Titus - Commentaries by William Kelly

On Titus, Titus 1:1, On

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“Paul, bondman of God and apostle of Jesus Christ according to [the] faith of God's elect, and full knowledge [or acknowledgment] of truth that is according to godliness” (ver. 1).

Bondman “of God” is unusual. Thus in the Epistle to the Romans it is “bondman of Jesus Christ.” So it is in the Epistle to the Philippians, where Timothy is associated with the apostle. Here alone it is “bondman of God and apostle of Jesus Christ.” No Christian ought to doubt that there is special suitability between that relationship to God, and the Epistle. “God,” as such, is prominent in all the pastoral Epistles rather than “Father,” where “bondman” could not be appropriate or rightly conceivable. Nevertheless it is only to Titus that the apostle presents himself as here he does. We may be thereby assured from this fact that it falls in with the character of the Epistle before us more even than with any other of the pastoral letters. Rom. 6 may help a little to explain why. The great truth in the latter portion of that chapter is that, though we are under grace, we are bondmen to Him whom we obey. Once alas! we were bondmen of sin; now, having got our freedom from sin, we have become bondmen to righteousness (ver. 18) and to God (ver. 22), having our fruit unto holiness and the end eternal life. A similarly fundamental depth is found in the Epistle to Titus: only here Paul predicates the term of himself, not of believers in general. If he calls himself “apostle of Jesus Christ,” he takes care previously to say that he was “bondman of God.” It was important for Titus to take heed to this. At the very outset it was a solemn reminder from the Holy Spirit. If the apostle did not often so speak, it was always true; and the expression of the truth here seems intended of God to be a fresh lesson to Titus, and the rather because in the circumstances before him it might easily be forgotten.

Titus was called to a serious but highly honorable charge. Had it been only to exercise oversight, he who aspires to that desires a good work. But Titus was called amongst other things to establish overseers: clearly a far more delicate and responsible service. Self-importance might here readily enter, as it has often done even with most excellent men. Hence the apostle, who had authorized and directed Titus in that high service, begins with the emphatic statement, “Paul, bondman of God.” All was worthless, if the will of God were not done. The Son of God shows the perfection of a life wholly devoted to that one thing, and first set it before all as a moral jewel of the highest water. In order to do His will in that perfection, He emptied Himself, taking a bondman's form, coming in the likeness of men, and, having been found in figure as a man, humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, death of the cross. In that perfection He stands alone; nevertheless He forms others according to His own blessed pattern, and none more evidently than the inspired man who now writes to Titus as “bondman of God.”

Titus was not, and could not be, like Paul, “apostle of Jesus Christ;” but was it not open to him to be, no less than the apostle, “bondman of God”? His special position was according to the will of the Lord Jesus, and he would fulfill its proper functions all the better if he valued, as the apostle did, the being “bondman of God.” His own will was thus to be forfended; and the apostle implies this in an introduction so peculiar and impressive. We may be sure that the words were not lost on Titus, but that he laid each deeply to heart.

There is another peculiarity here which has greatly perplexed the learned. As is too usual in a difficulty, they have departed from the plain and obvious meaning of the text, not by a daring conjecture, in the way of emendation as a substitute for it, but by a version, to say the least, of an arbitrary nature, which is quite uncalled for by the context. Two of the ablest recent commentators have joined in discarding “according to,” and in adopting “for.” But this is to lose the peculiar force of the scripture before us. To be apostle of Jesus Christ “for” the faith of God's elect, is a commonplace. It is no doubt, like all such proposals, an easy way of understanding the clause; but the truth intended vanishes. “According to the faith of God's elect” has the same ground as, and no less reason than, “according to piety,” just afterward, with which these commentators do not tamper. It is safest to translate correctly, even if one is obliged to feel or own we have no exposition to offer of which we are assured. The Revisers, therefore, as well as the Authorized translators, have acted more faithfully. Very possibly they might not have been able to explain the propriety of the phrase; but at any rate they have done no violence to the text in their respective versions. They have left the word of God for others to explain in due time, according to their measure of spiritual insight.

Is then the apostolic statement so hard to be understood? Not so, if we are simple. Aaron was anointed priest according to the law. There is now an entire change—a new system, resting upon an altogether different basis. It was no longer the first man dealt with morally, or helped ceremonially. There is the Second Man, the Last Adam. Faith, therefore, is come and revealed. It is no longer a question of any being guarded under law: believing men, even of Israel, were no longer under the old tutor. Paul, the Jew, and Titus, the Gentile, are alike sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Hence Paul here describes himself as “apostle of Jesus Christ according to faith of God's elect.” The entire system of legal ordinances had come to its end; Christ had effaced it, and taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. The ancient people of God have for the time completely passed away, with all the peculiarities of their probationary status. It is now a question of what God has wrought, given, and revealed in the person of Christ; and hence, therefore, of faith on the part of God's elect. What is external in Christianity may be more or less apprehended by the world; but here the apostle points only to what is unseen and eternal, and God's elect alone enter in and enjoy. Hence we see that in this short Epistle there is more than one pithy, yet fall, exhibition of the gospel in its deep moral power; wherein it is distinguished from the two Epistles to Timothy. This is in keeping with the “faith of God's elect,” and helps to illustrate why the writer describes himself as apostle of Jesus Christ accordingly.

But he adds another particular. Paul was His apostle also according to the full knowledge or acknowledgment of truth that is according to godliness. This is the more remarkable, because we find him a few verses afterward speaking of his having left Titus in Crete to set right what was wanting, and establish elders in every city, as he had ordered him; but he in no way describes his own apostleship as being according to such a direction of authority. This authority is not to be doubted in any way, and it is of high moment in its place; but Paul characterizes it

after another pattern altogether. It was “according to faith of God's elect, and knowledge of truth that is according to godliness.” Its stamp was not merely ecclesiastical but Christian, and its Christian description is the only thing on which the apostle here insists, even when he is about to notice the charge he had given Titus for ecclesiastical order. If Christianity is bound up with the faith of God's elect, it is for that very reason also with “knowledge of truth that is according to godliness.” “The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came into being through Jesus Christ.” Shadows and outward observances are now treated as vain. The body is of Christ. The truth must be known by faith, and that truth is according to godliness, else the apostle would have disowned it as having no living link with Christ.

On Titus, Titus 1:2-3, On

The apostle pursues what has been already begun in describing his mission. It was in hope of life eternal which God that cannot lie promised before the times of the ages, but manifested in its own seasons His word in a preaching, with which he was entrusted, according to our Savior God (ver. 2, 3).

Life eternal is really given to the believer now; and this is a revelation by no means uncommon in the writings of our apostle. Its present possession is emphatically prominent in the writings of John, whether the Gospel or his First Epistle. But Paul frequently treats it according to its future display, as in the synoptic Gospels. In one well-known passage of his, Rom. 6:22, 23, we have both:” Ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end life everlasting. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is life everlasting in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Here he describes his apostolic work or message as conditioned by the hope of life everlasting. It is wholly different from the expectations of the most pious Jew in Old Testament times, being grounded in the main on the promises of God the Father. If a prophet spoke of eternal life at all, it was bound up with the future kingdom of the Messiah. Under His scepter the Israelite looked for every outward blessing, for all honor and power as well as goodness from God, for the display of beneficence and of blessing in every form; and all this will surely be accomplished on earth, without fail or stint, according to the word of the living God. The apostle's work had a wholly different character, based upon the total rejection and the heavenly exaltation of the Lord Jesus, whereby that hope of life eternal is realized now, and in a way altogether superior to the testimony of the prophets (Psa. 133, Dan. 12). For he proceeds to show that the promise which the Christian actually enjoys, goes not merely beyond the prophets, or the human race on earth, but back into eternity. This was necessarily a promise within the Godhead. The God that knew no falsehood promised it before the times of the ages. So we saw in 2 Tim. 1:9, that God saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace that was given us in Christ Jesus before the times of the ages.

These times, stamped with distinctive principles on God's part, are occupied with the history of man's trial and failure in every form. First we see him innocent and in paradise, with everything good around him, and put to the simplest test of obedience in a single, and in itself slight, exception. This was enough: man fell, not deceived like the woman, but ensnared through her in known deliberate transgression. Was man any better when an outcast left to himself, with the sentence of death before him? “And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Therefore was man with the lower creation swept away from the earth. A spared remnant passed through the deluge in God's mercy, and the earth came under new conditions; for the sword of government was now instituted of God. After a vain attempt by unity to make a name forever in the tower of Babel, God scattered them after their families and tongues in their lands and their nations. Then, when idolatry had overspread the earth, by promise was man called and chosen and separated unto God in the person of Abraham and his descendants. But even when they reaped the blessing by God's deliverance from oppressing Egypt, they did not appreciate the riches of divine favor. Therefore, when God at Sinai proposed blessing on the condition of their own obedience, the people unanimously answered, “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.” On such a ground sinful man cannot stand. “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in God's sight.” Law may give knowledge of sin, never power against it. “The strength of sin is the law,” says our apostle (1 Cor. 15:56).

Hence justification is gratuitous by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Therefore, says he elsewhere (Gal. 3:10), “As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.” A statement of uncommon force; not as many as have broken the law, but as many as stand on that ground or principle. “For it is written, Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the law for to do them.” Now this is written in Deut. 27., in which chapter the facts stated are as striking as the words of the apostle to the Galatians. For Moses charged the people to stand, six tribes upon mount Gerizim to bless them, and six upon mount Ebal to curse; but in the sequel of the chapter we have the curses carefully recorded, which the Levites were to say to all the men of Israel, without one word of provision for the blessing! “As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.” There is no blessing provided or possible on that footing. It is those that are of faith who are blessed, none others. “And the law is not of faith.” It works wrath and a curse: not that the law is not righteous, for the commandment is holy, just, and good. “The law entered by the bye that the offense might abound.” Sin was long before the law; but the law made its evil plain and inexcusable.

So the prophets, who exposed the growing wickedness of Israel, and even of favored Judah, kept thundering in their ears, whilst they ever reminded them of their only hope in the coming Messiah, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to those that believe. At length, when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law. But the Jews refused Him, yea abhorred Him; so that His staff, Beauty, was cut asunder that He might break His covenant which He had made with all the peoples. For how could there he the predicted gathering, or obedience, of the peoples unto Him, if His own received Him not? They did worse; they weighed for His price thirty pieces of silver, and the field of the potter became the field of blood, Aceldama. Then His other staff, even Bands, was cut asunder, that He might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. The last link was broken in the cross of the Lord Jesus, even for the two houses of Israel. But sovereign grace through that very cross laid a foundation for an entirely new work, of which the Son of man, exalted at the right hand of God in heaven, is the author and crown. While Israel and the nations wholly disappear for all that was predicted of earthly blessing and glory, the Head of the new creation is revealed on high, and the Holy Ghost sent below, and a door of mercy lies open to every believer on terms of indiscriminate grace. This is Christianity for the individual. Along with it goes that new building of God, the church, the body of Christ.

Thus we see that what the God incapable of falsehood promised before the times of the ages, now shines upon the believer. What was first in purpose was last in accomplishment. Here, however, it is not purpose so much as “life eternal” which comes before us. “This life is in His Son.” There is no such life in any other. The first Adam was at best but a living soul; the last Adam a quickening Spirit. As Christ our life is risen from the dead, such is the character of the life we receive in Him. It is life after redemption was effected, that those who are quickened together with Him might have all their offenses forgiven, dead with Christ and risen with Him, and even, as the Epistle to the Ephesians adds, seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Here, however, the apostle does not dwell so much on heavenly association as on the wondrous fact that the life of the Christian is life eternal, promised before the world began, outside of times or dispensations in God's dealings with man on the earth. It derives its character from Him Who is eternal, The Way and the Truth, the Head, center, expression, and object of all the purposes of God. This we have now, as we shall have it in glory with Himself.

Nor is there anything vague or uncertain. It is not a law requiring what at best may, yea must, fail of fulfillment, as failure is invariable in man's hand. It is God's word manifested in a preaching which had His authority made good by His truth, the sure revelation of His mind. “We are of God (said another apostle): he that knoweth God heareth us.” Not to hear is the spirit of error. During man's probation, law put him to the proof characteristically. Now God manifested His word in its own seasons. There was a divine work to speak of.

Now, therefore, is the due time for bringing all out. “In its own seasons He manifested His word in a preaching, wherewith I was entrusted according to the command of God our Savior.” This is the “mystery of the gospel” (Eph. 6:19); at least it is a part, and an important part, of it. Ever since the apostle was sent forth on his mission, the greatest impulse was given, and that full development which we have written in his Epistles. It was embodied in Christ, Who died, rose, and was glorified in heaven; but the Holy Spirit was given in order that God's word as to this might be manifested; and manifested it was in Paul's preaching beyond all others, “according to command of God our Savior.” For never did this title “Savior God” before receive such an illustration; never again can it be after such a sort, even when the glory shall be a defense, a cloud of smoke by day, and a shining flame by night, upon every dwelling place, upon Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies. And it is all the more glorious, because it is a secret known only to faith, and preached therefore, instead of being established in power and visible display. Therefore is it now a “commandment of God our Savior.” When glory dwells in the land of Israel, as it surely will under Messiah and the new covenant literally enjoyed by the earthly people, there will be no room for any such commandment. It will then be the day for the triumph of the most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, on the downfall of Satan's power.

On Titus, Titus 1:4-6, On

The address follows:-” To Titus, genuine child according to a common faith: grace and peace from God [the] Father and Christ Jesus our Savior” (ver. 4).

Thus we see the apostle gives Titus the same designation as Timothy in his First Epistle, but there it is simply “in faith “; here it is “according to common faith.” They both believed the same truth of Christ, Paul the Jew and Titus the Gentile. It is not only that there is one body, the church, but a faith common to all Christians, common to the highest in spiritual place, power, and authority, with the least saint, were he a Scythian or a slave, that calls on the same Lord rich in grace toward all that call on His name.

But it will be observed, that Timothy is called “beloved child” in chap. 1 of the Second Epistle. Accordingly the apostle unbosoms himself to him as he does not to Titus. Nevertheless Titus thoroughly possessed his confidence, as he was entrusted with the important and delicate task of an apostolic envoy in Crete. It is the mistake of the old divines to confound this position with the gift of an evangelist, perhaps because Timothy was an evangelist. This Titus is never called. The truth is that the charge over doctrine, or the commission to appoint elders, is quite independent of an evangelist's gift. Titus had here a work within the church, not without; though no doubt an evangelist might also be appointed to such a charge by an apostle. But an ecclesiastic charge and the exercise of an evangelistic gift have a wholly distinct character, and in themselves no single link of connection. They might or might not be united in the same person.

According to the oldest MSS. and Versions, “mercy” is omitted in the verse, but Chrysostom is quite wrong, followed by Damascus, in asserting that “mercy” is only spoken of in 1 Tim. 1:2, for it is equally found in 2 Tim. 1:2. Here also Lachmann stands with the Received Text in giving it as found in the mass of the junior MSS. and Versions supported by the Alexandrian, and a few other uncial copies.

It is difficult however to resist the overwhelming external evidence; and the inference would be, that the apostle's heart was drawn out to desire mercy especially for Timothy, whilst he contented himself with the wish for “grace and peace” in Titus' case, as he commonly did in writing to the saints generally. In the Epistle of Jude “mercy” is put in the foreground, with “peace and love” following, for those addressed on the broadest possible ground. This insertion is quite as exceptional for the saints in general, as the omission of it is to Titus. There saints are regarded as the objects of special tenderness, as they were exposed to the most imminent danger, from the growing rush of evil towards the last gulf of apostacy. But if “mercy” is not here expressly before us, “grace” really implies it; for it is the fountain-head from which mercy flows, and peace is the issue ever to be desired, no less than the ever-flowing fountain, “from God the Father, and Christ Jesus our Savior.”

“For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest order further the things wanting, and appoint elders city by city, as I directed thee. If any one is blameless (or unaccused), husband of one wife, having children faithful, not under charge of profligacy, or unruly” (ver 5, 6).

There is no doubt that the apostle left Titus in Crete only for a time in the fulfillment of the charge given him. There is not a hint of his permanent residence there, but plain proof that he was to leave Crete for other quarters and different work. It is remarkable that the form of the word “left” has been changed from rather earlier days; and that this change falls in with permanence. So it stands in the commonly received text; but the best authorities followed by the critics agree that the original form quite coincides with the temporary character of the mission of Titus. The apostle's stay in the island was brief. Titus was left there for a while. Neither is said to have planted the gospel in Crete. It seems highly probable from Acts 2:11, that the glad tidings had been conveyed there almost from the great day of Pentecost. It was a question therefore of Titus' following up that setting of things in order which the apostle began. Even at Rome we learn from the first chapter of the Epistle that Paul longed to see them, that he might communicate some spiritual gift to them, in order to their strengthening. Still more

would this be called for in the far less frequented island where Titus was left. There would be things wanting which the short stay of the apostle could not suffice to complete. Further, there was the need of elders to be appointed, which was regularly, and sometimes long, subsequent to the gathering of the saints. It is implied that several cities, perhaps many, had assemblies in them, and that elders were to be appointed in each. Bp. Ellicott is quite right in questioning the statement of Jer. Taylor, “one in one city, many in many” (Episc. § 15). It is a strange, as well as certainly a precarious, statement from an Episcopalian, though natural enough to one of dissenting ideas. There is nothing here to limit eldership to one person in each

city. There may have been several. This would of course be modified by circumstances; but we know from elsewhere in the New Testament that plurality of elders in any given assembly was the rule, and so no doubt it was at Crete. Church order, though flexible, had a common principle and character. “For this cause,” says the apostle to the Corinthians, “have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you to remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere, in every church” (1 Cor. 4:17, compare 1 Cor. 11:16; 14:33-37).

It should be observed, as a consideration of the greatest moment, that the apostle does not specify a particular gift as requisite for these local charges. Scripture takes marked care to guard from that dangerous confusion, which was soon to characterize Christendom, and to form the separation of clergy from laity which is in fact a return to Judaism, and a denial in both principle and practice of the distinctive fullness of privilege to the church. It is not that a gift and a charge might not be combined in the same individual; but they are in themselves, and for most who have the one or the other, altogether different. The gift was one given by Christ to the church and from the greatest to the least, apart from all intervention of man. This can no more cease to be than Christ can abnegate His grace and living functions as the Head of the body.

Another weighty fact is that, so far from being interrupted by His ascension to heaven, Eph. 4:8-10 is precisely authoritative, that only from Him on high were they given, and given till we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. As no right-minded Christian will aver that this is attained yet, so neither should he doubt the unfailing grace of Christ. Power in external testimony may not adorn the assembly when unfaithful, and no more a visible united light as once here below. But the love of Christ cannot refuse all that is needed for the perfecting of the saints, unto ministerial work, unto building up of His body.

But elders or bishops were a local charge and depended for their nomination on those who had discernment to choose and authorize, ultimately from Christ, to appoint them. Hence we never see them in scripture, among the Gentiles at least, save as chosen by apostles, or by apostolic men like Timothy or Titus expressly commissioned to that end. The democratic idea is a fiction; had it been of God, it would have saved much trouble, and simplified matters outwardly, to have left their election with the assembly. But it is never so heard of in God's word. All power and authority is in the hands of Christ, Who wielded it through those He chose. Hence He called personally the twelve on earth, as He called Paul from heaven; and they did directly, or indirectly through fitting agents as here before us, choose elders assembly by assembly, city by city. The assembly might look out deacons; but elders needed and had a different source, the authority of Christ through men whom He chose and fitted to select them. How solemn a consideration this is, alike for Nationalists and Non-conformists, this is not the place to discuss at large. If they are spiritual and of single eye, they can scarce fail to see how far present arrangements are alien from scripture, how fallen the church is if it were only in the matter of gifts and charges. Alas! it is but a particular case of a ruin far more comprehensive and appalling.

Moral qualities and circumstances in accordance with them are here as elsewhere insisted on for elders. “If any one is blameless (or unaccused).” How censure others, if open to it himself? “Husband of one wife.” If married, he must have but one wife; for many heathen had several and at one time; and Jews discarded a wife with facility when they liked another more. “Having children faithful, not under charge of excess (or profligacy), or unruly.” Next to personal probity stands family relationship; and as plurality of wives would bar, whatever the suitability in other respects, so a disreputable offspring. How could he rule the house of God, who had already and manifestly failed in his own home?

On Titus, Titus 1:7-9, On

The characteristics required for the office are now set out. “For the bishop (or overseer) must be blameless (or free from accusation), as God's steward; not self-willed, not passionate, not quarelsome (lit. remaining over wine), not a striker, not a seeker of base lucre; but hospitable, a lover of good, sober-minded, just, holy, temperate, holding to the faithful word that is according to the teaching, that he may be able both to encourage with sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers” (ver. 7-9).

It is plain that there would be no force in the reason thus alleged, if “the bishop” and “the elder” were not identical. Titus was to appoint elders in every city as the apostle charged him: “if any man is blameless, &c., for the bishop must be blameless,” &c. Hence the Episcopalian is obliged to give up his idea that the bishop and elders in scripture represent two orders of officials, and driven to look for the prototype of the modern diocesan in such an one as Titus. But the Epistle itself, and other scriptures, refute the supposition of any such permanent functionary, though Titus did appoint elders in Crete.

The elder is expressive of the dignity of the person derived from the respect due to age; not that the elder must needs be an aged man, but one of experience. Thus the title was derived and applied even if there was no great age, where suitability for the position existed. The bishop, or overseer, expresses rather the nature of the office, which was to take account morally of the saints, and to maintain godly order. Oversight in short was the constant duty privately and publicly.

Hence it was a primary requisite that the overseer should himself be blameless, or free from charge against him, as God's steward. He had a governing post, and a moral responsibility therein to God. The apostle in 1 Cor. 4:1 speaks of himself and of his fellow-laborers as “stewards of God's mysteries.” Here we find no mysteries referred to. These were not the sacraments so called, but the new and hitherto secret truths of the New Testament revelation. Yet the elder, or overseer, might not be a teacher; still less did he stand in the higher place of apostle or prophet. Nevertheless he must be “apt to teach,” as we shall see confirmed ere long in this very context, though not possessed of the

teacher's distinct gift. But whatever his duty, he must act as God's steward, manifestly identified with the interests of His house. This would give seriousness of purpose, as it supposes moral courage with men and dependence on God and His word.

He must be “not self-willed,” or headstrong. It is the grossest mistake that self-will implies courage, though it may lead to rashness or even recklessness. Nothing gives so much quiet firmness as the consciousness of doing the will of God. One can then be lowly and patient, but uncompromising. Again, he must be “not soon angry” or passionate. Scarce anything enfeebles authority more than proneness to the explosions of anger. The weight of a rebuke, however just it might be, is apt to be lost when a man is overcome with passion. Calmness gives weight and force to a needed rebuke.

The next negation is perhaps a figurative expression; literally it means not abiding long over wine or disorderly through it. Hence it comes generally to mean, “not a brawler.” Even were a Christian free from the suspicion of so evil a source, the easily heated character is unfit to be, and unworthy of being, God's steward. The overseer must be no brawler.

If this refers rather to spirit and words, the next goes further down; he is to be “no striker.” Here there is a still less seemly violence, the one very naturally leading to the other. The overseer must be neither.

There is another characteristic which men in authority are not a little apt to fall into, but it is not to be in an overseer —he must not seek gain by base means, he must not yield to greed of filthy lucre. He who is called to rule before God among the saints must himself watch at least as much against this debasing evil as against those of violence.

How blessed the contrast with all these uncomely traits we see in Christ! And if every Christian is called to be Christ's epistle, how much more are the elders? How could one, known to fail or tamper with any of these things, reprove the failure of others as he ought?

The absence of evil qualities is not enough. The assembly of God is the only sphere on earth for the exercise and display of that which is divine. To steer clear, therefore, of the ordinary snares of men in office never could satisfy the mind of God. The overseer, without a thought of invitation or recompence in return, was called to be hospitable, and we know from other scriptures that this was not to be exercised after the manner of men but according to faith. So in the Epistle to the Hebrews the saints in general were called not to be forgetful of hospitality, for by it some have entertained angels unawares. It was not, therefore on the ground of previous knowledge, or of social equality. Had there been suspicion of a stranger, assuredly it would have excluded all such entertainment. So in faith and love Abraham received into hospitality, not angels only, but the Lord God Himself, in the form of man. Hospitality like this was not to be laid on the shelf, or vainly admired as a patriarchal virtue. Beyond question the overseer was not to be behind the saints in general, but to be given to hospitality. Nor this only, but “a lover of good,” not merely of good men, but of goodness—an important guard in the exercise of much more than hospitality. Self-pleasing might readily enter otherwise; and the indulgence of self ever is the service of Satan. Christ alone shows us truly and fully what good is, and makes it not only attractive but of power for the spirit and the walk. The overseer therefore was to be a “lover of good.”

Further, he was to be discreet or sober-minded. A man might easily carry the love of good into either a sentiment or an enthusiasm; but the Spirit of God gives sobriety. He is “a Spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind.” Thus is everything kept in its true place, because all is seen and weighed in the presence of God.

Hence the overseer was to be “just;” he must rightly estimate the relationship of others and his own: a most important element, not merely in a general way, but especially for one in his place. Nothing would more enfeeble his weight than a failure in righteousness. Yet to be “just” is not enough. It is of course imperative; but there must be more along with it. The overseer must be “pious,” or “holy” in that sense, “:.” It is not separate from evil, but gracious and upright, and is so used particularly of Christ in the Old Testament, as well as in the New. It is that character of piety which appreciates God's mercy, and is itself merciful. This was looked for in an elder, while he and all believers were arm or saints. Further, he was to be “temperate,” an expression much narrowed and so far misapplied in our day. Self-control not in one respect but in all is its real meaning.

These are the moral qualities which the Spirit of God insists on for elders, positively as well as negatively. But there is an addition of great value in verse 9, “Holding to the faithful word according to the teaching, that he may be able both to encourage (or exhort) in sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers.”

Here the necessary aptness to teach appears in the peculiar and twofold obligation for which it was required. It might not be formal ministry in the assembly; the work of the elder lay as much, or perhaps even more, with the wants and dangers of individual saints in daily life. Such an one must adhere firmly to the faithful word. Uncertainty in his own perception of it, uncertainty in his handling it for others, would altogether undermine the task laid on him to execute. The elder was not however to act according to his own wisdom; nor did his authority spring from himself, any more than from those that composed the assembly. He was God's steward, and the Holy Ghost made him an overseer, not in a mere flock of his own, “my people,” as men say, “but in the flock of God.” The faithful word, therefore, must be his standard, as well as the source from which he drew whatever material he used; and this not to nourish questions or indulge imagination, “but according to truth and love.” If he was a man in authority, so was he a man under authority. He was God's steward, that God's will might be done and the will of man repressed. God is not the author of confusion but of peace, Who will have all things done decently and in order. Thus the light of the faithful word must guide the elder and indeed the Christian. The teaching he was himself taught can alone determine what that order is; and now it is permanently in scripture. To that faithful word of God, therefore, the overseer must cling, avoiding strange notions as poison. Nor was it for his own guidance only. The elders were to rule, and, as made such by the Holy Spirit, were solemnly responsible to “rule well.” But if such were to be accounted worthy of double honor, it was especially true of those who labored in the word and in teaching (1 Tim. 5:17), as some might if not all.

Now in the conflict of circumstances which would come necessarily before the overseer, there are two wants constantly claiming his care—as well the need to encourage some, as no less the need to reprove gainsayers. Hence says the apostle in this passage, “That he may be able both to exhort (or comfort) with sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers.” For both a single eye is needed; but the faithful word is the means or weapon of all moment, sharper than any two-edged sword, which can divide as well as wound. On the overseer would fall this duty from time to time, and the faithful word alone would enable him both to encourage with sound doctrine, and to expose those who sought their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ.

In the later Epistles it is a sorrowful feature to observe how evil grows apace in the church of God. It had entered early, though apostolic vigilance and power held it in check; but it had never and nowhere entirely disappeared. Our Lord had prepared us for this, not as a question of fellowship for the church, but where the word of the gospel is sown in the world; for “the field,” as He interprets it, is the world. In that field tares were sown early by the enemy, and Christ's servants were forbidden to root them out. This, from their prejudices as Jews, they would have been too ready to attempt; but the Lord lets them know that in the field wheat and tares, however sad their mixture, were to grow together until the harvest. It is for angelic hands to deal with the tares when judgment comes. This is the day of grace not of judgment. The servants of the Lord are to sow the good, not to essay the extermination of evil from the world. To root up the tares would be death at least. This, on the one hand, the false church avowedly executes in open disobedience of the Lord. On the other, discipline in the true church, even to putting away, is according to the Lord's will. Indeed the church ceases to be the church where that unalienable obligation is declined. The Gospel of Matthew (chap. 13) and the First Epistle to the Corinthians (chap. 5) are in perfect harmony; but they refer to wholly distinct things. Wicked professors are to be put away from among the saints; they are not to be hurried out of the world. This the Lord preserves for the angels in the time of harvest, the end of the age. It is now sowing time, and the day of salvation. The judgment will fall by-and-by unsparingly; as grace should now reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. So it has reigned in the mighty work of redemption; so it ought to reign in the practical answer of the saints, individually or together.

It remains however that gainsaying abounds, the dark shadow which followed closely the glad tidings of God. “For there are many unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers, specially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who overthrow houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake” (ver. 10,11).

This we see even before the apostle's service closed. There were already “many” of these disorderly men. Whatever discipline might have done to clear the Lord's name, and safeguard the saints from corruption, this scandal abounded. It was a bitter sorrow for the heart of him who was soon to depart and be with Christ; and the more so, when he thought of the church, the beloved of Christ, so exposed to the attacks and wiles of the enemy. If grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, there were many now who bore His name whose speech was vanity, not to edification, whose aim was their belly, not to serve the Lord Jesus; nor did they merely foam out their own shame, but deceived people's minds. They led away the unguarded and self-confident, even where there might be life Godward. Still more did they hurry on to destruction the borderers whose ear is ever open to that which accredits man, in ignorance of the truth of God which lays him in the dust.

These unruly persons were “specially of the circumcision.” From without probably, yet more than the heathen had they knowledge of scripture, of course only of the Old Testament.

They were therefore quick to take the place of being a guide to the blind, a light to them that are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of babes. They had in the law the form of knowledge and of the truth. But if the name of God had been blasphemed among the Gentiles because of mere Jews who assumed the place of spiritual understanding, how much more was it about to be by the self-honor, of these “many” men who were not circumcised only, but baptized also! The apostle declares to Titus that they must have their mouths stopped. This of course could not be brought to pass by outward authority, but by the power of the word wielded in the Spirit. Titus seems one eminently suited for this work of vindicating God and His truth; as God would use his example and that of all who in faith act upon the apostle's word. Easy tolerance of evil may imitate grace, but is its shame and utter destruction. Grace maintains and is inseparable from the truth; otherwise it is no more grace, but a sham of good yet real evil, which demoralizes, corrupts, and destroys. It is not only that God is dishonored, but whole houses are subverted. This expression is morally important, “whole houses.” It might be through the head of the house, whose faith was undermined, and whose ways were made loose. What havoc to the family! and the more surely, if some or many of the household were unconverted. But even where all were converted, what a danger for them all! So much easier is it in this world to spread evil than to maintain what is good and true and holy.

No doubt the ways of these troublers were unruly; but evil teaching is still more pernicious, as it habitually clothes itself in thoughts which flatter human nature. Christ is not in it, Who is the life and nourishment of all who are born again. But these men were teaching things which ought not to be taught; and their aim was filthy lucre, not the glory of the Lord, but that which, as means or end, becomes an idol that tolerates lust and iniquity.

Evils are not everywhere the same; certain times and places have a character peculiar to themselves. The Cretans had an ill repute beyond most, and this not merely with strangers, who might regard them with scanty affection, but even among their own countrymen, usually apt to be somewhat prone to indulgence of faults. So “One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies' (i.e., gluttons). This testimony is true; for which cause rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men turning away from the truth” (ver. 12-14).

The apostle here quotes an ethic poet, Epimenides of Crete, in order the more to enforce the confessed dangers of those concerned. It is not to be supposed that he endorses him, this Gentile writer, as a prophet of God. It was needful therefore to add, “This testimony is true.” But it does show how grace condescends to use whatever is true, though the source might be impure. In the same spirit the apostle cited a celebrated comedian the more impressively to convict the Corinthians: “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” And if a heathen not particularly circumspect over himself or in his plays, gave utterance to a sentiment so applicable to the danger at Corinth, it was the more severe a reproof from such a mouth to the careless saints there. Their levity deceived them; even Menander reproved them. So here one of themselves, a prophet of their own, as a heathen moralist, gave a true witness to the unreliable character, the mischievous activity, and the lazy self-indulgence of Cretans as such. Natural character may be nothing for the life of faith: the Spirit of God works all that is good through Christ presented to the soul, as an object of faith, and spring of love, and giver of joy; but it is an important matter for the enemy, who skillfully acts upon the old man, if unjudged to the Lord's dishonor. Where there is unwatchfulness, a fall ensues. Therefore the evil nature affords constant danger. When Christ is really leaned on and looked to, the Holy Spirit gives entire superiority over evil. Here it is a question of those who are walking after the flesh: hence the humbling testimony is applied in all its force. Titus did well to bear it in mind; nor could a Cretan well complain of the apostle's severity, where an eminent countryman of theirs had long since owned their local character. “For which

cause rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound (or healthy) in the faith."

Pravity of conduct habitually flows from something unsound creeping into the spirit. To be unsound in the faith is the high road to unholy ways. Here too we find the perverseness of Jewish fables. It had appeared even then, and undoubtedly long before. Religions imagination has wrought since to the incalculable evil of those that bear the name of the Lord. But there is more than "fable" to watch against, even "commandments of men turning away from the truth." Never trust the practical exhortation or the moral way of those who, having professed the truth, have turned from it. There is no greater evil ordinarily in Christendom. It has an apostate character. For God's word will never mingle with man's commandments: where it is essayed, in the long run the human element really prevails, and the divine becomes a powerless form.

On Titus, Titus 1:15-16, On

We have to do with the truth, not with fable; and we are under grace, not under commandment of men alienated from the truth. Neither imagination nor human morality can mingle with Christian revelation. Scripture alone furnishes a bright sense of its living relationships and its glorious prospects, with which fable and "the unspiritual" mind can never compare. Nor can human commandments rise above their source; they are of the world, and therefore perishable. The word of the Lord abides forever, and judges alike both fable and human commandment. "To the pure all things [are] pure; but to the defiled and unbelieving [is] nothing pure; but both the mind and the conscience are defiled" (ver.15).

Duty depends upon relationship, and relationship on the revelation of God in Christ our life. Otherwise we are only in our sins. Such once were we all—not all gross, nor all externally shameful, such were some; but now through grace we were washed, but we were sanctified, but we were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God. Such is the source of Christian purity; and it is so much the more truly ours, because it is of God Who, as He has called, will also keep His own, through our Lord Jesus—loved in the world, and loved unto the end. To such all things are pure, because they themselves are pure. It is no question now of abstinence from this or that; of allowance of legal sanctity; of fleshly uncleanness. The will of God as expressed by His word directs the believer, as we see its perfection in the Lord Jesus. This is the true rule of life. Without Christ there can be nothing but a rule of death. And to the defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure. What was forbidden provoked the flesh to desire it. Stolen waters were sweet; and so it is still where Christ is unknown. Nothing is pure to the defiled and unbelieving, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled: an awful sentence morally, but most true. It is not only that their lower nature is corrupt, but the highest part of them, even that which ought to bring in good, and presumes to discuss divine things and God Himself, is wholly defiled. Religion in such a condition is at least as impure and profane as anything else.

It will be said, no doubt, that such persons know not God. This is undoubtedly true. They know neither the Father, nor Jesus Christ Whom He has sent; yet they may, or even do, profess to own God, as men now in Christendom, save the openly profane and unbelieving. "They profess to know God; but in works they deny [Him], being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (ver. 16). This alas! is not religions progress. The germ of it was even then in apostolic days. The fruit abounds everywhere in our day; and it will be found advancing more and more to greater ungodliness. For their word will spread as a gangrene. It suits the fallen nature of man. His pride is pampered by it, and his will delights in it. Departure from the will of God in a moral way prepared for the gradual rejection of all revelation; for men are ashamed to profess what they evidently hate, as well as what condemns them. God's word sanctifies. It judges the will of man, as well as all its outward workings and effects. It brings in God and His will, which grace makes the directory and food and joy of the new man. Instead of this Satan presents fable on the one hand and commandments of man on the other, which shut out conscience as well as God Himself.

It is evident that these instructions of the apostle are in full accordance with the teaching of the Master in Matt. 15, especially ver. 10-20; Luke 6:40-45; 11:34-44, and elsewhere. Christianity in the practical sense works outwardly from within: unless the soul be purified in obeying the truth, as with all that believe, there is neither the Father's name hallowed, nor sin truly judged, nor unfeigned love of the brethren. Neither can there be the worship of God in spirit and truth, any more than drawing near to the Father. All must be superficial and of the natural man. There can be nothing divine till one is born of the Spirit; whereas the gospel carries the soul, in the sense of God's favor in Christ, far beyond into peace, liberty, and power. For Christ is not only life, but the Deliverer in the fullest sense, as He is the revealed object before the soul from first to last.

Thus He, the unchanging One, changes all things for us; and if any one is in Christ, it is a new creation: old things have passed away, behold, all things are become new; and all the things are of the God Who reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. Such is the nature, such the character and ways of, God as He has now made Himself known to us in the gospel. How hateful to Him, and ungrateful in man, and base and rebellions in itself, to turn back from a revelation, so wondrous and blessed and complete, to the beggarly elements of Judaism, yea lower still, to the filthy defiling puddle of human fable and commandments! It is man's religion using as much, or rather as little, of God's word as snits the deadly deceiver, who is behind it all, and avails himself of that little in order to claim divine authority and avoid the reproach of slighting the revelation of grace and truth in Christ the Lord. But the pure in heart, as they shall see God, are enabled to discern present dishonor done to His word, His Son, and the mighty work of redemption, before the light of which these religions efforts and vanities of men flee away as darkness before the day.

We are not in this immediate context directed to the person of Him who makes all this folly and evil manifest; nor have we dogmatic unfolding of the gospel; but grand moral principles of the utmost moment are laid down. There is room for all, but each in its season, as God is pleased to suit His word to every one who hears the Shepherd's voice. "To the pure all things are pure." How plain and assuring to those who are subject to the Lord! How vain, in presence of such a declaration, to say that "the church" forbids flesh to be eaten on a Friday or in Lent! The value of a real fast is not denied thereby, but this is of grace in presence of adequate passing occasion; and never in the New Testament a general law, still less the sham of eating fish or eggs. Scripture, however, goes farther still, and, not content with maintaining the holy liberty of the Christian, denounces solemnly those who would infringe it. "But to the defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure, but both the mind and the conscience are defiled." Having part neither in divine nature nor in divine light, to which they plainly prefer human thoughts, feelings, and authority, they necessarily become a prey to the enemy whose malicious pleasure it is to dishonor God in man's dark and alien ways. Defilement accordingly taints every spring of inward and moral affection, as it pervades their entire life, be they or not openly corrupt, or at

any rate unbelieving.

It is in vain to boast in such a state of knowing God: as the Jews did of old, so do the superstitious now; but they alike prove the unreality of their boast, because “in works they deny Him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.” Hypocrisy, or at the least self-deception, is the inevitable result of their false position and state. The pretension to extraordinary holiness which essays to exalt self by ignorantly slighting

God's creatures, instead of using them holily and thankfully to His glory, opens the door to Satan who drags such into all defilement of flesh and spirit, yea into abominations contrary to nature itself. Estranged from the truth and grace of God, and abandoned to self, what hope can there be of repentance? What more terrible moral sentence than what the apostle pronounces, “unto every good work reprobate” ?

On Titus, Titus 2:1-2, On

In contrast with the injurious and profane trash, of which we have been just warned, the apostle now exhorts his trusted child and fellow-servant, and enters into details which we may profitably follow with all care. “But speak thou the things which become sound teaching: that the elder men be sober, grave, discreet, sound in faith, in love, in patience” (ver. 1, 2).

Scripture leaves no room for the thought that the saints need not diligent instruction. We learn what value for the apostle there is in continual exhortation. No doubt we have to distinguish between the sound doctrine and the things which become it. All right practice flows from divine principle; and all divine principles are concentrated in the person of Christ. He therefore is and must be the substance, the exemplar, and the test; as He is the object set before us as well as the life we have, and the nourishment of that life. For this very reason does the apostle urge fidelity on Titus. If he was steward of God's mysteries for the saints, he was no less to be a watchman on God's behalf. He was therefore to speak what befitted sound doctrine. This he could not do without Christ continually before his own eyes; nor would any profit as they ought without. Christ before theirs. There may be certain truths peculiar to certain times and seasons; but Christ is always in season; and, without giving Him His due place and connection withal, truth at any time is apt to fall flat, and, such is the infirmity of man, may sometimes work dangerously. His grace is sufficient as for the soul, so also for the servant; if he needs it for himself, he needs it for his ministry not a whit less.

Titus then was here enjoined by the apostle to speak the things which become sound doctrine. Exhortation should ever follow teaching, as it flows from the same source, and needs to be continually fed with the fresh streams of truth. It will be observed that the word is not exactly “teach,” but “speak thou the things,” &c. The work of Titus was largely pastoral; and a vast deal of a pastor's work lies in speaking face to face with the objects of his care. This does not at all supersede the value of public teaching, on the one hand; but, on the other, teaching in public will never supply adequately all that every day's need requires. How many things may be happily nipped in the bud, which else would threaten danger to souls! Taken early a kindly word may suffice; and what stimulus may be given by a few cheering words, where a soul might other wise hesitate and in time turn aside. How much instruction also may be given individually, and with far greater impressiveness than in the general exhortations of public addresses! Again, how few there are who know how to speak privately in accordance with their sound teaching! No doubt there may be legalism and a continual effort to preach in private as well as in public; but how happy when without restraint, and in unaffected love, there is fidelity everywhere, and the words at home are at least consistent with what has been heard in the congregation.

It is evident therefore that the language of the Epistle to Titus here is large enough to take in his service both privately and publicly, “but speak thou the things which become sound teaching.” Another element has to be taken into account. The special relations of those that are addressed themselves are not an unimportant consideration for a servant of the Lord. And we learn how careful is the apostle as to the befitting ways of those who are mutually related in the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians; as we see in the First Epistle of Peter with rather less prominence. Where mutual duties are pressed, the lesser or more subject relationship is regularly introduced before the greater. Thus the apostle exhorts wives before husbands, children before parents, and servants before masters. And this was done, one need not hesitate to say, in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. For even supposing that the more authoritative relation were to blame, how important that the subject one should feel and act aright before God! “A soft answer turneth away wrath.” Nor is anything more comely than the incorruptible pearl of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

Here to Titus the charge is different, and as proper in its own place. The apostle began with the aged or elder men. The first duty laid down is, that they be temperate or “sober.” If this became any Christian, the lack of it is serious in an elderly man: he above all should set an example of that moderation in spirit and conduct which bespeaks circumspectness and sense of the presence of God. One can understand how the inexperienced mind of youth may break forth into extravagance of thought or conduct; but such a fault sits peculiarly ill on a man of years, even if he be not old in the knowledge of the Lord. Retrospect should not have been without effect now that he does know Him in the light of God.

But besides sobriety aged men should be “grave.” It is not only that experience may be turned to the account of sobriety, but to an aged Christian things around, things before, ought surely to be viewed with no levity but with seriousness, as we now look upon the things, not that are seen but, unseen and eternal.

Then, again, Titus was to see that aged men be “discreet” or “sober-minded.” Their position would give them a certain weight, unless there were painful incongruity in their ways and spirit. There are continual perplexities that appear in the practical life of Christians. Discretion therefore is specially needed, and in none so much as an elderly man; who, if he lack the energy of youth, is expected to show discrimination in the conflicting circumstances of intercourse one with another.

Farther, they were to be “sound in faith.” It is very far from being enough that one know the Lord. It is well to be exercised in mind about the truth generally, but that very exercise exposes to mistaken thoughts, unless there be a single eye in looking to the Lord, and vigilance over one's own ideas. Neither is it safe to set the mind on, however one may respect, this favorite teacher, or that, among uninspired men. The word is the great safeguard, but the word sought into as a revelation of Christ to the soul. Where this is done prayerfully, there will be soundness in faith; where man is trusted (whether self, or a leader, or a party), error is not far off. For God is jealous of a rival and will never

endorse our leaning on the creature. He will have us to walk by faith, not by sight.

Nor is it enough to be “sound in the faith.” “In love” is the next word of the apostle. The order is instructive. As faith alone introduces into God's love toward us, so faith alone enables us to abound in the love of one another. There is scarce anything in which we are more liable to be deceived than in this divine charity, blessed as it is where real and holy. But it must be “faith working through love;” for faith brings in God, and God is love. It is not meant merely in what He has done for us, but in what He is and works in us. “He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love;” and “he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him” This supposes not only the truth known and enjoyed, but present communion with Him Who has made it all known to us in Christ and makes it good in those that are His, among whom questions are sure to rise which put the measure, and even reality, of love in us to the severest test.

There is another final want, of which the apostle speaks: that the aged men be sound— “in patience,” as well as in faith and love. Evil abounds; but evil, where the heart abides in faith and love, will not seldom give the opportunity of being above it. It may cause suffering; but in this there is fellowship with the Master; and patience well becomes the aged saint. It was a primary sign even for an apostle; as few things seem more sad where it is lacking, particularly among elders.

On Titus, Titus 2:3-5, On

Exhortation is now given for the other sex. “That aged women likewise be in deportment reverent, not slanderers, not enslaved to much wine; teachers of that which is good, that they may train () the young women to love their husbands, [and] love their children, (to be) discreet [or sober-minded], chaste, workers at home,1 good, subject to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (ver. 3-5).

As aged men were begun with, so aged women follow. With such, dress is not so special a snare as it is to the younger; but it is of great moment that, not their apparel only, but their general demeanor, should be suited to, and consistent with, those who have to do with sacred things. This, therefore, holds the first place. They would naturally be somewhat less restrained, from their age and habits, in all probability formed before their conversion to God. But grace is superior to all difficulties, and forms by the truth, instead of finding, that which is pleasing to the Lord. The doctrine however sound would be put to shame by irreverent carriage and demeanor. Where they bore themselves as those who had the fear of God before their eyes, it would commend their profession.

The next snare against which they are warned is the abuse of the tongue. Aged women were not to be “slanderers.” Unquestionably it becomes none that call on the name of the Lord; but as men are more exposed to the snare of rough or violent actions, so elder women to give vent to their feelings when irritated or in ally other way crossed. Idleness too (and often at their time of life there is apt to be a suspension of activity) would give room for injurious gossip. The Spirit of God therefore warns, in the next place, against abusive language on their part.

Again, their age, especially in the country before the apostle's mind, would give them opportunity and desire for wine. Naturally, we all know that the jaded body and tried mind might fall back on some such stimulant; as it is said in the last chapter of Proverbs, “Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts; let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his poverty no more. But the word is plain, “not enslaved to much wine.” Whatever may be the speculations of moderns, scripture will not bend to theory, but maintains liberty for the Christian in the use of every creature of God. Our Lord Himself personally and particularly disproved the assumption that all such use is evil in itself. Here, too, we have a clear proof that there is no absolute prohibition whatever. Timothy was even enjoined to use a little wine for his stomach's sake and his other infirmities. Aged women are simply cautioned that they be not enslaved to much wine. Such excitement as it can give becomes not those who, having Christ as their life, are exhorted to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5).

But the apostle is not content with guarding them against snares. It was fitting from their age that they should be “teachers of that which is good.” By good in this clause he does not mean what was benevolent, but what was honorable, what befitted themselves, and themselves in relation to the Lord. Aged women would have considerable opportunities. Set free from the calls on young and vigorous life, in old age they have a no less suited sphere of usefulness. Let them look to it that they be teachers, with the weight which experience gives, of that which is upright and comely. Whatever may be the tendency of nature, and the inclination from habit, grace brings in the name of Christ, and from Christ flows out all that becomes the saints, precious in God's eyes, whether they teach or are taught.

Next, the apostle looks at their relation to younger women, with whom they would as the rule have a strong influence. How were they to use their opportunities? “That they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children.” Here they would be admirably in place, and with the Lord before their eyes their experience would prove invaluable for those that have to face the daily difficulties and dilemmas of human life. Not merely were they to school their youngers to be subject to their husbands; to cultivate affection in the home circle is particularly pressed. This would win with an adversary of the truth, where godliness might at first be repellent; along with it love to a husband and to children is indispensably to be cherished by the wife and mother. Christianity was never intended to enfeeble the affections. If Christ governs, He is also the spring of sure unfailing strength. There is no trial with the husband or the child to which His grace would not apply; and the elder women were of all the most suited to cheer and confirm the hearts of their youngers, that they should not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good.

But there is another exhortation which fits in most suitably. They were to train their younger sisters to be discreet or sober-minded; they might be liable to enthusiasm on the one hand, or to carelessness on the other. Discretion is therefore a most needed quality to preserve in the true path of godliness and wisdom in the midst of the difficulties of ordinary life.

Further, purity claims a great place in the exhortation of the elders to their youngers. They were to train them to be chaste, in deed, word and spirit. Here the Spirit of God, revealing Christ, is of all power. How little it was known among the Greeks, or even the Jews to their shame! Their very religion defiled the Greeks; it was the consecration of every corruption, and made them far more polluted than if they had none. So mighty and so essential a quality is purity in Christianity, that it outwardly left a wholly new element, where grace was forgotten and truth almost effaced. Yet even then and there the very artists of christendom, the sculptors and painters, not to speak of poets, manifested how deeply the light of Christ had penetrated their conceptions, as compared with the voluptuous remains of ancient art. But here it was no

question of surviving sentiment, but a living reality, which a selfish Jew, or a dissolute Greek, would not fail to appreciate in family life.

The next thing pressed is that they be devoted to domestic occupation— “workers at home.” One cannot but feel the gracious wisdom of such an exhortation as this; and it, must have struck those who lived in heathen circumstances even more than ourselves, accustomed to the blessed contrast with heathen habits, in days of christendom, however degenerate. It is a fine example of the way in which the Spirit of God adapts Himself to the most ordinary duties in the present scene. See it in Christ, Who lived for so many years of His life, subject to His parents, and Who, in the obscurest of conditions, advanced in wisdom as well as favor with God and man. It is He Who makes all these exhortations as simple and easily understood as they are morally elevating. He brings in His own grace as applicable to women as to men. He shows us the way in every sense, the pattern of obeying God, undoubtedly beyond all comparison; yet how many has He not led, and fashioned, and blessed, in that narrow path!

The next exhortation is of great value, following diligence in home work. It is that the younger women should be “good,” in the sense of kindness. If Christ were not before their eyes, home work might be despised as drudgery. Christ sheds a heavenly light on every earthly duty, answering to the riband of blue which God commanded the Jews to attach to their garments. But the exhortation to kindness in this sort has special wisdom in following home work. There is no place where it is more valuable and less frequent. Nothing short of the Lord's grace could make it a constant habit, where countless little occurrences would inevitably turn up to try patience. But with Christ before the heart goodness would hold on its unobtrusive way; they would labor on as seeing Him Who is invisible.

Last, but not least, is the unvarying call that wives should be in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. What more irritating to a husband than the readiness on the wife's part to question his authority, or interfere with his plans? The habit of subjection is of all things the most suited to win a husband's ear; and assuredly the knowledge of Christ would give the secret of wisdom, whether he were a Christian or not. If he had experienced the danger and the evil of slighting advice, given very probably at his own desire, it would have the effect of producing the wish to hear again; but the wife's unjudged insubordinate spirit would completely counteract this happy influence, and make even what might be good to be shunned and disregarded. It was therefore of the greatest moment that the elder women should instill it into their youngers to be in subjection to their own husbands; and this not merely for the peace and profit of the household in general, and for the happy relation of the wife and husband, but “that the word of God be not blasphemed,” or evil spoken of. The failure of a wife in adorning the doctrine of God our Savior by subjection, even in that intimate tie, would not fail to bring reproach, not merely on herself individually, or her associates, but on the word of God itself. This may be unjust, but it proves what men expect from such as claim the possession of His favor; and these are bound to acknowledge that responsibility.

On Titus, Titus 2:9-12, On

Slavery was one of the grave facts which Christianity had to face, then universal, in some places existing yet to a certain extent. Nowhere does the power of Christ's work more clearly or more decidedly prove its heavenly source and character.

The apostle bids Titus exhort “Bond-servants to be in subjection to their own masters, to be well-pleasing in all things, not gainsaying, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things” (Titus 2:9-10). Here again subjection is the prime duty of such a relationship, and is accordingly put in the foreground—subjection to their own masters. Occupation only in thought with others might only do mischief. “To be well-pleasing in all things” is sometimes a very great difficulty, it may be from the peculiarities of the master or from those of the bondman. Satan would love to insinuate that in any other circumstances they might better obey, and that it is in vain as they are to think of being well-pleasing in all things. One's own master might be capricious or fault-finding; but there is no lowering the claim of Christ; and it is Christ, and Christ alone kept before the eyes, that enables a bondman to be truly subject and to persevere in all things instead of giving up something at least in despair. For faith, not resignation, is the true divine antidote to the passion of despair, which is never to be thought of by a Christian. Who more than a slave needs to remember God's call to rejoice in the Lord always?

Further, the slave was to be “not gainsaying, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity.” Many a one could do or even bear much who finds it difficult to avoid answering again; but the word is “not gainsaying.” Again, stolen themselves, or the children of those who were stolen, it was natural to have scanty respect for the rights of others whose very relationship was in general based on a wrong. But the apostle admits no reasoning on abstract rights as an excuse for “purloining.” He insists on Christian bondmen “showing every sort of good fidelity.” They were really serving the same Master as their masters if Christians; and without the sense of direct responsibility to the Lord, as well as of His grace, how could they go on thoroughly aright? So elsewhere grace teaches and exhorts that, whatsoever they do, they were to work from the soul as unto the Lord, and not unto men. It was not enough that they were not to be inconsistent and unworthy saints; but as the apostle here says, “that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.”

God's gospel is glad tidings to the highest earthly personage no less than to the lowest, though (as the rule) to the poor it is preached as alone generally accessible. No king, no queen, no emperor, but what is infinitely indebted, if the heart is opened, to the grace of God. How unspeakably sweet then for those in the painful and trying position of slavery!

It was this that wrought so powerfully on the affections of the blessed apostle. Therefore is he drawn out in the fall and beautiful declaration of the message of God's love. “For the grace of God appeared bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godlily in this present age” (Titus 2:11-12).

When the law was given by Moses, it was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator, All kinds of partitions barred man's way; clouds of incense, and veils rose up between the Israelite and God, Whose manifestation was only for one representative man, the high priest, for a passing moment and with ample blood, in the holiest. The law was the test of man already fallen, that sin might appear in its true colors. If sin was there, as it was, the law could only work wrath; for disobedience then takes the shape of open violation or transgression. Therefore is it said that the law came in by the way (), that the trespass might abound, and that through the commandment sin might become exceeding sinful. Thus law in result must surely condemn the sinner. It could never justify nor save the guilty, being characteristically the ministration of condemnation and death.

The gospel is wholly different in nature and effect where received. Therein the grace of God did appear, and we can add from elsewhere God's righteousness is revealed—the righteousness of faith which justifies, instead of condemning, because its efficacy is grounded on the accomplished and atoning work of Christ. Its character therefore is “bringing salvation,” and this not to a single people like Israel under the law, but “to all men.” The grace of God revealing Himself in Christ and His redemption is too precious to be limited; it is in itself infinite, for God is love as surely as He is light; and both have come out fully in Christ and especially in His death. God therefore is not of Jews only but of Gentiles also, Who justifies circumcision not by law but by faith, and uncircumcision through their actual faith, as we read in Rom. 3. A crucified Christ displays man as he really is. Jews and Gentiles are proved therein guilty and lost. But the grace of God goes out “to all” alike indiscriminately, not judging but “saving.” Such is the gospel as here shown. It is not a demand of works nor a test of man, but especially founded upon the work of God Himself in Christ; it is a revelation of His saving goodness for man to believe. “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved; for with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Nor is this all. While His grace presents salvation to all, it is also said to be disciplining us. Then change from “all men” to “us” is important, and ought not to be overlooked. The one is the universal message of God, which may or may not be received. The other is the distinct effect, whenever souls receive that message in faith. And to what end does God's grace teach us? “Instructing us to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godlily, in this present age.” No mistake is grosser or more antagonistic to the teaching of the apostle, than, after believing the gospel, to cast the Christian on the law as his rule of life. It is not so. Christ alone remains, not only the Savior, but the way, the truth, and the life; In and through Him has the grace of God appeared, and His grace alone saves by faith. But, besides, it disciplines us, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, and righteously and godlily, in this present age. We have first to watch against our inward snares, and those around us, to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts.” Either might work more or less to ruin the soul and dishonor God. In those who believing in Christ have a new and eternal life, a new character has to be formed, and old habits must be watched against which grew up in our past evil and folly. But that which is negative does not suffice for God as He reveals Himself in His Son. His grace, which goes far beyond law, instructs us, that we should live soberly as regards ourselves, righteously as regards others, and godlily in our highest relationship; for this present age is an evil one. But Christ gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of God our Father (Gal. 1:4). As it is here, in this world and during this age, that we live for the present, we are therefore called to be so much the more vigilant, if indeed we hear His voice.

On Titus, Titus 2:13-15, On

But there is another all-important branch of truth and full of rich fruit for the believer— “Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (ver. 13).

It is the object before us which forms our character. The Christian object is the Lord in glory; we may say of it in this respect what David said of Goliath's sword, “There is none like it.” The essential thing for the soul's salvation undoubtedly is Christ and His work for us received in faith. But if the true hope be lacking to the believer, the blank is irreparable. This is the fact, even if energy of faith and love may do much to hinder the wiles of Satan, who would insinuate false hopes under fair pleas as a substitute for the faith once delivered to the saints. As Christ is the proper object of faith, and as the Spirit forms us practically by our beholding Him living for us in heavenly glory, and thus transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as we read in 2 Corinthians so the right and divinely given object of hope is the coming of Christ to receive us to Himself.

Here the apostle presents it in a comprehensive way, not only the blessed hope, but the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Grace, we know, has already appeared (ver. 11), saving grace for all men. This they reject at their peril; for salvation cannot be otherwise, and the richer and surer the grace that saves, the guiltier is the unbelief that refuses or slights it. The grace of God alone leads into a walk of communion, and of practical righteousness for every day. But we need also to look for “the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory.” These are the two parts which comprise the revealed object God would have before our souls. “The blessed hope” is that which alone can satisfy the heart; it is to be in the presence of Christ on high, changed at His coming into His likeness and with Him forever. “The appearing of the” divine “glory” is bound up with it, and follows in due time, as that display of the divine manifestation in power, which our renewed souls cannot but desire to the utter exclusion of moral and physical evil and of Satan's guileful energy. It is Christ Who introduces it. As He brought the grace of God here below, so will He the glory to appear in His day. And He is called “the great God” as well as our Savior, lest we might forget His essential nature, when He executes judgments as Man glorified.

There is nothing nobler to act on the affections and the convictions, on the ends and ways, of man here below. Not in the smallest degree weakening the faith which works by love, it cheers and animates in the face of all which makes him groan; and we do groan now because, reconciled to God ourselves, we see nothing yet reconciled around us. Yea, we know not only a perishing world but a morally ruined church; not only the Gentiles still without God, but the Jews most of all hating the gospel of Christ. And what deliverance have we wrought in the earth? how far have we Christians, individually or together, reflected the heavenly glory of Christ as a testimony to those without? If the righteous with difficulty are saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?

Truly there is no ground for boasting save in the Lord, “Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all lawlessness, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works” (ver. 14). Thus, when bringing in the bright future of God, which alone can dispossess the enemy and deliver a fallen race and rained world, carefully does the apostle remind our souls that all has been of grace. We have no claim, no desert; we stand by and to nothing, but the Savior Who gave, not this or that merely, nor a thousand other things, however precious, which He indeed, and only could give, but that which is beyond all price, “Who gave Himself for us.” God the Father had His blessed part in the inestimable gift. He knowing all gave Him, sent Him. And He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?

The effect too answers to the cause: there is no failure, nor can there be, in the result for those that believe. What was His aim? “That He might redeem (or ransom) us from all lawlessness, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works.” Let us seek sedulously to make this good in our hearts, and to be a people for His own possession and delight (not “peculiar” in words or manner, habit or feeling), but for Him to have us as His own. It is wondrous that He should care to have us, or make much of such a possession. What

joy to the heart that He values us! May we be encouraged for this the more to be zealous of good works, not benevolent only but honorable and comely, not of forms or ordinances like Jews, nor of false gods like Gentiles.

“These things speak, and exhort, and reprove, with all authority. Let no man despise thee” (ver. 15). Arduous is the work of the ministry. Speaking, and exhorting, and reproving, must all have their place in faithful service. And “all authority” is thoroughly consistent with all humility. Woe be to those who despise Christ in the least of the servants whom He sends!

Lectures on the Second Coming and Kingdom of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Church of God in Relation to the Coming of the Lord, The

Titus 2:11-14.

Lecture 4.

ON a previous occasion we have seen the primary place which Israel had in the earthly purposes of God. Upon their land the eyes of Jehovah rested continually. Although for a season, to outward appearance, Israel lost their place, and the land itself has been the scene of continual devastation and of Gentile triumph over the ancient people of God, yet God Himself has never surrendered His plan — has only postponed that firm and first intention of His, as far as the earth is concerned. For all hope for the world, every approach to universal blessing upon the Gentiles, is bound up, not only with the restoration of Israel to their own land, but with their conversion to God in that land.

In explaining the subject of the Jews and the Gentiles, it has been already pointed out that there is an immense gap to all appearance, and indeed, in reality, in the ways of God — a gap which God’s word had left room for and predicted. During that interruption for the time being of the original plan of government, there has been a most important application of other truths, and a bringing to light of another system entirely distinct from the normal idea of Israel as the center of the nations for the earth. While God refuses to recognize the Jews as His people, He has transferred earthly power and authority to the great Gentile monarchies. This will have consequences of very deep interest; for, when the Lord comes and takes up the governmental plans which had come to naught for the present, wholly frustrated by the unfaithfulness of both Jew and Gentile, God will hand over, if I may so say, these broken tables to His Son, who will make good at His coming and reign, first Israel, or rather Himself as their King, the true Messiah of Israel, the spring and channel of blessing throughout the chosen people of God, who will then be fitted by grace for it, and so cause the stream of blessing to flow around among all nations; but, besides this, He will accomplish in His own person the other and larger glory, which answers to the exalted head of the Gentile world. Thus the two streams of blessing will flow peacefully around the Lord Jesus, the center as it were of two concentric circles which will then expand to His glory, and fill the world with divine blessing. He is the Son of David for the smaller circle, and the lower of the two; He is the Son of Man for the larger, all-embracing government, which will then be established under the whole heaven, and not only over the land of Judea. The rule of the heavens in His person will enfold all nations and bribes and peoples and tongues, and so ensure riotousness and peace throughout all the earth.

We have now before us another theme of still more surpassing interest, especially to those who know themselves the members of the body of Christ, It will be my business to show that as there is something yet more terrible than the Gentiles’ abuse of earthly power, which at the destined moment God will judge and replace by the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven to establish His own universal kingdom, so there is a blessing incomparably higher than, and entirely distinct from, anything connected either with Jew or Gentile. For disclosing this secret God in His wisdom selected that moment when the ruin of man and the world was evidently complete. It was not only the Jew rebellious and idolatrous, and the Gentile presumptuously and profanely denying the source of all His power; but when Jesus was in this world, when not merely law, the measure of human duty towards God, but the fullness of divine grace and truth came in the person of Jesus, the only begotten Son of the Father. And when the perfect divine goodness manifested in Him was hated of man, and drew out his fierce and increasing opposition even unto death, the death of the cross, then it was that God was pleased to bring a new thing to light. It was no longer that which was connected with the earth, not even His own appearing from the heaven to control and govern the earth; but He that ascended, rejected of the earth, into the heavens, went there as no private but public person, on the ground of redemption now accomplished. He “by [or, in virtue of] His own blood” entered into heaven. That blood, or rather the person of Him who shed it upon the cross and rose again, became the foundation of the Church of God. It was a work done on earth, but in itself and in its results infinite. It was a work which brought out the depth of what God is in holy grace to sinful man, the basis of His righteousness in justifying the believer. But more than this: God raised Christ from the dead, and set Him, not upon some earthly throne, nor even on a heavenly throne in connection with the earth, but at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers, as “the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.”

This was entirely unprecedented. When had been seen anything even remotely resembling it before? Mercy was no new thing; promises were not new, still less the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world for those blessed of the Father. None of these things was a mystery. On the contrary, God showed mercy to fallen Adam and his sons, gave promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prepared a kingdom, as we know, for the faithful of the nations, not to speak of His dealings with Israel; but when, had He a man exalted above all in been? when One who entered there with a perfectly efficacious sacrifice, and in risen life before Himself, as the head of a new system, head of a body on earth? Up to that time there had been nothing of the kind. So far from it that we are expressly told in the word of God it is a “mystery,” or secret (for this is the meaning of the word), which God hid, not in the Bible, but in Himself — a secret only now divulged to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. Types or shadows there might be, which, when this secret was made manifest, were found to receive an answer in certain of its parts or elements.

But, as a whole, it was an absolutely new thing, never made known either by man or to man, till the Lord Jesus Christ went up into heaven and sent down the Holy Ghost. Thus, as it was not only a divine person, but He as man, dead and risen, who is the foundation of the mystery, so there was to be another divine person sent down by the Father and Son upon earth to communicate the knowledge, and make good the blessing, and bring souls into the enjoyment, of God’s infinite grace in Christ, as well as of the glory which is proper to Him. This is the Church of God, the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Ghost; such is its portion even now.

You will understand, therefore, that when we speak of the Church of God now, when we read of it in the Bible, we are not to suppose a mere aggregate of individuals who are regenerate of the Spirit and look to Christ for salvation. There never was a time since sin came into the

world, that God did not work in souls. There never will be a time, till the new heavens and earth, but there will be a line of such believers on the earth. We speak now of that which Pentecost beheld — a sight absolutely new, yea, not even revealed in the Scripture. The testimony of the New Testament is abundant, explicit, and decisive about it. A few remarks may tend to make this plain. In the great body of the Old Testament we have the Jew, by God's institution, kept entirely distinct from the Gentile, without a question as to the character of the Jew or the faith of the Gentile. There were believers, of course, among Jews, as there were, certainly, from time to time, believers among Gentiles. The word of God proves this, so that it ought not to be a matter for debate or doubt; for it is a fact in His ways and a certainty in His word. But believers did not previously form one body; and more than this, there was no such thing ever promised or thought of in the Old Testament times, as any one forming a part of the body of Christ. Not only none of the saints, whose experience comes so largely before us in the law, psalms, and prophets, ever so speaks, but no prophet ever contemplates our proper oneness with the Lord. The attempt so to apply the expression in Isa. 26:19, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise," is (if it may be so said without offense) an evident absurdity. The Church is not a dead body, but expressly in living union with the Head. We are "quickened with Christ." It is an abuse of all propriety to allow for a moment that the Holy Ghost, who dwells hi the Church, would ever be supposed to fill a body that is a mere corpse in the sight of God. The truth is, as may be seen another time more fully, that in this verse God speaks by His prophet to the Jewish people, and, that they, as we know well from many parts of the word of God, are treated as now utterly dead. It is not that God will not raise them out of the sleep of death; but just as the Lord, in going to raise the daughter of the Jewish ruler, dealt with her that slept, so will it be with the Jewish people by and by. But the Church never is, under any circumstances, so described; it had no relation to God before it is called by grace into living union with Christ. And I venture to ask, In what sense could it ever be described as His dead body? It is of the dead body of Israel, then, that Jehovah thus speaks. It is not a question in Isaiah 26 of the Church, the body of Christ, the living Head in heaven, any more than in Ezek. 37, Dan. 12, and Hos. 6. (Compare, for the Assyrian, Nah. 3:18, and for the world, Rom. 11:15.) Israel had to Jehovah the relation of His people, which they forfeited under a broken law and a rejected Messiah, till divine mercy again raise them as from the grave and Jehovah own them as His "My dead body shall they arise."

To this, then, I would call your attention. The parenthesis of judgment has been already shown to exist in God's dealings with Israel, during which the literal seed have lost for the time their standing and title of God's people in the earth; namely, from the Babylonish captivity till the Savior, welcomed in their hearts in the name of Jehovah, re-appear and own them, and establish His kingdom in their midst with visible power and love. Besides, there is another parenthesis, which may be called the parenthesis of grace. This begins with Jesus rejected even to the cross, and raised up from the dead; but not yet to judge Israel and the Gentiles that have been guilty of that foul sin of refusing and putting Him to death. It is Jesus raised up and taking a new place in the fullest mercy in heaven, not only sending far and wide the message of grace to sinners upon the earth, but the Holy Ghost Himself sent down, and uniting those who now believe in His name both to Christ and to one another, members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, thus by the Spirit baptized and made one body, even now first upon earth, but surely never to be severed in heaven. But then for the first time is seen upon earth that strange spectacle and wondrous reality of divine grace, the Jew and Gentile joined together upon the common ground of union with Christ by the Holy Ghost.

And what a mighty preparation for this new work of God! Redemption accomplished, forgiveness and justification enjoyed, access into the holiest of all given, risen life and sonship made known, earthly priesthood, sacrifices, temple, everything that was connected with that mere visible and tangible scene here below completely disappearing, and these saints not in possession of the privileges here named individually alone, but united as a body to Christ the Lord at the right hand of God, conscious of their union with Him, waiting for Him to take them to Himself, to be with Him in that heaven where they know Him, and to which their hearts continually turn as their own proper home and portion — theirs because He, Christ their life, is there. Nothing of his did or could exist in the days that preceded Pentecost: not even unbelief can deny this, though it may display its blind baseness by treating it all as a mere question of circumstantial differences. Thus it is strictly, what I have called it, a parenthesis of grace; for it runs on from Christ's going up to heaven, and terminates with His coming again from heaven to receive those who are waiting for Him upon the earth. But when the Lord renews His connection with the Jews, and establishes His kingdom, the kingdom of the heavens, over the earth in the age to come, there will be no such fact as a head in heaven, nor, consequently, saints on earth joined in any such relation to Him as His one body by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

Is it, that there will be no such blessing as the Holy Ghost then poured out? Assuredly there will; but we must remember that, before Christ came, the Holy Ghost had ever been at work, for there was no dealing of God in the ancient world, from creation down to our Savior's presence and departure from it, without the agency of the Holy Ghost. It mattered not what it might be, judgment, mercy, power, skill, or wisdom, He was always the active Person of the Trinity. His it is evermore to deal with soul or body. I do not say that He is the object before them: the grace of God has given us this in Jesus Christ the Son; but the Holy Spirit is the inward agent who acts on and in men, and the power that effectuates, let it be in creation, providence, redemption, government, or anything else that God accomplishes in the earth. Not only will the ordinary action of the Spirit abide, but there will be an effusion of the Spirit of God even more largely than ever in the millennium. How, indeed, could it be otherwise in the day when our Lord Jesus Christ will govern the earth, and cause blessing to flow as a river everywhere? We know that the Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh. (Joel 2.) There will be a diffusion of good in power all the world over, richer far, at least in point of extent, than has ever been experienced here below. But it will not be, in most important respects, the same character of blessing as now. Christ will have come once more in person, and will visibly govern the universe. It would be presumptuous and vain for anyone to attempt to define details; but we have, on the warrant of God's word, the assurance that our Lord Jesus will come, will sit as a Priest on His throne, will reign in righteousness over the earth, and thus be the head not only of Israel but of the Gentiles too. All this is certain, and along with it we again find both a land and a people peculiarly holy and specially near the great King. We have others, too, owned and blessed, a little farther off. That is, we have Jews and Gentiles separated as of old. I do not mean that things will be resumed absolutely according to what was under the Levitical system; for the new covenant and the Messiah reigning in glory involve great differences. Nevertheless, there will be certain fundamental points of community between the two.

At the same time God, having once caused the tide of blessing to flow toward the Gentiles, will never depart from His grace, save in execution of judgment on adversaries. In the millennium, whatever may be the blessing of Israel, He will hold to it that the Gentiles are to rejoice with His people. But then this in itself is a very different thing from its present realization in the Church, wherein Jewish and Gentile distinctions disappear, and those who now believe are, by the Holy Ghost dwelling in them, made members of the risen exalted Man, Christ Jesus in heaven, the Holy Ghost being not merely poured out, but personally sent, The mission of the Comforter in person from heaven is the true distinction between the action of the Holy Ghost now, as compared either with the Old Testament times or the widespread blessing of which Scripture assures through Him in the future. Hence the presence of the Holy Ghost personally sent down from heaven (1 Peter 1) subsists now in such sort as was not true before Christ, and as is not to be after He comes to reign over the earth.

The truth of this (precious as the outpouring of the Spirit may be by and by), as it has often been before us in various forms, so will appear from many of the Scriptures which will come before us in the course of these lectures. Indeed, any one familiarly acquainted with the word of God will allow (and the more familiar, the more easily he will see and allow), that, in uttering what has gone before, a vast body of Scripture proof has been before my eyes in making these general observations.

Some very important consequences flow from this revelation of the Church of God, on which I would now say a few words, and on the hopes that are proper to the Christian. The statement of the truth as to this will of itself expose what it must necessarily displace and overturn — the earthly unfounded expectations which have been associated with the Church, because its heavenly character was unknown. My object is to prove and render evident that these truths are not merely important in themselves, but that they carry with them practical effects, not only for our outer walk, but also for the affections and inner discipline of the soul.

First of all, for all just laid down as to the Church of God, I appeal to the New Testament as a whole, and to every passage in detail which treats of the Church. Let me point also to the patent facts of the Old Testament, in contrast with what cannot be denied to be the teaching of the Holy Ghost in the New. If these things be so, let me ask how far our souls enter into this astonishing place of holy intimacy and near relationship to our God and Father, as well as to Christ our Lord. Have we weighed what becomes those who even now are one with Christ, members of His body, who have the Holy Ghost Himself dwelling in us? You will have noticed how it is assumed in Scripture, that this relation to God and Christ in the power of the Spirit supposes the consciousness of our union with Christ. How is it, then, that there can be members of Christ's body who have no such apprehension of their blessedness? The sad fact is, that the greatest mischief has been done to souls by mingling the hopes, the experience, the thoughts, and feelings too, which are produced by the revelation of Christ and the. Church with the experience, the expectations, and the ways of God's dealing that attach to the Old Testament saints. The Old Testament is as divine as the New; there is no part of it but what is of God. No one, therefore, can justly weaken or undervalue one word of either. But they are not the same. They differ, not in measure or degree only, but in character. Does this grate upon any heart here? Are there those who feel it to be unduly strong to affirm that the Church of God is, in its own proper nature, an absolutely new and heavenly thing? Let me ask such, if it be not worthy of God that He should put honor on His Son — His Son crucified upon the cross? Is it not worthy of God that, when all which the Old Testament would lead us to expect connected with the Messiah was rudely dashed to the ground in the cross, when the Jew and the Gentile emulated each other in hatred and contempt of His Son, — is it not worthy of Him, and due to His own Son, that He should make that moment of all others to be the one for bringing out counsels hid in Himself from everlasting, which alone involve and manifest an adequate value for Jesus and Him crucified, for the Son of God who had hung in shame, sorrow, and suffering, judged even of God Himself, for sin, yea, for our sins?

If earth refused Him, what did heaven? It opens and receives Him. Heaven had opened before when Jesus was here; now it once more opens to testify, not merely the complacency of God the Father in the Son, as He walked upon the earth, but what the feeling of God the Father was about the Son when, having been crucified, He was raised from the dead. It became then a question, what God would do for His Son. What could He do for Him in that nature in which He had been despised, and had suffered to the uttermost? He set Him up "far above all principalities and powers in heavenly places." Was that enough? It was not enough. Take the very worst, the vilest of men, and He will prove who the Son is; He will show what the value of that cross is; He will show the power of that precious blood to cleanse from all sin; He will show what the power of that life which is in Him is to them. The consequence is, that God then brings out counsels which He had kept secret before. He had promised the earth to Israel; He had ensured blessing to the Gentiles through Israel and in them; and all was necessarily connected with and dependent on Christ, because it was only so that either Israel or the nations could be blessed. But to whom had He ever promised the heavens? There all, as far as the Old Testament is concerned, might have seemed reserved for God Himself. No, He first puts the Second man above the heavens; for the wonderful truth is, that it is not merely in Christ viewed as the everlasting Son, which of course He was, but that which now shines out in the truth is, that all glory is conferred on man. It is in human nature that Christ is raised and exalted into the highest place in heaven. Let all the angels of God worship Him.

It was not enough, that Jesus personally should he thus in heaven; but what was the value of His work? That work was for sin; it was for sinners; it was also for God's glory, vindicating His character in every respect about sill; and now sin, awful as it is and destructive without Christ, becomes the occasion for God to display how Christ and Christ's work and Christ's blood triumph over every trace and effect of sin. The consequence is that now God could bring out the wonderful and hidden counsel, that whosoever believes in Christ is not only saved, is not only quickened, pardoned, justified, but has the Holy Ghost dwelling in him. So the Holy Ghost unites him to Christ.

Let us carefully warn those who hear or read. You often find persons talking about being united to Christ by faith. It is an unfortunate phrase. There is no such thing as being united by faith. It is the Holy. Ghost personally given who unites to Christ. It is the bond of One who is divine, and not merely of faith. It is admitted that faith is the gift of God. It is produced by the Holy Ghost, of course; but, beloved friends, to form a union between Christ and men upon earth, there is much more needed besides all this. If this be so, it evidently and at once sweeps away the theories of men about the Church of God. According to Scripture, His assembly in the New Testament consists, not exactly of believers, but of the believers who live now that the Holy Ghost, come down from heaven, baptized them into one body. The Holy Ghost is now given as the seal of redemption and the earnest of the inheritance.

There was no such state of things before Christ died, rose, and went to heaven. There was the Spirit regenerating or quickening souls by giving them faith in Christ; but He could not be the seal till the redemption was accomplished, of which He is the seal.

Again, there will not be the earnest of the inheritance, when the inheritance of glory is itself come. There we have the two ends, as it were, on either side of the Church completely put out of sight and reckoning. When the glory of Got illumines Zion, when the knowledge of His glory fills the earth, as the waters cover the sea, the time for the joint-heirs to take with Christ the inheritance will have arrived. Where would be the want or wisdom of an "earnest," when the inheritance itself is enjoyed? The truth is, that then the Holy Ghost will no longer act after this sort at all. Now He is the Comforter, or Patron; now He intercedes for us, yea, in us, with groanings unutterable. Why? The saints are in sorrow and trial; they are supposed to be always suffering, yet looking forward to reign with Christ; but when the Lord reigns, when the earth is blessed and the enemy bound, the action of the Holy Ghost will, of course, take a shape in accordance with so complete a change. There will be no need to give a divine stamp to the groans of men on earth, when there is really nothing but joy, and gladness, and peace, and righteousness everywhere. When all is thus bright, and evil is kept out, it is not the season for One to come and console the heart with the hope of future blessedness and glory on high. It is clearly another character suited to the new state of things, as Scripture abundantly proves.

Thus the Church differs essentially from the Old Testament saints; though they were as truly regenerate as we are, and just as certainly looking to, and resting upon, Christ alone: else they would not be saints at all So, in the millennium also, clearly there will be a divine knowledge of God in Christ, with self-judgment in His sight, or repentance, in every one who is born of God. The fact that Christ will be then displayed in glory, will not set aside the need of the operation of the Spirit in the soul, any more than when Christ was upon earth. Then, as before, the Spirit of God had to work in quickening power. Nevertheless, who can deny that the Lord Jesus distinctly intimated to the disciples (who had received Him, believed in His name, and were born of water and of the Spirit,) that there was some further blessing to be conferred on them shortly, which they had not yet got; that it was expedient for them, not merely for Him, that He should go away (for else the Comforter could not come); and that He, when He went, would send the Paraclete to be in them forever? We can all understand that it was expedient for Christ to enter into His glory above, but it was also expedient for them. The expediency lay in this, that else they could not have the Holy Ghost in that personal way in, which He was to be given and sent down from heaven. Christ went up, and the Holy Ghost came down; and now, from that day to this, the Holy Ghost dwells in every believer who rests on redemption in Christ; He dwells also in the Church of God. (John 14-16; 1 Cor. 3, 6, 12; 2 Cor. 6)

It would divert me from my present aim if I entered into the ecclesiastical bearings of this weighty matter, such as the gathering together and the worship of God's children. I am now viewing the Church in connection with the ways of God, so as to develop the ground of its distinctive hope. Viewed as it may be, it is evident that there is an entirely new creation brought to light upon earth answering to an entirely new thing in heaven — a man, a glorified Head there, who is God too. As Christ never before was a Head, as He only became Head when He went up to heaven after redemption was accomplished, so there was no such thing before on earth as the membership of His body. With this is bound up the Holy Ghost personally sent down, who makes us to be members of Christ; as it is said, "He that is joined, to the Lord is one spirit." It is not here a question of "one faith," but "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit;" it expressly Concerns the Holy Ghost working in this new and intimate manner. Not merely by believing, but "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." (1 Cor. 12:13.) He supposes the presence of the Holy Ghost, who is now given to be in the believer, and joins in one a believers, no matter what they may have been previously. (See also Ephes. 2.)

This, then is what, so to speak, makes the Church to be the Church. It is the place capital, constitutive element of God's Church, as the New Testament puts the case. But, moreover, the Holy Ghost is not here to draw attention to His own presence, however truly He is here and should be felt to be here. In fact, it is not so that He works at all. It is certain that He was sent down, and that He is here; it is very important, too, that the believer should own, know, and enjoy His presence; but still, the way in which He asserts His power is by exalting Christ. Hence, among His other glories, He maintains that Jesus is Lord, and consequently that there is no room for the allowance of human will in the Church of God, or for the interference of any authority as to divine things from without. Nay, more than this: all interference from within, save just so far as it is the Holy Ghost controlling the members of the body for the purpose of glorifying Christ (which conscience, guided by the word of God, has to discern), is a thing offensive to God and destructive of the very object of His Church upon the earth.

But if this be the character of the Church, and the power that works in it now, if herein lies the great test to decide what is of God and what is not, namely, the exalting of the Savior, I would ask, What does Scripture reveal as to the course and hopes of the Church of God here below? The New Testament, far from being silent, speaks much of both. Was the Church now to abide triumphant in unbroken progress? Was it infallibly to accomplish its immense work of worthily representing the grace and glory of Christ? Certainly Israel had broken down in its fruitless task, as the Gentiles had, as to their responsibility, wrought still more abominable corruption. What was to become of the Church of God? First of all, it differs widely from all others, its predecessors. The Church of God is not of this creation in any true sense. It is a stranger on the earth. It belongs to the heavens, where its Head is already, and whence the Spirit of glory and of God comes to form and fill it. Hence the New Testament continually keeps up this immense and fundamental truth, although the members of the Church of God may take up a certain place in the earth as for the moment succeeding Israel. The Jews were the people of God before, the members of the Church are now; the baptized are responsible to be witnesses for God upon the earth. Although there are some privileges and duties which they have in common with those who went before, they have a special character attaching to themselves alone.

This meets the difficulty which some minds feel in looking at Abraham's seed (Gal. 3) and the olive tree. (Rom. 11) It is quite true that we do follow Israel in these particulars and more. They were the seed of Abraham after the flesh; those who believe in Christ now are Abraham's seed quite as truly, though after another and spiritual manner. We have Christ; and as Christ was, in the highest sense, the promised Seed, in whom are all the promises of God, he that possesses Christ has all the promises already; for whatever promises there are, in Him is the Yea, and in Him the Amen, for glory to God by us; and in Him God has established us, who also has sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

There is more, however, to be noticed. Not only are the true believers thus Abraham's seed in a yet better and closer way than the literal Israel, because they have all in Christ; but also professing Christendom, or that which confesses the name of Christ here below, has an important place. This is the solemn matter treated of in Romans 11. The men of Israel were unfaithful to their trust, and made God's law odious and contemptible. The Gentile now, or professing Christendom, baptized unto Christ's name, is responsible to bear witness to God's goodness in the gospel; and, in point of fact, whatever light there is, whatever testimony in any way for God, is found, not among the Jews, but among the baptized. The Jews are hard, dry, blind, and dead, as their own commodities and pursuits. They understand not the very Scriptures they vainly hold in their hands. They are ashamed, abashed, and confounded, even before the feeblest true confessor of the name of Jesus; for it is too evident that, whatever may have been the light of Israel in olden time, it is now extinct and gone. The faithless Jewish branches are withered, and broken off. It is on the shoulders of the Gentile profession that any true testimony to God is borne. I say the Gentile "profession," because even those nominal Christians who are not born of God still have the outward light, which the Jews lack. Among them exclusively is there any recognition of the grace of God. There only is the gospel preached, and more or less truly even by unconverted people. They may not follow Christ, they may not receive the truth in Him; but still there is the holding out the word and name of Christ, especially His cross. But then all the mass of outside profession of Christ, although there is truth in it which is found nowhere else, is fast vanishing away, and we are now living in days when Christendom hastens to its ruin; and the strange sight grows apace, not merely of infidels (for there have been at all times plenty of infidels), not merely of profane men who mock and triumph at the abuses of Christendom, but of men who are apostates, though in every imaginable position of the Church so-called; not only professing the name of Christ, but setting up to be the teachers, chief rulers, and pillars of the Christian profession. Thus we have not alone the gross men, who deride the Bible and every truth in the Bible in proportion to its value and its glory, but (woe is me to say it with the sad conviction of its certainty!) the defense of the truth seems yet more ominous than even the attacks upon it. It is the pitiably feeble resistance to these assailants under the Christian name

and garb; it is the lax and compromising style adopted by those who are accepted as orthodox and true men; it is the letting in of the fatal principle, that Scripture contains errors, demonstrable errors, they will tell you, and this not coming from the rationalistic party, but from those who boast of the gospel, and who in the same context profess to be the champions of inspiration: these are the signs which portend the speedy “falling away.” What must be the result?

If these be the thoughts and words of men who stand for revealed truth, what can be expected from the advocates of free-thinking? If such is the actual state, what may be looked for in Christendom, when God sends strong delusion that men should believe a lie?

But along with this, God has sent forth a cry at midnight, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh!” And the good and gracious One who, thereby, has awakened souls afresh, and awakens them everywhere to the return of His Son from heaven — He who has wrought, spite of every hindrance in the way of indifference, scorn, and opposition, has also now vindicated His word, as it never was vindicated, since the early Church turned aside to mingle fables with it. The earliest writings of Christian antiquity evince the awful tampering by Judaisers, Gnostics, and superstition-mongers with the purity of the word of God; the latest writings, in the midst of approaching apostacy, are by contrast the best of all “evidences,” not only to His word, but also to His Spirit’s grace in the recovery of long-lost and precious treasures.

In very deed, God is now graciously recalling souls; and mark His way. To what does He arouse them, first of all? To Christ in heaven, to the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, filling hearts on earth with the consciousness of their relationship to Christ and of His love. And what are the effects? The perfect, happy, holy liberty of the Christian, heavenly joy in the certainty of the Savior’s love, and of communion with Him in thorough growing separation from the world, in every shape of it, that hated Him. And what then? Has all this no bearing on the Lord’s coming? God forbid the unbelieving thought. Surely it has much every way. When has there been anything like the present expectancy of Christ? I am aware that speculative men will tell you that cries have been heard continually in seasons of agitation among men, that the Lord was coming. But I am bold to affirm that there never was anything like the present attitude and tone of waiting for the Lord. The truth is, that there has been, from time to time, no small panic. Men have quailed, tearing that the day of judgment was just at hand. Is this the same thing as the bright, joyous hope of the Bridegroom’s coming? Is this going out to meet Him? No doubt at the year A.D. 600 a general alarm pervaded Christendom; and the year of grace 1000 witnessed a still more violent fright (for it really was unworthy of a better name). They shuddered at the thought that the Lord was just coming, to judge the world. Since these days there have been times, generally of external change and confusion — states convulsed, revolutions of kingdoms, &c., and the poor children of men and of God, too, frightened like hares, have thought and feared, ay, feared, that the Lord was at the doors, But can any fair man, with a judgment formed on the word of God, confound these painful rumors, these humiliating panics about the day of judgment, with the Lord calling out the virgins to go in with Him to the marriage?

It is not merely, you will observe, that they are awakened by the cry heard at midnight: this but recalls the virgins to their original position, which they had abandoned to sleep more at ease. Grace reawakens them; and they retake their lamps now trimmed, with oil in their vessels, and once more go out to meet the bridegroom. They do not stay where they were; they leave all that had detained them from their proper object; they burst through all earthly impediments; they cast aside the rags of human tradition. It is the prophetic picture of the recovered hope of the saints, acting on their hearts after a long eclipse, of souls neither excited nor alarmed, but in sympathy with the love of the Savior, and awaiting His coming with peace and joy in their souls. Is there nothing like this going on now? I appeal to those who love the Lord and the Church; and the more they know what is going on in the Church, and the more honest they are in answering, the better. Is not the midnight cry being made? Is there no going forth to meet Christ? It seems to me there can be but one answer, wherever spiritual intelligence and honesty are found. Since the apostles passed away, never till now has there been the appearance of any such awakening in the hearts of the saints all over the world; never before this joyful welcome, taking the place of sleep that used to be only disturbed by dreams of distress.

And another thing is in its way to be marked. It is not a set of persons satisfied with themselves, or wishing to use this cry in order to make a party. God forbid such a misuse! The cry goes out from the saints of God, wherever they may be, and penetrates where it is least expected. It has been heard in Catholicism. It has rung through Protestantism. Neither nationalism nor dissent have been able to stifle the call. Despite of all past sloth or present barriers and stumbling-blocks, the wise virgins go out to meet the Bridegroom. It is for none to say how far the Lord may carry the call, or to what extent He may give it effect. I do say it is a dangerous thing for souls to wait to see this or that result produced, before they go forth with oil in their vessels. Let the eye be only on Christ. Let the heart ever rest on the precious truth that we are one with Him, joyful in the taste of His love by the Holy Ghost now, and we shall soon reciprocate the longing of His heart who says, “Behold, I come quickly.” If we know what He is to us here, we shall earnestly desire unbroken fellowship with Himself in heaven. And if saints only in a larger measure enter into this most precious portion for the heart, they will not be able to rest where there is not a practical testimony to it in their hearts and their homes, in their walk and their worship. The hope is just as practical as the faith of God’s elect, and must be carried out into the details of each day. It is, indeed, the necessary homage of the saint, and due to the Lord and His truth. Therefore, every time when they meet tether as children of God, those who are conscious of such a call to go out to meet the Savior, cannot do without the assurance that they are on such a scriptural ground, and so guided by the word and Spirit of God, as to leave them happy in welcoming Him from heaven.

One may gather then what is the position of the Church in reference to Christ’s coming, even from the very cursory sketch that I have been able to give tonight. Only the general thought of the Church and its hope is here presented, in contrast with Jew and Gentile, without entering as yet into the rapture of the saints, or any question as to those who must pass through the future tribulation. As this is reserved for another occasion, I must for the present pass over many Scriptures of deep moment, content with no more than the broad and general aspect of that which the New Testament predicates of the Church. I trust, however, that every Christian here, small as may be his spiritual discernment, may see that such a new and wondrous relation as the union of the Christian and of the Church with Christ opens the door for a hope that is no less precious and special. He must be dull indeed who recognizes nothing more in John 14, for instance, or in 1 Thessalonians 4, than that which was expected by the saints of old, and expressed in the language of the Psalms and the prophets. Far different is that which the New Testament presents to the heart. What is the hope of the Church there? Is it social improvement or human progress? Is it even spreading the gospel throughout the whole world, and the conversion of the Jews? Not one of these things is our proper hope.

Do I mean, then, that it is not the duty of the Christian to preach the gospel, or to further the preaching of it, to every creature? Far from it; yea, in this as in other respects, I say, the Church is guilty; we ourselves, we are guilty. When I think what the Church was and will be, when I think what the Savior was and will be and ever is, and then of what we have been and are, I for one cannot but confess we are verily guilty for the poor, scant, feeble testimony to God’s grace we tender to every creature. Bear with me if I say, beloved friends, that I believe we have, in the present condition of Christendom, peculiarly to watch against a snare that is incident to the true position most of us are in. Beware of

substituting a judgment of others, in their wrong ways of doing God's work, for your own loving sympathy and right service. May we all have grace earnestly, humbly, self-denyingly, to help on the work of God ourselves. May we rather search how to help and sympathize with our brethren? It is an easy thing comparatively to criticize the various religious societies — for instance, those for missionary purposes and Bible circulation. It is not difficult for one to discern ways, means, and objects even, which are contrary to the word of God. Nor do I wish to weaken godly feeling as to all this for a moment.

No doubt, the way in which the world is appealed to and mingled with the Church is a fatal vice, ruinous to the testimony of God, and contradictory to the whole character of His Church. It is the same kind of sin as for the wife of a loving husband to play him false, giving herself up to that which is as shameful to her as contrary to his honor and love.

Let no one infer the least indifference to the sin of Christendom, to the duty of entire separation of the Christian from the world in doing the work of God.

But this does not alter my conviction, that we ought to be ashamed on our part that we so little feel our identification with God's testimony on earth, that our sympathies are so dull and intermittent for His workmen and His work in every form, that we have and shew so little self-renunciation, so little energy of heart in throwing ourselves into every movement of the Spirit of God whenever it may be done with a good conscience. Let us remember, "For My sake, and the gospel's." (Mark 10) What an answer in the day of the Lord, to say that we have not done this, and we have kept from that! It is quite right that we should not be drawn into unscriptural and offensive ways; but we ought surely, when we separate in sorrow but none the less thoroughly from that which is evil, to look up to God for grace that we may know His way of doing His own work, and that we be found in it heartily. "Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so. The Church from the beginning has reason to be ashamed. We ought more thoroughly and universally to have carried out the gospel to every creature. It was, it is the business of the Christian here below — not the whole business, nor yet the most blessed part; but still a most sweet privilege, a most suitable and bounden duty; for duty we have just as much as privilege. We ought then and thus to have been found in our measure scattering the good seed throughout the field of the world. Let us own that it has not been done, and that we have our own great shortcoming to confess.

What, then, is the present state of things? and what does the word of God warrant the believer in expecting? Exactly what has been, growing declension — at last, apostacy. The apostacy may not yet be complete, but it is ripening. The "mystery of iniquity," as the apostle himself says, "doth already work." The secret mischief was going on in his days; and what more solemn than the inspired intimation that the mystery of iniquity, even then at work, would go on till it ended in the apostacy, and in the revelation of the man of sin who should be destroyed by the manifestation of the Lord's coming? There is thus an uninterrupted chain of evil, first in the hidden form, and then in full development, never to be set aside by the gospel nor any energy of faith in the Church, but to await the final personal judgment of the Lord Jesus at His appearing. Here, then, not only the hope of the Church, even Christ Himself coming as the Bridegroom, but also His appearing in the way of judgment, are connected. The Church should joyfully, but patiently, wait for the one; Christendom cannot escape the other by false expectations and evil ways which only hasten that day.

It is evident that the practical effect is immense. Suppose, for example, that I am looking at the Church as having a vast future before it in this world, that it is to triumph over all adversaries, that it is to fill the whole world with the fruit of divine blessing. What will be the effect of such an expectation? Why, I cast myself into every kind of instrumentality for the purpose of bringing about these desired results. But if one knows that, on the contrary the evil is going on rapidly to ruin, that it began in apostolic days, and that it is irreparable; if one knows that the lawlessness of Christendom is surging up higher and stronger than ever; if one knows that every moral sign around betokens the speedy outburst into a flame of that which is now in preparation for the great catastrophe; how will all this affect the spirit? Of course I shall rejoice in having the Savior as the he of my heart—a hope shared with every saint of God, whether living or fallen asleep. But if I know that He is coming to receive us, and then in due season to judge all that is found here below (Christendom the most severely of all, as being the servant that "knew his master's will, and did it not"), what will be the effect? That I shall seek to separate myself from every act, habit, course, or association which the word of God condemns to my conscience; that I shall desire to be found with loins girded and light burning, and myself like one that waits for his lord.

Other opportunities may offer for drawing out the rich practical consequences of this truth. Tonight I would leave the great but simple fact resting on the minds of those that are listening to me; and I pray that God Himself may lead all our souls to look well to it; first, that we are really appreciating the place which grace has given us as members of Christ's body, the Church of God; that, if we do value it, we may be found carrying it out, not merely now and then, but every day; and that we allow nothing to draw us aside from the practical expression of our hope, and of our allegiance to our Lord, as of our thankfulness for the infinite mercy shown in bringing us into God's Church. The great bane of Christendom from the beginning has been either slipping into the world, courting it, valuing earthly objects on the one side, or on the other taking up Jewish elements, which is a mere religious, vain show, and now treated by the Holy Ghost in us Gentiles as no better than idolatry. (Gal. 4) But whether it be the Jewish element or the worldly conformity, they are alike destructive of the real separate and heavenly character of God's Church.

Again, we see that there is a hope which fits the Church of God. As Christ is the Head of the Church, so He is its hope: it is His own person and His own personal coming, to be with Himself above. It is not merely our going, but His coming for us; neither is it alone the individual soul happy and delivered from the sorrows and trials of this world, but every member of His body changed into conformity to the body of His glory — the dead raised, the living transformed; and both caught up with joy to the Savior, our life and our Head, come from heaven to receive us unto Himself, and present us before the Father in His house on high.

With remarkable clearness does the apostle distinguish the hope even from the inheritance of glory in the prayer which closes Ephesians 1. "That ye may know," says he, "what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.... and you," &c. The calling of God is detailed in the earlier verses of the chapter; the central verses develop the riches of the glory of God's inheritance (which He takes, not immediately and personally, so to speak, not in Christ alone, but also in the saints, who are not the inheritance, but rather the heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ). Then this prayer asks for them that they might know, not exactly God's calling, but the hope of it, — their bright future portion in Christ suited to it when everything inconsistent with the divine nature and our relationship to God shall have disappeared, and all shall be actually and only in full flow, fruition, and harmony with

Him in whose presence we shall be. Next, it is sought that they might know “the riches of the glory of His inheritance,” which, boundless as it is in glory, is nevertheless a prospect inferior to the “hope,” inferior even to the saints who are the objects of the love of Christ and of the Father, with which “the hope” connects itself. The third request (on which, however, I must not now enlarge) is, that they might know what is the exceeding greatness of God’s power toward us who believe, even that the self-same power which raised up Christ is that which has quickened us together with Christ, raised and seated us together in heavenly places in Him. How blessed and special then is the hope of God’s calling, as well as all that follows! Nor is it surprising, after all, to those who know who and what God is, and what is His love and value for Christ, seeing that He has given Him to be head over all things to the Church which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. The hope must be and is worthy of such infinite love and blessing.

Such is the Christian hope. Distinctly and in due time there follows also the manifest execution of His judgment upon that which bears the name of His Church, but is not — upon everything in Christendom that is false and contrary to His glory. He will judge the world. He will judge, but not as unhappy men of Christian antiquity imagined (which I just mention by the way, to show the early, rapid, and dreadful defection from the truth). They actually thought, that if a man were ever so wicked, but baptized, he would be better off in the day of judgment — better off even if cast into hellfire, than a mere Jew or Gentile. What a clear proof that these men, miscalled “the fathers of the Church,” but really its corrupters, polluted the sources of truth from the beginning, and contributed amazingly to the ruin of Christendom to this day This is not said from prejudice, nor from a mere dip into their writings, but from some acquaintance with the best. That gross error, inconsistent with an adequate knowledge of Christianity or any right moral measure, is found in those who are considered the chief. Does it not prove how rapid and deadly the departure was from the deposit of God’s truth? In fact, it was the working of the mystery of iniquity, or part of it. Now things become bolder; now the apostate character, and not corruption merely, becomes more and more apparent; the hatred, the scorn of the Church’s true character, and not merely of its privileges (for, alas, they are unknown), but even of the common principles which a Jew would have known and valued as his heritage. If this evil is notoriously going on, even in those that profess to be the defenders of the truth, Christendom is assuredly ground that bears thorns and briars, is rejected and cursed, whose end is to be burned.

In presence of such facts and such a future, what is it which every soul that has not faced these truths in the light of God ought to feel? Let the heart search and see that there be no object between it and Christ, that He can be welcomed day by day as the immediate hope of the Christian. I do not use the word “immediate” to fix a time in the least; but would add this remark, that when Christians talk of not fixing the time, they often mean in reality that Christ is not coming yet. Now, I protest against such a ground of objection, however I may repudiate the fixing of a date. Undoubtedly most who speak about fixing, or not fixing, the time, prove that they do not understand the question. In been, and for heaven, dates have no place; and our hope is a heavenly one. It is on earth, and for earthly matters, that we find the importance of times and seasons. They may be and are measured by the orbs of heaven, but still it is for an earthly people and earthly hope. If our place be with Christ on high, we are above them. We are one with Him who sits at the right hand of God. Times and seasons have no value nor bearing there. Whatever delay may be now, the reason is, not a date, but God’s long suffering in saving. It will close when God the Father has called out the last member of the body of Christ. It is not that He is “slack concerning His promise;” but when all are called out to heavenly association, Jesus will come to receive His saints who are waiting for Him.

Do you say that there are many saints of God who are not awaiting Him? I dare not say so. I believe that every saint of God loves the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many a saint may be obscure, he may hold wrong theories, he may insert a millennium between himself and. Christ’s coming, and thus fall under an immense incubus; but he has Christ as his hope for all that, if he loves Christ. It may be a poorly understood hope; there will surely be but a defective display of it; there must be a very partial enjoyment of it; yet it cannot be but that he who has Christ for his life, delights in and longs for the seeing of Christ, and the being with Christ and like Christ. At the same time, I admit, of course, the utter wrongness of interposing a delay by these prophetic misinterpretations; I warn against the admission of any earthly objects whatever between the heart and the coming of Christ. Depend upon it, that it is a great and frequent snare to guard against. It is not merely that some put a millennium between the present moment and His coming; but others again confound their position with Jews and Gentiles, and imagine a fearful tribulation for Christians between the present and the coming of Christ. Those who thus shake souls (2 Thess. 2:2) are just as guilty as others who take the world now, antedating the millennium. (1 Cor. 4:8.) The great tribulation is no more suitable a preparation of the Bride for meeting her Bridegroom than is the millennium. The truth is, Scripture interposes nothing between the heart and Christ it speaks much of these things, but it never substitutes either of them for the coming of Christ. This, too, will come bore us more fully another time; but I wish to leave on all a sufficiently plain and distinct view from God’s word of what the Church is, and of the hope which suits so blessed a relationship to Christ. May it ever be in our ears and hearts!

On Titus, Titus 3:1-2, On

From personal and domestic duties the apostle turns now to those which are external.

“Put them in mind to be in subjection to principalities, to authorities; to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing all meekness unto all men” (ver. 1, 2).

As the apostle Peter presses similar exhortations on the believing Jews in his First Epistle, so did the apostle very fully in writing to the Roman believers, who were mostly Gentiles. Now he charges Titus, himself a Gentile, to lay similar injunctions habitually on the Cretan brethren, whose countrymen were notorious for their insubordination and many vices to boot. Never was such an exhortation more needed than now, when the lawlessness of the age so rapidly increases as to shock all the right-minded. Lawlessness in the world is no less flagrant than a similar spirit in the church, though no doubt it is specially hateful in the temple of God, where the Holy Ghost dwells; but it is very possible for men to hold a rigid theory of obedience within the church, and to trample under foot and deny a similar responsibility in the world.

Scripture however is plain and decided: it is not enough that it be for wrath's sake, but for conscience. God is concerned in our subjection, for there is no authority but of God, those that be are ordained of God: monarchical, republican, or any mixture of the two, are ordained of God. “Therefore, he that resisteth authority withstandeth the ordinance of God.” Nor does it matter whether it be a supreme ruler or those commissioned by Him, as the apostle Peter lets us know (1 Peter 2:13-14), “For this is the will of God.” It was ordered in His providence that when the apostle wrote to the saints at Rome, one of the most cruel despots reigned: even so let every soul be in subjection to the higher

authorities. The worst ruler is better than anarchy. Nevertheless it is not for this reason of utility that the word of God speaks. Whoever he may be, he is the minister of God for good. He beareth not the sword in vain, he is a minister of God, and avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. If this doctrine is strange in our day, it is the more incumbent on the faithful, not only to believe, but to practice accordingly

Next, Titus was to remind them to be obedient in a general way. That this is the force of the word is plain from the New Testament usage. There is no sufficient reason to translate “to obey magistrates,” as in the A. V. This is to lose an exhortation by making it a mere repetition of the former clause. Do people plead the rights of man? the true place of the saint is “to obey.” Do they abase obedience in order to set aside the authority of God? the answer is, “We ought to obey God rather than man.” But obedience always, and every where is the duty of the saint. If not sure of the will of God, he ought to wait till he learns, if one of the elect in sanctification of the Spirit onto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. We are neither Jews under law, nor are we lawless Gentiles. The spirit of obedience Godward, if not always of man, it is therefore of the highest moment to inculcate.

But, further, the apostle would have Titus to press readiness unto every good work. The saint is called not only to be a righteous man practically, but a good man. So our Lord here below went about doing good. If we cannot, like Him, heal those that were oppressed of the devil, we are here exhorted to be ready unto every good work. It is a real and effective testimony to Christ where the truth is held and confessed along with it.

But again, he would have them put in mind “to speak evil of no man.” This is no easy matter in a world where evil abounds on every side, and where so much of it is leveled at the children of God in both word and deed; but God's word to us is plain, “to speak evil of no man.” There may be a duty to bear witness for a godly end. Let us take care that it is only thus we can be charged with it.

Moreover, it is very difficult for those who are in the truth not to seem “contentious” toward such as deny it, or count it unattainable or indifferent. With Christ before us, however, the clear place of the Christian is to be really far from any strife, though charity demands that we should bear our testimony to the truth, and ever to deal faithfully with our brethren. If the Jew was not to allow sin in his neighbor, how much more is the Christian to be watchful in love, and speaking the truth in love! This can only be with God before our eyes as seen in Christ., Then love is used and is never contentious.

Moreover, we are called to be “gentle.” Here again Christ has left us an example that we should follow in His steps. None so withering in His exposure of hypocrisy and self-righteousness; yet none so tender and considerate even to the most faulty against Himself.

Lastly comes, “showing all meekness toward all men.” What self-judgment is called for! what continual walking by faith and not by sight! Christ before our eyes believingly can alone either call it out or sustain it, whatever the circumstances.

On Titus, Titus 3:3, On

The apostle now draws a very dark yet true and life-like picture, not merely of what man is here or all over the world, but of what we ourselves were once in our natural state. It is evident that this was intended to strengthen the duty of subjection to authority on the one hand, and on the other the spirit of mild and meek bearing to all mankind, in all those who bear the name of the Lord. Grace was to prevail and display itself all round. This has been far from always the fact among God's children. And no wonder. They have been trained up for the most part under the mistaken assumption that the law is the rule of life for the Christian. The consequence has been that the Christians so formed have manifested the spirit of earthly righteousness, much more than of heavenly grace. Necessarily in the measure of our uprightness we are really characterized by that which governs our thoughts and affections. If error rule there, as communion fails, the walk is proportionably perverted from the will of God.

No maxim more false than that the practical life is independent of the creed. Christ is set forth in the written word as the true rule of Christian life; and as He walked Himself, so He uses all the word of God in the power of the Spirit to create in us intelligence as well as divine motives flowing out of His love. Grace, therefore, is the predominant character of the Christian, the direct and essential opposite of law. Undoubtedly God did of old test Israel by His law, and the commandment is holy, just, and good; but the object was to prove the impossibility of aught good in man, or to be got out of man. This the believer has to learn, and alone does learn, experimentally. On that ground nothing but the grace of God in Christ can deliver from sin, as well as from its consequences; but the practical effect is that the righteous import ( ) of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. With those who theorize about the law, it begins with ineffectual struggles, and issues in disappointment or delusion.

Hence the importance for us, who, as believers in Christ, are now the objects of divine grace, that we should draw lessons of lowly love, not only from the incomparable grace which has saved us, but from the utter depths of evil out of which we ourselves have been saved. “For we ourselves also were once foolish, disobedient, gone [or led] astray, serving [as slaves] divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, abominable, hating one another” (ver. 3).

To the Greek mind especially, perhaps no description was less welcome than that with which the apostle commences, “our folly.” But this is the truth. Human knowledge has nothing to do with it, save, it may be, by making the contrast more glaring. See a man, on the one hand full of science, sound information, and letters, as in Rom. 3; on the other hand a prey to every falsehood about God, and wholly without, and insensible of, any living relationship with Him. In the beast there cannot be such a link from its nature; there is for it no moral association with God. But a man! He had, even as man, God breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, whereby he became a living soul; he is therefore immediately and ever morally responsible; he was made to obey God, as much as to rule the lower creation. On earth the brute looks down, man alone looks up. Sin has utterly ruined this, whilst the responsibility remains. He has become the slave of a mightier rebel than himself. What “folly” now? and what can the end be?

Accordingly we find the next description of the apostle is “disobedient.” This is the universal condition of man; so he lives and dies in his natural state, never once obeying God here below. From a condition so desperate Christ; Himself the obedient Man, though infinitely more than man, alone delivers, and this by imparting His own life through faith. “He that believeth hath everlasting life.” It is true that this could not avail without Christ's death, which alone removes man's guilt before God by Christ's suffering, Just for unjust, on the cross. Yet even His death

could only be a blessed incentive to a new walk here below; and there would be no new life in which the Holy Ghost could act by the word, were that all. The first want therefore of a sinful soul is the breath of a new and spiritual life. But herein was manifested the love of God in our case, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Life in Him is only and always an obedient life; thereby the Holy Spirit separates us from evil from the moment of conversion. For we are sanctified, as the apostle Peter says, to the obedience of Jesus Christ, no less than to the sprinkling of His blood. Without His blood we should be oppressed with the sense of unremitted sins. Spiritual life alone would rather deepen this sense; life could not remove it righteously. It is there that His death by grace comes in effectually for us before God. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:9, 10).

Thus the whole work of Christ is necessary for sinful man, and is the incomparable boon which faith enjoys in its fullness; but the practical aim of it all is that we, having died to sins, should live onto righteousness (1 Peter 2) and walk even as He walked here below. “He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoso keepeth His word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected” (1 John 2). For man there is nothing good without obedience, yet were we also once as “disobedient,” as we were “foolish” or without intelligence.

Further, we were not only wandering in error, but “deceived,” however highly we may have thought of our independence and shrewd judgment. Nor should one be surprised to learn that so it was. We were part of the world which lies in the wicked one, where the spirit of self-will governs all without exception, Jews or Gentiles, among the sons of disobedience. “We also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as the rest” (Ephesians wholly ignorant that we were but slaves of one who is a liar and the father of it.

Nor was the evil confined to disease of the mind. We were “serving divers lusts and pleasures “; so much the more bondmen, because we flattered ourselves that we were pre-eminently free. We did our own will and pleased ourselves; we chose our pleasures here or there as we liked. What was this but to be slaves of the devil when we were pursuing divers lusts and pleasures? Our will is his slavery.

Such ways as these exposed us to constant dangers, difficulties, strains and ruffles. Conflict of will broke in upon the calmest surface of amiability; gusts of feeling, yea, of passion, swept us along now and then; in short we were, as Paul says here, “living in malice and in envy,” whatever might be the good opinion we had of ourselves or valued one from another.

Lastly, the apostle does not hesitate to say we were “abominable” as well as “hating one another.” We awakened the horror of other people, spite of all appearances or efforts; and others returned “hate” with no less bitterness of feeling. What a power of evil lay on us! What a reality of shame is alienation from God!

On Titus, Titus 3:4, On

“But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love toward man appeared.” The A. V. rather fails in that it merges the philanthropy of God in His kindness; whereas, by a distinct article to each, the two things are presented separately, however closely associated otherwise. Next, God's love toward man is a single word , whereas the absence of the article in the English makes its natural meaning to be His kindness toward man as well as His love. Now this is not really the thought expressed by the apostle, which appears to be as I have endeavored to represent it.

It is a blessed and full statement of what God is in His kindness in contrast with all that we were in our folly and evil aforetime. Corruption, violence, disobedience, and error described ourselves. God, Who is holy and of inflexible righteousness, is also the God of gracious goodness in His own nature, and has most especial love towards man. This is no longer hidden, no longer a manifestation to be waited for; it has appeared so completely that God Himself could not add to the expression of His love. “The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” It is true that no man has seen God at any time, but this has in no way hindered the activity of His kindness and the proof of His love to man; on the contrary, it has given occasion for its richest possible display. “The only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” Nothing could match this. It was beyond all thought of creature. The angels were lost in admiration; men, in stupid unbelief, think nothing about it, else their hard hearts would melt before the wonders of such love. The mind of man is incapable of fathoming grace, and therefore retreats into its own dark selfishness. And no wonder, if he judge as he is ever apt to judge of God by himself. Not one that ever was born would have had the heart for such a thing, even if he could. He sent His only Son to die for His enemies! To die for a good man, or for a dear friend, is what some rare man might do, as it has been done; to die for one's enemies is an impossibility for man. But this is the very way in which the kindness of God and His love toward man appeared. Being characteristically divine it can only be received by faith. Those who believe their own thoughts, and judge from their own feelings, refuse to receive it, give the lie to God, and are therefore lost, and this most justly. For this is the rejection of God, alike in His grace and truth. Now, whatever may be the compassion of God toward foolish disobedient man, as we who were so once can but testify, God cannot pass by deliberate and persistent contempt of His love in the presence of His revealed light. And it is the true light of God which is now shining. Such is the gospel of Christ, in which more than in all else put together the kindness of God and His love toward man appeared. He sent it forth to every creature as the sun shines for every land.

It was not so with the law, however capable of dealing in a righteous way with every heart that takes it up. Still the law was given to Israel, and they only were formally and by divine authority placed under the law. According to the scriptures the Gentiles were without law, and on this ground will they pass under God's judgment, as we are told in Rom. 2. But now even they, who were nothing but sinners, and had nothing but the conscience to accuse or excuse, have the unspeakable privilege of the gospel preached to them. As the Jews were without excuse in rejecting their Messiah when He came to them in love and ample attestation, so the Gentiles are yet more inexcusable if they shut their eyes and ears to that Christ, Who lifted up draws all men unto Him. It was a wonder for God in His love to humble Himself and come down to man in the person of His Son become a man. It was a wonder infinite that a man Who was God incarnate died as a sacrifice for sinners on the cross. He now is raised from the dead and received up in glory, exalted to give repentance and remission of sins, not to Israel only, but to any poor sinner who believes in Him to the ends of the earth.

“This is love, not that we loved God [which was what law asked but did not get], but that He loved us and gave His Son [this is the gospel] as a propitiation for our sins.” Thus did the kindness of God and His love toward man appear. It is matchless, full of comfort, deliverance, and blessing to every soul believing in Christ; but he who despises it, as he dishonors God in His deepest grace, so he incurs God's vengeance and everlasting judgment. In the solemn words of our Lord Jesus Himself, “He that believeth (obeyeth) not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

On Titus, Titus 3:5, On

It is remarkable that if we find the word in its human application in Acts 28:2, this is the only passage in scripture, where we hear of “philanthropy” or love of mankind predicated of God our Savior. This is worthy of inspiration. The philanthropy of God means His special affection towards man and, as we shall see presently, shown in a way of which the creature is quite incapable. Benevolent men boast of their own philanthropy or of their fellows. What can be more in contrast? The baser metal is displayed very often by Arians, Unitarians, and Deists, by heterodox Agnostics and Positivists. Furthermore Christians of every sort scruple not to join frequently in an unholy alliance with any or all those enemies of the faith. Men glory in these combinations so foreign to God's word and Christ's cross, worldly substitutes for the unity of the Spirit we are enjoined to keep. They rejoice that any merely natural means should be applied to the relief of social distress and personal misery.

In what is purely external and of this creation men can all unite, whatever their faith or lack of faith, yea, opposition to the faith of God's elect. Such is the philanthropy of man, without serious thought of God's word or will, occupied with prisons and workhouses, the hospital and the asylum, and seeking to deal with every degraded class, as well as the misery of the world in general. But our Savior God deals with man and brings in the light which discloses his ruin in the best circumstances, from the throne down to the firstborn of the maid-servant that is behind the mill. God's philanthropy views the human philanthropists as perhaps most of all needing His saving love, because they are blinded to their sins by the consciousness of amiability or benevolence. Many of them in principle believe nothing unseen. They see only the facts of human misery and seek to alleviate it, wholly ignorant that they themselves are wretched before God no less than the lowest of those they would relieve, and this for an eternity, which they not only do not believe but perhaps openly deny.

God's philanthropy is as different as His nature is from man's, and springs from motives of love in Himself, as it is based on the sacrifice of Christ. So we are told in the verse before. No longer hidden as once, it has appeared; and man is the more responsible because it contemplates all, but it is valid only for those who believe. For it is not “By works in righteousness which we ourselves did, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost” (ver. 5). Language cannot be clearer than this.

The works of man as a ground for salvation are excluded; and most mercifully, for how could the unrighteous man—and such we were by nature before God—do works in righteousness? There is no doubt a work done in righteousness, if there ever was such, and an infinite one. Christ, the Righteous One, did it all. For it terminated with His suffering for sin. Thereby have we our blessed portion. We committed sins in unrighteousness abundantly; works in righteousness we ourselves never did till we were justified by divine grace. But according to His mercy God saved us. Thus is He God our Savior. It is not only the title of His character: He has wrought according to His mercy in Christ.

It is not a theory but a fact; according to His mercy He saved us. The best part of Judaism consisted of shadows which prefigured this; but Christianity is founded on facts in Christ come and suffering for us, and these facts are now applied to souls. Christ is the life eternal; and the Christian has that life in Him, not in himself but in Christ. “He that believeth hath eternal life;” yet he was guilty and cannot deny his sins, but confesses and hates them before God. We needed therefore a Savior to die for our sins as much as a giver to us of life everlasting. This in both its parts was in the mercy of God; and thus according to His mercy He saved us.

But a mercy unknown or doubtful in its application to the soul is shorn of half its blessedness. Such is not the philanthropy of God. He loves that we should know what Christ has done and suffered for us. Believing in Him we are saved and know it on His own word and in the delivering power of His Spirit. Hence it is added, “According to His mercy He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Not only are we set in a new position through Christ's death and resurrection, of which baptism is the sign; but there is the effectual power of the Holy Spirit to renew us, making it an effectual belief in the soul from first to last. It is unbelief alone that doubts God's salvation, if we believe in Jesus. “He saved us,” though it is only in a way most holy and that secures holiness in us.

Regeneration is a new state of things, and not merely “to be born again,” as anyone can see in Matt. 19:28, “And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” It is the changed state of the earth which the Lord will introduce at His coming, as the kingdom of God pre-supposes according to John 3. That state is not yet come; but there is an action of grace which already apprehends a believer for it the moment he receives Christ. Of this baptism is the sign—not of the new birth, buff of deliverance from sin and its effects, by the death of Christ witnessed in the power of His resurrection that has taken away the sting. Superstitious men, who know not God's grace in Christ, can only misuse the sign and confound it with the thing signified. The gospel may not dispense with the outward side; but it announces an everlasting reality in Christ risen. How blessed to have our part in this new creation even now (2 Cor. 5)! How wondrous to know that “if any one is in Christ, it is a new creation! The old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new, and all things are of God, Who hath reconciled us to Himself through Christ.” Before this is manifested to every eye, the Christian has the washing of regeneration now and renewing of the Holy Spirit also. This makes the force evident. If the washing of regeneration is an objective sign, the renewing is a real and divine work in the soul. In order that it should be so, the Holy Spirit, as He does invariably, takes His suited, and efficacious part, which is no mere token but a reality in power.

It is well known that some are disposed to understand here “the laver of regeneration.” The A. V. did not recognize this; the margin of the Revised Version does. It is well that the Revisers did not venture farther. The notion is absolutely unfounded; for never means laver but washing, or the water for the washing (in the sense of hath) as is notorious. Never in the N. T. occurs which is the proper word for “laver.” They are both found in the Septuagint, and even , a place for washing or bathing-room. It is strange indeed that a commentator of learning could say that is always a vessel or pool in which washing takes place, here the “baptismal font.” Liddell and Scott do, it is true, give “a bath,

bathing place," but not a solitary instance of such usage. Their abundant references are to hot or cold bathing in the sense of washing, or water for it, or even libations to the dead; but is the tub or laver, as is the place or bath-room. Bp. Ellicott and Dean Alford misrepresent the Lexx., of course only through haste or pre-occupation. The word is correctly translated "washing" in our text. There could be no question about the matter unless there had been a prejudice to warp the mind. The wish was father of the thought.

On Titus, Titus 3:6, On

(CHAP. 3: 6.)

Salvation then is no outward work; nor is it now mere deliverance by power, but personal and inward." through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." There is a total change of position in Christ, a new place which is given to the believer, as well as another state subjectively. This is expressed by the washing and renewing. Old things are passed away, all things are become new. For now the believer is in Christ. As a man he was in Adam. Faith is now entitled to know that we all stand in Christ by God's mercy, and altogether independently of what we did ourselves. Thus the evil is gone before God and for the conscience; for Christ is risen, the full expression of the state into which the Christian is brought by grace.

But, besides the subjective change and the objective place, there is an incomparably blessed power which works in those who are brought into this standing. It is not only that there is the "renewing," perfectly true as this is; but the Holy Ghost Himself has been poured out upon us in all fullness, as it has been said here, "Which He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior" (ver. 6). This covers the entire Christian life. It is not merely that He effectually works, but He abides with us for over. This is of immense value and in evident contrast with O. T. privilege where the danger of His leaving is felt and deprecated, as we see in Psa. 51. Under the gospel our privileges are known as abiding. The life is eternal, and so is the redemption, as well as the inheritance. It is in short eternal salvation. The Holy Spirit Himself is even called in the Hebrews the Eternal Spirit, though there it is in His special connection with Christ offering Himself without spot to God. But beyond controversy it is the same Spirit Who is now by grace imparted to us, or, as is here expressed with peculiar emphasis, "poured out upon us richly." Undoubtedly this could not be, save "through Jesus Christ our Savior;" but so it is added here, that we might dream of no other ground, on the one hand, and on the other have the fullest assurance of abundant and unfailing grace in the power of the Spirit personally through such a Savior. It is a privilege which never can lapse, any more than God revokes it where faith is living, as it flows through Christ and His redemption.

We know that, on the day when this privilege was first made good, powers and wonders accompanied; but no mistake can well be more pernicious than to confound the gift () of the Holy Spirit with those gifts () and signs and miracles which were external vouchers, as well as the display of the victory of the ascended Man over all the energy of evil. The presence of the Paraclete is an incomparably higher and deeper thing than all the mighty deeds which He wrought. Just so the grace and truth of our Lord rose above the signs which pointed out Who and what He was. Even tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not; and yet tongues, the characteristic Christian miracle, approach nearer to that which edifies than any other exertion of divine power. But the gracious action of the Holy Spirit conveyed by His personal presence rises far above all such accompaniments, as the cause does above some or all of its effects.

Hence the all-important truth for all saints is, that while displays of power have passed away, as unsuited to the ruined state of the church, that which always was and is most needed and precious abides, because it rests on His work, finished on earth and accepted in heaven, Who never changes; and it comes to us through Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and forever. It is He who gives us to cry, "Abba, Father," and this is in the Spirit of the Son. It is He Who takes the things of Christ, and shows them to us and glorifies Him. It is He Who searches all things, yea the deep things of God. He gives us communion with the Father and the Son, no less than He helps our infirmity and makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, because He makes it for the saints according to God. It is He who is all-powerful on the one hand for service in testifying of Christ, on the other for the worship of saints, in the assembly above all.

The Holy Spirit has abdicated His relation to the assembly no more than to the individual Christian. It is only by the Holy Spirit that every believer can say that Jesus is Lord; but the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each to profit withal, for to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit. If there are external ornaments taken away, we can and ought surely to justify God; but He withholds nothing that is really necessary or profitable and for His own glory. Just as of old, so it is now—one and the same Spirit works all, dividing to each one severally as He will, for He is sovereign; and woe be to those who presume to control Him I He abides therefore for the blessing of the church and individual saints to Christ's glory.

The wealth of our privileges in the present gift of the Spirit corresponds to the nearness of relationship with the God and Father of Christ, and to the oneness with Christ into which only the Christian is introduced; and these are every one of them blessings not more intimate, and rich beyond all other times, than permanent: of none is this predicated more emphatically than of the Holy Spirit. But the unbelief of Christendom apprehends none of them as now revealed; and even God's children for the most part are a prey to doubt and darkness as to each, through the spirit of the world that has invaded them all but universally, even where they have not become victims of the delusion of the enemy in a vain pretension to a special revival. From all this evil on either side faith preserves the soul in peace. For if the Holy Ghost is still "poured out upon as richly through Jesus Christ our Savior" (and to deny this is in principle to deny the perpetuity of Christ's body and of the personal Pentecostal presence of God's Spirit), there is no room for a restoration of what God never took away. And, again, if the Spirit is still here in person, constituting God's assembly, how sad and shameless for those who believe in it to allow arrangements which grew out of unbelief in His presence and oppose His free action in the assembly or by the gifts of the Lord for the edifying of His body! Would that they who err in spirit might come to understanding, and they who murmur might learn doctrine! "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength," as wrote the evangelical prophet.

On Titus, Titus 3:7, On

Now comes the design of God. His kindness and love to man appeared in saving according to His own mercy, and with all fullness of favor at this present time: “That, having been justified by His grace, we should become heirs according to hope of eternal life” (ver. 7).

It is a mischievous mistake to suppose that the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on us richly is in order to our justification, as some have strangely conceived. All scripture proves that the gift of the Spirit follows faith, instead of being a preparation for justification. The effect is bad; for the Holy Ghost identifies His work with us: what He effects in and by us is ours. This accordingly would make the new work and walk of saints a means of justification, and thus grace would be no more grace. Not only does scripture else where uniformly prove the fallacy and the evil of such a view, but the very clause before us refutes it. For we are said to have been justified by the grace of God; or, as it is expressed in Rom. 8:34, “It is God that justifieth.” Certainly the believer is the last man to justify himself. God justifies, instead of laying anything to the charge of His elect, who abhor themselves before Him, owning not only their sins, but their nature as vile and corrupt. They are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:24). Here it is put as a fact emphatically. “Being, or having been, justified by His grace.” It is already done. Now grace on His part excludes desert on ours. “To him that worketh the reward is not reckoned as of grace but of debt, but to him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness,” and as reasoned out in Rom. 11:6, “if by grace, no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace.”

The grace of God assuredly produces works suitable to its source and its character. Holiness of walk follows in its train. But His grace implies necessarily that there is no good thing in us. It is therefore purely favor on His part as far as we are concerned. He has indeed taken care that there should be laid an immutable ground of righteousness; but this is in Christ and His work alone. It is in no way a question of desert in the object of His grace; who on the contrary is saved expressly and exclusively as a lost sinner. From the moment of new birth he becomes a saint and is called to walk thenceforth as such; but in this context it had been already and with precision laid down, “not out of works in righteousness which we had done, but according to His own mercy He saved us.” Christ dead and risen is the sole possible means of God's salvation; and His work of redemption is a righteous ground. For our passover also was sacrificed, Christ, Who died for our sins, having suffered Just for unjust, to bring us to God Who is glorified thereby, as never before, nor so by aught else.

But it is well to note that the apostle speaks of justification with a triple connection. In Rom. 5:1, it is justified by or out of faith. There is no other principle on which it could be without compromise. We look out of ourselves to Christ, and rest only on Him raised from among the dead, Who was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification. Therefore have we peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is of faith, not of works of law; and these were the two competing principles. If any works could justify a man, it must have been the works of God's law. Works of man's device could have no value with God. Works of law would have been all well, if man could do them. The truth is that man, being now a sinner, could not possibly face them. “All sinned, and do come short of the glory of God,” which becomes the measure now that Eden is lost by sin. All his works are necessarily vitiated by his fallen condition, even if he had not been as he is powerless through sin. Works of law therefore are wholly unavailing, save to detect and manifest the ruin of a sinner. If he is to be justified, it must be through Another by grace; and therefore it can only be by faith (.), not by law works. That the apostle in Rom. 5:1 asserts, with its blessed results for our souls toward God, past, present, and future.

But in ver. 9 of the same chapter we are told that we have been justified in (4) His blood. Here the efficacious cause comes forward. Without the blood of Christ no sin could be purged really and forever before God. But the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from every sin, as John declares. Hence if God justifies us, it is in virtue, or in the power, of Christ's blood; and having been now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” Our sins were the great difficulty, as the believer truly felt; but now they are gone, and he is justified and to be saved. Such is the confident assurance to us of the apostle: a monstrous piece of presumption and cruel cheat, if he had not been inspired of God to declare it as righteous and true.

In our text, Titus 3:7, we are directed to the source from which justification flows. It is the grace of God, and not any merit in its objects. It is therefore an unfailing source, with a ground which justifies God no less than the repentant soul. The result is according to the mind and love of God, “that, having been justified by His grace, we should become heirs according to hope of eternal life.” It is difficult to conceive anything more complete than these three statements of the same apostle. The accuracy of the form too is as striking as the truth conveyed is blessed to him who believes. Indeed it is a threefold cord which cannot be broken for him who trusts God by grace.

Some object to “heirs” standing alone; but it is all the more emphatic because it does. In Rom. 8:16, 17, we are told that we who believe are children of God; and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and Christ's joint-heirs. Again, in Gal. 4, the believer is no longer a bondman but a son, and if son, heir also through God (assuredly not through man, himself or others). Thus we learn the double truth, that by faith, not by works of law, we are heirs of God, and this through God. All is sovereign grace. It is He Who made us His heirs; and we are to inherit what Christ will inherit in glory. To Titus the apostle speaks so as to leave us “heirs” all the more largely, because it is quite indefinite.

But we have important words which accompany it: “Heirs according to hope of eternal life.” This life in Christ is the believer's now; but we have it in a body fall of weakness, compassed with infirmities, and in fact mortal. It will not be so when our hope is accomplished at the coming of Christ. Eternal life will be no longer hid with Christ in God, but manifested according to all the power of His glory, as it is even now the gift, the inestimable gift, of God's grace. So in the end of Rom. 6:22, we read, “Ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end eternal life.” The glorious future is here before us; then and there alone will the full character of eternal life be seen unhindered. But it is no less really true now, as the next verse (23) shows; for if the wages of sin is death, “the free gift of God (flowing from His favor) is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord!” This is His present gift in Christ. What a privilege for the believer to enjoy now! What a responsibility to walk accordingly and bear a true witness to Him! It is nothing less than Christ in us the hope of glory. When He comes to Israel, the glory will be possessed and manifest. We have Him as life while He is hidden in God; and when He shall be manifested, then shall we also with Him be manifested in glory.

On Titus, Titus 3:8-11, On

Nor was the apostle content with his full and clear statement of the gospel. He draws the attention of Titus to its importance and value in a formula not uncommon in these pastoral Epistles. “Faithful [is] the saying; and concerning these things I will that thou affirm strongly, in order that they who have believed God1 may be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men; but foolish questionings and genealogies and strifes and legal fightings shun, for they are unprofitable and vain” (ver. 8, 9).

There is no real ground for doubt that the apostle is here looking back on the development of the truth which had just occupied him. The salvation of God from first to last was simply and briefly stated in 1 Tim. 1:15, 16. It was here more fully explained. The relationship of the Holy Ghost to it is brought out as an added privilege, no less than the grace of God as the spring of it all. In 1 Tim. 1 it is just the plain truth of Christ come into the world to save sinners. Certainly the object of faith is not left out here; but God is shown to be a Savior-God as well as Jesus; and the Holy Ghost is said to be poured out richly, besides His renewing us, that, being justified by God's grace, we might be made heirs according to hope of eternal life.

It may be alleged, no doubt, that “faithful is the saying” precedes in the former case, whilst it follows here. But chap. 4: 9, 10, is a clear proof that the order may vary without in any way affecting the certainty of the apostolic application. The A. V. like some others is at least ambiguous, if not misleading; for one might infer from it that the faithful saying was merely the call of believers to maintain good works. This however is a most unworthy sense, which the text, as well as the truth generally, disproves. The apostle is laying down the only ground of power for a fruit-bearing course; he is urgent with Titus, that he should insist constantly and thoroughly on the sure but exclusive truth of salvation by grace in all its fullness as well as reality. This was the apostle's first theme for individual souls everywhere and always; he now presses it on Titus. Without it there is no readiness or power for good works; without it conscience is clouded, the heart hardened: there is neither life nor peace where it is unknown. When we are saved after this divine sort, we are able to take everything to God as well as from Him. In a world which cast out Christ and where Satan reigns, trials and sorrows are expected for the faithful, yet do we give thanks; comforts and joys are given of God, and we give thanks. Faith sees and hears Him Who guides and guards, whatever the difficulty or danger. His will is acceptable as well as holy and perfect. We love not His commandments only, but His word, having found its value in our deepest need, as He by it made known His love to us, in spite of our alienation and hatred. Now we can say without presumption, we love Him, because He first loved us; and we feel for His name and His honor. We desire to do His will, and to please Him; and this is the will of God, even our sanctification; for He has called us on terms of holiness, and we are ourselves taught of God to love one another: so the apostle has ruled.

Known salvation therefore, by God's grace in Christ our Lord, is the basis which the Holy Ghost lays for the walk of a child according to God. Nevertheless there is need for exhortation; and the word is full of cheer or of warning; and the encouragements are varied and strong, to the end that they who have believed God may be careful to maintain good works. Perhaps it is not too much to say that, if His grace justifies us, our fidelity justifies Him, however poor our measure may be.

It may be well also to protest here against lowering this expression (to maintain good works), as if it only echoed ver. 14. It is not so. The expression may be similar; but the context is clear that the object of God differs in the two verses, as we shall see by and by. Undoubtedly ver. 14 has an important bearing; but it is of a narrower and lower character. In ver. 8 good works have nothing to do with “necessary uses,” and must be taken in all their extent. They are the honorable works, which become a believer, not benevolent merely but suitable to the objects of divine favor and of everlasting blessing, in a world where evil abounds and God is unknown save to faith.

It is also well to add that it is not believing in God merely as in the A. V., but “believing God.” They have set to their seal that God is true, having accepted His testimony. Therefore they bowed to His conviction wrought inwardly, that they were hateful and hating one another, but oh! how thankfully also that according to His mercy He saved; and that if all the Trinity concerned itself in this truly divine salvation, without the cross it was not possible. Christ suffering for sins had made it righteous for God to exercise His grace without stint; and the Holy Ghost can crown it with the richest enjoyment and with real power for practice.

“These things are good and profitable to men.” Here it need not be doubted that the apostle includes the maintenance of good works on the part of believers; but why should any wish to exclude the faithfulness of God's salvation from a still more direct and important place? The cause is surely of at least equal moment with the effect. In contrast with these good and profitable things the apostle bids Titus “shun foolish questionings and genealogies and strifes and fighting about law.” It is the same apostle who told Timothy, as indeed we all know, that the law is good if a man use it lawfully. How so? It is not made for a righteous man but for the lawless and unruly, an unsparing weapon against all evil. What will produce honorable works? Nothing but the gospel of the glory of the blessed God which was committed to Paul and pressed on Titus no less than Timothy. Here then the apostle denounces the misuse of the law. As it puffs up man who, ignorant of his sin and powerlessness, builds on it, so it engenders foolish questions and genealogies and strifes, and legal fightings. Gospel truths are “good and profitable to men “: legal squabbles are “unprofitable and vain “; and such is the misuse of law to which man's mind is ever prone, if indeed he pays any heed at all. The truth of the gospel, as it reveals grace, so it commands both heart and conscience of the believer. Where faith is not, there is the power of death unremoved, and darkness God-ward. Such is the race in its natural estate, which no rite can alter—only the Deliverer received in faith.

From questions dark or trifling and in either way unprofitable or even injurious, to which legalism tends, the apostle next warns of a still darker result which is too apt to appear, the uprising of party spirit in its most extreme shape, which scripture designates “heresy.” 1 Cor. 11:18, 19, is the first occurrence of the phrase in the apostolic Epistles, which can alone precisely define its Christian application. “I hear that schisms exist among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that the approved may be made manifest among you.” Hence we learn how ordinary language differs from scripture. Men regard “heresy” as a departure from sound doctrine, which is apt to end in a separate party or sect characterized by it. In short they regard “schism” as the severed result, whether with, as generally is the fact, or without, as may be, the heterodox root. Now the inspired word appears to me irreconcilable with such thoughts. “Schisms” already existed in the church at Corinth. As yet there were no “sects” or separate parties; but this the apostle regarded as inevitable. Splits within lead naturally, and, as men are, necessarily to splits without or sects. This was imminent at Corinth, unless grace gave self-judgment and thus nipped the bud, so that the evil fruit should not follow. But the danger was at work in the “schisms” that afflicted the Corinthian saints, though all as yet ate of the one loaf. If they did not repent, the issue would surely be “heresies” or sects, as in Gal. 5:20. It seems plain that the word in neither Epistle necessarily involves strange doctrine, however often this may be and is the animating spring of the party. The carnal preference, which set up Cephas against Paul, or Apollos against both, formed “schisms” in the assembly; and this, if not judged as sin, would issue at length in outward factions, or “heresies.” For such fleshly feeling ever grows more hot and intolerant, so that Christ the center of unity is overlooked, and the Spirit, being grieved, ceases to control those who are thus self-willed.

But there is another step in the path of evil, of which we find the expression in the Second Epistle of Peter (2:1). Here there is marked development; for we hear of false teachers (), who are characterized as bringing in privily “destructive heresies,” or sects of perdition ( ). The context is clear, in this case alone, that it is not only personal or party self will breaking away from the unity of the Spirit, but that the factions or heresies anticipated by the apostle have the darker dye of ruinous heterodoxy also. Not a hint of this appears in the usage of the word for

the Galatians and the Corinthians, bad as the case in its mildest form is; because it ever is a violation of church unity. It is only when the term is contextually enlarged and weighted with the distinct imputation of false teaching that we can tax the “heretic” with heterodoxy. Hence the unbelieving cavils of De Wette, &c., have no real ground. The traditional and mistaken sense of a later day does not apply to the Pauline usage of .

Now this is of importance in helping us to a true and just discernment of the apostle's injunction to Titus, where there is an advance in fact on the warnings to the Corinthians and the Galatians. It is supposed that there was, or might be, a heretic in Crete, who had to be dealt with. Such an one had gone out in the pride of his heart and was after admonition to be declined. “An heretical man after a first and second admonition refuse, knowing that such a one is subverted and sinneth, being self-condemned” (ver. 10, 11). Here the evil is not expressed in the aggravated form of false teaching; and consequently we are not entitled to lighten the sin of faction in itself, of which alone the passage speaks, by supplementing the case with the far more serious shape of it denounced by Peter at a later day. By “heretical man” the apostle means any one active in originating or adopting faction, even if he were orthodox. Not content with “schism” inside, they were forming a separate school without. They might, as a general rule, fall into destructive views, more or less diverging from those whom they had willfullya and deliberately left, in order to justify themselves or oppose others vainly. But the apostle does not add a word, either here or elsewhere, to the evil of “faction” or “sect” in itself. Titus was to admonish once or twice. For there might be differing measures in the self-will that had gone outside: one so determined that a first admonition would be proved enough; another not so far gone might encourage the Lord's servant to persevere and admonish a second time.

This also explains, at any rate in part, why there is not a word about putting away the evil-doer. Titus was to “eschew” or “avoid” him. Now ; is said of shunning old wives' fables (1 Tim. 4:7), younger widows (v. 11), foolish and uninstructed questions (2 Tim. 3:23), as well as a heretic in the scripture before us. In no case is excommunication meant, but just avoiding, whether things or persons. It is granted that the Epistle does not embrace within its scope, like 1 Corinthians, all ecclesiastical action even to the last extremity; any more than excommunication is prescribed in the Epistle to the Galatians or in those to the seven Apocalyptic churches, whence the advocates for tolerating the worst evils within the assembly draw their unwise and unholy arguments.

But there is to be noticed another and more special reason why no such measure was to be laid on the church through Titus: the evil-doer had gone out. This is of the essence of “heresy,” whatever its form; in this lies its advance on and deduction from “schism.” Now how could you with propriety put away him who had already gone away? The utmost which could be done, when it was no mistake (perhaps with a right design yet an ill-guided conscience) but deliberate intention with willful slight and defiance of the assembly, would be to close the door formally, so that he could not enter fellowship again without as formal restoration. This in effect when it truly applied might be equivalent to excommunication; but it would bear on its front the stamping the offender with the fact of his own self will; while the assembly also would show itself not indifferent but vigilant and holy in the case. The assembly, by the Lord entrusted with the extreme act of putting away when God's word calls for it, does not overpass its responsibility in pronouncing on such a sin: the greater or at least more formal act includes what is less or akin. Some such action as this may be implied and inferred; but Waterland (Doctrine of Trin. ch. 4) goes too far in saying that the command to Titus contains as much. Still less is Vitringa (De Vet. Syn. 3. 1-10), after straining 2 Thessalonians and Rom. 16, warranted in making it= , the public excommunication following the admonition, or a private one as among the Jews, as Bp. Ellicott justly observes.

The truth is that the Holy Spirit applies in Gal. 5 to false doctrine the same solemn figure as He does in 1 Cor. 5 to immoral evil. It is leaven; and, where church action is enjoined, we are commanded to purge it from the assembly. Will any one contend that doctrinal leaven is to be kept in, and only immoral leaven is to be put out Evil doctrine is the worse and more ensnaring; and if man as man does not trouble about it, the more is it incumbent on the faithful to care for God's honor. “Holiness, O Lord, becometh Thine house forever.” Now that our Passover, Christ, has been sacrificed, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Let those who will have laxity speak out plainly and betray their evil aim, that we may at least keep ourselves pure.

Again, men who bring not the doctrine of Christ, and deny the Father and the Son, are branded by the most loving of the apostles as anti-Christ, whom we are forbidden to receive into the house or even to greet. This goes far beyond what is fairly and withal imperatively taught by the exclusion of leaven in the Pauline Epistles. It is a deeper evil striking at Christ's person, the Rock on which the church is built, and so demands a most prompt and thorough judgment for His sake, to say nothing of His people subtly imperiled by any tampering with them thereby.

Here Titus was simply to have done with an heretical man (leader or adherent is but a question of degree) after a first and second admonition. What follows confirms without constraint and thoroughly the difference of the case before us from ecclesiastical dealing: “Knowing that such a one is perverted, and sinneth, being self-condemned” (ver. 11). Whitby departs from scripture by adding, “is perverted from the true faith.” 1 Tim. 1:19, 20, 2 Tim. 2:18, teach this, but not the passage in question, which marks the evil of faction apart from heterodoxy, though the two often go together. Nor does mean “condemned by his own conscience,” but self-condemned, i.e., ipso facto, without saying a word of conscience, which may have been quite dull or darkened, instead of giving sentence against the man. He was self-condemned, because, liking his own will and perhaps notions too, he could no longer brook the atmosphere of God's assembly; he preferred to be outside God's habitation in the Spirit, to have a church of his own, or to be his own church. Now, as sin is lawlessness, so if one had as a denizen known that holy temple, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, to leave it (not forced out justly or unjustly) of his own will was to sin with a high hand and seal his own condemnation: words admirably suiting a deserter and self-exalting rival, but not by any means one whose sin had been solemnly judged and himself put away by the sentence of the church. In short, “heresy” simply, here and elsewhere in the Epistles, does not mean departure from the truth but from the assembly, which is its pillar and ground, where the Lord works by the Spirit to God's glory. It goes beyond “schism” which acts within, but it is not necessarily heterodox, though this is often added and likely to be its end.

On Titus, Titus 3:12-15, On

The conclusion now follows. “When I shall send Artemas unto thee or Tychicus, give diligence to come unto me at Nicopolis, for there I have determined to winter. Set forward Zenas the lawyer and Apollos, on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting to them. And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful. All that are with me salute thee. Salute them that love us in faith. Grace be with you all” (ver. 12-15).

It is a common mistake to suppose that words, so simple and common-place as these seem, have little value. We learn what the goodness of the Lord is through such an one as Paul, not merely in circumstances of great strain and difficulty, but in the most ordinary matters of daily spiritual life. Grace molds the conduct and the words alike, in the least things as in the greatest; as there is no affectation, there is no levity. The consciousness of God's presence, the habit of having to do with Him, impresses the simplest affairs with a tone that is holy and loving without an effort.

But the fact is that in these closing words we have that which ought to have cleared up many a controversy and been corrective of spurious tradition. Titus was in no way the fixed ecclesiastical ruler of

Crete; be had served the Lord there in most important ways, and his work was come to a close as far as that island was concerned. The apostle was not indifferent; he desired spiritual help for the saints and assemblies still, and therefore he proposes to send Artemas or Tychicus before Titus leaves. The fact that one of these we know rather fully in the Acts of the Apostles, the other not at all elsewhere, is full of interest. We learn that there were men whom the Lord honored in a high degree who only appear incidentally like Artemas; and yet he is even put before Tychicus. It would be wrong to infer that he had a higher standing. The Holy Spirit does not regulate the affairs of God after the manner of a Lord Chamberlain. We may be assured that the apostle would not speak of sending Artemas or Tychicus, had he not believed that the one was no less spiritually qualified than the other. Comparisons however are not sanctioned in scripture. But we can also see that the apostle did not think of sending both—it is “Artemas or Tychicus,” not Artemas and Tychicus. Laborers suitable to help the church in a large way are not numerous. Other places had claims no less than Crete; but it is plain that both these laborers held a personal relation to the apostle. He proposed to send the one or the other to Titus in Crete: when either one or the other should have arrived, the apostle calls on Titus to be diligent in joining him at Nicopolis, “for there I have determined to winter.”

From this we learn some facts of interest to all Christians. The apostle was certainly not a prisoner at this time. It appears to have been after his first imprisonment at Rome, and before the second, which closed in his death. Had he not been free, how could he speak of his decision to spend a winter there? But this also convincingly shows us that the traditional appendix to the Epistle is unfounded. The Epistle was not written from Nicopolis, any more than Titus was ordained bishop of Crete. Again, there is no sufficient reason to assume that it was Nicopolis in Macedonia, even if that city then existed. For it is certain that various cities of that name were built after the days of Paul—one or more by the emperor Trajan. Long before there was a Nicopolis in Alexandria, there was another Nicopolis in Cilicia. But the most important town of the name then existing, beyond a doubt, was in Epirus, looking down on a promontory of Actium in Acarnania, built by Augustus Caesar in honor of the great victory over Antony, which had such a momentous bearing on the future of the Roman empire. It seems therefore reasonable, as there is no particular description given pointing to another quarter, that the apostle means the city that was most notorious.

Further, we may be sure that the zeal which consumed the apostle did not now summon Titus there for rest to himself any more than to the younger workman. In the last Epistle the apostle ever wrote, it is said that Titus went to Dalmatia, which was in the neighborhood of Epirus. This again affords some confirmation that the Nicopolis in question lay in that neighborhood. The work of the Lord was to be pushed into the West as well as in the East.

Quite a distinct fact appears in the next verse, 13. “Set forward Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them.” How beautifully unjealous love, and zeal for the Lord's glory and care for the comfort of His laborers, are shown here. And how confidently too Paul looks for this blessed feeling in Titus, the reflex of his own. Often and long he had proved him to be a faithful and gracious brother. He is sure that an elevated authority in Crete has in no way impaired the old spirit of fellowship and value for others.

It is the more to be noticed, because neither of these two commended to his care were at all so associated with the apostle personally as many others. We never hear of them (as) in the group which accompanied the apostle on his journey. What is or is not said appears to indicate the co-ordinate class of laborers, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles as well as in the Epistles, Apollos notably being their type. Yet the heart of the apostle goes out and urges Titus in love no less for such than for his well-known usual associates.

Here again Zenas the lawyer is named before Apollos: this is the order not of the world, but of grace. t is not quite certain what sort of lawyer he was. Calvin dryly considers that he could not have been a forensic one: else he could not have wanted means. A graver but simple if not conclusive reason points in the same direction. Everywhere else in the N. T. “lawyer” is connected with Jewish learning rather than Roman or Greek law. Certain it is that Paul assumes that there might be need of the help enjoined. He had accepted help of the kind himself, as appears from his Epistles, and before this he asked for it on behalf of others. We find the same thing in the still later Third Epistle of John. But it is a fine trait of Christ to see this gracious consideration laid so confidently on the shoulders of Titus, though the apostle does not stop there. “And let ours also learn to maintain good works for the necessities, that they be not unfruitful.” If Titus was not to forget fellow-laborers, how incumbent it was on the saints generally? This is the force of “ours also.” Only here of course “ours” means the saints in Crete. They are exhorted to learn, what Titus had long learned, to be forward in good works, and, among all other calls, for the encouragement of devoted ministers of the Lord in His work. It is not merely the poor we should think of but the work of faith and labor of love. Thus should believers be not “unfruitful.” Nor is God unrighteous to forget that work or the love shown toward His name; and if it be so in ministering to the saints, in special honor of those who serve them at all cost.

Lastly, we have the salutation “All that are with me salute thee;” it is not merely “with me” as in Gal. 1:2. It is special connection and simple companionship. This gives the salutation increase of force. Again Paul directs Titus to salute “those that love us in faith.” Faith is the connecting link with all that is eternal and of the Spirit of God, yea with God Himself. His last word is not to Titus only, but “grace be with you all.” His heart breaks forth in the desire of divine blessing towards all the saints in Crete, as we know it did in a general yet practical way to all on earth. But the faithful stand in a special, divine, and everlasting relationship, which no saint ought ever to forget.

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Regeneration is a new state of things, and not merely “to be born again,” as any one can see in Matthew 19:28, “And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” It is the changed state of the earth which the Lord will introduce at His coming, as the kingdom of God pre-supposes according to John 3. That state is not yet come; but there is an action of grace which already apprehends a believer for it the moment he receives Christ. Of this baptism is the sign—not of the new birth, but of deliverance from sin and its effects, by the death of Christ witnessed in the power of His resurrection that has taken away the sting. Superstitious men, who know not God's grace in Christ, can only misuse the sign and confound it with the thing signified. The gospel may not dispense with the outward side; but it announces an everlasting reality in Christ risen. How blessed to have our part in this new creation even now (2 Corinthians 5)! How wondrous to know that “if any one is in Christ, it is a new creation! The old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new, and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself through Christ.” Before this is manifested to every eye, the Christian has the washing of regeneration now and renewing of the Holy Spirit also. This makes the force evident. If the washing of regeneration is an objective sign, the renewing is a real and divine work in the soul. In order that it should be so, the Holy Spirit, as He does invariably, takes His suited and efficacious part, which is no mere token but a reality in power.

It is well known that some are disposed to understand here “the laver of regeneration.” The A. V. did not recognize this; the margin of the Revised Version does. It is well that the revisers did not venture farther. The notion is absolutely unfounded; for never means laver but washing, or the water for the washing (in the sense of hath) as is notorious. Never in the N. T. occurs which is the proper word for “laver.” They are both found in the Septuagint, and even a place for washing or bathing-room. It is strange indeed that a commentator of learning could say that is always a vessel or pool in which washing takes place, here the “baptismal font.” Liddell and Scott do, it is true, give “a bath, bathing place,” but not a solitary instance of such usage. Their abundant references are to hot or cold bathing in the sense of washing, or water for it, or even libations to the dead; but is the tub or laver, as is the place or bathroom. Bp. Ellicott and Dean Alford misrepresent the Lexx., of course only through haste or preoccupation. The word is correctly translated “washing” in our text. There could be no question about the matter unless there had been a prejudice to warp the mind. The wish was father of the thought.

Salvation then is no outward work; nor is it now mere deliverance by power, but personal and inward “through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” There is a total change of position in Christ, a new place which is given to the believer, as well as another state subjectively. This is expressed by the washing and renewing. Old things are passed away, all things are become new. For now the believer is in Christ. As a man he was in Adam. Faith is now entitled to know that we all stand in Christ by God's mercy, and altogether independently of what we did ourselves. Thus the evil is gone before God and for the conscience; for Christ is risen, the full expression of the state into which the Christian is brought by grace.

But, besides the subjective change and the objective place, there is an incomparably blessed power which works in those who are brought into this standing. It is not only that there is the “renewing,” perfectly true as this is; but the Holy Ghost Himself has been poured out upon us in all fullness, as it has been said here, “Which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (ver. 6). This covers the entire Christian life. It is not merely that He effectually works, but He abides with us forever. This is of immense value and in evident contrast to Old Testament privilege where the danger of His leaving is felt and deprecated, as we see in Psalm 51. Under the gospel our privileges are known as abiding. The life is eternal, and so is the redemption, as well as the inheritance. It is in short eternal salvation. The Holy Spirit Himself is even called in the Hebrews the Eternal Spirit, though there it is in His special connection with Christ offering Himself without spot to God. But beyond controversy it is the same Spirit who is now by grace imparted to us, or, as is here expressed with peculiar emphasis, “poured out upon us richly.” Undoubtedly this could not be, save “through Jesus Christ our Savior"; but so it is added here, that we might dream of no other ground, on the one hand, and on the other have the fullest assurance of abundant and unfailing grace in the power of the Spirit personally through such a Savior. It is a privilege which never can lapse, any more than God revokes it where faith is living, as it flows through Christ and His redemption.

We know that, on the day when this privilege was first made good, powers and wonders accompanied; but no mistake can well be more pernicious than to confound the gift () of the Holy Spirit with those gifts () and signs and miracles which were external vouchers, as well as the display of the victory of the ascended Man over all the energy of evil. The presence of the Paraclete is an incomparably higher and deeper thing than all the mighty deeds which He wrought. Just so the grace and truth of our Lord rose above the signs which pointed out who and what He was. Even tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not; and yet tongues, the characteristic Christian miracle, approach nearer to that which edifies than any other exertion of divine power. But the gracious action of the Holy Spirit conveyed by His personal presence rises far above all such accompaniments, as the cause does above some or all of its effects.

Hence the all-important truth for all saints is, that while displays of power have passed away, as unsuited to the ruined state of the church, that which always was and is most needed and precious abides, because it rests on His work, finished on earth and accepted in heaven, who never changes; and it comes to us through Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and forever. It is He who gives us to cry, “Abba, Father,” and this is in the Spirit of the Son. It is He who takes the things of Christ, and shows them to us and glorifies Him. It is He who searches all things, yea the deep things of God. He gives us communion with the Father and the Son, no less than He helps our infirmity and makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, because He makes it for the saints according to God. It is He who is all-powerful on the one hand for service in testifying of Christ, on the other for the worship of saints, in the assembly above all.

The Holy Spirit has abdicated His relation to the assembly no more than to the individual Christian. It is only by the Holy Spirit that every believer can say that Jesus is Lord; but the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each to profit withal, for to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit. If there are external ornaments taken away, we can and ought surely to justify God; but He withholds nothing that is really necessary or profitable and for His own glory. Just as of old, so it is now—one and the same Spirit works all, dividing to each one severally as He will, for He is sovereign; and woe be to those who presume to control Him! He abides therefore for the blessing of the church and of individual saints to Christ's glory.

The wealth of our privileges in the present gift of the Spirit corresponds to the nearness of relationship with the God and Father of Christ, and to the oneness with Christ into which only the Christian is introduced; and these are every one of them blessings not more intimate, and rich beyond all other times, than permanent: of none is this predicated more emphatically than of the Holy Spirit. But the unbelief of Christendom apprehends none of them as now revealed; and even God's children for the most part are a prey to doubt and darkness as to each, through the spirit of the world that has invaded them all but universally, even where they have not become victims of the delusion of the enemy in a vain pretension to a special revival. From all this evil on either side faith preserves the soul in peace. For if the Holy Ghost is still “poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (and to deny this is in principle to deny the perpetuity of Christ's body and of the personal Pentecostal presence of God's Spirit), there is no room for a restoration of what God never took away. And, again, if the Spirit is still here in person, constituting God's assembly, how sad and shameless for those who believe in it to allow arrangements which grew out of unbelief in His presence and oppose His free action in the assembly or by the gifts of the Lord for the edifying of His body! Would that they who err in spirit might come to understanding, and they who murmur might learn doctrine! “In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength,” as wrote the evangelical prophet. W. K.

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