. If all the Christians here could stand up, one by one, and turn this into a great experience meeting, on the subject of pride, what a revelation! My brethren, it is a blessed place, the valley of humiliation.

"He that is down need fear no fall ;

He that is low no pride.

He that is humble ever shall

Have God to be his guide."

I was telling you about a man in the north of Ireland. A woman in the north of Ireland, though she does not belong to that country, said a simple thing once, which I daresay I may repeat. "All the power in the world cannot keep up a proud man, because God has determined to put him down; and all the power in the world cannot keep down a humble man, because God has determined to exalt him."

Now, my brother, turn it all over—personal trouble, family trouble, business trouble, church trouble. What was it for? Not because you were a sinner, above others, in word or deed, but because God saw deep down in you what would have borne bitter fruit if He had not, in that wonderful grace, taken in hand to

chasten you. I have read an incident like this. A king, who was hunting, got very warm in the chase, and being thirsty went up to a certain place and asked for something to drink, which a woman brought out to him. He took it, and drank it off. "Ah," he said, "that draught was delicious. But what was that floating on the surface?" "Oh," she said, "I saw you were warm with the chase, and I strewed a little dust on the top of the draught, in order that you might not drink it too quickly and hurt yourself!" A great deal that comes to us in life comes on that principle. We do not get all we want, and this is the reason. We know what we are *with* our trials; we do not know what we should be *without* them. There would be no living with us, perhaps, if God were to let us alone.

Another view is, that very often chastening is educative. It is a great principle in the things of God, that "God must acquaint His comforters with grief." Suppose you are not actually sinning, and that you are, through grace, a humble man, why the chastening? Because God is going to use you to comfort others. You have lost your health. Very good; then you will be able to sympathise, as never before, with the nervous people, and the weak people. You know how hardly you used to think of them. "Hypochondriacal" you called them, and all that. You understand them better now that your nerves have been unstrung. You have been at school. Or you have lost your money. How many other people have lost their money! God will use you perhaps to comfort them. Blessed be God, we are in His hands; and whether chastening be retributive, preventive, or educative for further service, this blessed God is chastening us, every one, that we may be made partakers practically of His holiness. Think of how we use that word *chasten* in our English language. You say of someone who has been afflicted, "Yes, she has been through the trial, and she is a chastened soul." When we utter

the word we do not necessarily connect it in our minds with the rod; it has come to mean to us the result which the rod produces. The softened person, the one that goes humbly and graciously, that is the person who has been made partaker of God's holiness, through the blessed discipline of Hebrews xii.

Mr. HERBERT W. TAYLOR then concluded the meeting with prayer and the giving out of the hymn (written by one now with the Lord, but who was formerly closely associated with the meetings at Clapton)—

“My Saviour, I would own Thee
Amid the world's proud scorn—
The world that mocked and crowned Thee
With diadem of thorn;
The world that now rejects Thee,
Makes nothing of Thy love;
Counts not the grace and pity
That brought Thee from above.

My Lord, my Master, help me
To walk apart with Thee;
Outside the camp, where only
Thy beauty I may see,
Far from the world's loud turmoil,
Far from its busy din,
Far from its praise and honour,
Its unbelief and sin.

Oh, keep my heart at leisure,
From all the world beside;
In close communion ever,
Thus with Thee to abide;
So all Thy whispered breathings
Of love and truth to hear,
And hail Thee with rejoicing
When Thou shalt soon appear.”

R. H. T.





THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION TO WORSHIP AND MINISTRY.

Wednesday Afternoon, May 9th, 1888.

THE meeting was commenced with the hymn—

“What was it, O our God,
Led Thee to give Thy Son?”

after which Mr. WILLIAM NOBBS, Mr. HENRY GROVES,
and Dr. LASERON led in prayer, followed by the
hymn—

“Thy name we bless, Lord Jesus!
That name all names excelling,”

and an address by

Mr. THOMAS B. MILLER.

The subjects suggested for our consideration at these Conferences are so important and comprehensive that I am reminded of the remark made this morning, that what we most need is “compression,” and that we should as clearly and as distinctly as we can go straight to the point before us, as time will not permit us to do more than just indicate the teaching of the Spirit of God on the subject.

The doctrine of sanctification, which was before us this morning, would, if our kind hosts had made

it the subject of our two days' Conference, have afforded abundance of material for profitable consideration; and when we merely announce the subject for this afternoon—"Worship and Ministry"—every one of us must feel what a vast enquiry opens up before us. We are so accustomed in this country to speak about places of worship, we all know what is generally meant thereby, and yet if we carefully enquire what the simple thought in the word of God about worship is, we might be inclined to conclude that the expression "places of worship" is very frequently misapplied. If one speaks to the children of God, or at any rate to those who are interested in the things of God, one finds that though they have been to a so-called place of worship on the first day of the week, very few indeed have any real thought of what worship is. Now, the thought of worship all through Scripture—in the Old and the New Testament alike—is the giving to God; not receiving from God, but giving to God. Take for example one word in Exodus xxiii. There I think we find the law very clearly brought before us. In verse 15 we have these words, "None shall appear before Me empty." God is laying down the law for all the males of the children of Israel. We find it repeated in Deuteronomy; it is given as an absolute, unchangeable principle, "None shall appear before Me empty." The offering might be a bullock for a ruler; it might be a ram, a lamb, a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons, or a handful of fine flour, but "none shall appear before Me empty." I desire to speak very simply and practically. The simple and practical question therefore is this: When you meet together in this room, say on the Lord's-day morning, what do you bring to God? What do you offer to God? Surely we must admit that what was true under the law is doubly true under the gospel; and what was true under the law was, "None shall appear before Me empty." No worshipper is to come into the presence

of God with an empty hand. That is the first primary thought of worship, and I pray God to bring that home to us.

Take for example what we have in the well-known chapter, Deuteronomy xxvi., which is one of the loveliest types of worship perhaps that we have in the whole of the Bible. We read in that chapter, "and it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance." The children of Israel were found in Egypt, "And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm," &c. He brought them through the waste howling wilderness; He brought them into the promised land. The place of worship is defined, "When thou art come into the land;" and if we were to dwell upon every word, we might remind you that it is not only the entering, but, as we read at the end of the verse, *possessing and dwelling*. When thou art come in unto the land, possessing it and dwelling therein, what art thou to do? "Thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth" of that beautiful land, of that goodly land into which the Lord thy God hath brought thee by His own power. Then bring the first-fruits of that goodly land unto the Lord thy God. I must not dwell longer upon this matter, but I hope that you and I, my brethren and sisters in Christ, who have been brought unto that goodly land, who know what it is to be delivered from Egypt, who know what it is to be already seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, may learn more fully the blessed meaning of this instructive type. And observe also what we read a little further down about this basket of first-fruits. It is to be brought unto the "place which the Lord thy God shall choose," and to the priest whom God Himself shall appoint.

Now these are, if I may so say, the primary conditions of worship. Into the full range of the subject before

me I have no thought of entering. Other dear brethren will take up different parts of this subject. But observe that worship is bringing to God the first-fruits of that goodly land into which the Lord our God has brought us. Worship can only be offered to God when we are dwelling in that land, having possessed it by faith; for, as you remember, though God defined exactly the boundaries of that land, yet what does He say? "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you." Every place that the foot of faith takes possession of, that is your portion and no more.

Well, I can understand you saying, "You terrify us I don't like such a thought as that. How dare I come into God's presence? What can I bring? I am glad when the first day of the week comes round to find myself at church, or chapel, or mission-room. I am glad to forget a little the sins, the troubles, the difficulties, the temptations of the past week. Am I not to come? I don't feel that I am good enough to come into His own presence. You are not saying very encouraging words." Let us find an answer to your difficulty in the words of our Lord. We will pass from the things old to the things new, and will read those verses in the New Testament in which the word "worship" occurs more frequently than in the same number of verses in any other part of the Bible; I mean John iv. I daresay you have noticed that one of the beautiful features of that beautiful gospel is the number of times in which our blessed Lord is alone with some poor sinner. There are two well-known instances at the beginning of the gospel—one is an interview between the Lord Jesus and "a ruler of the Jews;" the other is an interview between the Lord Jesus and a poor woman, who evidently was one of abandoned character. I shall never forget once listening to a brother, who is here now, as he unfolded the contrast between these two chapters, and pointed

out that every circumstance in each chapter was exactly the opposite of what you and I would have expected. Had you and I been told this story of two interviews between the Lord of glory and two persons on earth—the one being a ruler of the Jews, and the other a woman so unworthy that she was ashamed to be seen even with the women of the village, who shunned her; if we were told that He spoke very plainly on the absolute necessity of being born again, it would not seem unreasonable if we said, "Ah, that was certainly to the woman." But it was not. Then, again, if we were told that He conversed very freely on the subject of worship, naturally we should suppose it was with the ruler of the Jews. No, it was not. Ah, my beloved friends, man's thoughts are not as God's thoughts, nor man's ways as God's ways; and you and I know but little of the real heart of the blessed Lord. I am quite sure if Nicodemus had gone to the best and most advanced Christian in this room he would not have been repulsed, but would have been greatly encouraged. When, however, he comes to the Lord he meets only with rebuff. He says to the blessed Master, "We know that Thou art a Teacher come from God." What would you and I have said? "We are very glad to find you so interested in these things." We should have given him every encouragement. The Lord Jesus, on the contrary, meets him, I say again, with a rebuff. What is the reiterated answer? "You must be born again." Teach? There is no one before Me I can teach; nothing I can work upon. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Then with regard to that poor lone woman. Beloved friends, there is a little verse which is the very keynote of John iv., and the words are, "The Father seeketh such to worship Him." Is there one here that feels the awful solemnity of this subject of worship? Is there one here who shrinks as I put to him, "None shall come into His presence empty-handed"? Listen

to the words that thrill our hearts. It is not I that am seeking the Father; it is not I that am longing to come to Him, but the Father "seeketh such to worship Him." From all eternity the blessed God had ordained that the poor woman should be found alone at Sychar's well; from all eternity the Father had ordained that the blessed One, as we read so simply and so sweetly, "must needs go through Samaria." He comes to that well, He sits down at that well, and the Father draws to His own blessed Person that poor lone woman—that woman who had drunk deeply at the cup of this world's pleasures. The goblet was drained, and nothing but the bitter dregs remained. She had stopped at nothing. She was determined to have her own way, she was determined to have her own pleasure; and where does she find herself? Look at her! This is the one that the Father seeketh to worship Him. And, dear friends, if there are some of you who desire to have fellowship with God, know that He will have those for whom His heart yearns with unutterable love. "They that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Now look what a beautiful start this is; and I believe we always start rightly when we start, as it were, from the top of the ladder. Jacob's ladder had two ends. I doubt not whether it is the gospel or worship, it is better to start from the top of the ladder. "The Father seeketh such to worship Him." What a wonderful thought this is! Let us turn for a moment to the words of the chapter. I will just read the words, and you will see how frequently the subject of worship is brought before us there. In verse 20 the woman says, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Christ said, "Believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and

in truth." These verses bring before us the subject of the chapter; viz., Worship. But the true secret, beloved friends, of spiritual worship—worship in the power of the Spirit of God—comes before us earlier in this chapter. You will find it in verse 10: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."

She was there a perfect symbol of human life. What is it? She draws the water, she drinks the water, and she thirsts again. She draws, she drinks, she thirsts again; and that is the story of the whole world. There are many young people here to-day, whom I long to lead to know better what it is to have the blessing, the refreshing, the power, the joy of this living water. I do not mean only that you should be converted, or that you should be born again; that is the subject of chap. iii. That chapter deals with the operations of the Spirit of God. It is a soul born of water and of the Spirit, it is the quickening power of God the Holy Ghost. What have we here? Not the quickening power of the Spirit of God, but the Holy Ghost dwelling in one who is quickened by the power of the Spirit of God. Chapter iv., though the one address is only to that poor woman, carries us beyond the lesson of chapter iii., addressed to the ruler of the Jews. And thus you see what our blessed Lord reveals takes the place of all human and unsatisfying desire, for the human heart can never be satisfied with this world. I know I am speaking to Christians, I know I am ostensibly speaking *only* to Christians; but is every heart here perfectly satisfied? I do not say, Have you looked to the blood? I do not say, Have you put the blood on the doorpost and on the lintel? I will not raise that question; I assume that everyone here is under the shelter of the blood of Christ; but I ask, Is everyone here feeding upon the roasted lamb? Is everyone here satisfied with Christ? Is it a question

of drawing, drinking, and thirsting again? Or is it a question of possessing in my very heart of hearts, not a draught of water, not a bucket of water, not even "pouring the water out of his buckets," but a well—that is, a springing well—that nothing can ever stop? Those of you who are builders know very well that if you find a well of water it is not of the slightest use to make your foundation upon it. You may put a weight upon it, you may put a heavy stone upon it, but you cannot arrest it, you cannot stop it; it will rise, it will spring; and so we find it here. That is the very spring of worship.

You have the land, you possess the land, you dwell in the land. You have not only salvation, but you have Christ in you, the hope of glory by the living power and energy of God the Holy Ghost. I do pray you forgive me if I put the question very plainly. I have had to do with young people, I was going to say, all my life, but certainly for more than thirty years since I was converted to God. My work has been to a large extent among the young. I am sure, if I ask the young here, they will say that they are on the Lord's side; but are you hearty for the Lord? Is your soul full to overflowing? That is the well of water, and worship is, as it were, the bubbling up and overflowing of that blessed well. And where is it coming from? When you travel in the south of London there are two objects which invariably meet the eye. You can scarcely lose sight of them. These are the towers on either side of the Crystal Palace. What are these towers for? They are tanks. But why build them so high? Because a high fountain is wanted. It is not in the power of man to raise water above its own level, so if you want a high fountain you must put your reservoir at an equal height. The water may rise nearly to the height of the fountain, but never higher. And as we read that the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be

lifted up—the One who was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. That One, who is exalted and glorified at God's right hand, sends down the Holy Ghost, which comes down from the reservoir, as it were, at God's right hand; and it is towards that height spiritual worship ascends. There are, however, many opposing elements which hinder it attaining that glorious level.

It is very beautiful to see how the Lord Jesus wins the heart of this poor woman, and I purposely select this scripture because it is so well known. Now observe for just one moment how the Lord is revealed to her. Look at verse 26. You know how He reaches her conscience. You know how she prates about worship. People with no knowledge very frequently speak of worship. I had a letter this morning from one who knows very little about true religion, in which he alluded to a conversation between a Protestant and a Roman Catholic, and he argued so strongly and staunchly, that he was ready to go to the stake for the religion of his forefathers. If I ask my brother from the north of Ireland what he finds there, he will reply, "Broken heads"; for they are very ready to resort to blows for the settlement of the tenets of the Church of Rome and Protestantism. So this poor woman, though not fit company for the women of the village, could yet discuss the question of worship. What puts a stop to the woman's talking? Those beautiful words of our Lord, who says, "I that speak unto thee am He." When she knows the Lord she forgets all else. I am not going to take up the question of ministry, and yet you will find a beautiful link between this poor woman and the ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Look what she does immediately. "The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" That is the first aspect, the first blessed phase of ministry. That is true service. She is sent forth with this blessed

message and you will find further on, in verse 39, "Many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did." Compare this with 1 Corinthians iii. 5. What do we read? "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" That is the whole story. That leads us to ministry in the Holy Ghost. May God, in His infinite love, lead us to respond more and more to the seeking of the Father, to the longing desire of the Father, that we may be worshippers in spirit and in truth.

The hymn—

"O Christ, in Thee my soul hath found,
And found in Thee alone,"

was then sung, and the following address was delivered by

Mr. F. C. BLAND:

I want to read two texts in the Old Testament, and then one in the New. Read the two first verses of Exodus xv.: "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him." It was, as you are all aware, after Israel came out of Egypt that this desire burst forth from their hearts in song—that they might become worshippers, or have a habitation for God to dwell amongst them. I suppose it was, in some measure, in answer to that aspiration, that we get that verse which was read to us this morning, Exodus xxv. 8: "Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." We know, from the divine Word, that all these things,

which were written aforetime in connection with Israel's worship, were types or samples of our worship. Now, material things formed the tabernacle of their worship, but they "served unto an example and shadow of heavenly things." (Heb. viii. 5.) We may, therefore, look for in the New Testament that which is there shadowed forth in the Old; viz., a dwelling-place for God amongst His people. If you turn to Ephesians ii. 19 you will find what I refer to: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an *habitation of God through the Spirit*." Here we get distinctly that which is analagous to what we read of in the book of Exodus. The symbolic thing gives way to that which is symbolized, and in the epistle to the Hebrews we read: "He taketh away the first that He may establish the second."

And I may add, that the second is never truly established in the heart whilst a shred of the first ritual remains. The whole establishment consists of two or three gathered together with the Lord in their midst. I remember someone once saying, "It is high time that Brethren should be disestablished." But an old brother answered, "But how could you accomplish that? They would only have to 'assemble,' and if two or three got together with the Lord in their midst, there they would be again." We can never be disendowed, for our gifts come from an ascended Christ; and we can never be disestablished while there are two or three to meet together, and while the promise of Matthew xviii. 20 remains. The brother who preceded me spoke of the individual aspect of worship. I want to speak on collective worship and ministry in the assembly of God's saints.

Now, some brother or sister may say, "Oh! what concerns me is that which we have been hearing about this morning; viz., individual walk and worship. I do not minister in the assembly, and have no responsibility as to assembly worship." Dear friend, you never made a greater mistake in your life. You may perhaps say, "I have nothing to do with that wonderful administration of the mystery; I am only a unit, and I leave all that to those who take the oversight, and can teach and preach." But I read in Ephesians iv. 16: "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

What are these joints and bands spoken of here? Are they only the pastors and teachers? I trow not. I read in 1 Cor. xii. that the feeblest members are *necessary*. My dear brother or sister, you who may sit in a corner of the room, unheard and, it may be, unnoticed, do you believe that in the morning meeting in the assembly you are *absolutely necessary*? Yet such is the emphatic declaration of the Spirit of God in 1 Cor. xii.

But to return to the thought of our being a habitation of God through the Spirit. It is evident that the apostle did not think this calling to be a light thing; for he no sooner touches on the subject in the end of chapter ii. than he breaks off into a parenthesis of a whole chapter's length, bowing his knees to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, asking that the Ephesians "may be *strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man*;" that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith; that they may be able to comprehend all the breadth and length, and depth and height of this mystery, which is that to which unquestionably this verse points; and to know, as a superadded thing in connection with it, the love of Christ, which passeth

knowledge, that they might be filled with the fulness of God. Do you young Christians, whose names are given out one Lord's-day, and who are received the next, think that that prayer concerns *you*? and that each one, as he or she comes in, needs to be filled with the *Spirit of might in the inner man*? What an expression! That you may be able to understand this wondrous thing. We hear the expression often used, "Such and such a number of people have come out, and are meeting simply." That is, of course, very nice; but let them be careful as to what they are about; for there is a great deal more involved in being a habitation of God through the Spirit, and carrying out the varied and wondrous administrations of the assembly, than merely meeting to break bread on the first day of the week. And though angels and principalities and powers can never again look down on a manifested unity; nor can the Church claim the place of being God's candlestick on earth again; yet they do assuredly still see what the twos and threes do when they are gathered together; and may still learn, by the use we make of what is left to us, the manifold wisdom of God.

I ask with all solemnity, Do they always learn this? I am going to speak plainly, for it is a subject very dear to my heart, and one on which I could speak, not for half an hour only, but until the clock came round to the same hour in the morning. The place we have taken outside the systems of men challenges a comparison with what we have come out from, and it ought to bear that comparison. We have got rid of a clergy, but we need a ministry sustained by the prayers of the saints. But having given up systems, we do not necessarily become unsystematic; and having taken this place of meeting simply, as it is called, we assume a position of most serious responsibility, while at the same time we become the recipients of the most marvellous blessings and expanded privileges, and

have matters of tremendous moment committed to our trust.

We have *manifold* gifts, instead of one-man ministry, and are told that the feeblest member is necessary. I could tell you of many of these members that I have known, feeble it may have been in body, but how necessary! My thoughts turn to one especially, who was for more than five years laid upon a bed of suffering, but who was a power in the place where she lived. I could tell you of those who apparently were nothing, but yet whose power was felt here or there, because they had fellowship with God in prayer about the assembly where their lot was cast. When we come into a meeting in the morning, what is our first thought? Is it, Well, I hope we shall have a happy meeting? Or is it, Will God be glorified in our coming together? Will principalities and powers look down and see something that honours God, and displays His wisdom in having called us to be His habitation? Someone may say, "That is perfectly true; and all will be well if our brethren who minister give us something suitable, and what will help us in our worship." But have your prayers nothing to do with this? And have you ever considered the perilous position that those who minister occupy when standing up in the presence of God to lead His people in worship?

We are in the habit in gospel meetings of asking those who wish to be prayed for to hold up their hands. I often wonder, when speaking on this subject, if I were to ask all those who are in the habit of praying in public or private for those who minister to hold up their hands, how many hands would be held up?

I am in the habit of ministering in a meeting in Dublin, but I do not know how many people pray for me, or for those who take the oversight of the saints; or who visit the sick and dying! Might I ask how many of you pray for those who minister in this place? You may do infinitely more for the brother who is

ministering than he can do for himself. You can hold up his hands and strengthen him, and I assure you that your doing so will be well-pleasing to God; you may perhaps please God more by going into your chamber and asking God for His presence and power in the meeting, than if you were to minister in the assembly every day in the year. Now the subject is, "The Holy Spirit in Relation to Worship and Ministry." I take it that the two chapters, 1 Cor. xii. and xiv., give us what bears upon these two things. If you note you will find that the word Spirit or Holy Ghost occurs some nine or ten times in the twelfth chapter. It is all in connection with the gifts of the Spirit, and His dividing to every man severally as He will; and the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the profit of all. The one chapter gives us the divine mechanism of the Spiritual Body of Christ; the other treats of its proper functional activities, providing for its order or guarding against disorder. The thirteenth chapter comes in between, giving us the true vital principle animating the body. In fact, the gifts of the twelfth are baptised in the love of the thirteenth that they may be exercised in grace and for edification in the fourteenth. Some people have said that chapter fourteen cannot concern us now, because the gifts spoken of there were miraculous gifts; but if you turn to the two chapters you will see that they both begin with "concerning *spiritual* gifts," so that they contain directions for all that are *spiritual*, whether miraculous or otherwise. Now chapter twelve tells us of the divine mechanism of the body, and it tells us that the feeblest members are necessary. In the natural body we bestow on the uncomely parts more abundant comeliness. Can we then in the spiritual body give the feeble members the cold shoulder, and say, "Dear me! I do wish that brother would go somewhere else!" I remember once speaking to a brother about one such, and he answered, "What is the Church of God made up of? Are they

all comely members?" We must keep this in mind, and then we can understand the apostle's exhortation in Eph. iv. 2, to be surrounded "with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; *endeavouring* to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." It is a great thing we are undertaking, and therefore we must be prepared for it. I remember another brother, who I see present, speaking to me about a dear man, who because everything did not go as smoothly as he expected, left the assembly where he was wont to worship. The dear brother said "he never rightly estimated the difficulties to be met with in an assembly of saints." The apostle who wrote to the Ephesians evidently did so; for he is brought to his knees in prayer when he writes to them about it.

I remember an old brother once saying to me, "I came out from systems of men, never thinking of what I left; but I went after this thing enraptured by it, as that by which principalities and powers were to learn God's wisdom."

I have already said that in 1 Cor. xii. the divine mechanism of the body is given us. In chap. xiv. it is seen in exercise, and you will find the word "*edify*" rules this chapter, as "the Holy Ghost" rules chap. xii. Anything, therefore, that is not to edification, no matter how scriptural, how eloquent, or how deep it may be, is, in the words of chap. xiii. 2, *Nothing!*

The chapter begins by saying, "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth *himself*; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church." Now edification means building up, strengthening, refreshing, putting on a solid foundation. And you see he refers to unknown tongues. I do not know exactly what they were; it may be the tongues of the many nations that came to Jerusalem, in which the apostles spoke at Pentecost, or those with which Paul said he spoke more than they all. It does not matter;

but here we definitely get that if a man could speak with all the tongues in the world, unless people understood them, they would be of no use. Therefore if I should go to an assembly of poor ignorant people, and speak that which was beyond their comprehension, I should be a barbarian, as much as if I were speaking in an unknown tongue. A man's speech does not necessarily edify when the man is enjoying it himself with all his heart. He is to judge whether what he has in his thoughts is suitable to the occasion and the audience; and if not, let him speak to himself and to God. The Holy Ghost will guide us in giving up as definitely as in *taking up* a subject, *even when it is on our heart*; for the Holy Ghost is a Spirit of wisdom, as well as a Spirit of impulse. We who minister should see that what we minister is, first, Scriptural—always solemn—and that it is suitable to those to whom we speak.

Another thing of great importance is shortness. It is the most difficult thing in the world for a man to *sit down when he has done*; but it is an attainment we should all aim at; and I know from experience that it requires more courage to read a text and then to sit down than to speak on it for half an hour. This is a great snare to young people; and indeed old people too. The fear of people thinking that we are not able to say anything often tempts us to speak when we have nothing to say. Like Peter, when he was in the mount, he thought he ought to say something; and he said the wrong thing. There is a difference between feeling that we have something to say and feeling that we must say something. It is a sure sign of a low state of the assembly if we cannot bear silence. A brother once said to us in Dublin, "God forbid that we should be robbed of our seasons of silence." And I add, It is a poor heart that has nothing to say during such a season. You will easily understand the difference between the silence of weakness and the silence of

power. If it is the former we should not rest contentedly under it, but seek God's help in prayer. If the latter, we should not be restless under it, but seek God in worship.

Another principle we get inculcated in 1 Cor. xiv. is consideration as to the numbers who are to speak: "Let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course." So that there is to be a reasonableness to be observed as to the numbers who minister. God remembers what we are often apt to forget; viz., that we are poor human beings, with bodies easily tried, and with minds which are too apt to wander. "He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are but dust;" and it would be well if we who minister bore it in mind also. There is a great danger of our doing an outrage to the spirit of worship by carrying on a meeting, after the worship is done, by hymns given out, or prayers *made* to fill up the time. To a person looking in at the window all would appear quite right; but if he were to come in, he would be painfully convinced that it was a mere form without power. To rest contented with such a state of things is grievous indeed, and our thoughts might often be in the words of Gideon, "If the Lord be with us, why are we thus?" I am speaking plainly, for I believe plain words are needed for the present distress. And I believe in my heart that if we took it to heart, that God might so move all our hearts, that the unbeliever coming in would again fall on his face, and confess of a truth that God was amongst us.

How careful then should we be that we do not mar in anywise by our carelessness or self-will that which God has ordained to His own glory, and that we forsake not the assembling of ourselves together, as, alas! the manner of some is. Of course all who come to our meetings have not the same light, nor has the truth of worship come with the same power to all. We therefore need to be very tender in our dealings with weak

saints; and to see that we do not "receive him that is weak to judge his doubtful thoughts." (Rom. xiv. 1.) I am not saying this to qualify in the least degree the obedience we are called on to render to every truth of God. There is only one Lawgiver, and who will dare to qualify the obedience we are bound to render to Him? "Do this in remembrance of Me" is as much a command as "Thou shalt do no murder," and will find its response in every true heart; and no reprobation can be too strong for those, who under the excuse for preaching or serving God in some other line of things, do violence to this last request of our blessed Lord.

But let us take heed that we do not mistake slowness of apprehension for indifference; or want of light for disobedience; and deal with people as if there was no difference. For if we make the light which we ourselves have the standard of other people's obedience, we may do a great outrage to some who are weak in the faith.

— If people who attend our meetings go elsewhere; it might be well, before stamping them as disobedient, to see whether they have not gone elsewhere in search of spiritual food which we have not given them; or that they have fled from the feebleness and formality of our meetings to where the teaching was robust and healthful; though the mode of worship may not be as scriptural. I often think of Jotham's parable in Judges ix., where "the trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" It would have *lost* instead of *gained* by going away, and so it declined. Then "the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us." But the fig tree found sweetness and good fruit at home, and it likewise refused. "Then said the trees unto the vine,

Come thou, and reign over us." But the vine had joy and good cheer for God and man, and refused to be promoted over the trees. The bramble is next invited; and having nothing to lose, takes the place at once, and that with lofty pretensions; and calls on all the other trees to put their trust under its shadow, though it had no shade to give them. It had neither sweetness, fatness, nor good fruit; but it will devour the cedars of Lebanon if they do not acknowledge it as king.

Now, my friends, if we have not the sweetness in our meetings; if we make it felt that we have not the anointing there, if there is nothing to cheer either God or man; we shall not make people spiritual or obedient by excommunicating them, or looking askance at them as if they were apostates. I remember once having a number of sheep that were very wild; they broke over walls and wire fences and everything, and I did not know what to do with them.

I asked a friend how I should tether them. Whether I should tie a fore and hind leg of each sheep together? or whether I should tie them together, two and two, by their necks. He looked at me quietly and said, "Tether them by the teeth. Give them plenty of good grass to eat, and you will have no trouble with them." And depend on it, if we give those who come to us plenty of good food in the green pastures of the Word; and if there be quiet reverence; and the power of the Holy Ghost is felt in our meetings for worship even though there be no ministry at all; we shall hear little of their wandering elsewhere. The best judges of what is to profit and edification are often the most simple saints; and if worship is in the spirit, and Christ is ministered; it will be for the profit of all. It is those who *sit by who are to judge*, and not those who themselves are ministering at the time. And if two or three brothers, who are of repute amongst us, were to tell any one of us, who have been minister-

ing for years; that our ministry ceased to be profitable—I can answer for myself at least, and I trust for all who hear me—we would not obtrude our ministry on the assembly, no matter how deeply it might interest ourselves. These are practical truths, dear friends. I am speaking, I trust, to real men and women, into whose hearts I want to put some of the longing desires that have filled my own heart for many years.

One thing more. “Let all things be done decently and in order.” This is the last exhortation in this solemn and pregnant chapter. Neatness and carefulness about all the material arrangements of our meetings should be observed; punctuality in attending, and reverent manners and ways, and, need I add, reverent thoughts, are what become the saints of God.

These great principles I learn from these chapters. I have not said half what I should like to say, but I trust I have said enough to set those who have heard me thinking. The Lord grant that the brother who next speaks may fill up anything I have left unsaid, and that we may go away strengthened, encouraged, comforted, and, above all things, solemnized in our hearts.

MR. G. F. TRENCH

then led the assembly in prayer, and gave the following address in continuation of the subject.

When Mr. Miller was showing that the approach of the worshipper to God was not to be with empty hands, my mind was running upon Exodus xxix., where we read of what is called the “consecration” of the priests; and I dare say there may be some here who have not noticed that the word “consecrate” is, in the margin, “fill the hand;” and that is true in every case where the word occurs, with one or two exceptions. The climax of those ordinances which led up to what was called “the consecration of the priests” was the moment when their hands were filled; and when we

are called upon to come to God with full hands, we are called upon to exercise the function of priests. In the present day there is very little thought of priesthood, but a good deal of ministry. Thousands go to what are called places of "worship," principally that they may hear the preacher, and the hearing of the minister is exalted above the exercise of the priesthood; for the preacher is not the priest, but *you*. God calls us together in order that we should lift up full hands before His throne, and the minister is there to help us to do it. That is all.

Look at the miracle of our Lord Jesus Christ, where He dealt with a man with a withered hand. I have been lately asking myself, and asking the Lord, what is the spiritual teaching for the believer in this narrative. That it may teach the reaching forth of the hand with faith in the first instance, by which the sinner believes and comes to Christ, there can be no doubt; but that it has a teaching for the saint is also certain. God has given me great blessing for myself in the understanding of it, and I want you to share that blessing. If you think of Moses on the mountain when Amalek fought with Israel, you will remember that his hands were heavy, and that two of his friends were called upon to hold them up. There is a paralysis that takes the soul of the saint in this matter of prayer to God, which it needs the present power of the Holy Ghost to conquer. We need the voice of Christ to say to us in power, "Stretch forth thy hand," and that act the Holy Ghost enables us to perform. Again, as priests, we are called to exercise our great functions, and, like Moses on the mountain, we sometimes find our hands heavy, a heaviness rests upon the spirit, a sort of incipient paralysis upon the soul. There is inattention; there are wandering thoughts; there are distractions; and there is, above all, a sense of weariness. By what power then are you to perform the function of a priest unto God? Remember that Christ, by the

exercise of His miraculous power, enabled that poor man to do what he was utterly powerless to perform. This miraculous power for worship is now by the Holy Ghost given to the church, so that on every occasion when the saints come together the heavy hands may rise. I ask you then to believe in the Holy Ghost as your power for worship. Note also, that while this is the habit of the soul, this trusting in God for the exercise of His divine power by which we may put into practice the functions of the new life, I believe it is far more than a habit of the soul. So firmly do I believe in the miraculous character of this worship to which we are called, that I affirm that on each several occasion we should come to God expecting Him to put forth His mighty power to enable us to do that apparently simple act which we profess to do when we bend our knees, or quietly bow our head upon the bench before us, or stand to sing our hymns. Why are meetings heavy? And why does a great sense of weariness oppress so many? Is it not for this very reason, that we do not believe that a miracle is necessary to enable us to perform those acts of praise, and prayer, and worship for which we have come together? In the olden time, when God was about to establish for Himself a place of worship, He made it of wood and of curtains, and beautified it with gold and silver. You know how afterwards, in the days of Solomon, that idea was gloriously expanded, and how that magnificent temple was erected which cost such an enormous sum, the very reading of the records of which fills the mind with admiration and wonder. There are many in the present day who seek to imitate that splendour, and by the triumphs of the skill of the architect, the chemist, the coloured glass-manufacturer, and the musical instrument-maker, to delight the senses of sight, of hearing, and of smell; and they, by their appeal to such sensations, sufficiently indicate their notion of what worship consists in.

But these beautiful buildings and ordinances of the Old Testament were but shadows of the true and "better things," which in Christ God hath now provided for us. He has His temple still; but oh, what a glorious conception! It is not of stones and gold, but now of living men and women. Each particular stone of His temple has a heart to love Him, and a voice to praise Him. And yet men build Him beautiful structures of mason-work, oblivious of the great transition from type to substance that has come to pass in Christ. But "what house will ye build Me? saith the Lord." Can we emulate the gifts and free-will offerings of the princes of Israel, who laid at the feet of King David, in gold and silver and brass, for the work of the temple, sums equal to between 800 and 1000 millions of our English money? What a priestly response that was to David's appeal in 1 Chronicles xxix. 5: "Who then is willing [not to "consecrate his service," but] to fill his hand this day unto the Lord?" Did they not fill their hands in truth? But the offerings we have to give are ourselves, for we ourselves are the material His house is built of. For "ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." (1 Cor. iii. 16.)

The great change thus inaugurated is further developed in another direction; for whereas in former times God made known His laws by writing them in language so simple and so plain, and moreover so brief, that he that ran might read, recording His law upon tables of stone—to wit, flags or slabs—which tables were smashed, now we have revealed to us that more glorious conception of the mind of God, according to which He declares that His will is to be known, and His character understood, not now by tables of stone, nor even merely by the records of this blessed Book, but by His "living epistle," written in the lives of men and women such as you. Is it not glorious? Some of you may have heard of Norah Fitzmaurice, a young

girl in Ireland, who a short while ago was called upon to witness the dying agony of her bleeding father, shot on the high road by hired assassins as he went to his morning's work. After that girl had honestly and truthfully borne witness against the assassins, so terrible is the persecution which the farming classes in that country have to suffer, that she was actually followed into what to her was her place of worship; and when she kneeled down the major part of the congregation was by signs here and there beckoned to leave, and she was left with a few policemen and the priest, who at the trial had incurred the censure of the judge for his attempts, happily abortive, to prevent her from giving evidence. A Roman Catholic friend of mine told me that when he had advised this girl to continue to go to mass, she answered, "I will, but it is not because I care much about it." My friend said to me, "That girl's faith is nearly broken down; and what must the wretch have been in her mind when her faith in these holy mysteries breaks down because of the character of those who administer them!" I said to my friend, "It is not a very healthy state of things that such a distinction should be made. It is not the purpose of God that the holy things of His religion should be dissevered from the lives of those who administer them." God is going to be seen in living men and women, in their lives, and words, and ways, and looks; and unless He is thus made known the most perfect performance of the rites and ordinances of religion is a hollow vanity. God will have no such distinction made.

Our subject is so large, it includes so many departments and branches, that, if one were to touch it at all adequately, one would have not only to look at John iii. iv., as we have done, but to trace the operations of the Holy Ghost right on through chapters vii., xiv., xv., and xvi. We should pass then to the epistle to the Romans, and in chapter viii. see the

several other branches of the same subject that are brought out there. Then, after turning to the epistle to the Galatians, where the great contrast is set forth between the Law and the Spirit of God, we should pass on to the first epistle to the Corinthians, to which Mr. Bland has been referring us; and after going all through that we should begin to have some conception of the richness and fulness of this vast subject. But there is one branch of it which has not been touched upon to which I desire to refer briefly.

In 1 Corinthians ii. 9 there is a verse which more than any other has been generally taken out of its context, and consequently misinterpreted by Christian people. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Now that verse is almost invariably taken, by those who are less instructed than you are, to refer to the glories of the world to come, to the brightness of the new Jerusalem, the city of the skies, the wonderful things that Christ is doing when He says, "I am going to prepare a place for you." But if you will look through chapters i., ii., you will see that Paul is dealing with a single subject. He is dealing with those philosophers who flourished in Corinth, who destroyed, or sought to destroy, the faith of the saints there, and, coming down to our own time, whose successors are working such havoc in the church. In the following passages, chapters i. 19, 31, ii. 9, 16, and iii. 19, you will find five different quotations in which St. Paul answers out of the Old Testament this question: What place is the wisdom and philosophy of man to hold in the great doctrinal economy of the church? The answer of the apostle is very emphatic and conclusive: "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God," and "the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of

God." This then is the connection in which he uses this remarkable quotation: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit." It is CHRIST, beloved friends! Your wisdom, your righteousness, your sanctification, your redemption, these are the things which God hath prepared in Christ for those who love Him, and which "are freely given to us of God." (v. 12.) If we are to own the Spirit of God in our ministry, we must put from us the reasonings of man. But a little time ago I was made acquainted with the painful fact, that one who had been in the ministry of God had become shaken in respect of the atonement of Christ. The thought struck me, when I saw his views written out by himself very briefly, that it was almost certain that, with such opinions as to atonement, he was unsound upon the question of the righteousness of God, as applicable to the future punishment of the unbeliever. I went to see him, first of all privately, with a definite purpose in my mind to discover from him whether his belief had been shaken in the eternal punishment of the unbelieving. I could not at first get an answer, but at last it came out that this was indeed the secret of his doubts. Now what does this incident show? It shows this, that when men begin to lose the sense of what God's righteousness requires as against sin, then they lose faith in the value and awful significance of the atonement of the Christ. But God will bring to nought the wisdom of the wise, and when people come and say to you, "I cannot see this," or "I cannot conceive that God would do that," remember this verse, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit;" and that is the source (not human reason, human conscience, or human

wisdom) to which we turn for our knowledge of the "invisible things of God."

Is it not remarkable that in John iii. in the Revised Version we have the word *pneuma* (*πνεῦμα*) presented under the erroneous translation "wind"?—"The wind bloweth where it listeth"—a Greek word which occurs I do not know how many times in the New Testament, and which, except here, is never translated by any other word than "Spirit." There is no reference to the wind. "The Spirit breathes where He listeth, and thou hearest His voice, and knowest not whence He cometh, or whither He goeth." The meaning seems to be, that the Lord Jesus has come down to make known to us heavenly things; and if we seek to find them out by human means, or to trace them to human sources, or to attribute to them human objects, we shall lose them, and lose them in proportion as we do these things. "The Spirit breathes where He lists," and the children of God have got to bow before His authority. I read a book lately on the *Atonement of Christ*, by Bishop Magee, of Peterborough—a book written with a view, as he says, to assisting unbelievers in coming to the faith. He says that, after searching all through the New Testament for the meaning, the explanation, or the philosophy of God's plan of salvation, he can find no adequate explanation of it. Some difficulty he admits there was why a sinner should not be forgiven. That Christ met that difficulty by His death he acknowledges; but what that difficulty was, or how it was disposed of by Christ's death, nobody can find out, and nobody can tell. Now you will see in John iii. the things that we do not know, and the things that we do know. We do not know whence the Spirit comes, or whither He goes. And so it will be as to every one who is born of the Spirit; for he will not seek to account for his faith by human methods, nor can he explain his ways to human reason. On the other hand, he is able to say, in the language of our

Lord, in verse 11, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." And, as Mr. Groves prayed at the beginning of the meeting, "may God grant us more of this assurance and confidence in the assertion before the world, that the things that God has revealed are certainly true." And although we should be confronted by all the philosophers of the world, we ought to be able, as believers in the Holy Ghost, to take our stand on this assurance and never yield an inch.

But now there is a personal question for each of us in this sacred subject, upon which, although it has been dealt with by others, I must say a word. It is vain for you or me to seek in our collective capacity to carry out or to exhibit the wondrous perfection of God's designs, unless in our own souls we are secretly walking in the power of the Holy Ghost. We can never raise the assembly beyond the measure of growth which has been reached by the individual; and if there is little communion with God in the assembly, then it is most certain that there is little communion with God in the souls of those who come together. I do pray God to grant that here, at the close of this meeting, there may be a moment of self-searching with us all, to know whether or not we have so believed in the Holy Ghost as to make Him a clear throne within our hearts. I am thinking of the soul as a palace of the Great King. I believe that He has dignified, not the natural self, but that which He has new created, by making it His residence. I see that soul possessed of many powers, of many capacities, suited for various functions in the life which we now live. It is like a palace of many chambers, in all of which God claims to be supreme. I search myself this moment, as I ask you to search yourself. Have you made a clear place for God in every chamber? Is it so in your reading? Is it so in your talking? Is it so in your family? Is it so with your husband? Is it so with your wife? Is it so with your children? Is it so in sacred things?

Is it so in your secular work? Have you made a clear domain for God? God means to be supreme in the sanctuary of the soul, and if we are reserving chambers for self we are so far excluding the Holy Ghost. Now may God speak!

There was a brother, whom I met the other day in Limerick, a Dutchman, who had learned to know the Lord, I believe, in Mr. Guinness's London Training Home for Missions. He had been out to Africa, where the climate had broken him down. He was now just starting in the *City of Rome* for the United States in search of work for the Lord. We had happy communion. Is there not something exquisitely sweet in the communion of the Holy Ghost? That man, when asking for our prayers, also wished for a few words of encouragement. I gave him four simple maxims, and I will now give them to you.

First, "*Be emptied of self.*" In all things connected with ministry and worship—in your personal life, and in your collective life—begin, so to speak, by clearing the decks; be empty of self. That is the first thing. It is not possible for us to serve two masters. Cast self beneath your feet, and offer all your powers a live sacrifice to Christ.

The second thing is, "*Believe in the Holy Ghost.*" The first was negative, but this is positive. The poor monk in his monastery is always at work to deny himself, but he does not believe in the Holy Ghost, and there he stays. But all our power flows from this faith, and none at all from mere self-denial. Have faith in God, and do the things that He ordains, and He will fill your heart with praise, and your lives with service. We are not so superstitious as to attach miraculous power to relics, and such like; but it is not superstition, but simple faith, to feel assured that there is available for us a miraculous agency of the Holy Ghost to make our earthly lives divine in every detail.

The third thing is, "*Be occupied with Christ.*" The

Holy Ghost is not set before us as our object. He gives us the power, but He points the eye to Jesus. Let your eye follow His finger, and whether you be a worshipper or a worker, a dweller in the garret or the mansion, a mother caring for a sick child or one moving in the circle of the home and acquaintance, ever and everywhere be occupied with Christ, for all fulness is in Him.

The last word is, "*Love men.*" Oh, love the souls of men! Let your delight be with the sons of men. Search out their needs, and when you minister, minister for the needs which you have discovered. It is not that, if I have found some text fruitful for myself, I should make a nice sermon upon it; but rather, as a wise physician who can diagnose the ailments of the saints, and the sickness of the sinners, to minister forth in fitness and rich abundance God's holy Word, which meets every sickness, which heals every disease, and sends away the hungry people joyful and praiseful and satisfied. May God now add His blessing! Amen.

The congregation then united in singing the hymn—

"O Saviour, we adore Thee,
We bless Thy precious name,"

after which Mr. JOHN G. McVICKER closed in prayer.





PROPHECY

IN RELATION TO THE JEWS, THE GENTILES, AND THE CHURCH OF GOD.

Wednesday Evening, May 9th, 1888.

THE meeting was commenced with a season of silent prayer, after which was sung the hymn—

“Jesus! that Name is love!
Jesus, our Lord.”

Mr. T. B. MILLER, Mr. G. F. ASSITER, and Dr. MACLEAN then followed in prayer. The hymn—

“It may be at morn, when the day is awaking,”
having been sung,

Dr. ROBERT McKILLIAM
delivered an address on

**THE CHURCH: AN ELECTION CALLED OUT OF
AND SEPARATED FROM THE WORLD.**

The part of the subject, dear friends, that I have been asked to take up to-night is, the Church of God, specially in relation to the study of the prophetic Word. Will you turn with me to the Gospel according

to Matthew xvi. 13? "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist: some Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged He His disciples that they should tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ. From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." Verse 24, "Then said Jesus unto His disciples, 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 shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life 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."

I have long felt that the Church's place, in the purposes of God, is the key to the study of unfulfilled prophecy; and I think it is for want of a clear comprehension of the nature of the Church, and of the place which, in God's purpose, it occupies with respect

to the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the world at the present day, that so many mistakes are made in the interpretation of the prophetic Word. I think, in order to the clear understanding of the nature of the Church, we must see the distinction in God's word between the kingdom and the Church. I suppose we are all agreed here this evening, that when our Lord came in His first advent, it was with the view of bringing in the kingdom from heaven according to all the prophetic scriptures that had promised that God's King should come to God's nation, and bring a condition in harmony with the mind of God; first, as regards the nation itself, and then, through the nation of God's election and purpose, His blessing to all the nations on the face of the earth. So we know, if we study the Gospels, and especially Matthew, we find it very clearly taught that the great thought that was first in the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ, in presenting Himself to the Israel-people, was His Messiahship, and the introduction of the kingdom that had been promised right down from Abraham through the ages. And then we know how, step by step, He was rejected of His people. It is in relation to the introduction of the kingdom that John the Baptist is spoken of as "the forerunner;" and Christ Himself speaking of this, said that John the Baptist was Elias if the nation would receive it; and I understand by that, would "receive the kingdom." If His nation was prepared to receive the kingdom at that time, then the promises respecting the forerunner, Elias, who was to prepare the way of the Lord, would have been fulfilled in the person and work of John the Baptist. Now we know this did not take place. The nation, as a whole, refused the kingdom in refusing the King; and, step by step, when it became apparent that Jesus was to be rejected, He gave a larger and fuller blessing in grace to the remnant that accepted Him. He came to His own possessions, we read in John, and His own

people received Him not. If you study the context of the passage we have just read, you find there has been decided rejection, and, step by step, it has become very apparent to the disciples, through the Lord's words, that He is about to be rejected; and we find our Lord then saying, "Whom say men that I the Son of man am?" and to those to whom it had been revealed that He was not only the Christ, but the Son of the living God, He brings in in connection with that statement, and unto them as the remnant, a new position altogether, which position we have to consider this evening. Peter said our Lord was not only the Christ, but the Son of the living God. "Whom say ye that I am?" "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven."

Thus we have it clearly pointed out that in the case of those who, when the whole nation rejected the Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah, received Him, there was a distinct revelation given, which was given to none beside, that Jesus, the despised and rejected One, who came in such lowly guise, was not only the Christ of prophecy and the Christ of God, the Messiah of the Jewish people, but the Son of the living God. In connection with this statement, and specially in connection with that company to whom it was so revealed, we find the Lord bringing in a larger blessing, and we have them united to Himself from that moment in His rejection as a special election. When national blessings have for a time to be set aside, fuller grace is to be brought in for those who thus received the Christ of God; and the called-out company was from that moment formed. I believe the Jewish remnant took the place then of Church ground; and the centre of the truth here stated is not only that Jesus is the Christ, but the Son of the living God. How much this is brought out in the Gospel according to John, which is, more than any

other, the gospel where the nature of the Church is fully pointed out, and where the heavenly character of the Church is fully declared, and where those truths are taught us, in the power of God's spirit, that, more than any other truths, build us up in union with Christ as the Son of the living God! We find that the precious teachings in the Gospel according to John all circle round the great truth thus revealed to the heart of Peter, that Jesus was not only the Christ, but the Son of the living God.

The next thought in connection with this is, what we find in Acts iii. I must just pause to consider what took place when Peter was speaking at Pentecost to the men of Israel, as related in Acts iii., from verse 19. There he calls, in the power of God's Spirit, the nation again to repentance. Another offer is given to them. Step by step their King was rejected. He was led to the cross; and then, when He ascended to heaven, and sent down the Holy Ghost, there took place, not at first the preaching of grace to all (the gospel with which we are so familiar), but once again the proclamation of the kingdom. I do hope there is a very clear and distinct understanding in the minds of all here of the distinction between the proclamation of the kingdom—which John, as the forerunner, pointed to, and which the Lord Jesus Christ preached, and sent in the day of His flesh His disciples to preach—and the proclamation of the gospel of the present day. I think that from want of a clear perception of this distinction many of God's children are prevented from having understanding of much prophetic truth. There is the gospel of the kingdom, which the Lord Himself declared at His first advent; and there is the gospel of God's grace, which subsequently the Holy Ghost proclaimed through the Church, and which is proclaimed to-day. What first took place then at Pentecost was, that Peter spoke to the men of Israel as such and said, "Ye men of Israel, repent." After charging

home the crime of rejecting the Messiah, he called upon them to repent, and in doing so used these remarkable words, "Repent . . . that your sins may be blotted out, and that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of Jehovah; and that He may send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." So that there was a distinct and clear call to repentance, and an offer in connection with it, made to the Israel nation, of the immediate return of the Lord Jesus, when, their sins put away, He would bring in the times of refreshing from the presence of Jehovah, and the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. You know the answer to this. Our Lord foretells it in the parable of the householder who let out his vineyard to husbandmen. When the time of the fruit drew near they not only beat his servants, refused and cast out his son, but killed the son, and sent a messenger to say, "We will not have this man to rule over us." The answer given to this appeal, through Peter, to the nation to repent was the stoning of Stephen. And I believe that from that moment there was thus the rejection a second time of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah by His nation; and that then the nation was set aside for a very considerable period. And there was no longer the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom in the world, because if you study prophecy aright I think you will come to the conclusion that there cannot possibly be the preaching of the gospel of God's kingdom if the nation is set aside. There must be, first, the repentance of the nation, and the blotting out of the national sin; there must be the recognition that they have committed a great crime in rejecting the Messiah before they can receive the Lord Jesus Christ back again, and with

Him the kingdom. I am sure we cannot study the prophetic Word without being convinced that the nations of the earth will never know anything of the blessings of the kingdom from heaven till the Israel-nation has first embraced it. If we go right on in the order of prophecy, we shall find very clearly from the whole prophetic Word that the thing next to be expected was the bringing in of the day of vengeance of our God. There was nothing further needed to manifest the world's crime. Both Jew and Gentile combined to crucify the Lord of glory. The world was thus marked out, ready for the judgment of God. I think we shall find that the Church has very much forsaken her true position, forgotten her character (I mean the *true Church*), in the very position she has taken up in these last days toward the world. This could not have been done if the Church had been able to realise that the world was ripe for judgment; that a greater crime, so to speak, could never be committed than had already been committed in the murder of the Son of God; and that if it were not for the grace of God coming in marvellously during the past nineteen centuries, there could have been nothing between the world after the crucifixion of Christ, and the final rejection of Him when offered by the Holy Ghost, and the day of vengeance of our God. Nevertheless, we find God bringing in something which is not in prophecy. We find the next thing in prophecy, after the rejection of the Lord Jesus, is the day of vengeance of our God; and next, that in the midst of the day of vengeance, when God's judgment is poured broadcast over the world, He begins to comfort the mourning ones in Zion. This is prophetic; but nineteen centuries have elapsed without anything of this kind being manifested. What then *did take place* when the Lord Jesus was finally rejected? Our God came in, and two things took place—He took His stand upon the redemption brought in by the precious blood

of Jesus, and He offered terms of unalloyed grace to everybody that would accept the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour. They were to be treated in marvellous grace. And while the gospel of God's grace was proclaimed, another thing was to take place, and that was, that God's time of long-suffering was to continue; His forbearance with the world, not bringing in the terrible judgments according to the prophetic Word, but forbearing, and entering the period of long-suffering, which was to continue indefinitely, and has continued up to this hour. He sent out, as we have already said, the gospel of grace, and proclaimed grace to every soul without exception—to young or old, to the worst sinner, as well as the man or woman who fancies himself or herself by comparison better than others. He brought in this new kind of righteousness never heard of before.

I want you very clearly to understand this. One of God's great controversies at the present day with the world is, that He is acknowledging only **ONE RIGHTEOUSNESS**. The rejection and crucifixion of Christ brought in the world so guilty before God, that the best man in the world is accounted utterly unworthy of God dealing with him on the ground of righteousness, and all are put upon the same level—sinners simply, without any distinction, young and old, Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, good and bad—all are sinners; and God, taking His stand upon the redemption brought in by the blood of Jesus Christ, offers the righteousness of God. The man or woman who ignores his or her own righteousness, takes the place of a sinner before God, and accepts Jesus Christ and His finished work, is declared to stand upon the righteousness of God, which is the only righteousness that, throughout the present Church period, God is accepting. God will take no notice of human righteousness, the best of which is a polluted thing, and belongs only to the world that crucified the Lord of glory. While many, in the present day, are

clutching, so to speak, at their own righteousness, because they find a difference between themselves and others, there is this controversy on the part of God with them that they are rejecting the only righteousness that God in His grace has held out to the world in nineteen centuries. Those who did receive and have received the Lord Jesus Christ as God's righteousness, acknowledging God's grace, have been *separated from all the rest of the world beside*. It is not a question of ecclesiastical organisation—not, as we know, a question of churches simply and purely; it is a question of one wonderful body called out—a separated company. It is fashionable in these days to speak as if *ecclesia* meant "assembly." I think it has led some upon the wrong lines. I believe the assembly is coming. The great gathering-time of the Church is close at hand. It will not be here; but when we enter the presence of the Lord, see Him eye to eye, and are gathered round His person. I think it is a gloss to put the meaning of *assembly* upon the word. The Church has lost the meaning of the word *ecclesia*, because the Church, as a whole, has departed from the very place embodied in the meaning of that word. It means right through, the called-out, separated company; called out to the rejected Jesus, and the best righteousness of man trodden under foot, as it were, by God Himself; because the very best righteousness of men was shown at the cross in rejecting Jesus. Now those who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, bringing salvation through grace only, have been called out of all this, and united, under the power of God's Spirit, to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Head, in glory, of this marvellous elect company, the Church, which is the body of Christ. How often you and I, as individuals, have departed from the very principle embodied in that thought! How the whole Church has been seeking her own glory, following the ambitions of men of the world, instead of being so intensely afraid that we

should come under the influence and power of that world which rejected our Saviour and Lord; that the further we are now from it by the power of God's Spirit, so much the more shall we gladden the heart of the Lord Jesus. If we are to know anything about our Lord's, and the Father's thought about the Church, it will be by the whole Church becoming more and more a separated people to the Lord Jesus Christ, especially in these days in which we are living. If we get into the world's stream, and conform to the fashion of the things of time, we cannot know much of the blessed position that God means we should take as His Church, the practical union with the Lord Jesus, and the power that comes of it. Now we are just waiting to be removed bodily. I think a mistake has arisen, because the true church character has been lost sight of, to a very great extent, in these days. So long as grace continues to be proclaimed, as for nineteen hundred years it has been proclaimed, so long is it impossible for God to bring in judgment on a large scale; these two things are incompatible in the purpose of God. There cannot be God's judgment broadcast upon the earth while His long-suffering continues. While the gospel of God's grace, which is calling out the Church, continues to be preached, I do not believe for one moment that the tribulation can take place, that the day of vengeance of God can begin. I believe it is a matter of pure grace unto the end, till the last member is added to the Church; and then the knell of judgment shall be heard. As soon as, in the grace of God, the last member is added to the Church, as soon as God's forbearance with the world ceases, then, from that moment, I believe the Church is not only fully gathered, but will be taken into the presence, and round the Person of, the Lord Jesus; and then the day of vengeance will burst upon the world. The first part of the judgments of God will be the removal of the Church. When grace ceases to be preached,

the *gracious* company, the result of it, will be taken away. It is utterly incompatible with the whole question of grace, and with the result of grace—the Church, the body of Christ—to suppose that that body should pass through the day of vengeance, when the great question is, dealing with the world for rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah, and the gospel of God's grace right through these nineteen centuries.

In closing I just want, in a word, to touch upon the fact that *WE* are to show forth the riches of God's grace. I should like to deal with that for a few moments before I sit down. We need not follow the ambitions of this life, nor the fashions of this world; for *OUR* destiny is very different. We are to be kept from the times of judgment, and to be ushered into the glory of the Lord. We are not only to be for ever with the Lord, and to be His special reward from the Father, for the time He has waited all these years, when His own people have rejected Him; but we are to show forth the praises and the riches of God's grace through eternal ages. As I understand that term it is an exceedingly wonderful and precious one. You and I are destined, the Holy Ghost is moulding and fashioning us for the purpose, to show forth the *riches* of God's GRACE. Have you ever thought what that means? Look at Paul, who honestly could say that, if it were to be a question of the law, or of man's righteousness, he was head and shoulders above most men; and for what he saw of that wonderful mystery, as revealed to Him and others, he was led to count all these things but dung, that he might win Christ. He thus took his place as a poor, unworthy sinner. It was all perfectly true that, if he were to take his stand amongst his fellow-men, and be judged on a question of comparison of human righteousness, he would stand head and shoulders above them; yet he took his place amongst the lowest, and said, "I receive God's righteousness, casting these things behind my back. I take

hold of God's only righteousness, for me, a sinner ;" and, as such, he was bound up with the large mass of those drawn out from Jews and Gentiles, the scum and offscouring of human righteousness, so to speak ; he took his stand side by side with them, and was introduced into the new righteousness of God in Christ. From that moment he had a new life, a new being, so to speak, as well as new destinies. He was to show forth, along with that company, one wonderful thing—the exceeding riches of God's grace. I think, when we get into the full presence of the Lord Jesus, we shall see Him as He is, and shine forth in the likeness of the brightness of His glory. If there will be one thing more than another that will be seen in every one of us, it will be the greatness of God's grace in your case and in mine, and how much we needed it, from first to last, and how much it was grace, grace, grace, without one single thought of desert on our part ; but how we got grace, through the blood of Jesus, to begin with, and were maintained in grace by and under the power of the Spirit. If there is one thing more than another to be seen in the Church through eternal ages, it is God showing *what grace means*. This is one thought that, I think, is not cherished as it well might be in the Church. We do sometimes think of our gifts ; we think of the power of the Holy Ghost through us ; we think of the preaching of the gospel in these last days, and many added to the Church ; but do we think of this ? We should take our place lower at the feet of Jesus if we thought of it more—that we are going to show, and in measure are showing just now, if we have any real Christ-life about us, to the world lying in the wicked one, what God's grace has done, is doing, and shall do, for us ; and only through the blood of Jesus, and maintained, not by our own power, but by the power of our living Head. We should be manifesting grace to others. There was not one thought of malice in the heart of Christ to the

Christ-rejectors. While the gospel is preached by the Church, in the Holy Ghost, there should be the most intense love for sinners in us, if Christ be in us. If we know what grace means in our own hearts, we know what it is to show it forth to others—that we have been all along treated as we do not deserve, but as Christ deserves, and so to treat others—to show forth the exceeding riches of God's grace to the world lying in the wicked one. Judgment and grace cannot go hand in hand to any great extent. There cannot be judgment sown broadcast over the earth so long as the Church remains to show forth the marvellous grace of God. The Lord help us to keep close to Jesus. If there is anything more needed than another, it is Christ to be seen in our gatherings, in our lives, in manifestation to those lying in the wicked one; that in the little time that yet remains, we may be called and enabled to manifest the grace of God to poor sinners on all sides of us; and if we are brought into persecution for Christ's name sake, manifesting not even a desire for judgment, but that God's grace be manifestly shown forth through all the members of His body till the time comes for His Church to be removed.

ROBERT ANDERSON, LL.D.,

then followed in prayer and delivered an address on

PROPHECY IN RELATION TO THE JEWS.

The branch of the subject upon which I have been specially asked to speak is, "Prophecy in relation to the Jews." It is certainly the centre of the subject, the largest and the most important part of it. Dr. McKilliam was unable to keep clear of it in the address he has given us; and you will probably find that Mr. Bland, who is to follow me, will as little be able to do so. I feel almost overwhelmed at the idea of dealing with it in the brief time allotted to

me; and though, when I try to speak from notes, I feel as if my hands were tied behind my back, I must use a few notes, in order that there may be no digression, and that I may be able, as briefly as possible, to bring before you a review of the revelation God has given of His purposes relative to His earthly people. First of all I want to guard against an impression which I think is very common, as to the position which the Jewish nation occupied. I believe it is commonly thought that the Jews had a position equivalent to a monopoly of divine favour and blessing. Such a thought, however, is absolutely foreign to Scripture. God's great purpose was blessing to the world at large, and I do not think there is any illustration which more aptly exemplifies His intention in regard to the Jews than that of agency. He intended them to be His agents on earth. Now when a producer appoints an agent he does not do so with a view to prevent, but, on the contrary, to promote, a wide distribution of the article which he produces. And such was clearly the purpose God had in view when He took up this people. But whether it be the case of an individual, or a congregation, or a community, or a nation, if when God gives blessing that blessing is used selfishly—used in order to pander to human pride—it invariably turns to evil. And so it proved in Israel's history. Again there is another misapprehension that, I think, we need to guard against. I say confidently, and without the slightest reservation, that God never had the intention, and never revealed the purpose, of bringing blessing to this world through the Jewish nation apart from the blessed Lord Jesus Christ Himself. His great purpose was, that that nation should be the household of the coming Heir, that they should be a people prepared for the Lord, so that when the Lord appeared all nations of the earth should be blessed through Him, for He is the "seed" of the promise.

If the two thousand years which passed between

the promise to Abraham and the cross of Christ be regarded from one point of view, they marked the slow but constant unfolding of the divine purpose, from another point of view they were characterised by the constant thwarting and postponement of that purpose; Four hundred and thirty years after the promise, the people were brought nationally into covenant with God. And this led up to a crisis which, I venture to suggest, was a definite anticipation of God's purpose. Through their carnal lust for power and display in the midst of the nations of the world they claimed a king. In due course this led up to the apostasy and captivity of the nation—first of Israel, or the ten tribes, and then of Judah. This period of apostasy was precisely the period of prophetic utterance, which closed with the prophesy of Malachi. As there was a period of 430 years between the promise to Abraham and the covenant of Sinai, so there was a period of 430 years between the prophecy of Malachi and the cross of Christ. And during all this period the prophetic voice was silent. The cross of Christ was the great crisis of all things. I wish here to say something which may seem strange to some of you, but I say it with great confidence and deliberation; namely, that the cross of Christ was the setting aside of every covenant, the forfeiture of every promise given to man. It was entirely in grace that God repeated those promises, and renewed those covenants. But God has thought fit to do it. For example, in the chapter to which our attention has been called (Acts iii.) God goes back to the promise to Abraham (v. 25) when giving to that people the proclamation, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and He may send the Christ foreordained unto you, even Jesus." Then were to come those times of restitution of all things which, the apostle says, were the burden of every prophetic

utterance, from Moses and Samuel right down to the last who ever spoke.

That proclamation was rejected; but even after its rejection, though there was to be no longer priority of blessing, the Jew was still to have priority in the offer of the gospel. "To the Jew first" is characteristic of the whole period included dispensationally in the Acts of the Apostles. Even in Rome Paul put the testimony before the Jew first. Before ever he went to the Church he called together the "chief of the Jews," and gave them the gospel, spending a whole day in unfolding the Scriptures to them. But they rejected it. Then room was made for the unreserved ministration of the mystery of grace, which had already been unfolded in this very epistle to the Romans. You remember its closing words: "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest"—this great mystery which was not revealed in promise, which was not revealed in covenant, which is, in a sense, as inconsistent with covenant and promise as it is with works, which gives blessing, not upon the ground of what men are, but entirely independent of it. If you ask what the historic event was that marked the crisis in the Jews' career dispensationally, I daresay we shall all agree as to the answer. The *historic* event was no doubt the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the people. And as at the first destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar God lingered for forty years before the crash came, so here He lingered for forty years before this judgment fell upon them; for "He had compassion upon His dwelling-place."

Such, then, was the position of the Jews during that Pentecostal dispensation which is unfolded to us in the Acts of the Apostles. But now all this is changed. If

you want to know what their present position is, turn for a moment to Romans xi. There are two seeming contradictions in the chapter; but you may take it as a rule, in dealing with God's Word, that though the seeming contradictions are numerous, and though the enemies of truth make the most of them, they are always capable of explanation. "Hath God cast away His people?" And the answer is, "No, certainly not." And yet lower down, in verse 15, he says, "For if the *casting away* of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" Then, again, verse 11 asks, "Have they stumbled that they should *fall*?" And the answer is, "No." Yet in the next verse we read, "Now if the *fall* of them be the riches of the Gentiles." The explanation is, that these are wholly different words. God has not "apostatized" His people (as the word is), but He has "set aside" His people. Have they fallen in the sense of final apostasy? No. It is a fall in the sense of transgression, a totally different word. All this, while it seemed to be a failure of God's great purpose, was but the unfolding of a wider purpose, as you read in this very chapter, "How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" Through this fall God, in the riches of His wisdom and knowledge, has found a way for opening wide the door of mercy and bringing sinners to Himself. (v. 32.) As the setting aside of Israel was the reconciliation of the world, so we read that their restoration will be as life from the dead. But when and how are they to be restored? God never does and never can—I say it reverently—act upon conflicting principles at the same time, and here are two principles which are absolutely opposed; namely, priority of blessing to the Jew, and at the same time perfect equality. "To the Jew first," and, "There is no difference." Suppose it were a question here to-night, "To whom will God give blessing?" If we were in the Pentecostal dispen-

sation, someone might come forward and say, "I am one of the children of Abraham—one of the children of the promise." And the apostle's word would be, "It is to you first." But would you accept that as the gospel now? God's word now to the man who claims blessing on that ground is, "There is no difference, for all have sinned." The two, I repeat, are absolutely inconsistent, and that word, "No difference," must be set aside before the Jew can regain the position which he formerly held—not a monopoly of blessing which he never had, but the special position of privilege which he once enjoyed. How and when can that be? The more you think of this, the more you allow your mind to rest upon it, the plainer the truth will become, that the great crisis which will mark the change of dispensation, and prepare the way for the earthly people's restoration to favour, is the first stage of the coming of the Lord, to call the heavenly people out of the world to the place which He has prepared for them. Meanwhile events may be preparing for the great drama of the future; but the main stream of prophetic fulfilment is tided back until the favoured people come upon the scene once more.

Remember that my theme is the Jew. If we had a fourth division of the subject to-night I should suggest that it should be, "Israel as a nation, including the ten tribes." It is not merely the Jew who is to be brought back to blessing. "All Israel shall be saved." Not every Israelite, but Israel as a nation. As Ezekiel xxxvii. so plainly teaches, these people are to be no longer divided; they are to be no longer two nations, as in the past, but one nation under one king.

And now let me say a few brief words about the future. First of all there must be a revival of the fourth great kingdom of prophecy. It seems to me also that there is probably to be a re-fulfilment on strictly literal lines of Daniel vii. I venture to warn you against the idea which some people have, that the seventieth

week—the last week of Daniel's prophecy—includes all that remains to be fulfilled in the future. As, according to the best chronologists, the era from Adam to the cross of Christ is divided into two periods of two thousand and eighty-six years, the central point being the covenant with Abraham, so I have sometimes had the thought that this age will extend to a similar period of two thousand and eighty-six years. But this is merely a suggestion in a matter on which no one may dogmatize. I merely mention it to emphasise the statement, that the seventieth week is only one portion of the period to intervene between the close of this dispensation and the end; and that, moreover, with a definite reference to the national position of Judah. The seventieth week comes within the period of the judgments of the seven seals in the book of Revelation. You have in the fifth seal the souls under the altar of those who have been slain in the terrible persecution called the great tribulation. This shows it to be parallel with the latter portion of the week. The sixth seal brings before us those terrible catastrophes, the great natural convulsions foretold in prophecy, which plainly mark the epoch as being the close of the seventieth week. (Matthew xxiv. 29.) And then the seventh seal is the strange and terrible period of judgment which is to follow. You have within the seventh seal the seven vials, the seven thunders, and the seven trumpets. Each series closes apparently at the same epoch.

Again and again we find ourselves face to face with a difficulty which has oppressed believing hearts ever since men began to think. We realize that the world is full of sorrow and suffering, and cruelty and evil, and that there is a God above all who might in a moment put an end to all this suffering and set wrong right. It is a great mystery that God has delayed to do this through all the ages. He tells us of the restitution of all things, the time when everything shall be set right. But when? In the fifth

seal in Revelation v. you have the cry of martyrs; it is the refrain of the hymn we have been singing—

“How long, O Lord, how long?”

And the answer is given in chapter x., where the mighty angel swears by Jehovah God that there shall be delay no longer, but that in the days of the voice of the seventh angel the mystery of God shall be finished—finished even in the manner He has declared to His servants the prophets. And as we turn the page we read that when the seventh angel sounded, the great triumphant shout was heard in heaven: “The sovereignty of this world has become our Lord’s and His Christ’s, and He shall reign for ever and ever.”

A thousand years with Him are but as a day, and so the vision reaches right on to the close of the thousand years of the kingdom age; and the Church having been already revealed in its distinctive glory as the body of Christ, the blessed nation is manifested in its distinctive glory as the bride. And then will be the complete and ultimate fulfilment of the great promise that all nations of the earth shall be blessed in Him. My time is gone, and I must abruptly close, but will you allow me to add this closing word. Is there anyone here who asks the question, “What is all this to us?” I answer by asking you to turn again to Romans xi., and mark the place you have in the unsearchable judgments of God. We are not mere waifs from the wreck of humanity, thrown up, as it were, upon the shore; but each one of us whom God’s grace has reached and blessed, is brought into the sphere of this marvellous purpose which has been thus unfolding during all the ages of earth’s history, and is yet to be displayed to the glory of Him to whom all glory belongs. And yet another thought. In that closing scene of the Apocalypse you find that the cry, “It is finished,” which issued from the cross long centuries ago, and has been echoing and re-echoing

ever since, is taken up by Him that sits upon the throne; and those glorious words, "It is done," proclaim the accomplishment of all the purposes of God. And as, at the beginning, when God ended His work, and saw that it was good, He rested in the midst of His creation; so God will yet proclaim the great rest of the new creation, when everything will be "very good." And do you remember the word which follows? I give it as it is in the original: "He that overcometh shall inherit *these* things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son." In presence of such promises and hopes, let us take up the exhortation of that passage, and address it—each one of us—to his own heart. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

The assembly then united in the singing of the hymn—

"Through the dark path of sorrow which Jesus has trod."

MR. F. C. BLAND

then followed with an address on

PROPHECY IN RELATION TO THE GENTILES.

I was struck with an expression in our brother Dr. McKilliam's prayer, which was a desire that we might look on this world as it appears to be in the eyes of God—a deeply solemn and searching thought; for God looks upon nations and their condition, as well as upon individuals. If God did not do so, He would not be Governor of the world. It has been rightly remarked, that the Gentile nations are not *directly* the subjects of prophecy at this time; for the reason that prophecy relates to God's earthly people as a centre; and usually touches Gentile nations, according as they have meddled with that people. Still, we find abundance of proofs in the word of God that God deals with nations *as such*, and that they will receive their

judgment afterwards, on the ground of national sins and apostasy, and for abuse of privileges enjoyed. I will just read two or three verses in the book of Amos, as illustrative of what I mean. Chapter i. 2: "The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither. Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron." Verse 6: "Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom." Chapter ii. 1: "Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime." One might have thought that God would not be concerned as to whether the bones of the king of Edom were burned into lime or not. But what a marvellous thing, that God takes account of the behaviour of nations, and mentions certain incidents as being characteristic of what the moral condition of those nations was—in one case, oppression of God's people; in another case, immorality of various kinds; and here, the unnatural act of burning the bones of the king of Edom into lime! In the latter part of that chapter, verse 11, you read, "And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the Lord. But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not." Here we get the responsibility of people to whom God gave a revelation, and their determination to suppress it; as well as the way they sought to degrade, and to seduce from their Nazariteship, those who were separated to God.

There is nothing clearer in Scripture than that

nations are judged according to their responsibilities. The Lord says, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! . . . It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you." Now some may think that a statement by the Lord with respect to the responsibility of Israel as a people has no instruction or warning to us. But I ask whether Chorazin and Bethsaida are as guilty of apostasy from God as the land in which we live; with its national sins; its apostasy from the truth of God; and its multitudes of idols, not of wood and of stone, but of everything that ministers to man's lusts? Will God take no account of the fact, that there is a Bible in almost every house; and that He knows every text that is marked in them, and who has marked them; and with what object they have done so? This is the nation of Bibles; of religious activities, of missionary societies, and professed Christianity. And we boast of its being the land from whence the light of God's truth shines out to the whole world. So did Israel of old (Isaiah i.) in the abundance of their sacrifices and solemn assemblies. But God says, "My soul hateth them; they are a trouble to Me. I am weary to bear them," because they boasted in these things while the fear of God was not amongst them. As one has in solemn words described this London in which we are assembled to-day: "Wealthy, busy, restless, intellectual, degraded London. Sender forth of missionaries, but, save in China, the largest heathen city in the world. Converter of the isles of the sea, but thyself unconverted. Fullest of riches and of misery, of civilisation and of savage life, of refinement and debasement. Great heart, whose pulses are felt in every continent, but thyself diseased and feeble; wilt thou, in this thy day, anticipate by thy conversion the day of the Lord? or will it come upon thee, as hath never been the like, nor shall be? Wilt thou win thy lost ones to Christ? or be thyself the birthplace or

abode of antichrist?" It is not likely to be either the birthplace or abode of the antichrist, for we know from Scripture that his place of rising will be in the east of Europe. But there are many antichrists even now; and everything that is against God and His truth, whether openly or covertly, is the spirit of antichrist; and while the particular fulfilment of it is located in a certain place, the same judgment awaits it generally from a righteous God. The judgment of Babylon, in Revelation, has specific reference to two things. Chapter xvii. I take to refer to Popery in its blackest form. It is called a mystery, because while professing to be God's witness upon earth; and to be the sole expounder of His truth; it has hidden or perverted it; and under the name of Christ has slain its millions of Christians. Chapter xviii. appears to have reference to the commerce of the world, and to its luxuries and pleasures, beginning with gold, which man values most; and ending with souls of men, which God values most.

If an Old Testament word, like *Babylon*, is found in the New Testament, I take it that to learn its symbolic meaning, we must go back to the Old Testament scriptures to see what relation that place spoken of had to the people of God at that time. Look at the history of Babylon. It was always against God's people, and ended by taking them captive to Babylon. Is there anything that takes professing Christians, and often real Christians, captive too? We have two classes of unsaved people in the world—professing Christians without divine life, who are ensnared and lulled to sleep by the formalities of religion; and those who care nothing for these things, who are of the world, and live for the world, and are ensnared and taken captive by its pleasures and its business. These are the things that take people captive; not their bodies, but their souls and spirits. These are the things Moses overcame in Egypt, esteeming reproach of greater riches than its treasures—"Choosing rather to suffer affliction

with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." That there will be national responsibility we cannot deny, and that there will be national judgments I believe we have abundance of proof. As we heard said, it is a time of long-suffering; therefore those national judgments will not come till the day of long-suffering has ended. But come they will; and we may learn in what form they will come from the prophetic scriptures. If you turn to Jeremiah xxv. 15 you will read, "For thus saith the Lord God of Israel unto me; Take the wine cup of this fury at My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it. And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them. Then took I the cup at the Lord's hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the Lord had sent me." Verse 28, "And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at thine hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Ye shall certainly drink." Is there any preparation for this? I forget how many millions a year are spent on armaments in Europe. What for? Is it that these men will beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks? No. There must come something else first. That wine-cup must be put into the hands of the nations. It has been already mentioned that there will be ten kingdoms formed in the prophetic earth at the time of the end, which *as nations* will agree to give their kingdoms and power to the beast. (Rev. xvii.) This is not the apostasy of individuals against the truth of the gospel, but mighty nations, advanced in the arts and sciences; who have for the first time in the history of the world one heart, and that is to give their kingdoms to the one who opposeth himself above all, that is called God and is worshipped; viz., the *Antichrist*. Everything is preparing for him. Every infidel book that is printed; every spiritualistic seance that is held; every thought

of rebellion against God, and every tampering with and trifling with His word; is just preparing the minds of Christendom to receive one who will come in his own name. Now the Antichrist will be a representative man. He will only represent the feelings and thoughts of those who will receive him. When we send a member to the imperial parliament from any town or district he is supposed to represent the principles and feelings of the majority of the place from which he comes. The Antichrist will represent the feelings of all Christendom; of all those who received not the truth in the love of it; but will receive his mark in their foreheads and hands. Sometimes people think it awful that there should be such a person; but anyone who rejects Christ would be an Antichrist if he could. The heart of man is Antichristian as long as it rejects Christ. It is a fearful thought that such an apostasy is coming, and that men will be sent strong delusions that they should believe the lie. Jesus is the Truth and the Life. Antichrist is not only a lie, but the lie embodied in a person. You may say, "I have heard prophetic lectures, and know all the signs when Antichrist will come;" but God will send every Christ-rejecting sinner the working of delusion, that he may believe the lie. The working of delusion! What a word! I ask, Is it or is it not working now? It is enough to make us tremble when we think what we who are saved have escaped from, through the grace of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. Another verse in connection with the punishment of nations: "Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters; but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing [or a thistle down, margin] before the whirlwind." (Isaiah

xvii. 12, 13.) What a way God has of describing things! Now there are other scriptures which tell us of the distinction between Christendom and the nations outside. I have no doubt, from scripture, that many who have not received the message of salvation will receive it when the gospel of the kingdom shall again be preached, after the Church is taken away. It will be the same gospel that is preached now—for God can never retrograde in His testimony, or ignore the sufferings of His Son—but it will be preached kingdom-wise, if I may use the expression; that is, instead of pointing heavenward, it will point to the setting up of His kingdom upon earth. It is then, according to Psalm ii., that He shall ask of God, and He will give Him the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. It was this the Lord Himself had in view, when the book of the prophet Isaiah was given to Him in the synagogue, and He read down to "the acceptable year of our Lord," and *closed the book*. There follows "the day of vengeance of our God." The latter part is not yet fulfilled. The gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world for a *witness* unto all nations, and then shall the end come. Many poor heathen, even in this land, may hear that gospel of the kingdom. God will not make those who have not heard the gospel accountable like those who have. It is those who pull away the shoulder, and throw back God's invitations in His face, of whom it will be affirmed, as in the parable (Matthew xxii.), that they would not come. Is there anyone here who has been invited, over and over again, to come? Has that record been written against you—He would not come?

My time is up, except just to refer to one or two prophecies about the nations in the end. The nations will be preached to and, I believe, by those spoken of in Joel, on whom God will pour forth His Spirit. They will go out to all nations, discipling them. Then will be that great gathering, "when the Son of man

shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations." Christendom will not be in that gathering; it will be judged before, and never restored. You may notice in the Psalms that judgments pronounced on Israel never end without a promise of restoration; and through them blessing is to come to the nations that have not heard Jehovah's name, nor seen His glory. (Isaiah lxvi. 19.) You never get such a promise with regard to Christendom, for its apostasy is more terrible than Israel's was. Israel will be restored, Christendom never. You remember that solemn word in Genesis xv., where God is speaking to Abraham, which says that in a certain time his seed "shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." What a solemn word, that God was going to allow their iniquity to fill up! Is this the cause of delay to the judgment on Christendom? If so, to what will this nation come? What is true of nations is also true of individuals. Many a man and woman is allowed to go on to fill up the measure of their iniquity, like the nations—a solemn thought for those who, because the sentence of God against sin is not executed speedily, have their hearts wholly set on doing evil. It may be the "salt" that is in this world that is preserving it from judgment for a time. But the time will come when that preserving power will cease—for, alas! the salt is fast losing its savour—and the mystery of God shall be finished; that is, that the apparent strangeness of God's ways in not interfering in judgment now, when men are defying Him to His face, will cease; or, in other words, God's long-suffering will have reached its limit, and judgment will have begun. I end with another text, as my time is up. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"

The meeting was then closed with the Doxology.



HINDRANCES TO THE FULNESS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Thursday Morning, May 10th, 1888.

ON the second day of the Conference the large audience again assembled, in a spirit of joy and gratitude for the realized presence and blessing of the Lord throughout the gatherings of the previous day, and trustful anticipations of more to follow.

The proceedings were commenced with the hymn—

“Jesus! how much Thy name unfolds
To every opened ear;”

after which prayer was offered by Mr. W. H. BENNET and Mr. J. G. McVICKER. The hymn—

“We are going forth with our staff in hand,”
was then sung, after which

Mr. T. B. MILLER

led in prayer and then gave the following address on the subject for the morning.

I am very glad to be asked to open the subject this morning, because I think I may fairly count upon you to allow me to begin at the commencement, and to speak, first of all, of the A B C of the subject to those in this assembly who are youngest in years, and

youngest in the faith. Other speakers will follow, and to them I very gladly leave the development of this intensely-interesting theme. I believe it is important that we should be very clear, in the first place, as to the meaning of the subject before us. I will first of all read a word in the book of Psalms. We read, in the language of David, "Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me," (Psalm li. 11.) Now I should like to say clearly that this prayer would not be the true and intelligent prayer of any believer at the present time. We were speaking yesterday of the Lord's grace to that poor woman at Sychar's lonely well; and we were dwelling together with joy of heart upon that wondrous gift of God—the Holy Ghost sent down in the name of the risen Christ. Now everyone who has received that gift has received it as the unchangeable, irrevocable gift of God. I do not doubt for a moment that almost all here are clear on this point; but if there is one who is not, our time will not be mis-spent in briefly referring to it. The prayer is not applicable to a true believer in the present dispensation. No sincere believer in the Lord Jesus Christ will ever be eternally cast away from God's presence. "I give unto My sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, that gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man can pluck them out of My Father's hand." Therefore it is perfectly clear that the soul that is once saved through the blood of the Lamb is in the grasp of the hand of everlasting power.

The high priest of old bore upon the shoulder of his strength and upon his breastplate the name of each of the twelve tribes of Israel; so the weakest, the feeblest believer in the Lord Jesus is borne upon the shoulder of strength, and upon the bosom of changeless love of our great High Priest. We find in Ephesians i. what the result of believing on

the Lord is. In verse 13 we read of those who heard "the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." This is the indwelling of the Holy Ghost—God the Holy Ghost dwelling within my body. We often speak of the *heart* as being God's dwelling-place, but literally and scripturally your *bodies* are "the temples of the Holy Ghost." Now this is the great blessed fact, and I just refer to it in order that I may help souls to know more of the doctrine of the Holy Ghost. We had pressed upon us yesterday the "necessity for deeper faith in the Holy Ghost." But first of all we must be clear about the *fact*. When we are clear about a fact, when we know a fact from the word of God, our faith in the fact is developed and strengthened. Therefore let us be quite clear of this. It is the grace of God that brings salvation, and it is the same blessed grace that seals the divine work of Christ, received by faith in the soul by the indwelling of the Spirit of God. And, thank God, that gift is irrevocable. It would be false, it would be a denial of the truth of God, if anyone here were to say, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." It is as false as that the soul once trusting in Christ can ever be cast off. It never can.

This being true, we find in the epistle to the Galatians a very simple explanation of the subject before us this morning. This subject is, the "hindrances to the fulness of the Spirit;" first in the individual, and then in the collective assembly. First, then, as to the individual; for the condition of each one individually affects the condition of the assembly collectively. We are too apt to leave the responsibility of the assembly in the hands of certain persons. What we saw yesterday was this, that every one of us, as worshippers, must come right into the presence of the Holy God with our hands full. Hence the state of each one in the assembly is a matter of the greatest importance.

Turn for a moment to Galatians v. 16: "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." The word "lust" is perhaps one that we do not quite understand, or rather it is one to which we attach a too exclusive and specific meaning. It has more the sense of bias or tendency. I do not mean that it would not have an awful tendency. A man may have a tendency to murder, or a tendency to lie. That is his bias, and that is the meaning of it here. Now we find further on that the flesh—and this one word in its endless developments is the answer to the question raised this morning, What are the "hindrances to the fulness of the Spirit"?—"lusteth or warreth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye do not the things that ye would." It would be wrong to say "ye cannot" do; for surely greater is He that is for us and IN us. We must not put it in that way, but that ye "do not" the things. The hindrance, therefore, to the fulness of the Spirit's power in the individual is the allowance of the flesh, with its affections and lusts, instead of obeying the word, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

In the word of God the flesh is always presented as in constant opposition to the Spirit of God. When our Lord speaks to Nicodemus He says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." I remember a remark made by a beloved brother in the Lord—the late Mr. Bellett, of Dublin—who said, "Sublimate the flesh, beloved, or you will never yield your spirit." That is a very important thing to remember. I do not say that you do not know, but I venture to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. You will never alter the words of our Lord: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." It is not necessary for us, as it were, to manifest the grosser form of these works of the flesh, as enumerated in

Gal. v. 19-21. Perhaps you will say, "Do not read them." Well, I won't read them. I do not want to read them; but I think it is well that you should read them, and that every one of us should be conscious before God, the heart-searcher, that the germ of every one of these terrible works of the flesh is in my natural heart. You remember the well-known saying of dear old John Bradford, when he saw a man passing on his way to execution, "But for the grace of God, there goes John Bradford." I do not want to offend your ears; "it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret," and it is not necessary to dwell upon the grosser forms of the flesh; but I want you, my brethren, to feel before God that there is something within you which will do everything to hinder the development and strengthening of the divine life which is in you by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Let me now refer you to one word in the Old Testament, in the book of Leviticus, and there I think we shall learn how blessedly God helps us to bring forth "things new and old;" and how the type shadows of the Old Testament help us to understand the doctrines of the New Testament, and how the New Testament doctrines throw light upon the types of the Old Testament. Now observe Leviticus ii. 11: "Ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the Lord made by fire." Here are two materials of the most opposite possible description. There is the sourness of the leaven, and there is the sweetness of the honey; and God's word is as absolute about the honey as about the leaven. And why is this? Because God cannot accept the honey of the flesh any more than the leaven of the flesh. In the sight of God mere good motives, mere amiability—those attributes that we all value—are but as the honey, which must not be included in the burnt-offering. It is not that one wishes to be unreal. "Hast thou found honey? eat

so much as is sufficient for thee." It is a pleasant thing when there is amiability in the family circle, or elsewhere amongst men. But what does God say? "Ye shall burn no . . . honey in any offering of the Lord made by fire." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" and the amiability of the honey can no more be offered upon God's altar than the sourness of the leaven. May God help us to understand these things in our hearts. The time comes in the history of God's people when each one learns to say, with one of old, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." It is when we know the fulness of the power of the blessed Spirit of God that we know ourselves. As these things sink down deep into our hearts, we are no longer deceived by the honey that has satisfied us hitherto. We abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes. This is what we need to learn.

There are two scriptures to which I will draw your attention, as they definitely bring before us the hindrances to the fulness of that blessed Holy Spirit's power in the individual and in the assembly. The first is in Ephesians iv. If you will refer to verses 22, 23 together, in connection with the subject that we have before us, you will read, "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Now verse 30: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto" (How long? As long as you are faithful? No. But unto) "the day of redemption." That which I have sought to bring before you is confirmed here in the very word of solemn warning, and I pray God that we may all understand that the blessed Spirit of God has taken up His abode in our bodies. "Your body is the temple of

the Holy Ghost." We know what it is to have an honoured guest. We try to think what will please him, and remove everything that would grieve him. If we have an intense feeling of the holiness of the One whom we are entertaining, we would not like anything in our hearts, or anything in our belongings, to meet His eye or ear that would grieve Him. Oh, when we think of the blessed Holy Spirit, not simply as a guest, but as One who will abide with us for ever, what power there is in the words, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit!" It is grieving the Holy Spirit; that is the hindrance to the fulness of His power in each individual. If you were to ask, Will you kindly speak to us of the many ways in which the Holy Spirit is grieved? I am quite sure that we might continue all through the day. I am therefore only able to allude to it, and to exhort you to "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."

It is not a question of whether I shall be eternally lost, but whether that sensitive—I venture to say that sensitive—blessed Spirit of God shall be grieved. We know what a sensitive plant is. I hear that there is one recently discovered, so sensitive that it foretells any change in the weather forty-eight hours in advance. Now may we not say that the blessed Spirit of God is very sensitive, and must be grieved if the flesh is at work—if leaven is allowed, if honey is offered? How sad to grieve the Spirit of God! We read of one who, of old, went out and shook himself, and rose, as he thought, in the same strength; but he wist not that the Lord had departed from him; and the power of the Holy Ghost may depart from us to-day as from Samson of old. If the Spirit is not present with me, then I am just like any other man. Nay, I will say more than that, for I believe there is no man so helpless, so powerless, as the believer when the Spirit of God is grieved. I have often felt that we have so far defied the world, and despised its good opinion, that when the faith of those who have gone forth in the

power of the Holy Ghost is departed, the natural guards of conduct being also gone, they are weaker than other men. It is well that we should know this. We need the fulness of the Spirit's power, or we are weaker than water spilt upon the ground, that cannot be gathered up again.

There is a word in 1 Thessalonians v. 19 which indicates one hindrance to the fulness of the Spirit in assemblies. There are two short verses close together, and I believe that they are intimately connected: "Quench not the Spirit," and "Despise not prophesyings." "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." There is no surer way of quenching the Spirit in the assembly than to despise prophesyings. We may not like the one by whom God thus speaks. Either he may be poor and uneducated, and we despise him, or we may be jealous of his power and influence; but the Spirit of God is quenched. Solemn thought! May I venture to quote from an epistle that, I fear, we do not often read? May God apply His own word. The epistle to which I refer is the general epistle of James (i. 9): "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: but the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away." We may read the last verse of the first chapter: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." "My brethren, have not faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of person. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?" Now look at this, beloved friends. Have we not plain warning against the flesh in our assemblies; and, mark you, it is applicable equally to the brother of low degree and the brother of high degree—when either the brother of low degree forgets his true place, or when the brother of high degree forgets the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. I do not think I need say more. Are we not in danger both ways? I remember, many years ago, speaking to a sister, who was with the so-called Brethren in their early days, and her remark was to me, "I think that one of the first difficulties was when humble brethren—that is, the brethren of low degree—presumed upon the grace of the Lord Jesus in those in a higher station of life, and then, alas! it was resented." There was failure on both sides, it may be, and so sorrow and confusion came in.

No doubt the fulness of the Spirit's power is sometimes hindered by the brother of low degree, sometimes by the brother of high degree; but I believe this, that where there is really gift from God, and power in the Holy Ghost, there is no place where it is so truly valued as in the assembly, apart altogether from any question of rank, or station, or education. If there be real power and godliness, which we can all manifestly recognize, there is no place on the face of the earth where it is so truly and heartily recognized as amongst those who are gathered simply to the Lord's name; of this I have not a question of doubt. I have watched it from my boyhood; I have watched it as a spectator; I have watched it, too, as a participator, and of that I am perfectly certain. If I venture to read these two portions of scripture, I read them feeling that they include every rank and station—as men speak in this world—which is to be found in the church of God, and you will not feel that I am dwelling unduly on either side.

May we know what this fulness of the Holy Spirit is from our very hearts, and pray that we may more quickly discern it in places where, it may be, we never thought of looking for it before. I believe that if we walk in the Spirit we shall learn to judge the things of the flesh—things which in the past we have never challenged—as hateful to us, and we shall learn to judge ourselves far more severely, and others far more lovingly. That, I think, is what we want—very hard with ourselves, and very full of the omnipotence of lovingkindness to all the beloved people of God.

MR. HENRY GROVES

then immediately continued the subject as follows.

I especially desire that in touching the subject of hindrances we may realise that hindrances may become helps, and they become so when we can say of them as Caleb said of the Canaanites, "They are bread for us." We are in danger of being discouraged by the difficulties that lie in our way; and we should learn to thank God for hindrances, because they are divine opportunities for God to come in. If there were no hindrances we might get on somehow, but as it is we cannot get on without God. What we need to learn in the present day, as ever, is that God is God; for faith believes that He is, as well as that He becomes a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. (See Hebrews xi.) Let us, by God's grace, buckle on our armour a little tighter, and know what it is, in the power of the living God, to grow fat upon our difficulties, and to glorify God by the very things that seem in themselves to be our ruin. It is the magnificence of God's divine purpose to work out conformity to Christ in His beauty and glory and grace, by the very things that seem to be the marring of it all. When we get to the other side, and see things as they are, we shall marvel that we groaned under our hindrances so much, and that we did not

triumph over them more, and that Christ was not more before our eyes. A brother once said, in talking of Caleb, "Caleb could not see the walls and the Anakim, because he always kept God between himself and them." That makes the Anakim and the great walled cities nothing, because God comes between. I am glad to see so many young Christians here, and would like them to remember that God in Scripture is represented as beneath us and above us, and around us, before us, and behind us. And if so, what chance has the enemy against us? Verily, none but what we give him. It is well to ponder that, and to become watchful over ourselves; for if so, then, by the grace of God, He will carry us through all; and we shall be like the three children of faith, who walked up and down in the burning, fiery furnace, that will only burn our bands and set us free. God wants us to know ourselves. God has written what we are in the Word. And our difficulties and hindrances prove us to ourselves, as they prove God to us, so that we know ourselves and know Him. But knowledge in Scripture is never headwork; it is always heartwork. It is important to remember this nowadays, when heads are so large, and hearts so small, that so we walk humbly. If knowledge has not a hold of the heart, and the heart a hold on the will, what are we? What have we?

There is much that is often painfully unreal about us all, and I say this, that God may tear away a little of the tinsel that seems to make us look so smart, for the unreal man is but an earthen potsherd covered with silver dross. I desire to be very short, but hindrances are many, and surround us on all sides, becoming such directly or indirectly from want of faith in God. Our dear friend spoke to us just now about grieving the Holy Ghost, and I want to remind you of a grieved Christ, because whatever grieves God the Holy Ghost grieves God the Son. Now, in order not to grieve our God we must know Him, and in order to know Him

we must study the whole word of God. The Bible, from first to last, is one beautiful whole, drawn and dovetailed together, where each part stands in its own place. Much of the weakness in the present day, in the church of God, arises from studying the word of God in a fragmentary manner. We should learn our A B C in Genesis, and if not we shall never know our X Y Z in Revelation. How few know the language of heaven! Like the Israelites of old, we have a mixed language—partly of Israel, and partly of Ashdod, and this is shadowed forth in our thoughts and conceptions of God and His truth.

Let us now turn to Matthew xvii. The Lord had just come down from the mount of transfiguration with His disciples, and found one possessed with a devil, and the father said, "I brought him to Thy disciples, and they could not cure him." We find from verse 17 that Christ was grieved. Mark His words—"O unbelieving and perverse generation!" There is nothing we are so apt to pity ourselves for as our unbelief; but the Lord Jesus links unbelief with perverseness of heart. Would to God we realized this more! for it would make us shrink from unbelief as dishonouring to God and ruinous to ourselves. Alas! how often we pity ourselves, because of our unbelief, as a poor man pities his empty pocket. But it is our emptiness, and not our unbelief, that Christ wants. Our empty vessel He fills, the poor man He enriches, and the one He sends empty away is the one who thinks he is rich.

Now God wants us to consider our Lord's word of reproof here given, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you?" (v. 17.) "I cannot" is never the language of faith; but rather, "I can do all things." This was Paul's estimate of divine possibilities with him who has laid hold of Christ. The Lord says here, "How long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?" And let us ask ourselves sometimes, "Lord, how long hast Thou borne with me?"

In verse 19 the disciples asked Him, "Why could not we cast him out?" The Lord replies, "Because of your unbelief." It was only their failing to realise God. What made Elijah what he was? It was that he knew God, and could say, "The God before whom I stand." This is a remarkable expression of Elijah, and one frequently used by him, and corresponds with Paul's words, "The God whose I am, and whom I serve." If we only thus realised the presence of God, and stood waiting in that presence, we should realise ourselves as backed by the omnipotence of divine power, and should not wound the heart of Christ by our distrust and unbelief, nor grieve the blessed Spirit of the living God, by our disobedience. We would then know what it is to be in the bright sunshine of the ever-living presence of the ever-blessed Christ. In the same chapter the Lord says, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Thus we see that in order to have all hindrances taken out of the way we need *faith, prayer, and self-control*. It is the allowing ourselves by this innocent thing or the other, as we call it, that little by little draws the heart away from this secret of its strength and power. I feel that what our brother said just now is very true, that many read very little of the epistle of James. It speaks of dead faith, and was written by the Spirit of God at the time of the declension of the Jewish Church, which the latter chapters of the Acts unfold, when the Church at Jerusalem had lost her first power, love, and faith in the Son of God; and the epistle of James comes in and sounds a note of warning. And the Church in this nineteenth century needs the truths of the same epistle in a very especial manner, in order that we might learn what real faith is. Intellectual faith will make us great in our own eyes, able to talk wonderfully about truth; but when faith in the living God lays hold upon the heart, then only does it become a reality. This epistle draws a contrast

between the heart and the mouth, and is like the book of Proverbs in this respect, for it dwells much on the difference between what is in the heart and what comes out of the lips. The study would make us feel how much lip-Christianity there is amongst us, and how little, comparatively, of what belongs to the heart, that lays bold of us with a divine power that makes itself felt, and holds us in the mighty grasp of the living God.

Let us turn to 2 Peter i. This second epistle of Peter—and I might say all the second epistles—in a very especial manner points to the latter days, showing the corrupting elements which were to come in and mar the beauty and spoil the glory of what we have in the first epistles. The church in its early days in Jerusalem was soon dimmed by unbelief, mistrust, and self-will. In verse 1 the apostle speaks of “like precious faith.” The expression “like precious” seems to link together God’s conception of faith and ours, and reminds one of a word in Mark’s gospel, in chapter ix,—“Have faith of God” (as in the margin); that is, “Have divine faith,” that “like precious faith” that God looks at and so estimates, and that we are called upon to estimate likewise. The apostle says we are given a divine nature, and have divine power. Now notice verse 5, and I would especially call attention to the rendering in the Revised Version—“Beside this, on your part, bringing in all diligence.” Mark, the diligence of faith. It is not that which lies down content with past attainments, but the activities of faith, for battles have to be fought and victories won. It is said of Joshua that “he went all night” when he went against the Amorite kings. Joshua did not say, “God is going to do it, therefore I may take it easy.” He “went all night,” and came upon his enemies at the breaking of the day, and smote them with the sword; and when he began to smite, God thundered, but God did not come in till Joshua had drawn his sword. We are prone to say, “If God will thunder, I

will fight." That is not God's way. God will have us giving all diligence, because God has put all resources at our disposal. God send us not poor and helpless ones to war at our own charges; He pays the charges and gives what is necessary for the battle.

I once heard of a good man saying in connection with that verse in the psalm—"By my God, I have leaped over a wall." "Well," said he, "I cannot leap over it, but I can leap at it, and God will take me over." God answers faith. Leap at the wall and God will take you over it. That is what we gather is the force of "Giving all diligence, supply, on your part, in your faith." Mark, not *to* your faith, but *in* it. The distinction is important. It is not an accretion from without, but it is a something from within in the power of the Holy Ghost. "Add in your faith virtue." No word in English exactly conveys the idea of the original word rendered "virtue." It might be rendered manliness, valour, courage. In the faith that grasped God has to be added the manliness of the one that has got hold of God, and has courage to obey Him, and corresponds with the beautiful word in the first epistle to the Corinthians—"Quit you like men;" or rather, "Be manly." Faith lays hold of God, and acts as having God with it; and unless we act thus, let us not boast of faith. We may be talking Christians, but the talk of the lips tends only to penury, and there is a danger of familiarizing ourselves with Christian truth that has nothing of life in it.

In Mark ii. 5 we read, "Jesus *saw their faith.*" Does Christ *see* ours? He may hear of it from our lips, but does He *see* it? We want something that God can see. As the faith of Abraham, the father of the faithful, who, when he was told to offer up Isaac, that very son on whom all the promises of God hung, went early in the morning, and had three days to ponder over it. It was no hasty act. We can often do a thing in a moment, and repent it afterwards; but God gave

Abraham a three days' journey to think about it. If God intimates to you that He has some very hard service for you to do, ask of Him that He may give you time to ponder it well, and you will never repent it afterwards. What we do in a moment of impulse is not what God wants; but what comes of the quiet fixedness of purpose that counts on God. God saw Abraham's faith, and said, "Now I know that thou fearest Me." Every act of disobedience, and every coming short in obedience, is the result of not fearing God, and the fruit of unbelief. It is harder in the end to disobey God than to obey Him. How we should rush into the path of obedience, if we ever felt that obedience is always the happier and easier thing! For God takes you over the wall; but disobedience has to climb over the wall, by itself, as best it can.

The Greek lexicon explains the word here rendered *virtue* as "manliness in action." It is not something quiet and passive that lies within, but that comes out in action. If used of God, it implies godlikeness in action, and so we read, "That we might shew forth the godlikeness in action [or the praiseworthiness] of Him who hath called us." And in man it is essentially activity in noble actions. This marks what faith leads to, and takes away the misconceptions of a great deal that to us goes for faith, because faith develops itself into manliness of life, and hears the word, "Quit you like men, be strong."

Then comes next knowledge. Mark, manliness to obey first, and knowledge afterward. Alas! how often are we trying to fill our heads with knowledge of the Bible, and oftentimes thinking very little of where our feet are going. What God estimates as faith leads to obedience, and obedience to knowledge. How easy knowledge is *then*; it never mistakes the road, because the spirit of obedience to God comes first.

Next comes self-control (temperance); for in the power of God self is held subject, and its desires,

appetites, held as under his mighty control. Then God's law becomes not "a table of stone" outside, but "a law of liberty" within—a law of a divine instinct. We want the spiritual instincts of the child of God, that makes the law of God to us, in the new covenant, a law written upon the heart, like a mother's love to her child. We love God, because we cannot help it; God has so loved us.

Next follows patience. We are impatient one with another because we have no self-control.

Then follows godliness, brotherly love, and charity, of which we cannot now speak. And then we read, "If these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." I do not know a chapter that so lets us into the secrets of failure, because in it God draws a picture of what good success is. I will only say further, "And so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (v. 11.)

We naturally look at these words as referring to the entrance into the kingdom by-and-by; but a remark was made yesterday which I will just confirm by saying, that whatever is objectively true in the future becomes, by faith, subjectively true now. If we want an entrance into the kingdom to-day down here, in our home, our business, it shall be ministered. For the kingdom of God is "*righteousness*"—hands not defiled with filthy lucre—and "*peace*" not troubled with outside anxieties, and "*joy*" in the Holy Ghost. And this is the kingdom into which we may have an abundant entrance while here below; and then what happy hearts and bright faces we should carry about with us!

Now, in conclusion, I would give two verses for us to carry home. May God write them upon all our hearts, and we shall most assuredly find that all our

hindrances have become bread for us, all our difficulties helps, whether in the church, the family, the world, or in our own persons; for they are just opportunities for the revelation of God to our hearts. The two verses are these (Rom. xv. 13), "Now the God of hope"—of an eternal hope; or, as we may express it, "the God of eternal certainties;" for every "hope" of the Bible is a certainty. Hope is a divine reality, a divine certainty; for hope pins itself to God. "Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope." We are oftentimes looking within for the hope; but *He* is our hope. The other verse is (1 Peter v. 10), "The God of all grace." Now, in the midst of our hindrances, as we call them, or helps, as I believe God would have us regard them, in our difficulties and our perplexities, let us get well hold of these two revelations of God to our souls. As "the God of hope" in regard to the future, and "the God of all grace" as to the present. This will suffice us, come what may. "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, will make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."

The hymn—

"Thine, Jesus, Thine!
No more this heart of mine,"

was then sung, and an address followed by

MR. W. R. LANE.

HINDRANCES TO SPIRITUAL BLESSING.

Let us read the last two verses of Psalm cxxxix.: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." In considering the subject before us this morning—the importance of which cannot be exaggerated; viz., hin-

drances to the fulness of the Spirit's blessing and power—how needful it is that we breathe this prayer with all earnestness. Do we long for this divine investigation of our hearts and thoughts? Nothing but the testing, penetrating eye of the omniscient God can search the secret chambers of the soul, and lay bare the hidden springs of our life. It is by the energy of the living Word that He searches the heart, and tries the reins of the children of men. It pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. The process may be humbling and painful; but let us not shrink from it.

There need be no terror at the thought of the all-pervading presence. The investigation is carried on, not by a stern judge, but by a loving Father; by One who is seeking our highest blessedness, and who desires that we may be partakers of His holiness, and enjoy to the full the fruits of His redeeming love. It must be an individual prayer, "Search me," and "try me." Conferences are good and valuable, and we would not forsake the assembling of ourselves together; but if we are really to learn what our spiritual hindrances are, it can best be done in the quiet and hush of the closet. It is absolutely essential that there be more of secret conference with God. Is it any wonder that we are lean and barren if this secret work has been neglected? How often mere appearances pass for piety! Oh for reality! Alas! how easy to forsake the inward fact of religion, and still cling to a semblance of it; the profession being but the echo of a lost spirituality. Yes; the prayer must be an individual cry unto God. Search ME; try ME; correct ME; lead ME in the way everlasting.

Church position must not be substituted for heart religion. Ecclesiastical correctness is important; but it cannot in any possible way compensate for the lack of the Spirit's life and breath animating the soul

of every member of the congregation. Let us see to it then, dear brothers and sisters, as we have been already to-day exhorted, that we are individually right with God. There cannot be collective power if there is individual weakness. Surely, dear friends, our one great concern at this time must be, What is the state of my soul? Am I growing in grace, seeking to be filled with the unction and power of the Holy Ghost?

Let us briefly consider some of the hindrances to the full measure of the Spirit's life and power.

1. The want of deep *conviction of the possibility* of being filled with the Spirit. It is a matter that seems to be of little concern to many of God's people. The danger is, that we rest in the first stage of the Christian life, as if forgiveness and deliverance from wrath were everything; failing to apprehend that this is only the beginning of life. It is the starting-point, not the goal; the initial step into an infinite fulness of blessing that remains to be enjoyed. It is like the introduction to Canaan; the *possession* of the land is another thing. Are we seriously desirous that the fulness of the Spirit's blessing may become a fact in our own lives? We are living in the dispensation of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost has been sent down from the glorified Christ to inhabit His blood-bought people; to fill their entire being with His own divine presence; to saturate their hearts and lives with His power and energy. May the desire for a more unhindered abiding, and mighty indwelling of the Comforter, root itself in all our hearts to-day.

We do from time to time meet with those who are dwelling in God; His presence is their home. We have felt that to get near to them is to get nearer to Jesus. Such lives are a silent rebuke to those who have been content with a half-hearted experience, and at the same time an encouragement and a stimulus to those who long for a closer walk with God.

"When such a man, familiar with the skies,
Has filled his urn, where those pure waters rise,
And once more mingles with us meaner things,
'Tis e'en as if an angel shook his wings;
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
Which tells us whence his treasures are supplied."

Now is this a privilege for the few only? Is it not for all? For you, my brother; for you, my sister; and for me? Let us now lay claim to that which is the common inheritance of all the redeemed. This is a glory which all the saints should possess. We get some typical intimations in the Old Testament of this. Immediately Moses had finished the work of building the tabernacle, the glory of the Lord filled it. So, in Solomon's day, when he had completed the temple, the glory of the Lord filled the house of God. Our bodies are now the temples of the Holy Ghost, and if we will but make room for Him, He will come and fill us with His glory. He will no less come and fill with the fulness of His love and grace those who have been redeemed by the precious blood of His Son. Oh that many of us may now prove Him in the matter!

2. Another hindrance is *reservation*. Turn to Malachi iii. 10: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." The people had been robbing God—reserving to themselves that which was the Lord's; for which God had a controversy with them. They were cursed with a curse: their harvests had been devoured, the increase of the field destroyed, and the vine had cast her fruit before the time. We were reminded yesterday that God gives all, and He claims all. Have we kept this steadily in view? Have we not been guilty of this great robbery? "You have robbed Me," saith the Lord. Think of your *time*—how has that been spent?

your *talents*—for whose honour have they been laid out? your *influence*—has that been exerted for God? Verily, the charge comes home to many of us! We have been made stewards of another's goods, and have been unfaithful to the trust committed to us. I heard Mr. McVicker say once, remarking upon 1 Cor. iii. 22, God gives us all things *except ourselves*. "All are yours, and *ye* are Christ's." We are His by eternal choice of us—by the purchase of blood, by the woes of Golgotha, and by actual possession of the Holy Ghost. And we are His by our own voluntary choice. We dedicated ourselves at our conversion, spirit, soul, and body to the Lord. But there has been a series of misappropriations going on since that. We have defrauded God—kept back part of the price. Now the condition of blessing is: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and *prove Me* now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." God claims *all*. This surely is a condition of blessing to which we must give earnest heed, unreserved dedication, unqualified surrender to the Lord. Yes, brethren, the difficulty is with us, the hindrance to power lies at our own door. "*Prove Me*," saith the Lord, "with a full devotion of yourselves to Me, and you shall prove that I am longing to impart a full measure of power to you. If you will keep nothing back on your part, there shall nothing be kept back on Mine." There would be no reservation of divine blessing, if there were no reservations in our consecration. Look at the word in the margin, "I will empty you out." An image from a vessel completely emptied of its contents; no blessing withheld. Heaven's own fulness is not too great a blessing for God to give to a truly devoted soul. Brethren, let us test Him now. Was anyone ever a loser by serving God with the whole heart? or a gainer by serving Him with a

half heart? Oh, if we will but give ourselves wholly to Him, He will give Himself wholly to us! Shall the Holy Ghost fill His temple to-day? Shall our blessed Lord and Master, our *owner*, possess now, that which He purchased at such a cost? Spirit, soul, and body—all for Jesus; no reserve, nothing kept back from Him. If we have robbed Him of talents, time, money, opportunity, or aught else, that was intended for His service and glory, then “let him that stole steal no more.” Let us “cease to do evil, and learn to do well.” The hindrance to power must be on our side; it cannot be with God. He has no greater delight than to fill the heart with the sunshine of His own presence, and saturate the life with His power.

May God help us! May the Spirit of the Lord search us! Let us now, earnestly and personally, pray: “Holy Spirit, enlighten my understanding. Shine in every part of my inmost being. Reveal to me the secret hindrances that lie hidden there, and give me grace and help now in this solemn hour to yield myself wholly a free-will offering unto the Lord.” If that be the honest prayer of the heart, then this day shall mark a crisis in the history of many of these blood-bought lives. We have been singing—

“Thine, Jesus, thine!
No more this heart of mine
Shall seek its joys apart from Thee.”

It is one thing to sing such words, and another practically to realize them in the daily life. Many of our beautiful hymns were written by saints in hours of close communion, and the sentiments therefore would not be equally true at all times, even to their own experience. We want the melody of the heart to correspond to the language of the lips. We do well sometimes, if one may speak for others, to sing such hymns by way of desire, earnestly and intensely longing that the rich experience, the burning devotion,

the whole-hearted consecration set forth may become our own. As old Herbert says—

“Lie not; but let thy heart be true to God,
Thy mouth to it, thy actions to them both.”

3. Another very serious hindrance to the power of the Holy Ghost is *spiritual sluggishness*. Mr. Groves spoke of this just now, and referred to the book of Proverbs. Let me ask you to turn again to that book, and in chapter xiii. 4 you will find words solemn and instructive on this point: “The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing.” The sluggard desires, and there must be an appreciation of the blessing, and a deep longing for its enjoyment; but that is not enough. Have you never felt anything of this sluggard desire, which comes to nothing? You have pined for a closer walk with God; a life more thoroughly consecrated to Jesus; deep inward longings to be better; inward dissatisfaction with the past, and a desire for more of heaven, of holiness, of fellowship with Christ in your life. But, alas! it has not lasted long. The desire so soon evaporated! It was like the early dew, it quickly passed away. What was the reason of this? It was but the desire of the sluggard, who desires “the gains of diligence, without the diligence that gains.” *Desire* there must be in religion, or our profession will be a carcase without life; but desire without effort, without action, is a delusion. Wishing will not give life to the sinner, or the increase of life to the saint. Desiring to be spiritual will not make us spiritual. Many an earnest Christian has had his light quenched by the bed of sloth and carnal ease, as well as by the bushel of business and care. Note the contrast of the text, “The soul of the diligent shall be made fat.” Let us not be content to say, “I long for a larger measure of the Spirit’s blessing in my heart,” but let us add diligence to our desire. Oh, for a holy industry in the things of God! Look again

at chapter xxvi. 13: "The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets." The sluggard sees no end of difficulties. He knows that he is not what he should be; that his soul is not in such a lively state as it once was, may be. But says he, "There is a lion in the streets. There are so many difficulties. If I hadn't such a family to look after, if I hadn't so many business responsibilities, if I were in better circumstances, if I were only living in a Christian family, how easy it would be then! There is a lion in the way." How ingenious we are in making excuses, in a time of spiritual sloth, to lay the responsibility upon circumstances, instead of upon ourselves! It can only be by the diligent and prayerful use of the means provided in God's word that our souls can get an increase of power. Oh, for such a desire as shall carry us over every wall of difficulty, and shall make us bold to face every lion in our way! An arm paralysed by indolence and carelessness will not be of much service in wielding the sword against the foe.

Look at the next verse: "As the door turneth upon its hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed." He turns on his bed, but not out of it. There is movement, but no progress. He cannot rest; his conscience is ill at ease. He says, "I must pray," but remains prayerless. "I must give time for soul cultivation," but he neglects his vineyard still. If good intentions and wishes would make him holy, he would be the most saintly of saints. I have been the guest of a dear friend, whose regular habit is to rise before others in the morning, in order that she may give herself to prayer and the word of God; and in that "still hour," before others are about, she is engaged in the business of communion with God, and as a result her face, like Moses, is bright with the sunshine of that other world. We were hearing just now about the sad faces of the unconverted. What troubles me sometimes is the gloomy and sad countenances of some Christians. Oh, is not

the remedy for this found in the secret hour with God? If we are to be filled with the Spirit we must see to this. It is a bad sign if we are afraid of solitude. Keep thy heart with all diligence. Let there be an eager searching of the Word, and digging as for hid treasure. As the electric fluid runs through the wire, so the Spirit comes through the written Word. If we neglect the Word, the Spirit will neglect us. Look at chapter xxvi. 15: "The slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it out again to his mouth." The bread of life is there close at hand, but for the want of earnest exercise his soul starves, while it might be fat and flourishing. "He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread." We must add to our faith energy. The diligent Christian will grow rich by trading with his precious substance. Note also chapter xx. 4: "The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing." If we would have a golden harvest we must not neglect the plough. God gives seed, but He gives seed to the sower. Our fields will not keep us if we do not keep them. If we will not use the seed God gives for the sowing-time, we shall beg for bread in vain in harvest-time. The sluggard begs in harvest, and has nothing. This law is as inevitable in the spiritual as in the natural world. The ploughing, the sowing, the care is our responsibility; the increase, the growth, the harvest is from the Lord. Time fails us to turn to the sluggard's garden, in chapter xxiv., that we may receive instruction there, and other verses in this practical book of holy writ, showing us some of the consequences of this paralysis of spiritual indolence.

4. Another hindrance I feel I must refer to, is that of *sectarianism*. I can imagine someone saying, "Ah! you are coming to the point now." Well, I am not going to ask you to think so much of the sectarianism and divisions of Christendom, these are sad enough, but to

come closer home. The sectarianism I refer to is that which may be formed in our own hearts. Oh, it is sad enough to have denominational walls separating God's people! but it does seem to me that the divisions of heart and affections, the divisions of spirit, must be far more grieving to our heavenly Father, and infinitely more destructive to the life and power of His children. Let us be careful lest, while we declaim against sectarianism around us, we may be fostering and cherishing sectarianism *within us*. It is with *all* saints that we are to comprehend the love of Christ. Surely it is our privilege and our solemn responsibility to cultivate personal fellowship as far as possible with all who, like ourselves, are endeavouring to walk by the light they possess. The Spirit, it is true, leads God's people in a narrow way; but He does not dwell in large measure in a narrow heart. There are things in which Christians differ—serious things—and we should not be wise to shut our eyes to the fact. The hand must not relax its hold of the banner of truth. There must be no retreat. We must be like the young ensign in one of the battles of the Crimea, who, when the regiment had fallen back, and the officer in command called out to him, "Bring back the colours," replied, "Bring the men up to the colours." The Lord has given a banner to His people that it may be displayed because of the truth. But do let us bear in mind, that the things about which all true Christians are of one mind infinitely outweigh in importance—if we may draw such a comparison—the things in which they differ. Perhaps when in the Zion above we see eye to eye, we shall wonder that we did not spend more of our time on earth in trying to find as much as we could of Christ in one another. If there must be walls of division in the Church, may God clear out every vestige of sectarianism at any rate from our hearts. I am solemnly persuaded, my brethren, that this has been, and is, a very serious hindrance in the way of the Spirit's power. The divine Comforter

is grieved by us if we are not walking in love and grace toward all those in whom He dwells; and in the measure that we grieve Him in others do we frustrate His working and power in ourselves.

5. I have only time to mention the terrible hindrance of what we call the *little inconsistencies* of life. The little foxes that spoil the vines. The fretful, complaining impatience, for instance, that does not perhaps appear in the Church, but that finds vent at home. Then we are not under the restraint imposed upon us by the presence of our brethren who hold us in reputation. The true self of the man is not always seen except when he is, so to speak, "off parade." You cannot know him till you have lived with him. The little things of the daily life are the real test of the value and reality of religious profession. We all know that it is so easy to talk of patience, and to have the semblance of meekness; but is it not quite another—the exercise of patience and meekness—when, for instance (pardon the homely illustration), the baby is cutting his teeth, and fetches you out of your bed four or five times during the night. And yet these are things which, if not guarded against, will eat away the heart-life like the little boring insect attacks the forest tree. There are many things for which we are not excluded from the communion of the Church, but which, to an alarming extent, obstruct and mar the communion of the Holy Ghost. May God indeed search out in us every way that is painful or grieving to Him, and lead us from this hour in the way everlasting.

You remember the story of the old Scotch peasant who was visited by the Queen. When Her Majesty had departed, the good old woman took the chair upon which the Queen had sat, and carefully cleaned and polished it. She then placed it in the most prominent part of her little parlour, saying, "Naebody else shall ever sit on that chair." It was evermore a sacred

chair to her, because the Queen had sat upon it. But the King of kings has condescended to come and make our hearts His throne. Shall He not have His way with us, and reign without a rival there?

“Take my heart, and let it be
Ever closed to all but Thee.”

Many have come to these Conference meetings longing for some definite rise in spiritual life, some richer enjoyment of the possibilities of faith, and a fuller measure of power from on high. God help us all, and fulfil in each, “all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power: that the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in us, and we in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

The meeting was closed with prayer by Mr. F. C. BLAND.





OUR RESPONSIBILITY IN RELATION TO THE WORLD.

Thursday Afternoon, May 10th, 1888.

THE afternoon meeting was commenced with the hymn—

“Rise, my soul, thy God directs thee.”

Mr. W. NOBBS and Mr. PITTER then led the assembly in prayer, after which two verses of the hymn—

“Our Lord is now rejected,
And by the world disowned,”

were sung, and the first address on the above subject was given by

Dr. NEATBY,

who said : I will ask you to look with me at Philippians ii. 14 : “Do all things without murmurings and disputings : that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world ; holding forth the word of life ; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.” The subject is, our responsibility toward the world ; and the part of it that I would seek to take up, as the Lord may enable

me, is that which has relation to our *living* Christ. Our responsibility in this, beloved friends, is very great, and I do not care how much it is pressed upon our hearts this afternoon; if it is a burden there all the better, because we know where to cast our burden. We know who gives rest from every burden. His strength is made perfect in our weakness, and it is only in this strength that we are able to discharge our responsibilities. Although the gospel naturally suggests itself to one's mind in connection with such a subject as we have before us, yet the first and most important gospel testimony is *Christ lived out* in every detail of daily life. If it can be truly said of us, "And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," we are preaching in our lives the most powerful gospel that we can present. I suppose that the world should see in Christians downright happy people. This would surely be the most telling contradiction to the lie of the enemy, that Christianity, or religion as they say, is a very good thing to die with, but a very dull, unhappy thing to live with. It is most solemnly true that you cannot die without it. It is real death to die without it; it is a death that never dies. But that which should be the testimony of every Christian, is that Christ makes the heart happy *now*—*my* heart happy now. You ought to be able to see it in my face without my speaking. I know, beloved friends, that this is very feebly accomplished in me; but I am speaking of what a Christian should be. The heart that has found Christ ought to be a happy heart. When the apostle Paul was brought before Agrippa, it was a very remarkable sight to see an old man led in chained to a soldier, worn down with abundant labours, with a long imprisonment—to see that old man stand before them with all the bright vigour of youth and wish that they were all as happy as he was. A strange prisoner indeed to have such peace of heart, such liberty of soul, such joy unspeakable and full of glory that the

best desire his satisfied heart can form for the king and for his judges is just this: "I would to God, that, not only thou, but all that hear me, this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds," and the chain rattles on his arms, as he says the words. I do not know what effect it had upon Agrippa. I do not know what that august assembly felt. Nor what the individuals composing it felt that night, when each one closed his door, and found himself alone; but I know that Paul, at least, discharged his responsibilities toward the world that day as I would to God we all of us may to-day, and each day till the Lord comes.

Let us look at the portion of God's word before us. If it were not that the time is so limited, it would be a very happy occupation to look at it in detail, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings." Really, it ought not to be necessary to warn Christians against murmurings. Murmurings! It seems the last thing that should ever come from a Christian's lips. He has so much to make him happy, so much to make him ever turn to God with thankfulness, and so much to make him, before the world and in his daily calling, overflow with praise in the enjoyment of his present portion, and in the prospect that lies before him, that murmurings should be out of the question. It would be well if in preaching the gospel we dwelt upon the present blessing, to which the sinner is called, far more than is usually done. That heaven is a blessed place, and that Christ has wrought a work which gives the believer a title to enter there, is blessedly true; but God has redeemed sinners to Himself *now*, and calls them out of this world to keep a feast to Him in the desert. Oh, beloved friends, how little is this thought presented in the testimony of the gospel! Yet it is a feast of fat things that He has spread, although in the sands of the desert. The present knowledge of God, as He is revealed in the Son of His love; the enjoyment

of God thus revealed day by day; delight in Him through our Lord Jesus Christ; conscious nearness to Him, and closest relation with Him. These are some of the "fat things" which His hand has prepared for this wondrous feast. The Lord's word to Pharaoh was, "Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness." This was God's gracious will; but instead of holding a feast they murmured in the desert, they disputed in the desert, they chided Moses in the desert, they tempted God in the desert. This may well speak to our consciences.

"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke." There is a wonderful presentation of Christ in this portion, and of the Christian, as being in the place of Christ. We are called into the place that Christ occupied down here. He was the Son of God; we are children of God. He was the Light of the world; we are to shine as lights in the world. He was the Word of life; we are to present the Word of life. In point of fact, if it is responsibility, or if it is privilege, we are always placed in the position that Christ has won for us by that work which He accomplished. It is really His own place.

In John xvii. the Lord presents His beloved disciples to His Father as those He had received from the Father and as now occupying the same place on the one hand in the Father's affections, and on the other in this present world. In the last verse He says, "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." He had whilst here amongst them declared the name of the Father—He had in measure put it into their lips and into their hearts. The full declaration was reserved for the day when the Holy Ghost should come upon them; but He says, "I have declared," and "I will declare." He had declared here; He would declare, when risen from the dead, the Father's name—"Thy name" as Father. Jehovah had passed

before Moses and declared His name as far as the revelation of God extended then; but now Christ—Jehovah-Jesus, God manifested in flesh—had declared the name of Father in this world. And how is the name of Father declared to any one? It is only by giving the person to whom the name of Father is declared the place of a child. "Because we are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are children of God." This passage appears to be scarcely understood by many children of God. It is constantly quoted as if the witness of the Spirit were to the pardon of our sins. It is not so, beloved; but it is to our highest privilege that He bears witness. Of course to be children of God we must be pardoned, we must have peace with God, our sins must be out of the question entirely; but over and above that we are children of God, and children in the fullest sense of the word. For when the Lord was risen from the dead, the first thing that He did was to declare the name of Father to Mary Magdalen. In John xx. 17: "Jesus saith unto her, Touch Me not." A strange thing to bid her not to touch Him, but it has reference to the fact that she was going to take Him away. She had said, "Tell Me where Thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." "Now," says Christ in effect, "I am not going to be with you as I have been; I am going to ascend to My Father. Do not touch Me. I am not going to stay with you." She was holding out her hands to seize Him. She had said she would take Him away; she would now be as good as her word. There was no difficulty about touching Him. He told Thomas to reach his hand and thrust it into His side; but when Mary thinks that He is going to be with them as usual now that He is risen from the dead, He says, "No, touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren"—

a word never heard before. He had said, "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother." But the relationship here spoken of was a new thing. Now Christ reveals Himself to them, and He puts them in the same position Godward as He is in—"My Father and your Father;" that is, He is our Father in the same blessed way as He is the Father of the Lord Jesus. Of course I need not say here that He did not make them eternal sons of God. That is His personal place. He stood alone, for ever and infinitely above any other, the eternal Son of God. No one could join the Lord Jesus there, and not one of His would wish to do so. Blessed be His name, He has the pre-eminence everywhere; and here the Creator, the eternal God, the everlasting Father, He stands alone.

But as Son of God, born into this world, this passage puts you and me into the same place of nearness to God. Not only so, it gives us the same place as Christ in our responsibility before the world. Now the apostle presses home upon the saints at Philippi that they should be found there—he would press upon us that we should be found in the north of London, "children of God, without rebuke;" that they and we should walk in this world as children of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. Now for this, beloved, two things are needed—the Spirit in our souls who is a testimony of this new relationship to God, as the power that worketh in us for the true testimony that we have to bear; and, secondly, the eye upon Christ, our blessed Pattern, the Man in the glory of God to whom we are to be conformed. We want Him as the object before us—the forming object, the controlling object, the governing object. This is what the Holy Spirit would lead our souls to. The Holy Ghost does not testify of Himself as the object and end of a Christian's life. The witness and testimony of the Holy Ghost is to Christ; and in

making Christ precious to our hearts, in glorifying Christ before our eyes, He gives us the power to live Christ in every word and look and every outflow of the mind. Thus Christ is before the eye. He must be, because we look to see what we should be, Christ being the blessed, the only Model. Unlike other models, when we look at Him we get the power to become like Him. In gazing upon Him one day—the day to which the renewed heart looks forward with unspeakable joy—we shall be just like Him. In looking at Him we shall become like Him. At the first glance, before we know, we shall be changed into His blessed, lovely image. But now “beholding the glory of the Lord,” looking at Him for our own soul’s delight and profit, and also to see what we should be like, “we are changed into the same image.” We cannot look in the day that is coming without being like Him, and we cannot look now without being in measure like our Saviour. We look at Him to see how He walked, because “he that saith he abideth in Him ought himself so to walk, even as He walked.” We look, and we are changed. Were you ever half an hour in the presence of the Lord Jesus without becoming more like Him? Ah, beloved, if you desire—and I am sure you do, you could not be a child of God without it—if you desire likeness to Christ, spend many a half-hour in His blessed company, and lengthen it out whenever you can into the whole hour. Stay there, at His feet, gazing into His face by faith. That is the way to “walk as He walked,” that is the way to be “blameless and harmless; the sons of God without rebuke.” Should not a child be like its father? How can I, who am so unlike God, become like Him? I have seen the face of Jesus (God shines out perfectly there), and gazing on His face I become like it. It is this abiding occupation of heart with Christ, this constant communion with Him, that produces this practical likeness to Him. We see this in a most remarkable degree in that

blessed man Stephen. He looked at Christ till his face shone, as Moses looked at Jehovah, and his enemies were so exasperated that they tried to disfigure that face that shone so with a brightness they could not endure. It told too plainly that Jesus is Jehovah. They tried to beat out the brightness that condemned them by casting stones at that happy face; and at last Stephen fell asleep. That was all they could do—put the blessed man to sleep on the bosom of eternal love. That was the utmost their enmity, malice, and hardness of heart could do; and that is all, beloved friends, that all the powers of hell and of earth can do to a child of God. Let them do their worst. They have sent many a man from the lions and the stake, from the prison-house and the torture-chamber, to the sleep to which Jesus puts His beloved, and in the same moment to feast their eyes spiritually on that One that they are soon to be like in body also. Stephen's face shone, not by trying to make his face shine, but by looking upon "the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." How often you and I have begun at the wrong end! Have we not too often tried to walk as Christ walked, and forgotten how we could do it—by deep communion with the humble and obedient Son of man as we see Him in His word, and with Him at the right hand of God? Let us, by His grace, from this afternoon learn that all power God has vested in Himself, and His glory He will not give to another. If you are to walk to the praise of Christ, if you are to be to the praise and glory of God as a testimony for Him in this world, it must be by the power of the Holy Ghost, and the result of the daily, hourly communion into which He leads the soul. It is not a coat you can put on and off at your list. Live in the sanctuary, live in the presence of God, live as His child, be occupied with Christ where God has glorified Him, and you will become like Him. I should like to trace some of the charac-

teristics of the path of Christ, but there is not time. I beg you to do it.

Take the temptations of Christ as they are recorded in Matthew and Luke. At the beginning of His course we see how He was tempted, how "He suffered, being tempted." Two things are to be remarked. He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted by the devil. He was not led by any will of His own, but by the Holy Ghost. And secondly, the suggestions of the enemy caused Him to suffer. This was morally His power against the temptations. You and I very often do *not* suffer when we are tempted; it is rather something that we like; something that finds a response in our hearts; and that is our weakness. Christ suffered; it was a positive pain to Christ to have the thought suggested to His mind, "The Father takes very little care of you. You have been here forty days, and He has given you nothing to eat. Now take the matter into your own hands. Make that stone into a loaf." The thought of taking Himself out of His Father's hands was pain to Him. Blessed Jesus, what perfection is Thine! So with all the rest. Every temptation of the enemy, to do something for Himself, to do something on His own behalf, and in His own strength, without the direction of His Father, without the will of God, fell upon an unwilling ear. He could not do it; He had no disposition to do it. There was nothing in His soul of souls that responded to that terrible temptation of the enemy.

When He was in the temple, doing His Father's work, and His mother came to seek Him, and said, "Thy father and I have sought Thee, sorrowing," the blessed Jesus meekly answered, "Didn't you know, wist ye not, that I must be about My Father's business?" As if to say, I have not been doing My own will amongst these doctors. I have not been glorifying Myself amongst them. "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" Oh, that I

might be about my Father's business! That my whole life might say in everything, "Didn't you know that I must be about my Father's business?" Oh, it would be a mighty power! Oh, beloved friends, we want to know more of the reality of this blessed God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ being *our* Father. It would give peace to our hearts and power to our testimony. There would then be no place for the fears that often fill the heart; there would be no place for the doubts that crowd in and dispute the place with Christ, if we knew how much—as far we *can* know it—our Father loves us. But now I beg that you will, as I cannot, follow this up at your leisure, trace the perfection of Christ in His whole path. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

And here let me remark that the Lord's life had two terminations. It had its natural termination on the mount of transfiguration. The cross was the result, according to Philip. ii., of a fresh humbling of Himself. It was pure, perfect grace. He went down from the mount of transfiguration to die for our sake. God put His blessed stamp upon the path of Christ down here, when the Son of man wrapped His head in the excellent glory, and there came a voice from that glory, "This is My beloved Son; hear Him." Moses and Elias are as nothing there. Christ is the object of God. His life, in which it has been His meat to do the will of Him that sent Him, in which He had been ever about His Father's business, His life was stamped with divine approval there. From thence—from that Shekinah—He humbles Himself, and becomes obedient to death, the death of the cross. Death did not overtake the Lord Jesus, nor was it the natural end of a sinless life. It is by the second humbling of Himself—by His obedience unto death—that we are made righteous. But how perfectly He did the will of God, and what glory He brought to His name in life and in death!

Now the next thing is that we are to shine as lights in the world. Here we are still in company with Christ; and it will never do, beloved friends, to get out of that company, for ours is a borrowed light. "Among whom ye shine as luminaries"—as heavenly lights. It is not a torchlight, but it is as one of the lights in the firmament. It is the finger of God that has placed each light in the firmament, and it is His finger that has formed us to represent Christ in giving a clear and unmistakeable light for Him in this world. Christ is represented in pictures as the Light of the world. He is *not* the Light of the world. The world did not want Him, and cast Him out. "As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." He *was* the Light of the world, and ought to be the Light of the world; but all the light there is now is the reflection of Christ and the moral shining of Christ through us. The light comes from Him entirely; but it is through the saints, and in the Word. We are to represent Christ here below, "Among whom ye shine as lights in the world."

There is still a third thing: "Holding forth the Word of life"—presenting the Word of life in your words, in your ways, as a thing that has seized your moral being, and holds it for Christ. Christ is the Word of life, and it is in Christ living through us that we present the Word of life. Because the Word of life keeps me, holds me, forms me, fashions me, I hold it forth in my walk before the world. It may be without speaking a word, but it will often be in preaching the Word to individuals and companies; it will *always* be in magnifying Christ. And now, beloved friends, I press this upon you very earnestly, with all my heart, because the glory of your Saviour is involved in it. I want us to go from these meetings, and to take Christ with us into all the hundreds of spheres which we shall be called to fill. Let our neighbours have to say of us, "These people have been with Jesus." Let them see

it in your tempers. People make a thousand excuses for temper. "It is a great deal physical infirmity," they say, when their tempers are bad. But, beloved friends, Christ can get the victory over physical tempers. "But thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Whatever you testify in the world, mind you do not testify that Christ cannot give you the victory over your temper; do not testify *that*. Do not let your life be a testimony that Christ leaves people as fretful as they were before, as passionate as they were before, as "touchy" as they were before. No; I know all about the physical part of it. But, I say, Christ has gotten the victory. Oh, let Him be enthroned in your hearts, beloved, the governor, the rightful possessor of all within the heart! I daresay many of you recall a passage in Bunyan's *Holy War*, with which I will close. When the Prince Immanuel comes to take possession of the town of Mansoul, there is a council of war held by Diabolus, and a man is selected to be an envoy to the Prince. The man's name is Loath-to-stoop, "a stiff man in his way, and a great doer for Diabolus." He comes to the Prince, and, when he obtains an audience, he says, "Great sir, that it may be known unto all men how good-natured a prince my master is, he has sent me to tell your lordship that he is very willing, rather than to go to war, to deliver up into your hands half the town of Mansoul. I am therefore to know if your Mightiness will accept of this proposition." The Prince replies, "The whole is Mine by gift and purchase; wherefore I will never lose one half." Mr. Loath-to-stoop then proposes: "Sir, my master hath said that he will be content that you shall be the nominal and titular Lord of all, if he may possess but a part." Prince Immanuel replies, "The whole is Mine really; not in name and word only: wherefore I will be the sole Lord and possessor of all, or of none at all, of Mansoul." Still Mr. Loath-to-stoop has one proposal: "Sir, behold

the condescension of my master! He says that he will be content, if he may but have assigned to him some place in Mansoul as a place to live privately in, and you shall be Lord of all the rest." Prince Immanuel replies, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and of all that He hath given Me I will lose nothing; no, not a hoof nor a hair. I will not therefore grant him, no, not the least corner in Mansoul to dwell in; I will have it all to Myself." I commend the allegory to your earnest and prayerful consideration. Christ will have a *whole* heart, a *whole* life; and sometimes He will put us through the furnace, heated as hot as He sees fit, but He will have the whole, blessed be His name! The Father gave Him it, and He paid the full redemption-price that He might have the whole. Blessed Jesus! it is wondrous condescension, it is pure and precious grace, that He should want the whole. I pray Him to take it, to glorify Himself in it, and to give us speedily, to you and to me, the unutterable joy of seeing His blessed face.

The audience then united in singing the following verses—

"Keep us, Lord, oh, keep us cleaving
To Thyself, and still believing,
Till the hour of our receiving
Promised joys in heaven.

"Then we shall be where we would be,
Then we shall be what we should be;
Things which are not now, nor could be,
Then shall be our own,"

after which an address was delivered by

MR. W. H. BENNET.

It will not be out of place to ask ourselves if we are conscious of the contrast implied in the statement of this subject: "Our responsibility in relation to the world." That contrast is very clearly expressed in

1 John v. 19: "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness;" or, as the R.V. gives it: "The whole world lieth in the wicked one." John says, "We *know*" this. Do *we* all know it? The statement is very comprehensive—"the whole world." That is, the whole world of John's day, whether Jew or Gentile, whether civilized or barbarian. And why? Because all had rejected God as He had been pleased to reveal Himself. The knowledge that man might have had of God from creation he turned his back upon. He gave up God, not liking to retain God in his knowledge; and then, in judgment, God gave him up to a reprobate mind. (Rom. i. 28.) Then God selected one nation for Himself, and revealed Himself to that nation. He chose the nation of Israel, blessed them with rich and great blessings, and at last sent to them His own beloved Son. That holy One—of whose life and death we have been hearing—God sent, and He lived amongst men as the Revealer of God. The works of God in creation declare the power and skill of God's hand. The Son of God, in the midst of men, expressed the very love, and grace, and tenderness of God's heart. But that blessed One was rejected. His own people rejected Him, and delivered Him into the hands of the Gentiles, and thus the "princes of this world crucified the Lord of glory." Jew and Gentile joined in getting rid of Him, and the world was given up entirely, we may say, to Satan's power, inasmuch that Satan is called "the prince of this world," and "the god of this age." With these awful titles given to Satan, the statement of John corresponds when he says, "The whole world lieth in the wicked one;" that is, it is entirely in his embrace, and under his power.

Now perhaps it is very difficult for us, when we read these statements, to feel that they can apply to the condition of things at the present time. We are apt to think the world is different now; that a vast change has come over it in these eighteen centuries. We live

in the midst of what is called Christendom, where the name of Christ is taken, where a great deal about God is known, and where men on every hand are ever discussing the Word of God. Can it still be true that "the whole world lieth in the wicked one"? Yes; it is true to this day, and will be true till the Lord comes, and Satan is bound. It is true of far-off heathen lands, with their superstitions and their philosophies; but it is equally true of the nations of Christendom, including this nation, with all its religiousness, and with all its profession of Christ. For under all this outward profession where is the subjection of heart to Christ? where is the acknowledgment of Christ as Lord? where is the reverence that is due to God's blessed Word? It is as true now as it ever was, that "the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Can we say "*we know*" it? Have we any questions in our minds as to the truth of this solemn statement? or can we adopt the language of this verse?

But thank God "*we know*" something else. "We know that we are of God." And who are *we*? We were once of this world, and under the power of Satan. We were following our own inclination, and thus walking in different ways; but all alike pursuing "the course of this world." Now, however, God has in His infinite grace delivered us from the world—its course and its doom. The gospel of God has come in the power of the Holy Ghost to our souls, and we have learned what Christ has done for us in His death upon the cross. Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." (Galatians i. 4.) That cross of Christ, which stands between us and our sins, stands also between us and the world. By that sacrifice of Christ, by that atoning death of God's blessed Son, we have been separated off from the world unto God, and by His mighty voice we have been called out of it. God has

revealed Christ to our hearts by the Spirit, and thus has called us out of the world, and called us "into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Cor. i. 9.) We are called unto fellowship with that blessed One whom the world has rejected; whom the heavens have received; and who is enthroned at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Now think what that means. It means nothing less than that we are with Him *here* in reflection, and that we are with Him *there* in His glory. Already in spirit we are with Him there, and soon we shall be with Him in reality—in bodies of glory conformed unto His own. Can we say we know this? Do we know that we are of God—born of God, children of God, heirs of God—of God in every sense? It will be for our profit and help if we all afresh lay this question to our hearts. This is an age of *thought*, as men say. Men glory in being men of "modern thought," and they are content to spend their days in *thinking* without ever seeking to reach this divine certainty—"We know." But the child of God can say, "I know;" and in so far as we are taught of God we know both the condition of the world, and the end of its course; and we know something at least of the glory and dignity of the calling of God's people, and what the end of their course shall be.

But what is the result of this? Our responsibilities grow out of our calling. We are called into union with Christ, and therefore He says of us, "They are not of the world even as I am not of the world." But He also said, in speaking to His Father, "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." Therefore we are looked upon as those who have been *called out of* the world, and who have again been *sent into* the world. We have been sent here for a definite purpose, and that is "to walk even as He walked;" to be—as we have been so beautifully told to be—here in the earth what Christ was when He was in the world. We have been

reminded of what He said of Himself, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world;" and also of His words to His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world." Christ, while in the world, was its light—ever revealing God, ever manifesting God's grace, and God's truth, and God's holiness—ever shining in the midst of men; not simply when He spoke, and when He wrought miracles, but always, at all times during the whole period of "the days of His flesh." Whether in those thirty years at Nazareth in solitude, or the three years of His public ministry. In the whole of that matchless life His light was ever shining. The light shone in the darkness, "even though the darkness comprehended it not." And then He left His people here to be the light of the world. Just as you know when He healed that poor demoniac, and the people of the place rejected Him, and besought Him to depart from them, He went away, but left the poor man whom He had healed to be an abiding witness to His power and grace; so, though rejected by the world, He has, in His infinite grace, left His own to be an abiding witness of Himself to all around them—"the light of the world." There was a time when that word might indeed have been used. "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" (Sol. Song vi. 10.)

We see the Church of God, in her early days of first love and perfect unity, shining with a light received from afar, shining amongst men and revealing the glory of a hidden Christ. That time may soon come to an end. Where is the light now—the one clear light given forth by the Church of God? We look for it in vain. But shall we not bless God for that other word that has been quoted to us, "Among whom ye shine as lights in the world"? So the Church of God—through her departure from her Lord, and the manifold divisions, and fearful worldliness

resulting therefrom—no longer sheds forth a clear and bright light around her. The saints of God *individually* are lights, and are called to shine as such. To do this we are responsible, both for the glory of God, and the blessing of men.

I will not dwell further on that, because it has been already so much dwelt upon. But there is another word which shows us our responsibility. Christ speaks of Himself as "the faithful and true witness." (Rev. iii. 14.) He was ever that when on earth; and when He was leaving His disciples He said to them, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (or, "Ye shall be My witnesses") "unto the uttermost part of the earth." We are called into fellowship with Christ in this great matter of bearing testimony for God to men. "Ye shall be My witnesses." Therefore a great responsibility rests upon us, as the witness of Christ in the world, to be "holding forth the word of life." Think for a moment of far-off lands that have never heard the gospel. Are we all conscious of our responsibility towards those lands? Our dear brother Fred. Arnot writes from Central Africa, "We are all called upon to go forth either personally or in sympathy." And that is true. The last commission, given by the Lord to His own before He left them, to go and make disciples of all nations, remains with us; and the assurance of His presence with us until the end of the age encourages us to fulfil it. We are responsible towards those lands that have never yet received the gospel—responsible to do that which in us lies towards the sending forth of the gospel to the millions upon whom the light has never shined. And what about this land? What about Christendom? Have we not a great responsibility here? Most assuredly we have. We are called to be the witnesses of Christ here, and that may not always mean simply preaching the gospel as though men did not know it. Not that we are to leave that on one side, for while the day of God's

long-suffering lasts the gospel of His grace is to be declared, but we are also called to be witnesses for all the truth of God. We are surrounded by those who deny the truth, and by many others who ignore it. We are surrounded by men who profess to be Christian teachers, and yet oppose or leave out of their teaching the very fundamental truths of the gospel. We are to be witnesses unto these truths, and we are to go on bearing witness, no matter how that witness may be received, no matter how it may be regarded. Do not let us in this matter allow anything like a false charity. May God give us much more of the Spirit of Christ towards all those who are His, and increase in every one of us the spirit of sympathy and love towards all saints. But when it comes to a question of the truth of God—those grand fundamental truths of His word which He has committed to our trust—anything like compromise means unfaithfulness.

Let us remember the words of the apostle John concerning false teachers who profess to be of God. In 1 John iv. 5, 6 he says: "They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us." Men take the name of Christ, and make great profession of loyalty to Christ, but being of the world they can only speak of the world. John does not mean that they speak *about* the world, but rather that they draw their teaching, as it were, from the world. It is the spirit of the world that animates them, and therefore the world heareth them. "The world will love its own;" and when the world hears teaching that flatters it, teaching that does not put it into its true place of condemnation, and that ignores its sinfulness, to that teaching the world will listen. But the word of the apostle is very decided—"He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us." By "us" John means himself and his fellow-apostles.

Perhaps all the other apostles had passed away when he wrote; but in the scriptures of the New Testament we have the words of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he who refuses to bow to the teaching of the apostles concerning the Lord Jesus and His blessed ministry—the fulness and glory of His person, and the reality of His work of atonement—gives evidence that he is not of God. The force of that statement I do not attempt to define, but the Word is clear enough. We have one standard; we have only one; and God requires on the part of all His servants absolute subjection to His written Word. Those who refuse, I repeat, to bow to that Word declare that they are not of God, and that they have not yielded themselves to the authority of God.

What do we mean when we say that we are brought unto the kingdom of God? For we *are* called into the kingdom of God when we are called “out of darkness into His marvellous light,” and out of the world in which the authority of Satan is still a fearful reality. I know that we belong to the Church of God; but that does not alter the fact that we are in the kingdom of God. And to be in that kingdom is to be in a sphere in which the will of God is supreme—a sphere in which God calls for implicit and absolute subjection to Himself and to His Word. That subjection characterizes, or should characterize, all who are Christ’s, and it is only in yielding it that they are clearly marked off from the world which knows not God, which submits not to God, which reverences not God’s word, bows not to God’s will, and values not God’s grace.

Now, dear friends, these are only just a few remarks on this great subject. Much more might be said, but I would particularly emphasize that with which I began—the importance of laying to heart the great contrast between the church and the world, between those who are “of God” and the world that “lieth in the wicked one.” We should put the question to our

hearts very seriously and solemnly in the presence of God, "Am I living as one who is of God? Am I giving a clear and decided testimony to this world by my walk, by my ways, by my conduct, by my pursuits, that I do not belong to the course of this world, but that as a pilgrim in the earth, as a stranger here, I am passing on to the everlasting city of God—the bright inheritance above?" The secret of such a walk is the consciousness of being called into the fellowship of the blessed Son of God—called into fellowship with Him whom the world has rejected, of whom the world has said, "He is worthy only of the cross," but of whom God says, "He is worthy of the highest place that I can give Him." And those who are with Him in His rejection now, will be with Him in that place of supreme dignity for ever. Those who are with Him in heart and spirit and service and testimony here below, will soon be with Him in His everlasting glory, and will for ever know the joy and blessedness of that new creation of which He is the foundation and the Head, and the everlasting bond. May our hearts be raised up to some sense of this our high calling. Then shall we better understand our responsibility to this world, and through God's grace we shall more truly fulfil it by being living witnesses of Christ, testifying by the lip as God enables us, and, above all, by life and conduct, that we are His, that our sympathies and tastes are far above present things, and that to us unseen and eternal things are realities. Let us remember that no testimony is so powerful as the testimony of a goodly life; and nothing is so calculated to reach the conscience of the careless and indifferent, and to lead them to Christ, as the steady witness of a walk in fellowship with Him.

The first two verses of the hymn—

"How many sheep are straying,
Lost from the Saviour's fold,"

were then sung, when the following address was delivered by

MR. H. A. MANDEVILLE.

I am encouraged to speak, for the few minutes allotted to me, by those two verses of the hymn we have sung—

“How many sheep are straying,
Lost from the Saviour's fold!
Upon the lonely mountain
They shiver with the cold,
Within the tangled thickets,
Where poison-vines do creep,
And over rocky ledges
Wander the poor lost sheep.
“Oh, come let us go and find them,
In the paths of death they roam :
At the close of day 'twill be sweet to say,
I have brought some lost one home.”

I had determined that I would give them out as the key-note of what is on my heart. We are a mighty group of happy believers in Christ here this afternoon together; but, oh, are we a *mighty phalanx of soul-winners*? Have we our eyes open to what the Son of God must have seen when He looked down upon this perishing world, when He left the Father's bosom, when that which we have been singing about brought Him down, the Shepherd, to seek the sheep? As another hymn has it—

“None of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed ;
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.”

Oh, brethren and sisters in Christ, here are we, so safe ourselves, so blessed ourselves, so sure of yonder glory; and what are we going to do with the little remaining moments of our time here in view of the perishing ones around us? Look at these four lepers at the gate of Samaria (2 Kings vii. 3-10) going out

into that camp, and finding the food they needed, and the clothing they needed, and the provision they needed, and they eat, and they drink, and they hide the treasure for the future, as well as enjoy the supply for the deep need in the present; and then those men stand still, and the thought enters into their minds, "That beleagured city there, a few miles off"—perhaps a few hundred yards off—"and within that city it is all death and starvation; mothers destroying and consuming their own offspring, so dire is their need." These four wretched lepers, wretched in themselves, they get possessed with one absorbing desire to tell the wonderful tidings that they have for that city. They say, "We do not well." "This day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace;" and away they go to communicate the good news. Oh, if only the mighty living God might come in upon us here, and make the very fulness and fatness and preciousness of this Conference—as it has been, and as assuredly it will be to the very end—so come home to our hearts that it might fill us up and overwhelm us, that we might be like those four lepers, and turn and look outside ourselves, that the very richness of what we have in our own hearts might bring before us, as never before, the poverty and the awful eternal future that lies before those without Christ. I daresay you have heard of that ship running down before a fresh breeze, and seeing another wrecked, crippled vessel, tossing about; and altering course and standing down to her, heaving to, and sending a boat's crew on board, and finding those two men, one a dead body below, and the other a living man lashed in the rigging, all but at death's door. They bring him on board, and bury the other poor body in the depths of the sea; and all their attention is devoted to "bringing to" this man that they have just snatched, as it were, from the jaws of death. Then—you know the story—how when he opened his eyes, and recovered consciousness, that poor swollen tongue tried to move, those poor parched lips

quivered and worked, and no doctor's entreaties could get that man to rest till he made known to them what was burdening his heart above and beyond all his helplessness and wretchedness in himself. It was just that communication, "THERE IS ANOTHER MAN!" Ah! they knew it; but they knew also that that other man was beyond their power to assist.

Oh that we, revived and restored far beyond that one, we, who are so blessed together this evening, might look out and say, "There are the other ones in this perishing world." Oh that we might take heed to that message that was sent from without into the royal palace to the queen Esther—"Who knowest but thou art come to the throne for such a time as this!" The tidings are sent in to the queen about the decree of death hanging over all her kindred, according to the flesh; and she is warned that if she does not rise to the occasion the Lord may open deliverance from some other quarter, and she will get no blessing. Then comes that stirring thought for her heart, "Who knowest but thou, within that palace, with access to the king, thou who mayest perish perhaps in trying to carry it out—nevertheless, thou—art come to the throne for such a time as this." Who knows what may be the possibilities before some of those sitting here, of an Esther here! Who knows how many souls might be rescued from eternal ruin, how many souls might sing the grand redemption song in yonder glory, as the result of this Conference, if we will only yield ourselves to the purpose for which our Lord Jesus Christ has saved us! That scripture in John xvii., connected with John iii., has been stirring in my heart through this afternoon, how "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." And how in John xvii., when He is going away, He says that as the Father has sent Him, "even so send I you into the world." He wants us to carry the tidings, to tell the glad news. Cannot

we tell it, like those four lepers? They had gone through the agony and misery of the starvation in the gate. Oh, how they could come and tell of the provision without, which they had so enjoyed and satisfied themselves with! Each of us have been rescued, and God wants to make us rescuers.

I remember an event in my life, twenty-four years ago, when the great line-of-battle ship I was serving in as an officer took fire under the magazine, and in twenty minutes from the time of alarm we were in the boats or in the water struggling for life, getting clear of that vast bonfire of a ship. The spirit-room had burst, and the ship was on fire from stem to stern, and everyone was driven out. Ah, my friends, when we got clear of it, and a little distance off, the boats together and re-arranged, some of the men out of crowded boats into others less heavily laden, there was the looking back; and we saw hanging under the bows, by the ropes from the bowsprit, many a comrade and shipmate who did not get into the boats, and could not swim. The ropes were burning above, and as they burn so the living freight drops, and they sink to rise no more. Then a boat with a volunteer crew went in again and again to take off those perishing ones. Amongst those taken off from under the bows, and amidst the roar of the fire there, utterly unable to swim, and who would have perished if not laid hold of in such a way, were some who, when they found themselves in the place of safety, were possessed by the one burning desire to pull an oar in again to save the others who were left behind. The volunteer boat-crews that went in the first time were, in some instances, replaced the second time by men they had saved, not because the first men were unwilling to go in again, but because of the imperative, longing desires of some of their fellow-shipmates, saved from the place of deadly peril, themselves saying, "For heaven's sake, let me have your oar, that I may pull in to save the others."

They knew the awful character of the peril. How they longed to go in and take others out! Brethren and sisters in the Lord, my mind goes back, I suppose—what must it be? ten, eleven, twelve years ago?—to a meeting at Willow Park, at the time of the old Dublin Believers' Meetings; and a brother, who has now gone home to be with the Lord (Dr. Mackay), standing up at the end of one of the meetings and talking about preaching the gospel and winning souls. There he was—a great rugged, bluff Scotchman, like a sea captain. He was saying, "Give me the lifeboat work—out through the surf and billows, out to the wreck, and bring them in. Let the tugs take them up the harbour, *but let us go out again.*" Oh, that is what the Lord wants every one of us to have in our lives, this seeking after souls, this opening our eyes! It may be in one direction, it may be in another. It may take the form of prayer in one, and active effort in another of sympathy, whatever it may be. It may go out to the ends of the earth, to China, to Central Africa; or it may be at home, in some poor court or tiny village, in some forgotten country spot, where the souls will perish without God and without hope, if some poor weak brother or sister does not push the battle to the gate. Oh that every one of our hearts may beat with the great life-pulses, as it were, that brought the Son of God from yonder glory to death. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." What was that will? "God is not willing that any should perish." God's will was our salvation. Here are we, a large assemblage together, saved, because it was God's will, for our sakes, not to keep His Son back. He set His love upon us. "God so loved the world." Are we the children of God? Are we the family of God? Have we the love of God to a perishing world? "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish." Perish! perish! *love and perish!*—two wonder-

ful words. *Love*, the love of God, who loved a guilty world; *perish*, that awful word that tells us of the doom that world was going on to, and tells us the doom those are going on to, who are without God, without Christ, without hope. May God open our eyes. Only He can do it. May He lay the burden of souls on our hearts. By-and-by, when the world is folded up, all things at an end, and we are in yonder glory, I wonder how these moments of our little lives down here will look at us in the light of the possibilities which might have been accomplished through the carrying of the gospel message to precious souls. You know *that solemn verse* in Proverbs. I will read it, because it is a solemn message. Chapter xxiv. 11: "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not He that pondereth the heart consider it? and He that keepeth thy soul, doth not He know it? and shall not He render to every man according to his works?" Oh, then, if that be true, how much more the other side of it, "If thou dost *not* forbear to deliver, and *dost* consider and ponder and act," how may we not expect the power of God to work in and through us, the greatest success in our work? There is going to be great success to every true seeker of souls in the gospel vineyard. May God bring us all into that success, all into that blessed current.

I remember a dying Christian brother, over in Ireland, looking up from his bed of sickness and weakness, and saying, as I dare say he had said to others who had come in before me, "Ah! you may build a house, plant a garden, make a name in this world—it will all pass away; but if you have the tiniest part to do with the salvation of one soul, it will stand for all eternity, to your everlasting joy and gladness." May we have part and lot in the blessed work of soul winning. May our prayers empower our efforts! and

oh, may that be a mighty, active power in each of us who are the Lord's children to make us long to be clean vessels! May the trust in life we have to live for others, the message for others, committed to us for the sake of others—may it have a power upon us that we may wait at the feet of our God, that we may not be unfit to carry this wonderful message of life, and love, and liberty, to souls. May God bless us, and bring this practical, wondrous result out of this Conference—that we may be a phalanx of soul-winners, as well as a company of happy, satisfied, Christ-delighting believers.

After the singing of the hymn—

"To God be the glory! great things He hath done,"

Mr. T. H. MORRIS closed with prayer.





FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL.

Thursday Evening, May 10th, 1888.

THE evening meeting was commenced by a season of silent prayer and the singing of the hymn—

“It passeth knowledge, that dear love of Thine.”

Mr. C. RUSSELL HURDITCH said: As we have now come to the closing hours of this interesting Conference, in which the Lord's presence and blessing have been so richly realized, it is fitting that we should unite in thanksgiving to God for inclining Mr. Morley to invite us together for these happy meetings; and I am sure it has been a joy to us all that both Mr. and Mrs. Morley have been able to be present with us these two days. Let us all join in prayer that the Lord would continue to bless them in their advancing years, and make them increasingly fruitful in His service. We should also unitedly give praise to God that He put it into their hearts to cause the large and commodious hall in which we are assembled to be erected, and that so much happy “lifeboat” work had been carried on in it, through which very many souls had been brought to God, and so large a fellowship gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus. I am sure you will pray that this blessing may be greatly augmented in the future.

Prayer was also asked that God would strengthen

his servant Mr. C. H. Spurgeon, who, no doubt, was in full and hearty sympathy with the object of these meetings, though just then in much physical weakness and pain. Prayerful remembrance was desired for Mrs. Lincoln, the widow of another standard-bearer who fell asleep so recently. They all knew how he and Mr. Denham Smith would have delighted to be present at these meetings. Prayer was also asked for others who had that week been called to mourn the loss of beloved relatives. Thanksgiving was also rendered to the Lord for the favourable weather throughout the Conference—for He had given bright sunshine in answer to prayer,—and for the blessing many had received during these two memorable days.

These requests were very heartily responded to by the assembly, who were led in prayer and thanksgiving by Dr. ECCLES, Mr. R. SPRAGGS, and Dr. LASERON.

The hymn—

“The cross! the cross! the Christian’s only glory;
I see the standard rise,”

was then sung, and an address was given by

Mr. H. GROVES

ON SIN, ATONEMENT, AND PUNISHMENT.

The subject that I am asked to speak upon this evening is “sin”—that darkest subject of which we shall never know the full reality until we see God face to face. There is very much in the word of God to enlighten our understandings and to exercise our hearts in regard to it. What is sin? What its magnitude? What its character? What are God’s thoughts about it? It matters little what man thinks. One thing I would say to all believers, that shallow thoughts of sin will give them shallow thoughts of the atonement, and shallow thoughts of the atonement will result in shallow thoughts of hell. All hangs

together in the perfect harmony of truth. It is remarkable that the very same word in Hebrew means *sin*, *sin-offering*, and *the punishment of sin*; and it is well to remember that God, in giving to us His precious Word in the Hebrew tongue, has moulded that language so that it might well out with God's deep and mighty thoughts. As stated above, the word for "sin" in Hebrew has three apparently very diverse significations. First, that of *sin* in its own essential character as a falling short of the will of God; second, the *sin-offering*; and then, thirdly, it is used frequently for the *punishment* that is due to sin. Hence we learn that man's sin, the atonement of Christ for sin, and the punishment that is the just reward of sin, all three are embraced in the one word in the Hebrew Bible. Thus we are taught a most important truth that we may find it hard to realize, namely, that God would identify in our mind sin, atonement, and punishment. If we know the magnitude of sin, we shall not wonder at the magnitude of the atonement; and if we realize the magnitude of the atonement, we shall not stumble at the punishment of hell. The world does not know what sin is, and therefore can never estimate what the atonement is, nor see the divine justice that would punish sin with an eternal punishment.

One who was in church fellowship many years ago, but who turned away to the doctrine of non-eternity of punishment, said to me, "If I held your views of the atonement, I should hold your views on eternal punishment."

The question of eternal punishment is often looked at as unduly severe and harsh, and that because not viewed in the light of the Divine estimate of sin. This the Holy Spirit alone can reveal to the awakened soul, and cause it to see in any measure what it is in God's sight. If we would know what sin really is, we have to look at the cross and its agonies; at hell and its lake of fire. But it will only be at the judgment-seat

of Christ, when the infinite value and all-sufficiency of the atonement of the Son of God really is known, that sin and punishment will be looked at in their due proportions. God's truth and righteousness, His mercy and love, hang together as the several parts of a mighty edifice, and the moment you touch one stone the whole building will inevitably crumble to pieces.

We are living in days when the devil is doing his best among Christian people to destroy the very fundamentals of truth, seeking to reduce to its lowest point the thought of sin, of atonement, and of hell. Everything is being minimized that has relation to God, and that only magnified which concerns man and his selfish interests.

Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, unfolds an awful picture of God's thoughts of sin, and it is in order that we may have our hearts exercised before God in connection with these fundamental truths that we have come here. We can but touch the very threshold of this marvellous and awful subject, the awfulness of which God only knows. Remember then that, in the estimate of God, sin, punishment, and atonement all weigh alike. God has not given more in the atonement for sin than sin demands: no, not one iota.

Now I will ask your attention to three words which, coming so frequently together in the Bible, have given rise to much enquiry as to their meaning and difference. In Exodus xxxiv. 5 we read, "And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. . . . Jehovah, Jehovah, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving *iniquity* and *transgression* and *sin*." May I just say here in passing that the word in the Hebrew for the forgiveness of sin, and most frequently elsewhere, means "lifting off"? God does not leave the sin on the sinner. He does not cover him with a mantle that

is to cover the filthiness, but He lifts it off. This is God's remedy for sin; this is God's forgiveness. He further adds, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." What has rendered it necessary for God to make such a proclamation? Sin! It was the apostasy—the golden calf. We may thank God for the golden calf, as we may well thank God that we were born in a sinful world, and born sinful men. Why? Because our sin unfolds the length and breadth, and depth and height, of the knowledge of God. We never should have known God but for sin. God has triumphed. It is through sin that God has made those mighty revelations, wherein He has revealed Himself to His creatures as He who is "gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." It is this latter clause that the sinner bates; it is this that the sinner does not like in the character of God—that He cannot clear the guilty. In Romans iii. there is a remarkable contrast drawn between the manifestation of God's *longsuffering in ages past* and God's *righteousness now*. It is no longer the manifestation of longsuffering, but the manifestation of righteousness that is involved in the forgiveness of sin, and therein consists the beauty and the glory of Christ's atonement. The believer, in order to having perfect security, needs to see that he stands not upon the mercy of God in the matter of forgiveness, but upon the righteousness of God. Righteousness is not necessarily a concomitant of mercy, for mercy may be shown without righteousness being vindicated, but not so with God. And therefore during God's longsuffering in ages past He never absolutely forgave sin, properly speaking, until Christ had died. Do not misunderstand. God had in His possession, as it were, a legal bond against sinners, which was left unexecuted but uncanceled until the

death of Christ, when the bond was cancelled, the debt having been paid for all who believed in God, and they now stand faultless for ever. What a stupendous work of divine mercy!

This contrast in Romans iii. is exceedingly sweet and precious, for it places our standing in Christ upon the righteousness of a righteous God. It is this that is so little realized by many of God's children. When we consciously stand upon the righteousness of God we know where we are, and, whether in storm or sunshine, we know that we are safe on the mighty rock of the righteousness of God. This is the lesson of the epistle to the Romans, even "the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith."

I will now refer to those three words of which I have already spoken—*iniquity*, *transgression*, and *sin*. Let us turn for a moment to Psalm xxxii., which says, "Oh, the happiness of the man whose transgression is forgiven" (*i.e.* "lifted off"), "whose sin is covered;" not, as has been already said, covered on him, but taken off and covered over, so that God's eye cannot see what is hidden under the blood of Christ; and whose iniquity is not imputed; that is, is never brought into judgment from the depths of the sea.

It is well to know that all the words in Old Testament scripture connected with atonement never mean anything subjective in the creature, but always objective in Christ. This is one of the great delusions in the church of God in the present day, when atonement is made a subjective realization in man, and not an objective reality in the person of Christ. There is a danger sometimes of Christians forgetting the subjective side of truth; but there is a deeper and darker thing—Christian infidelity on the objective side of truth. Take the objective first and the subjective second, and we shall have God's order. For first it is Christ for me; and then after it is God the Holy Ghost within. We have thus the mighty Trinity, the

purposes of God the Father towards us, the work of God the Son for us, and the accomplishment of God the Holy Ghost in us. But for the Trinity there could have been no salvation.

I will now refer to the three words—*transgression*, *sin*, and *iniquity*. "Oh, the happinesses!" It is plural. God loves plurals, and the Hebrew language is very full of them. The apostle Paul says, "Oh, the riches!" He cannot get to the bottom of them, so he says "the exceeding riches." He wants words, and he multiplies and spoils his grammar in order that he may get into the realities of the holy and divine love of God that goes beyond human language. If we only knew what God has prepared for us, if we only knew God's plurals, we should be brighter, happier, holier. *Transgression* is crossing over the lines laid down in God's law; it is lawlessness. *Sin* is missing the mark given to attain to. (How little Christians, and how much less the world, think of missing and coming short; yet this is essentially what sin is.) Compare the expression of Paul in the epistle to the Romans, "Come short of the glory of God." It is not a matter of transgression, but it is something far deeper, for it concerns the glory of God. *Iniquity* stands lowest in the catalogue, and is the only conception the world has of sin, and refers to moral depravity. The world has no conception of sin as simply a matter of transgression against the will of God. They have no sense of sin in connection with that coming short of the glory of God, and I fear that a great many of us also know very little about it. It needs as much a divine revelation from God the Holy Ghost for us to understand what sin is, as it needs a revelation from God the Holy Ghost to reveal to us what Christ is. And it needs a revelation from God the Holy Ghost to reveal to our hearts what that holy fire is that kindles hell. A revelation from God! the world has not it, and therefore let us not be surprised if the world knows nothing

of sin. What says the Lord? "When He" (the Spirit) "cometh, He will convict" (He does not say "convince") "the world of sin." When a man is convinced of sin, he is near repentance; but a man may be convicted of sin, and the heart remain as hard as the nether millstone. Convicted and lost, but convinced and saved.

These three words give us divine thoughts about sin. Iniquity implies moral corruption; it means lying, thieving, adultery, and such like. This limits man's consciousness of sin, and why? Because these things affect his selfish interest; and only viewing sin as affecting himself and his neighbours, he does not trouble himself about God's claims or God's honour.

"I never did anybody any wrong," is man's reply when called to repent; and as to having come short of the glory of God, such thoughts never come across his mind. May God give unto us all a deeper sense of what sin is, and that knowledge will make us cling with warmer hearts and truer convictions to that mighty Christ who came to bear sin.

I was reading some words of good old John Hawker the other day, and in speaking of the words, "Pilate marvelled that He was already dead," he remarked that if Pilate had known what a burden He bore, he would not have marvelled that He was already dead, but he would only have marvelled that He lived so long.

Sin is an awful reality, but it has revealed God to us, and therefore let us thank God and take courage.

Just one word on Isaiah vi., and I have done. We find in the first four chapters of that book a man pronouncing "woe" upon all kinds of sinners; but when we come to this chapter God is preparing him to become His evangelist, but an evangelist to a doomed nation. Yes, an evangelist to preach the gospel to ears that will not hear, to eyes that will not see, and to hearts that will not understand. When God sends Isaiah forth—preparing him for this awful work—it is very

much like the ministry of our Lord Jesus—a ministry of death unto death. Not that God willeth so; but God now gives Isaiah a vision. He hears one say, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." And then what do we find? Immediately he cries, "Woe is me!"

My fellow-Christians, do we know what it is, under God's revelation, thus to cry out? We can utter "woe" to them going down to hell; we can preach "woe" to those who are living and walking in open and flagrant sin; but when a preacher of God stands before the glory of heaven, and says, "Woe is me!"—and why? "Because mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts"—it is then God sends the live coals from the altar. He touches his lips, and says, "Thy iniquity is purged; go and do thy work." God grant that dwellers in the household of faith should be brought face to face with the vision of the glory of God. This will give them a fuller knowledge of sin in its sense of "missing the mark;" and there will then be a tenderer heart, a gentler hand, and a more gracious spirit in dealing with unsaved souls. May God give unto us a little of His long-suffering to our fellow-saints as well as to our fellow-sinners.

After a short time spent in silent prayer, three verses of the hymn—

"Thy name is holy, O our God!"

were then sung, and an address was given by

Mr. GEORGE F. TRENCH,

ON THE GOSPEL OF GOD.

There was a young evangelist, about the time of the great revival in Ireland, who, when asked by a clergyman in Herefordshire, "What is the doctrine that you laymen are preaching?" answered, "We are preaching God." "God! How do you mean?" He pointed to that verse in Romans i., "I am not ashamed

of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed." It was a happy reply. Those who truly preach the gospel present salvation as based on the character of God. It is the *gospel of God*. And not of God's love alone, of His justice also. I think it was Dr. Sinclair Paterson who lately pointed out the tendency of modern thought to exalt the family relationship of God to man above that of the kingdom. There is depth in that remark. The Fatherhood is not to be exalted to the exclusion of the Kingship of God; and we ought to understand something of the principles upon which He reigns. Look at Psalm lxxxix. for what I mean. I will not read the whole of the context; but in verse 13 we read, "Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is Thy hand, and high is Thy right hand. Justice and judgment are the habitation [*foundation*, rather] of Thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before Thy face. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance. In Thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted. For Thou art the glory of their strength," and so on. In this passage "judgment" means justice enforced. "Truth" means mercy fulfilled, promise faithfully performed. May I point out to you the inferiority, so to speak, of the place which is given to mercy and truth, as compared with that of justice and judgment. The *foundation* of the throne is justice and judgment; but the heralds who go before the face of the King are mercy and truth. Now it must always be so. It is a principle of every kingdom, of all rule, that justice and judgment are the foundation of the throne. In a dispensation characterized by sin or crime, it is incumbent upon the ruler to see that his law is obeyed. If it is possible to induce better obedience by the exhibition of grace, by all

means let grace be shown. At this point man finds no difficulty, for it is very pleasant to exercise grace. But there is a great difficulty when the throne or rule of God is in question. Judge of its magnitude by the cross of Christ. With God grace can only be exercised in recognition of justice, in a sense subordinately to justice, or at any rate on lines parallel with it. Grace cannot ignore the claim of justice. It cannot for a moment put it in the background. It cannot even temper it. The marvellous wisdom of God was therefore called into action to find a way by which his grace might be exercised, in full recognition of his righteousness. And Christ died. Now observe that when God had made known His righteous law to Moses, the words were hardly out of His lips, when He proceeded to preach the gospel. The law with all its terrors had but just been pronounced, when the book of Leviticus is opened out to Israel, with the gospel of sacrifice, the gospel of substitution, that gospel which the world in its wisdom discredits to-day—the gospel of blood. Exodus gives us the law. Leviticus gives us the atonement. Numbers follows with the forgiveness of the sinner—forgiveness on the ground of blood—the uplifted serpent, and the cities of refuge.

I want to exemplify these principles by three passages of the word of God, upon which I have sometimes spoken under the title or heading of "The Three Prodigals."

1. In Deut. xxi. 18 you will find the first of them. "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so

shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear." I suppose most of us when we first read that passage think it a very happy and blessed thing that the law of Moses has passed away. Further knowledge, however, convinces us that it is rather a very blessed thing that the principles that are here exhibited and illustrated remain. This is righteousness; this is the justice and the judgment of the throne of God as exhibited in the law of Moses. To understand it lies at the very base of our apprehension of the gospel of God. We are not supposed to turn away from it in order to congratulate ourselves that we are not members of the elderhood of Israel, who had such unpleasant duties to perform. We are supposed to appreciate the meaning and force of it to understand that this law was passed in the necessary carrying out of the fundamental principles of God's throne.

Now I do believe—allow me to say it here—that a great deal of all our preaching of God's grace fails of its effect because we fail to preach His righteousness as revealed against sin; and like the sweet manna in Israel, it palls upon the vitiated taste of men. When you preach grace, grace, grace, they do not realize what it refers to. They have no sense of sin, no sense of the need of grace. They have never been in the attitude of the criminal who watches for the cell-door to open as he sits in anguish hoping for reprieve. They have no sense of danger; they are not awakened to the need of this marvellous message. There is no contradiction in terms when we say that men should preach the law as well as the gospel. We must distinguish. *Christians*, it is true, are not under law; that is, because the law as their condemnation has been satisfied, and as indicating God's will it is written upon their hearts, and they love it. But the attitude of unbelieving men to God keeps them still under law; and if they will continue to reject His grace, they shall learn that it is so painfully.

Oh, is it not a solemn thing that the elders of Israel themselves were to be the executors of this punishment? Somebody said to me, "Do you think it possible that the saints can ever feel differently than they now do about the pangs and pains of hell? They shrink from the thought that a God of love could inflict such penalties. Will it ever be otherwise?" This passage supplies the answer; and as certainly as now the sweet sound of grace is pleasant to our hearts and hearing, so willingly then shall we give assent to the execution of judgment. We find men, in the book of Revelation, when their minds are enlarged, worshipping and blessing God when they behold the infliction of His judgments. Let us think what that means. It is because of our infirmity, nay, our sinfulness, that we cannot find satisfaction in the thought that righteousness should prevail against sin. It will not be so always.

2. Now pass on in thought to Luke xv. I will not ask you to read it. No doubt those beautiful words are familiar to us all. I have often thought that if all the conceptions, histories, narratives, and records of Christendom should fall out of the world, and be forgotten, there is one passage which would live and be handed down through a thousand generations, and that is the story of the prodigal son.

Now notice that in the story of this prodigal—another scapegrace—there is not a word about judgment, not a word about stoning; but under the influence of that wonderful process of mind through which many of us have passed he comes home, and the very moment he comes in sight of the old family abode, his father runs forth to meet him, clasps him to his breast, sheds tears of love upon his cheek, and cannot bring forth enough of the wealth of his house to do him honour. *The father himself becomes a prodigal*—prodigal of his love, lavish of his grace to his good-for-nothing son. Now you will ask, How does this correspond with the teaching of our first prodigal? I feel sure you have

noticed how completely the blessed Jesus reserved all explanations as to the method by which the grace of God could be indulged. In all His teaching and His preaching it cannot be discovered. It was mentioned last evening that one of the Bishops has declared his inability to discover how it was that God found any difficulty in saving souls, or by what means the Lord Jesus Christ's death removed that difficulty. It would almost seem as if he had never opened the epistle to the Romans. I confess to you that if the gospels be read by themselves, one could form very little idea upon this wonderful theme; but when we open the page of the Romans, there bursts upon the mind the fulness of that wonderful teaching of which Christ prophesied when He said, "When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth." "He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you;" foretelling thus that future development, through the epistles, of the *rationale* of the gospel, by which all becomes wonderfully, perfectly plain. For understanding of Luke xv. I will just refer you to another passage in the same gospel, which, in the light of the epistles to the Romans or Ephesians, you will see the force of.

We are supposed to read our Testaments backward as well as forward, and to direct the higher light of the epistles back upon the gospel narratives. In Luke xxiii. 33 we find, "There they crucified Him." Next verse, "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them." Now you understand Luke xv. As soon as men had crucified Christ, then came forth those ever-blessed words—"Father, forgive them." When the blood was shed the groundwork of reconciliation was laid. Then the prodigal of Moses might become the reconciled child of Luke xv. The stones that were intended for the scapegrace of Moses had fallen upon his Substitute, and thrown open the arms of the Father to receive the returning son. "For He is our peace . . . that He

might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh." (Eph. ii. 14-17.)

When General Gordon entered the city of Khartoum, and found the people groaning under the tyranny of their Arab oppressors, he ordered all the records of their debts to be brought forth into the market-place—debts of taxes and official extortion that had accumulated against them to such an enormous extent that to pay them these people would have been kept in poverty and bondage perpetually. He ordered also the instruments of torture to be brought out—whips and knouts and other weapons of brutality by which the people were persecuted and oppressed. He piled them up in the centre of the city, set fire to them, and burned them, and the people hailed Gordon as their "Saviour." The blessed Jesus has done the same; nay, He Himself has paid the debt, and He Himself has borne the stripes, and He has purchased peace, pardon, salvation by the sacrifice of Himself; and He has done it righteously.

I remember a poor fellow coming to me many years ago, when first I was beginning to do a bit of what Mr. Mandeville has aptly called "lifeboat work," and saying, "How is this theory of yours possible? You talk of substitution. You say that man was doomed to eternal punishment, yet the Lord Jesus Christ's death lasted but for a few days. How can you contend that the one is the *quid pro quo* of the other?"

Beloved friends, why was that death for three days only? It was because He *could not* be holden of the grave. And why? Christ would have been dead till now, and dead eternally, but for the *value* of His sacrifice. It is the excellent richness of the person of Him who offered it that made the sacrifice so short. Therefore He *could not* be holden in death, for by His "few days" death the whole of the vast debt was

paid. Our friends who come back to us from China bring us for curiosities strings of perforated coins, which are of such little value, that if you wanted to pay a debt of say a hundred pounds, I don't know but what this whole platform would be covered with them, and I am sure I don't know how long it would take anybody to count them over. But if an Englishman wants to pay a million of gold, he gives instead a little morsel of paper; that is all. Those innumerable "cash" of China will represent the perpetuity of man's worthless sufferings. That bank-note, so apparently trifling, but representing the unseen wealth behind it, illustrates the cause of the brevity of our Lord's passion.

Beloved friends, we must not estimate the value of Christ's atonement by the length of time it took to accomplish. It was the preciousness of His Person which at once satisfied God's righteousness the very moment the weapon of the law fell upon Him. His blood was the infinite treasure, more precious than gold and silver, by which He purchased our redemption.

3. But now I want you to look at the third prodigal. You will find him, under the name of Absalom, in 2 Samuel xiv.

A man who had committed murder (this was fratricide) should, according to the law in Num. xxxv., have been surely put to death. I have often wondered—we who live in the South of Ireland have our minds perhaps more definitely directed to these thoughts—at the reiteration of the claim of righteousness, in regard of the crime of murder, as seen in this chapter. "The murderer shall surely be put to death" (v. 16); "the murderer shall surely be put to death" (v. 17); "the murderer shall surely be put to death" (v. 18); "he that smote him shall surely be put to death" (v. 21); "the revenger of blood shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him." (v. 21.) In Ireland guilt has come

upon the land, because righteousness has not been done (see v. 33), crime has not been punished, and murder has gone unavenged. The law is despised, and clemency is scorned. Here Absalom was a murderer, and, according to the law of Moses, should have been put to death, and David's were the lips that should have pronounced the sentence. This story comes in in a remarkable place—between Deut. xxi. and Luke xv. For David was bound by the law of Moses, but he was checked by the Spirit of Christ, which so powerfully animated him. He found himself in this difficulty, that if he executed the law of Moses he would have to do violence to that grace of his heart of which we have such marvellous exhibitions many times in his history, and which will at once present themselves to your mind. He unfortunately adopted an intermediate course, and Absalom is banished. He remains three years in his banishment, and then, by the cleverness of Joab, he is allowed to come back to Jerusalem to dwell in his own house, but not to see the face of the king. Then he burns the standing corn of this great general, because he was offended that he was left for two years living in Jerusalem, and not allowed to see his father's face. At last David yields, and allows him to see him. Absalom comes in to him; he kisses him. But David kissed him too late; he kissed a Judas that day, he kissed a traitor. (See 2 Sam. xv. 5, 6.) David had hopelessly damaged that man's character by the unprincipled course he had adopted. He was bound to do one thing or the other; he should have executed him as a murderer, or he should have forgiven him out and out, frankly, fully, and affectionately, upon the ground of *sacrifice*. *He did neither*. He allowed him to go back to his house. He "tempered justice with mercy," as our human courts do and our human wisdom preaches. That is not the gospel, nor the way of God. At last he allows him to see his face; he kisses and dismisses him, but there was no restoration of com-

munion. And why? There had been no confession, and there had been no sacrifice.

Now, my dear friends, in talking to you about the prodigal Absalom, I am talking to you about the gospel, falsely so-called, of our modern Christendom. I am talking to you about the gospel as, I fear, it is known to nine-tenths of the Christians of the religious world. They do not believe in the righteousness of God, and for that reason cannot appreciate the grace of God; but they take up an intermediate position, something like that of Absalom in banishment, not quite condemned, not quite forgiven, and they have not the least conception of the effect of the grace of God as restoring them to full communion, and making them happy in His service. They occupy an indefinite position, not quite in danger, and not quite safe. Oh, beloved friends, if we want to break up this utterly false and most imperfect peace, and establish in its place the joyful liberty and intelligent enjoyment of true peace, we must preach the righteousness of God, come back to what Paul in Romans i. declares, and not be ashamed of the gospel, which reveals God in His righteousness! Then we shall show men the awful danger of their condemnation, and at the same time tell them that that condemnation is ready to pass away; nay, has passed upon the head of one perfect Substitute. Explain that God can righteously pardon them. Ask them to come in, not to be kissed and sent away again into doubt and uncertainty, but to live for evermore in the love of God. It is a glorious gospel which we have to preach—all fear taken away; all condemnation past; the peace that passeth all understanding within; the very smile of God upon our face; and our ears rejoicing in the joyful sound of perfect reconciliation, the music of the Father's house. I believe that when some people read in Psalm lxxxix. about the "joyful sound," they think of grace and mercy only. But the joyful sound is that of mercy

and truth wrought out through justice and judgment. It is mercy founded upon righteousness, and accomplished through it. There are some other verses in the same psalm exhibiting this great principle, and which ought not to be dissevered from those to which I have pointed you. They are in the latter part of the psalm—which is, I may say, one of the most precious portions of God's word. Verse 30: "If his children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments; if they break My statutes, and keep not My commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips."

I find that many believers, detecting themselves in sin and shortcoming, feel some difficulty as to their eternal security, and ask, "How is it that God can still receive us if, after our conversion, we continue to commit sin?" It is essential that you should understand, and that those who preach should explain, that the principles of God's kingship extend even to the region of His own family; and that the method by which He establishes His righteousness in the family, and in the house, is that which is set forth here. He punishes our transgressions with stripes, and our iniquities with the rod. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." It is not His way to pass over sin in the believer, albeit He has forgiven it as a condemning crime for ever. His way is to quicken our consciences, and touch our hearts by that method which, when we get far from Him, alone is effectual. But He will never, never cast us out. I say this that I may speak to the conscience of us all, and that I may exalt the unity, the harmony, the perfection of the divine economy. Now, may the Lord give us to realize the blessedness of the righteousness of God as revealed in His gospel! I think, in closing, of that poor old

woman who, when dying, was visited by one who, surprised at her peaceful expression of countenance, said, "Well, dear, I suppose that you are trusting in the mercy of God, and for that reason are so peaceful!" "Not exactly, ma'am," she replied; "I am trusting in the justice of God, and that's what keeps me happy." There is no footing so firm as this. Let each of us plant his foot down upon it steadily.

The audience then united in singing the verses—

"Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Be saved, to sin no more.

"E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy wounds supplied for me,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall for ever be,"

after which an address was given by

MR. A. STEWART,

ON REDEMPTION.

I am glad that redeeming love is to be my theme. I ask you to read the seventh verse of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians: "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." I beg you to observe the note of certainty that is in that verse. There was, I believe, a gentleman who sometimes went to hear a certain great preacher, of whom he said, "When I go to hear him, he seems to me an earnest man in search of a religion." We may not claim in a full sense to be earnest men, but we can and do claim that we are not in search of a religion. We know that in Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. Take another passage in the same chapter—the 13th and 14th verses: "In whom ye also trusted, after

that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory." Now I draw two simple distinctions. There is a redemption that we *have* and a redemption that we *hope for*; there is a redemption by *purchase* and a redemption by *power*. That is revealed to us in the verses we have read. The moment the sinner, by the grace of God, believes the gospel, he comes under the shelter of the blood of atonement, and he is sealed by the Holy Ghost, and then his eyes are turned to the place whence the day is about to spring, and he waits for the redemption which the Lord Jesus Christ by the right hand of His power is to work for him. Let me be simple in illustration if I can. Suppose a man has purchased a quantity of goods, but does not mean to put them to a present use, and, as is often the case, bestows them in a warehouse. He seals them with his seal and leaves them there. By-and-by he comes back again, and takes to himself and appropriates to its proper use what he had already purchased and paid for and sealed. That is a very rude illustration, but it may help us to understand what is meant. We are already redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb, and sealed by the Holy Ghost, and we are waiting for God's Son from heaven to assert and make good His title to the purchase of His blood. We are dealing with doctrine, but let us connect doctrine with Christ Himself. There is One—the Son of God—who is wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption, all in one, unto those who believe on His name. We have not redemption merely, but a Redeemer. I wish I could speak worthily of Him. I thank God there are so many in this room who are trusting Him. There was another great preacher—not the one I referred to before—one of whose characteristics was

his great liking for precious stones. You might have seen him with supplies of unset diamonds and rubies in his waistcoat pocket, taking them out and delighting in them. He used to find satisfaction on a Saturday in going into a great jeweller's shop in New York and feasting his eyes on the articles that he saw there. But, my friends, it is beyond all the pleasures that earthly jewels can afford to look on the workmanship of the Holy Ghost. It is a most blessed thing to see such a congregation as this, to find in it a response to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to feel that He is the Nail fastened in a sure place, and that we are only hanging on Him like cups and flagons.

The word "redeemer" in the Old Testament Scriptures, in the Hebrew language, folds in its compass three distinct meanings—one meaning, perhaps, expressed in three; and it is translated in our version of the Scriptures by three different words. These three meanings are kinsman, redeemer, and avenger. A redeemer is one who is at once kinsman, redeemer, and avenger. Now, keeping that in mind, read the second of Hebrews, and in the 14th and 15th verses you will see these three characters of the Son of God appearing and flashing out of the text: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." As the Kinsman, He took flesh and blood; as the Avenger, He destroyed him that had the power of death—only the inceptive fulfilment, because there is a destruction yet to come—and to this end that, as the Redeemer, He might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to bondage.

We are to speak to-night on fundamental truths of the gospel. We want to get right down to the bottom of the gospel. What is that? Well, my friends, we

are saved by the precious blood of Christ, and we may say that atonement is the foundation truth of the gospel; but remember that incarnation is behind atonement, and that Godhead is behind incarnation. You have got to the bottom now. God is my salvation. It is bottomed and grounded upon this—that the Word was made flesh. A hundred years ago, when times were rougher and speech was ruder, there was a clergyman in Haworth called Grimshaw. Rude in speech he was, but sound and true, and he said once, "God must un-God Himself before I can be damned." There is an anecdote told sometimes which seems to fit at this point. It is about an old woman who was professing herself sure of being saved. There are always people ready to suggest doubts to such, and I suppose they were telling her not to be too sure, because she might be lost after all. "Well," she said, "if I am lost, there will be a great loss: I shall lose my soul, and God will lose His character." That is our position. God is our salvation, and His word our assurance. The Son of God took flesh of the Virgin; He was born in Bethlehem of Judaea. What then? That moment He was Kinsman of man; He took responsibilities upon Him that could only be solved by death. When He became the Kinsman, by blessed necessity He became also the Redeemer and the Avenger of men.

The "solidarity of humanity" is a sounding phrase. People would like to think of the unity of the mass of mankind, and to argue that, as all the rivers run into the sea, all mankind shall one day be saved. But, when they talk thus, think of two things. Think of Cain and Abel in the fourth of Genesis—that is where the streams began to diverge; then go to the Book of Revelation, and think of the new heaven and the new earth, and the lake of fire. You know that parallel lines will never meet, and that is the end of the record. A new heaven and a new earth and a lake

of fire. Now observe that, though the Lord Jesus Christ became man, our union with Him is as risen from the dead. I guard myself at this point.

What, then, was it that the Lord Jesus Christ in grace became bound to do when He took upon Him flesh and blood? Just the two things we read of in Hebrews ii.—to redeem and to avenge. I suppose people sometimes speak foolishly, as if the gospel were only to be found in the gospels, and perhaps somewhat extended in the epistles. Remember that all these great truths—shall I say that they are organic growths?—root themselves at the very beginning of the book, and go through the whole texture, so to speak, of the Scriptures. At the very beginning God was teaching these lessons. In Leviticus xxv. you read these words: "And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land. If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold." And read the 47th and 48th verses: "If a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: after that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him." The kinsman was the redeemer, and there were two subjects of redemption: one was the man, and the other was the man's possession. It is very simple. Turn to Romans viii.: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." That was a mighty basis for God to work upon which was laid in the cross of Christ. When the man fell, you remember he did not fall alone; he dragged his inheritance down with him. What then?

In the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, God has laid the foundation for bringing the very groaning creation back into the liberty of the glory of His sons. There is a very ancient illustration of this result of the cross. The creature is likened to a nurse that has brought up a royal child, and shares, when the time of his crowning comes, in the benefit and the blessing of his reign. Is there not a time coming when the wilderness shall literally rejoice and blossom like the rose? Yes; and beyond that there are new heavens and a new earth, and what makes these possible is the death of the Redeemer.

Observe that in Leviticus the kinsman was dealing with a righteous claim. If a man had bought the land he had a right to it. The kinsman, if he paid the price, was only meeting a righteous demand. And so in the case of the Israelite who sold himself to the stranger. If the kinsman went to redeem him he must take the money in his hand and pay the price. When Jesus Christ hung on the cross, He was meeting a righteous claim; He was redeeming us from the curse of the law. But He was doing far more. Do you remember, further back in the book, how Lot went down into Sodom, and how, when the time of adversity came, it was seen that, instead of his being able to deliver Sodom, he only shared in its overthrow? Do you remember what the Scripture says (Genesis xiv.): "When Abram heard that his brother was taken captive"—Lot was not his brother, he was his nephew, but the Spirit of the Lord seems at this place to draw the bond tighter, for truly a brother is born for adversity—"he armed his trained servants," and pursued the captors; "and he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people"? These two things appear here as in Leviticus. Abram brought back Lot and his possessions with him, as in Leviticus xxv. the kinsman redeemed the man and the land. But Abram was not, like that kinsman, meeting a

righteous claim. He was encountering an adversary. Now we come again to the cross. There was a righteous claim to be met, but there was also a tremendous score to settle with the adversary of mankind; and at the cross the Lord Jesus, as the Avenger of man, encountered and destroyed him. The gospels are full of two things—miracles and parables. What are the miracles? They have been well called "redemptive acts." You have never grasped the significance of the miracles until you have learnt this. The Son of God came down into the kingdom of the enemy, into the house of the strong man; and His work throughout the gospels is the spoiling of the strong man's goods, and delivering his captives. Read Luke viii. In that chapter there are four miracles recorded. What is the first one? The stilling of the tempest on the lake. Why was there a tempest on the lake? I am sure there were no gales like that in Eden. The answer is, that man had dragged his inheritance down with him. Hence the storms that vex it. What did the Lord Jesus do? He rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. Why did He rebuke them? Surely because He saw who was acting behind the storm. Read the first chapter of the book of Job, where the hand of God raises for us the veil. When Satan got permission to afflict Job, it was soon seen that he had power to do so. The elements bent to his will and did his work. Let us not doubt that it was he whom the Son of God rebuked when He calmed the lake. It was a redemptive act, wrought in a portion of man's inheritance cursed by sin. It was a foreshowing of the mighty redemption yet to come. What is the next miracle? The casting of the devils out of the Gadarene demoniac. Satan had dethroned his mind. What is the next? It is the healing of the woman with the issue. Satan had affected her body with disease. - What is the next? It is the raising from the dead of the little daughter of Jairus. She was lying

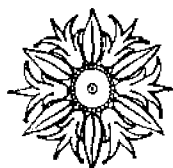
dead ; and the Son of God, who had stilled the tempest on the lake, restored to his right mind the demoniac, and given health to the body of the woman, met the enemy in the last stretch of his power, and raised that little girl from the dead. These were the acts of a Redeemer. I must close with this word. The promise of God that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent has had its fulfilment, so far, at the cross. But there is vengeance on the enemy yet to be executed. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." (Rom. xvi. 20.) If you read Numbers xxxv., referred to already, you will find the word "avenger" seven times repeated. The person that made the city of refuge necessary for the manslayer was the avenger of blood, and he was the kinsman and the redeemer. The Lord Jesus will fully sustain that character. "The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer." There is no city of refuge for the "murderer." His doom is sure.

One word was on my mind to say, if I might speak to those who are teachers and preachers, Let us beware of a depressing ministry. There is nothing more certain than that God is going to have His way, and that the Son of God is going to avenge us on our adversary. You may have gone into some old castle and have seen on the wall a banner shivered with shot—a mere bundle of silk rags—and they have told you that it was a trophy taken in such and such a battle. But in the day that is coming, when the fight is over, Satan won't have a rag or a tatter to show.

All then joined in singing a verse of the hymn—

"All hail the power of Jesu's name,"

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