

Notes of a Sermon

By the late REV. JOHN KENNEDY, D.D., Dingwall.

(Taken by a hearer.)

“Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.” – Psalm 106:4,5.

(Dr. Kennedy read the first six verses of the Psalm; with remarks.)

This passage begins with an alleluia, and ends with a confession of sin. There is a gradation of feeling downwards from the alleluia to the confession. He begins by saying “Praise ye the Lord,” and gives a good reason why the Lord should be praised; “he is good,” and “his mercy endureth for ever.” But looking at His goodness and eternal mercy, the Psalmist feels his inability to praise the Lord, and show forth all His praise. Passing by those giving praises, and looking wistfully at them as he passes, he says, “Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times,” who can praise the Lord all through life. And he would fain have fellowship with them, but feels himself unable to join in praise until the Lord remember him and visit him with His salvation. Without this he cannot see the good of the Lord’s chosen, rejoice with His nation, and glory with His inheritance, and so is unable to praise the Lord. Then verse 6 comes in with a confession of sin, “We have sinned with our fathers.” It would almost seem as if the passage should begin where it closes; as if the gradation of feeling should ascend upwards from confession of sin to prayer, from that to hope and longing, and thence still nearer, until the heart burst into one great alleluia to God. Well, friends, the movements of God’s people are sometimes in one direction and sometimes in another; sometimes from the alleluia down to the confession, and then from the confession to the prayer, from the prayer to the hope and longing, from that to nearness to the Lord, and to praise Him with a cry of alleluia. The time is coming when thy song will be begun from which there will be no more coming down. You have heard of the snail attempting to scale a wall. While it was sunshine it succeeded so far, but on the sun going down it fell back again, but not so far as before, until at last it reached the top. So it is with God’s people. They ascend from groanings to alleluias, until at last they reach the home in Zion above, when all that disturbs their rest will be far off, and the song of praise begun that shall never have an end.

We shall now consider: –

I. – The object of the Psalmist’s desire.

II. – What he asked from God, and felt he must receive ere that object could be attained.

I. – The object of the Psalmist’s desire is stated in the fifth verse.

1. He would fain see the good of God’s chosen. There are here several things – the chosen, the good, the seeing, the chosen having good, and the Psalmist desiring to see that good.

God’s chosen are not in themselves a choice people. They are chosen not because choice; by nature they are the children of wrath, even as others. There was no difference between them and others, that they should be before God as chosen, and, in relation to His covenant, His people; but His choice made them precious in His sight. They were set apart in Christ with a view to the fulfilment of a purpose of salvation in reference to them. As thus set apart they were before the mind of God, and contemplating them at their worst and lowest state

with Christ before Him, there could be and was eternal calm in God's mind with reference to them. As thus set apart in Christ, are we not to think this a wonder? The Father making this present to the Son; a present by such a Father to such a Son. It was joy to God the Father to give them to the Son. Why was it so? Because not only did Jehovah love them, and therefore provide for their salvation, but He had to express His love to Himself in the manifestation of His name, in carrying into effect the end of His purpose regarding them, namely, in setting them apart by a work of grace upon their souls in fulfilment of His eternal purpose. I cannot look in on God's chosen as set apart according to His covenant in Christ; but I can know them by the marks they bear as the consequence of a work of grace. The Lord came and found them dead in sins and brought them to life; out, and He brought them in; high-minded, and He brought them low; on the brink of hell, and by cords of love He drew them to Himself; imputed to them His righteousness, and on the ground of it justified them; and brought them into His family. As thus brought in, and as Jehovah's chosen, manifested in the work of Christ, what a sight is before my eyes! How blessed the people thus chosen in Christ! I cannot wonder at the Psalmist desiring to have fellowship with them. None but he who is spiritually dead can rest without this. I cannot see Thy chosen without seeing good being set apart for them. His loved ones shall have as much good as God would have them to enjoy. They are the members of Christ's body; He supplies their wants out of the fulness of His grace. This good is the provision of the everlasting covenant. It is all the provision love can make, and that love is divine love. O! friends, let us not stop short of this – that God Himself is the great good of His chosen. "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." He will be theirs as a God of all grace, in order to be the God of their salvation while they are here, with the view of being the God of all glory, the fountain of blessing, to them for evermore.

Dear friends, have we seen aught of their good? Have I ever seen it and desired to be partaker of it? What is it he asks? Is it the Balaam look? Nay. What advantage would it be to the poor creature lying in a hut and dying for want, to look out at the window on the rich land around him? This would only deepen his pain, and make the dying the more bitter. A view, as an outcast and afar off, leaving the soul far off and unable to join with God's people in their hope, would only add to one's misery. There is something more than that needed; it is the occupying such a place in reality as one's own. Without appropriating faith in the good of God's chosen, what can we have? Some hear of this good, and may frame petitions in reference to it before God, but that is all; they are independent, as if the good of God's chosen was so small a thing that they could get on without it. How proudly such oppose the fulness of God's grace as it passes before them! The nearer they come to it in profession and privileges, and yet have only their own things instead of Christ's, it shall merely increase their misery at last, that this good is so full and free as it is.

The Psalmist not only desires to exercise faith in this good, but also to enjoy it. On one occasion when I was a child and lay on a sick bed, there was something like a feast in the house and rejoicing. The sounds of rejoicing only aggravated my feelings. I had no fear of my state in that house as a child, but for the present, in my feelings, I was an outcast. Such is the way with God's people at times. There are times when they can't appropriate and times when they can. When the power of sin within is broken and the soul restored again, then there is something of merry-making with God. The time will come when there shall be no blindness to keep them from the sight of His excellence, no fear to cause the slightest trembling in their heart, but a perfect response to the manifestations of God's love, and with the health of perfect beings, they shall come in to enjoy the perfect blessedness God has in store for them. Till then they are wistfully longing for this good, but their desire will be gratified at last.

2. He would fain rejoice in the gladness of God's nation. God has a nation, and that nation has gladness, and the Psalmist desires to rejoice in its gladness. Israel was God's nation even when in bondage under the taskmasters. A strange place to find it, and a strange

people to make a nation of! There is a nation among men that may be found in still greater bondage and degradation than the people in Egypt. He calls His true people out from under the dominion of sin and the world, out of the grasp of Satan, from the bonds of death, from the brink of death eternal, and gathers them to Himself, and constitutes them a nation. What a peculiar nation! The reign over it is different from that in heaven, and opposite to that in hell; it possesses an element not found outside the circle of the chosen – grace. It is a reign of grace, telling meanwhile in the advancing of that nation, until it attains to perfect blessedness. God placed Himself at its head as the one governor and source of supply. He gathers this people in order to save them and rule over them. The meaner, more weakly and helpless they are, the more glory redounds to Jehovah, their head, and when they attain to perfect blessedness at last, how it shall be to the praise of His glory from whom and to whom are all things! Think of them as with Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as the supplier of their wants. Shall they perish by famine? No. By pestilence? No. Jehovah cares for them to heal them. By sword? No. Jehovah watches over them. Christ says, “They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all: and none is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one.” The Son cannot have them without the Father’s having them, for He is Christ’s head. They are in His hands, and when their life is hid with Christ in God, what destroyer can reach that life? Jehovah is the life of His nation, and never shall any of them die. Well may they sing, “Jehovah, blessed be the rock of my salvation.”

This nation is entitled to gladness – a triple gladness.

(1) It is entitled to gladness when thinking of what the Lord has done for them. He found them under the sentence of death, and on the border of death eternal, in the destroyer’s grasp, the dupes of a present evil world, and the degraded slaves of sin. Having redeemed them by blood, He now redeems them by power, and they are brought under the reign of grace, to be supplied by power. It were a shame were they not to give forth a song of praise when they think of what He has done for them.

(2) This nation is entitled to gladness when they think of what the Lord is in Himself. Some kings are so famous in comparison with others that their very subjects can hold up their heads with the nobles of other countries. Such is the King of this nation. He is a mighty one, and having such a one to boast of, His subjects can hold up their heads. What a nation it must be that has Jehovah as its head! Well may the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Matchless in beauty, unchangeable and almighty, is He to whom His subjects can turn their eyes, and say “Who is like unto Him?” In seasons of singing “they shall sing in the ways of the Lord, because great is the glory of the Lord,” having a heart-ravishing view of His glory, and a heart-cheering view of His mercy. I should like a combination of gratitude for received grace mingled with praise for His glory.

(3) This nation is entitled to gladness when they think of what the Lord has for them. Though I am poor, He is rich; though I am cold and unloving, He is love itself; though I am blind, He is light; though I am leprous, He can sanctify; if I am foolish, He can make me wise; if I am weak, He can perfect His strength in my weakness; if I am far off, He can bring me nigh; if I have nothing, He has all. The Psalmist says, “I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living,” but because he believed this he could sing. This nation rejoices, and the Psalmist desires to rejoice with them. A sight of the world’s vapid joy has more response in the hearts of some than all the gladness of God’s nation, and they have no desire to join the Psalmist in rejoicing with the people of God.

3. He would fain glory with the Lord’s inheritance. There are two wonders in the Bible: Jehovah is the inheritance of His people, and His people are His inheritance. Which is the greater wonder of the two – that God should count His people His inheritance, or that His people should have the warrant to say that He is their inheritance? I can’t conceive of the one

without the other; the one wonder involves the other. I am not to separate them, and yet I may distinguish them. I think it is the greater wonder that He should count them His inheritance. They are His inheritance, and how so? There are three reasons why. (1) He can claim them as His own, as none else can. (2) He has bound them to the glory and honour of His name. (3) He has an enjoyment in them that none besides can have.

(1) I wonder who can lay a claim to them prior to God's. Before the foundation of the world He set them apart. He could do with the mass what He pleased, and He set *them* apart for Himself. Who could come into court and lodge a claim prior to His? He bought them by the blood of His Son. What is bought with such a price is thoroughly bought, and the right of purchase can't be disputed. He has done by His Spirit the work of uniting them to His Christ. He has clothed them with Christ's righteousness, and they are under the reign of His grace, with a view to be prepared for life eternal. They are His as none else; they are the inheritance of God.

(2) He has bound them to the glory and honour of His name. He has connected them with the cause of His glory. A man has a piece of waste ground. He fences it round, marks it with his name, and having done so, he necessarily connects that which he has fenced and marked with the honour of his character. It will be seen what he will make of it. If he does not make it what it should be, people will say he has no money, or if he has, he has no will, or perhaps skill. In either case his name will suffer from his inheritance not being what it ought to be. Jehovah, having set apart a people for Himself, and having brought them in by His grace, has made the cause of their salvation the cause of His glory. Don't judge of that piece of waste ground when uncultivated, or when its aspect may become more ungainly than at first. Then it was a plain; now it is covered with stones and boulders. Wait a little until the design has taken full effect, and the house is built. Don't judge of God's skill as the God of salvation, of His grace, power, or wisdom, until you have the full fruit in a glorified inheritance. For when at last He enjoys the perfect fulfilment of His purpose, the inheritance will bear to be looked at by every eye. The eye of His Son looks on it, and finds nothing but what is to the praise of His glory. Jehovah owes it to Himself that it should be such that it will be the joy of every eye that can discern its beauty.

(3) He has an enjoyment in them that none else can have. It is sweet to think of this. Never can one form any adequate conception of Jehovah's joy in His glorified inheritance. I was thinking of the joy He has in His own dear Son, and what it must be to Him to see them in the likeness of that dear Son. In that prospect – but to Jehovah there is no prospect – the enjoyment of that inheritance shall satisfy His love, His infinite love to Himself; it shall satisfy His heart. In being everything for them He gave the highest manifestation of His glory, and to His eye, at least, it will be manifest that they have been to the praise of His glory. It will also be manifest to Him what it is for Him to have them as His inheritance, as well as what it is for them to have Him as their inheritance for ever.

His inheritance may glory for three reasons.

[1] A peculiar reason: the fact of their being the inheritance of God. Answer this question – Which gives greater rest to a Christian's heart, to contemplate his right to God, or God's right to him? I have no hesitation in saying that the latter is the special calming thought to the troubled hearts of God's children. Claim Him I cannot unless He first chooses and claims me. I can claim Him only as the result of that. If there were not first His election and claim, I never would have a right to claim Him as mine. Sometimes I have the skill to make good my claim against the accuser; but at all times Jehovah can make good His claim against all gainsayers. If He abandons His claim to me, and drops me, He abandons His glory. O, if I could only find a footing there, I could breathe!

[2] These are a strange people who have a right to glory in their infirmities. But then He has taken me with my poverty, blindness, sickness, folly, and impotence, that He may deliver

me from all those wants and ailments. And I can glory in these things which constitute my need of His grace, and which furnish the opportunity of coming to that store which God has provided for His inheritance. I don't know what people on this earth have a right to glory in infirmities but this people.

[3] Lastly, they may glory in this, that their good is bound up with the highest manifestations of His glory. I have no hesitation in saying that the sweetest thing is the assurance which they shall have that Jehovah has been glorified in their salvation, and that it was in the measure in which they were poor, needy, and hell-deserving, in that very measure Jehovah found occasion for the manifestation of His glory. I was wondering how there can be an eternal confession of past sins in their song in their Father's house, and how they can sing without any faltering in the singing as they look back to the past. The reason is, they shall see perfectly the manifestation of Jehovah's glory in connection with all the past, and they are now in the region where cause of sorrow cannot touch the eternal calm, if the thought that all things from God to them have been from them to God.

II. – What the Psalmist asked from God and felt he must receive, ere the object of his desire could be attained. The Psalmist would fain rejoice with them, but cannot, without being remembered and visited by God, and he prays for this remembrance and visitation.

1. "Remember me." It is not much he asks if you count the prayer by the words. It was not much that the thief on the cross asked; it was "Remember me," but there was much involved in the petition. "Remember me," says the Psalmist, "with the favour thou bearest to thy people." Not with the good things of this world. His eye is fixed on the covenant, and the love of God as expressed to a covenant people, and he is appealing to be remembered with that love in the way that God remembers that people. What is it to me to have a share with the world? It will soon pass hence, and the world will know me no more. What is it to me beside the favour that shall endure for ever, that secures my preparation for eternal life in heaven? O Lord, remember me with that favour, for without that before Thy mind, and without my case being taken up by Thee, I shall perish with the outcasts. If in connection with distributing alms to the poor, one said to the distributor, "Remember me," that person meant that, when cases would be considered, his case also might be considered, and that favourably, with a view to something being set apart for him that would be helpful in the time of need. I was thinking of God the Father blessing His people with all spiritual blessings, the Son pleading their case within the veil, and the Holy Ghost coming to communicate the purchased blessings they needed. If I have unction in my eye, I cannot view all this without the cry, "Remember me." O Father, when Thou art blessing others, remember me. O blessed Spirit, when Thou comest forth to apply the things of Christ, remember me. O, friends, how blind must we be to the excellency of the things of God and His salvation, if the cry "Remember me" does not issue from us.

2. "O visit me with thy salvation." He asks to be visited. It is a great thing to ask a visit from God. How many would shrink from sending an invitation to the proprietor of high position, and still more to Her Majesty the Queen, to visit them! But just think of this – a worm of the dust addressing such a cry to God to visit him. Don't say, however, it is presumption. No, no. Suppose a sovereign offered to visit a subject – and I believe that it is the rule of etiquette that no subject has a right to invite a sovereign until the sovereign first expresses pleasure to come – that subject would be guilty of no presumption in asking the sovereign to come. So here, the call is first from God. It is "Seek and ye shall find." If I had not this call, I could not venture to say "Remember me." Some are more careful to send an invitation to a fellow-creature than to God. I would seek to be saved from the mock humility that shrinks from asking a visit from God. There is One set apart as the physician of the poor. That is His office. Who is entitled to send for Him? All who can prove they are sick. That is all they require to prove. When God has given to Himself the name of the God of salvation,

and to His Son the name of Jesus, and to His Spirit the name of the Spirit of all grace, I am not presumptuous in asking God to visit me, full of hell as I am. For it is as the God of salvation I ask Him to come, through the rent veil and shed blood of His dear Son and by the ministration of His Spirit. If He finds me dumb, blind, dead, in my very utter helplessness He has an opportunity of showing what, as the God of salvation, He can accomplish to the praise of His glory.

I am to ask you three questions. (1) Have you ever asked Christ to visit you? Not with your tongue merely, but has your soul really ever felt like that of the Psalmist, that you must remain for ever an outcast unless the Lord visit you? If you have, I am sure there was no failing on His part, for He says, "Ask and it shall be given you." The Lord is faithful and cannot lie. On the other hand, if you have not asked, you have none to blame but yourself for being an outcast to-day and through eternity. I think though Christ should only have this to say to you at the last day, "Never through all the years I was with you in the gospel did you invite me to come to you with my salvation," you will be left without excuse, not only as regards your inability, but also as regards your choice. Is it not time to cry out, "Remember me, O Lord, and visit me with thy salvation?" I am willing to come to a point with you to-night.

(2) Will you then come to the point now, and ask the Lord now to visit you? There is a present opportunity of sending up the cry to God. If you let it pass there is not one word in all God's Book to warrant the hope of your getting another opportunity. Will you then come to the point now? You never gave one hour to your soul in dealing with God. Won't you give it to-night? Say, "Remember me, and visit me with thy salvation."

(3) What hope, friends, can you have if the Lord does not visit you with His salvation? You must be cut off for ever. Dead in the destroyer's grasp and near the gate of hell, if God remembers you not, it is death eternal for you. Will you not call upon Him while He is near, and seek Him while He may be found? "Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation." "Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you." "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Amen.

[October 1900]

Notes of Lecture.

By the late REV. JOHN DUNCAN, LL.D.

Delivered on Sabbath, 2nd April, 1865, in the Clare Hall, Edinburgh.

And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers: but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." – 1 Peter 1:17-21.

The apostle proceeds from the doctrine he had laid down to the practical application of it; connecting the privileges which he had enumerated in the preceding part of the chapter with the duties which were incumbent on them, and which stand in such clear relation unto these privileges, namely, that they should walk worthy of them and of Him from whom they had obtained them. Begotten again unto a lively hope, he calls them unto the exercise of that hope in the way of diligence. "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." He had said in verse 7, "That the trial of your faith, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ," therefore "Hope to the end." "Gird up the loins of your mind;" in allusion to the eastern garments, which were long and loose, and apt to impede, and which were girt about the loins with a girdle, keeping all tight and firm, and so fitting for all necessary work. Ye are children whom God hath begotten again, but live "as obedient children," verse 14. "God hath called you, and as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy. Be ye holy for I am holy." verses 15,16.

"And if ye call on the Father," ye invoke the Father; ye invoke, ye call God by the name of Father. Ye are children; and children call in all their need on their father's direction, on their father's assistance, on their father's protection; and ye invoke the Father. "The Father" is a name of endearment, but this Father is very venerable, "who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work." Grace is sovereign. God in sovereign grace quickened some of the dead, some and not all of them; gives repentance to some who would otherwise have remained impenitent, some and not all of them; gives faith to some who would otherwise have remained for ever unbelieving, to some and not all of them. So He deals in His sovereign grace. But in His acts of judgment, in His acts as judge, God deals with every man according to his character. He condemns the wicked. He justifies the ungodly, it is true, but the ungodly who believe in Jesus. He gives pardon to the penitent believer, to all such, and to none other than penitent believers in His Son. You see that grace is not contrary to the character of God, as judging according to every man's work. Or if there seem to remain a difficulty in reconciling them, let us only look to the fundamental cause of sovereign grace as dispensed; it is bestowed on Christ as the reward of His obedience. And so though grace is unto sinners, it is "grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord;" and the gifts of grace are at the same time, from the constitution of the covenant of grace, the rewards of obedience.

And within His own family God judgeth according to every man's work. Not that God has ever said that He will disinherit His children; but He is calling on them ever to be obedient children; and God makes distinctions within His own family between obedience and disobedience, and the more and less obedience. His children are never in the same degree disobedient, as the children of disobedience are; but relatively to others they are so, there are obedient children compared with other children of God. All of them have faith, hope, and love; they do all love and obey God; but in some there is more self-will, self-confidence yet unsubdued than in others. And God's complacency in His saints is according to and in proportion to their walking with Him. Within a family, if the conduct of the child displease the father, the father does not disinherit and drive the child out of doors to go about like a

beggar; but the father will be displeased and will show tokens of his displeasure; there will be his frown and chastisement, and there never will be peace in the house till there be obedience.

“Ye invoke the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, therefore pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.” Mark the duty called *fear*, the fear of the Lord. In the Old Testament very frequently that is brought forth prominently for the fundamental principle of all true religion. “The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom.” But mark here the character of this fear, it is filial. If ye call Him Father. Fear invoking such an one. God complains of Israel, “If I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?” God is a Father; and when we come to Jesus asking Him to teach us how to pray, O how He opens our mouths with His very first words, “Our Father.” Only at His lips may we learn to address God by this name; only when we come to Jesus asking Him to teach us to pray, can we say, “Our Father.” For He is the only begotten Son of God. He it is who bought from Satan’s family children unto God to be received and adopted into God’s family. From His lips only can we learn, for He alone can give the right so to address God. Adoption is one of the blessings which believers receive from Christ, and immediately when they receive Him. “As many as received him, to them gave he the *prerogative* to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name.” “Our Father.” But He adds, teaching us reverence with confidence, “Our Father which art in heaven;” the heavenly Father, the King of majesty and glory. “If ye invoke the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.” Filial fear. As in that verse in the chapter we read (Proverbs 14:26) – “In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and his children shall have a place of refuge.” Mark the parallelism: “In the fear of the Lord,” parallel to “his children:” “is strong confidence” parallel to “shall have a place of defence.” This fear is the fear of the children of God. It hath respect unto God, and therefore unto everything that is in God. It hath respect unto the awful mysteriousness of His name; it hath respect unto His supreme majesty, as possessor and Lord of heaven and earth, and all things visible and invisible. It hath respect unto His moral character, unto His holiness, hating sin, and unto His justice, punishing sin. It hath respect unto His omniscience and omnipotence. It hath respect even unto His final awful eternal punishment. I don’t find in Scripture that Christ calls His disciples ever to fear that God will send them to hell. But it is the next thing: He does not put it, “Fear him who *may cast*,” but “Fear him who *can*,” not “Fear him who *will*,” but “him who *can*.” To fear God, because He can cast both soul and body into hell fire, is therefore not legal in the sense of being unevangelical. Christ taught His own disciples whom they should fear, and to fear Him in this respect. But the fear hath respect unto the goodness of God. When there is the promise to Zion of the great and good things that God will do (Isaiah 60), they are so great and unexpected that they are sublime even to awfulness. “Then thou shalt see and flow together, and thine heart shall fear and be enlarged.” Awfully sublime goodness!

And this connects the motive which stands in front with the motive which follows after the fear: In front, “Ye invoke the Father”; following after, “Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear; forasmuch as ye know ye were redeemed.” This is the second motive to godly fear. “Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear; knowing ye were redeemed” (verses 18,19). It is a solemn and great transaction. If a man in former times was taken by Algerian pirates and carried into captivity, his redemption, if by any means it was accomplished, would be looked back to as the great event of his life. So is our redemption; our redemption as wrought by the death of Christ, our redemption in the application thereof by the Spirit uniting us to Christ by faith. And there is something fearful in the redemption, for it was by blood, by the shedding of blood. Ye were redeemed, and it cost a great price; fear, because ye were redeemed with a price. And men’s gold and silver are the most precious things; but not with these were ye redeemed – they were all too little. “No man can by any means redeem his

brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever." It appeared a hopeless matter that we should ever escape out of the dominion of sin and Satan, the world, death, and hell. That appeared a hopeless thing. And so it must have appeared to everyone but to the infinite mind of God, which knew how it could be done, and to the infinite love of God, which also could prepare to do it. Ye were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. God gave the redemption price for you. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation of our sins." And that Son as voluntarily gave Himself. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," and that was done. Now, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear, since ye know that. Since ye call on the Father who gave His Son, since ye call on Him through His Son, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear of the divine majesty, and of the awful transaction of the purchase of your precious sinful souls.

"Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Let our attention be more particularly directed to that ransom price. It was with blood. "Without shedding of blood is no remission," no forgiveness of sin. "The wages of sin is death." God attached the penalty of death to sin. He did so in justice; and as His justice led Him to attach the penalty, so His truth also insisted on the execution of it. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "Without shedding of blood is no remission." God gave to Israel appointed sacrifices. He said, "I have given you the blood for your souls." God accepted of a vicarious death. Death He demanded. He would not depart from that rule, that sin must be followed by death; but He admitted substitution. In the case of Israel, the blood of the animal for the death of the man. Yet it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sin; an irrational creature, all the animals in the world, were not worth the soul of a single man. They had their effect – they sanctified unto the purifying of the flesh; so that the Israelite, having offered his sacrifice, had a right to enter into the congregation of the Lord, and to engage in all the acts of Jehovah's worship; and in them was typified, to the believing worshipper, the great sacrifice which could purge the conscience, which they could not. With blood then; thy life cost death; thou wast redeemed with blood; but with no ordinary blood, with the blood of Christ, of Christ as a lamb. The sacrificial death of Christ – the death of the Lord Jesus Christ – was a true and proper sacrifice, as a lamb. And here the selection of a lamb seems to point out the passover. In the redemption of Israel from Egypt, the paschal lamb was slain, and the blood of that lamb was sprinkled on the doorposts and lintels of their houses. This Lamb, which was given as the redemption price for our souls, is set before us with these characteristics, "a lamb without blemish and without spot." The perfect purity of this Lamb; the outward sacrifice required to be free from all physical defect, but the sacrifice which could deliver the soul of man from guilt must be free from all moral defect, perfectly sinless and immaculate.

And here now all hope in self, as in our fellowmen, is cut off. Our temporal death cannot suffice, cannot be a sacrifice, for it is not immaculate. Nor could any of our brethren's, suppose other difficulties away; they are not immaculate, they are stained, and cannot come up on the altar of our God. The fire indeed that descends on the sacrifice falls on sin; but it falls on the pure. Sin; for the sinner had confessed his sin over the head of the animal. The sin was committed by the man; the sinfulness which led to the commission of it was inherent in the man. The guilt, however, was taken from the penitent Israelite entering the sanctuary of God, and was transferred over to the lamb. And if he was a believer in Christ, he looked forward to the great sacrifice that was to be offered. Here we find sin and perfect purity combined; the Lamb without blemish and without spot, but a sacrifice; that is, the innocent and the holy suffering for the guilty on account of the guilt of the guilty charged on it. O,

what is there in the putting away of sin, when the fear of death and judgment comes, which any of us can find satisfaction in? Holiness and eternal truth and justice coming, even as they will come, will find sin, but it is covered by blood. "Not corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." First the spotlessness, but with the precious blood as of a lamb. The blood of the lamb must have suggested to the Jewish Church the blood of the Messiah, the great one whom God had promised to Israel, Israel's Lord, Israel's King, Israel's Saviour, the one Mediator between God and men, Christ exalted above all heavens, Christ the only begotten Son of the Father, very God and very man, standing in our room, Himself holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, made sin and a curse for us sinful and accursed.

Now, our attention is particularly called to the character of the apostle's style, which we have already remarked. Round a central figure he draws a panoramic picture. So he does with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. God begetting these scattered strangers into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; the lively hope leading to its object, "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," reserved for them, and they kept for that inheritance. This panorama, you see, is very wide, but it widens further. "In this ye rejoice," – in this hope of the inheritance ye rejoice – "receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls," – their souls saved. Can the panorama extend further? Yes. "Of which salvation the prophets spake," – so bringing in the company of the Old Testament Church – "which things the angels desire to look into," – bringing the angels too.

So here, round the sacrificial redeeming blood of Jesus Christ, he gathers in a large comprehensive view of thought stretching out from eternity into all time. "The blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you," (verse 20). Foreordained before the foundation of the world in eternity; manifest in these last times. From eternity before time, down to the manifestation in time and the last time, sweeping over the antecedent time of the prophets. From eternity designed; predicted in time; in the last time manifested; "manifest for you." Determined before the world was for you; "manifest in these last times for you."

Who are you? "You, who through him do believe in God," (verse 21). So this foreordination of Christ in eternal ages, and the manifestation of Him in time, are connected now with their faith in Him, and their faith in God by Him, "who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory." And this act of God's raising Him from the dead and giving Him glory, is connected also with its end and design, "that your faith and hope might be in God." What an amplitude of view is thus gathered round the precious blood of Christ! It is the blood of the Lamb. Now, this Lamb, when do we behold Him first of all? The manifestation follows after. The veil is taken away, and the scene opens out of time into eternity, when creatures were not, when nothing was but the eternal Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In that eternity there was no vacuity, there was life. There was a Father loving the Son, and a Son loving the Father, in the reciprocity of infinite love. There was a Holy Spirit of the Father and the Son, loving and responded to in love infinitely. Wisdom, heavenly wisdom, was there, the personal Wisdom of God; and His delights were with the sons of men, when there were no sons of men actually existing. But in the purpose of God they were, in the thought of God they were, of God Triune, in a covenant of grace between the Father and the Son for the redemption of an innumerable company of the fallen children of Adam. All that took place in time was but the accomplishing of a plan, the fulfilling of a purpose. Now, this is a thing that is far from us, very high, because we are creatures and live in time, and time bounds our natural faculties. So often a difficulty presents itself to some minds. At one time it did very much to mine; "its being out of time, how can I come into contact with it?" It was manifested. We have no knowledge of the fore-ordination; but we know Him who, being eternal, came

into time, being the eternal God, was a child of a day, of an hour, an infant in Bethlehem, who walked through Judea and Galilee, who was crucified and rose again. Thus, though thou mayest not look into the Lamb's book of life to see whose names are written there, and to see if thine be among them, if thou knowest Jesus, He was there. Let none therefore, whose trust is in Jesus, puzzle themselves about their election. God has kept to Himself the names of the elect saved, but He has revealed that of the elect Saviour, – "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." And then He has given signs of the elect saved; they hear the voice of the good Shepherd, and follow Him. He was foreordained before the foundation of the world. I wish you particularly to mark that Christ is God's elect, peculiarly God's elect. His people who have believed, and who through grace shall believe on Him, are God's elect ones to be saved; but the Son is the elect Saviour. The Father made choice of Him in His infinite wisdom, being the one fitted to do the work.

And He was manifested. What lay hid in eternity and in God came forth into manifestation; was manifested, not only in the way of prediction, but in the execution of prediction, by the actual appearance, the incarnation of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, with all that followed in that incarnation. He was manifested. Prophecy foretold His coming, yet still He was in the bosom of the Father; He had to come actually into time, the message and prediction only had come. But He was manifested, "that eternal life which was with the Father." John says, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled of the Word of life: for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory." "I am the life;" and "this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." It is no more now a purpose hid with God; it is no more merely a purpose announced by the voice of God; it is an executed purpose. The foreordained Lamb is the manifested Lamb. In the last days; the last, the best days; the days of which all the prophets prophesied, and enquired what manner of time they would be; the days which many prophets and righteous men desired to see and saw not.

"Manifest in these last times for you." The Lamb manifest for you; destined to be a sacrificial Lamb, manifest to be a sacrificial Lamb, for you, not for Himself. "The wages of sin is death;" and He died in whom was no sin. Though He died by the hands of wicked men, it was under the government of God who had said, "The wages of sin is death;" it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him; it was for you. But who are you? "You, who by him do believe in God," verse 21. The enquiry, "For whom did Christ die?" can be answered in this way and no other; "for you who by him do believe in God." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Jesus says, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth in him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Therefore let us give all diligence, not to make our election and our calling, but our calling and our election sure.

"For you who by him do believe in God." The object of faith is here stated, God by Christ. Christ Himself is set forth before us as the object of faith. "He that believeth in me shall never die." He is so as the only begotten Son of God; but Christ as mediator is the object of a faith that terminates in God who sent Him, in God who revealed Him to be a propitiation, in God who raised Him from the dead. "You who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." Now here

we have the grounds of our faith in God. The grounds of our faith in God are God's doings to Christ; He raised Him up from the dead and gave Him glory. That is the ground on which faith and hope, resting on Christ, goes on and rests in God; God did that. It does not rest first on what God has done in us, but on what God did in raising Christ and giving Him glory. For when we trust in Christ, we trust not in a dead man, but trust in Him who is the living one, and who became dead, and who is alive for evermore. We trust now not in one who is on earth, but in one who has gone to the Father, and whom God hath highly exalted, and given a name that is above every name. He hath given Him glory; and He hath given Him glory that we should trust in Him; in God who did that for Christ the head; for He also did it for Christ in His members. If we are of Him in Christ, then He, who hath set our Head on high, will bring His members unto Him where He is, to behold His glory. And in the meantime He gives us all things: "What is good the Lord will give." "He that spared not his Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" He hath raised up Christ from the dead, and given Him glory. That is the pledge.

Now, for all these things, "pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." It would not be improper were we to say, "pass the time of your sojourning here in joy, in jubilation." For these things are most blessed and glorious, and one truth cannot be contrary to another. What things God hath done in raising Christ from the dead and giving Him glory, laying a foundation for faith and hope, lay also a foundation for joy unspeakable and full of glory, of which the apostle has previously spoken. But, "pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." "Ye call on the Father," but "pass the time of your sojourning;" you are not yet in your Father's house; and as pilgrims and strangers surrounded by manifold temptations, "pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." Thus pass the time, remembering the sacrificial blood on the lintels and the door posts. Israel would say, "Ah, the destroying angel has passed, and has seen the blood on the lintels and door posts, otherwise his sword would have slain every first-born of Israel, as well as every first-born of the Egyptians, for they are sinners too." Pass the time of your sojourning here in faith, in hope, in love, in gratitude, in obedience, all in fear. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Why should there be a cause of fear, not rather of hope, of trust? God is a great God; and it is an awful, a wondrous, a great thing, to have God working in you of His good pleasure, to have God taking the guidance of your thoughts and words and actions. "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."

And now may God give us more and more to know that we are redeemed, by increasing – by bestowing faith if we have it not, by increasing it if we have – our faith in Jesus, and in His precious blood, and in His Father who gave Him. Let us seek to abound in faith, in hope, in joy, in reverential fear solemnizing all our joy; passing onwards as pilgrims and strangers through the wilderness, having to cross the Jordan that we may reach Canaan. [October 1900]

Outlines of Sermons.

By the late REV. JOHN SINCLAIR, Bruan Caithness,
Preached on 25th April, and 14th July, 1839.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." – John 3:3.

Nicodemus had a desire put into his heart to be taught, and a conviction that Christ could teach him. This put him in search of a plan. Whether for fear or shame, when he would not

come by day, he came by night. Is any creature here seeking Christ in secret? You see Jesus did not refuse, for He casts out none. Continue seeking; though He “bear long,” He will not be silent for ever. Jesus puts Nicodemus at once to the new birth; a change of heart, and not merely of life. “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again.” “A man.” That is, anyone. The word means man, woman, or child.

I. – This saying will stand.

1. It has the authority of God the Father. Christ spoke by that authority. “Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.” He is the Father’s prophet, and “whosoever will not hear the words of that prophet, that soul shall be cut off.”

2. The speaker is “the faithful and true Witness,” that will not and cannot lie. And here, He doubles the assertion; “Verily, verily.” If then, there be found in heaven a man – anyone – without the new birth, Christ will be a liar, even with His double word!

3. The speaker is Judge. God “hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that man* whom he hath ordained.” Christ knows the rule, and that rule is this Word; and if any enter the kingdom without the new birth, it must be in spite of the Judge, or unknown to Him. See then the certainty of this truth, and be not deceived. Whatever profession, or character, or knowledge anyone may have, except that person be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

II. – The author of this new birth. The Holy Ghost is the author. “Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” “Water” refers to baptism more narrowly, but to the Word and ordinances more generally, “the incorruptible seed.” But though ordinances be the means, and as rational creatures we should attend them, there ought to be a continual conviction that without the Holy Ghost there can be no new birth.

1. It is to raise the dead. “Dead in trespasses and sins.” We might as soon go to the church-yard; only there is a promise of help for this, not for that. The prophet is commanded to speak to the dry bones. The dead will hear no voice but that of the Son of God, and that by the Holy Ghost.

2. It is more than creation work. Not only is it to make something, but to unmake first. There is the taking away of a stony heart before the giving of an heart of flesh. It would be as easy to order a stone to become nothing, and then a fleshy substance to take its place, as this. We see then the absolute need of the third Person of the Godhead for the saving of one soul. And further, we see what we have done in grieving Him away!

III. – The procurer of the new birth. The God-man, Christ Jesus. “He shall see of the travail of his soul.” God might have created new beings to fill His kingdom, or of stones raised up children to Abraham; but till righteousness, justice, holiness, and truth were satisfied, He could not receive us into the kingdom. Therefore Christ had to pay their debt, to take their room, to take their sin, curse and hell, before they could get the kingdom. He had sorrow when His hour was come; but He has joy when a man – anyone – is born again. O that this were to-day!

IV. – The moving cause of the new birth. The eternal electing love of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God. “God so loved the world;” “the Son of God who,” says the apostle, “loved me and gave himself for me;” and “the love of the Spirit.” And this love rested on them when He saw them in their blood, their souls murdered, in a state of nature, unwashed, unswaddled, and unpitied by any other. Here notice the freeness of the new birth. We know not which is the more wonderful, God’s giving up His Son, not sparing Him, or the Son’s giving up Himself, but both together make a matchless wonder.

V. – The nature of this birth. It is painful. It was so to Christ; it is so to the soul.

1. The Holy Ghost convinces of sin by the Word. Either by the Word read as in the case of Josiah, Luther, etc., or preached as in the case of the 3000, etc.; more frequently the latter. "Faith cometh by hearing," and the Spirit does not leave the person till He shows him he is a lost sinner, justly condemned; and that not in the general but in the particular; "Thou art the man." Here the sinner runs to many physicians. For twelve years in the case of some, and no better, but worse. The woman's blood was still running; her life was still running away.

2. The Spirit convinces until He shows the person he is a helpless sinner. "Refuge fails him, no man takes care for his soul." He is shut up, his strength is gone, and there is none left. The Word seems to cut him off from mercy.

3. Here the Spirit discovers in Christ what will suit him, and sets his heart upon the Saviour, through the Word, sometimes giving a glimpse of assurance, as it were, though there is much of sense in it, rather than single-handed faith. When the Lord makes a short work, there is often a clear and full reception of Christ in all His offices. When there is more lingering in the place of the breaking forth of children, the eyes are set on Christ but not so clearly nor decidedly at once.

VI. – Some marks of the new birth.

1. The person desires the milk of the Word, as a new-born babe. His faith has no other firm footing, his mouth, no other food.

2. He looks to his Father for clothes. "Not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." The servant looks for wages to buy with, but the child looks for the clothes ready made. So the legalist, the Pharisee, works well, and then goes to Christ to buy, but he "abides not in the house for ever." The child is kept poor, nothing in hand, and gets all as gifts.

3. He loves the family. The brethren. Others love only some who suit them; the child loves all he knows, and that for the same reason, the image they bear.

VII. – Here we are informed.

1. The child is humble. He was black when the Lord first loved him.

2. There is hope to the black now. Electing love is very sovereign. This is no discouragement. None otherwise would ever come, and it is hid who will come. But all coming are welcome.

3. Do not give new pangs to the Saviour by new sins. Though He is now above suffering, the guilt is the same.

4. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."

VIII. – Here there is direction.

1. To backsliders, "Do thy first works." He will not change His love, but He may go and hide Himself. Raze not the foundations, but come anew.

2. To those who have some feeling of a comfortable state. Often see sin. "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood." It is like heaven to see Him washing.

3. To those who have not. Be taking a view of sins; from very nature shapen in iniquity; the poison of a serpent; of sins of youth and of manhood. And seek the Spirit to convince and humble you, etc., and to reveal Christ.

IX. – Be diligent in the use of the means. Reading and hearing the word. Do not cherish the antinomian spirit; means are precious. They are set for trial and will condemn us as rational creatures, if we neglect them. But beware of trusting in them. They cannot raise the dead, nor create anew. Look for north wind and south to blow. And when the Spirit is grieved, look to the atoning blood. Remember the certainty of the words in the text, "Except a man – any one – be born again, he cannot see nor enter the kingdom of God."

[The author adds a note which, among other things, indicates he was in delicate health at this time: –
“Delivered sitting, with change of order, and amplification, etc.” – J.S.]

Second Outline:

“There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.” “God knoweth them that are his.” He knows them by name. “Their names are in the book of life.” And whatever be their office, or whatever be their service to Satan, the Lord can take them from him when He chooses. His absolute authority is such, He can say “to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.” Nicodemus was a ruler of the people. “Not many noble are called,” but some are. Days were when there were nobles in Christ’s kingdom, and there are a few yet. “And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers.”

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. It seems he was either afraid to come, lest he should be excommunicated, or he was ashamed to acknowledge Christ. It is good to come against opposition. At first grace is weak; but when of the right seed, and if it bring to Jesus, it will grow. There is no despair of a poor creature coming to Jesus. He is meek and lowly, and upbraideth not. Come. It is night with all when they come to Christ. It is His work to turn sinners from darkness to light. If you were to ask everyone who ever came to Christ, “When did you come?” “Oh, it was night,” would be the answer. “Samuel knew not the Lord,” when first the Lord spoke to him. But there is light enough with God, and no darkness at all. Nicodemus knew that Jesus came from God. He had the evidence of miracles; he had knowledge in some measure. So we have the evidence of the Word. There is a more sure word of prophecy. It is safe to go upon it, and dangerous to go against it. The Word must be fulfilled, “every jot and tittle.” Not one of these shall fail, when heaven and earth pass away.

Jesus taught Nicodemus that knowledge was not sufficient, but grace. Jesus answers suitably to the case. So He does to the woman of Samaria, the Syrophenician woman, the young lawyer, as well as to this knowing Pharisee. He says, “Verily, verily;” “Of a truth, of a truth.”

1. Jesus is the faithful and true witness.
2. He is the judge appointed.
3. He has eyes as flames of fire and cannot be deceived.

4. He has omnipotent power. He adds, “I say unto thee:” That is to say, “Remember it, I have told you.” He tells the same to each one of us to-day, though no further word should be spoken. We are warned: Except anyone, whoever here, man, woman, or child, be born again, born from above, that person cannot see, cannot enter into the kingdom of God. We must have a birth from heaven before we can go to it, we must be heaven-born to go to heaven. Without the new birth we cannot see the kingdom on earth nor enter it in heaven.

We intend, if the Lord will, to show: –

- I. – The necessity of the new birth.
- II. – The nature of the new birth.
- III. – The marks of the new birth.

I. – The necessity of the new birth. If our hearts were not harder than adamant, the testimony of Jesus, the God of truth, were enough to take away from everyone of us, who are without the new birth, all hope of salvation in our present state, and that with no more proof than His bare word. His word, with power, would do this. But we intend to show from other parts of the Scripture the ground of this assertion.

1. Then we need the new birth, because by our first birth we are flesh. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” John 3:6. Now “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” It refers no doubt to the nature of man as a sinful creature, for Adam would have inherited the kingdom, if he had stood. In this new birth the very body is changed from being

yielded as an instrument of sin. I heard one saying, “The sinful body must be worn out by repentance.” So it is written, “His flesh shall be fresher than a child’s: he shall return to the days of his youth.” The body is all sinful flesh, and though born a thousand times over, without the Spirit, is still the same. But “the flesh” is also the old nature. “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” Nothing but the Holy Spirit in them can do this work. The flesh, the old nature, would make war against the Spirit in heaven, if it could get there. A devil in heaven it would be. It possesses the very nature of the old serpent, poison. Oh, what would some of us do in heaven with such a heart, as we may and do feel in us, a carnal mind that is “enmity against God?”

II. – By nature we are not the children of God, but of the devil. “Ye are of your father the devil” – John 8:44. Not that the devil created us, he cannot; but the case is worse, we have given ourselves to him. We have cast off the image of God and taken the image and shape of the devil. We are shapen in iniquity. Holiness is beauty. They who are born anew are born “in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning.” Sin is deformity. It is an abominable thing.

1. Now, we are deformed in all our faculties, unclean in every-one.

(1) The understanding which was made full of light is dark. “Having the understanding darkened;” “ye were sometimes darkness.” The understanding is ignorant. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” Many are outwardly ignorant of the way of salvation. If taken to heaven, the understanding in this state would be a black lump there. The knowledge the understanding possesses is but the darkness of sin. Men are “wise to do evil.” The enemy has knowledge. So have many of his children, but then it is all bent against God and their own salvation. This kind of knowledge leads away from God, not to Him. If the soul were taken to heaven in this state, all its knowledge would be exercised to destroy everything there; it would prove a brand of hell, not lighted at the sacred fire.

(2) The will is adverse to God. It is adverse to everything belonging to Him. “Israel would none of me,” saith the Lord. It will not have God’s law for a rule. “We will not have this man to rule over us.” What the sinner does is either for his own advantage, for working righteousness for himself, or for escaping hell. His will is opposed to every command as coming from God. It is enmity against God, not subject to His law, neither indeed can be. The will *will* not have the gospel. “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” It cannot obey the law, and will not take gospel help. Here is our great misery. The will has the very nature of Satan. “The lusts of your father ye will do,” ye are willing to do. Although we were taken to heaven, we would not be willing to do one good thing there, but the contrary.

(3) The conscience is in the image of Satan. It is seared, dead, giving no warning. “Having their conscience seared as with a hot iron” – 1 Timothy 4:2. It does not reprove for sin. In this state, it is not like God who can see no sin without reproof and punishment. The conscience is defiled. “Even their mind and conscience is defiled” – Titus 1:15. When there is a little light, there is no practice according to the light. “They profess they know God, but in works deny him.” The conscience would continue defiled though taken to heaven. The place cannot change the nature – more is needed to accomplish this.

(4) The affections have the image of Satan. They love the world. “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” If the affections were not changed, they would be crying after a burnt world in heaven. They love sin. “How long will ye love vanity?” This is the great evil, the love of sin. (Oh, if it were broken in my heart!) Although we would be taken to heaven, that would not break the love of sin, but we would seek the same as the fallen angels, to take the throne and cast down God. Oh, the love of sin! We need the new birth.

(5) The memory. “Of the Rock that begat thee, thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee” – Deuteronomy 32:18. We have no inclination to remember God,

“Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us” – Isaiah 30:11. People cannot now bear to hear of Him, and the place would not change their nature.

(6) The imagination. “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” – Genesis 6:5. Every thought not excited by present objects would be evil, not one good.

The whole soul bears the image of Satan; and the only difference between man and him is that man is not able to exert so much power to do iniquity. The nature is as vile.

2. Not only are all the faculties of man defiled and deformed, but it is in his nature to put forth this in action, and to work against God. “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” It cannot be healed, but cut off; it cannot be cured, but destroyed. So we see it might as soon cease to be sinful as cease to fight against God. So in all persons till renewed; warnings, afflictions, mercies, promises, offers, everything fails to keep back sin. Until a renewing come, it is the nature of sin to work as described.

3. Not only are all the faculties inclined with all their bent to sin, but they are prostrated under the power of the enemy. “We are taken captive by him at his will.” Unless we are kept back by restraining grace, in spite of him, by a more powerful arm, he is our master. He reigns and rules in the children of disobedience, and horrible rule he keeps them under.

(1) Satan is powerful. He is called “the prince of darkness.” He is too strong – “the strong man armed” – for us. If he bids us not pray, we obey; if he bids us not read, we obey; and so on.

(2) He is full of malice against God. He sets himself in the seat of God, the heart. And he is against the happiness of the creature. So bent on this is he that though he increase his own torment, he will seek whom he may devour. Paul says, “We are not ignorant of his devices.” He first tries to deceive with hopes of safety without the new birth, and failing of that, he tries to drive to despair as in the case of Judas, Cain, etc. He would first cover the creature’s misery, and then he would cover Christ’s glory. And he has power to do so until He come who bruises the head of this leviathan, this old serpent, and delivers the lawful captive.

III. – We are “by nature children of wrath,” not of heaven.

1. By guilt; “Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” God is just. “The God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.” According to the strictest justice of God, nothing else is due to the sinner. This the Spirit teaches.

2. By pollution. “Fitted for destruction.” Instead of being fit for heaven, every faculty of the soul, and member of the body, fitted for destruction. “Not fit for the kingdom of heaven.” Like to like. Their work is for Satan. So their hire also; their inheritance is in the lake of everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. They are themselves also his angels, his messengers.

3. By their own consent. “In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” It was so with holy Adam in submission to the divine covenant. But not in this sense we mean here. It is by sinful consent. “A covenant with death, and with hell at agreement.” We are warned and forewarned a thousand times. Do we wonder then that “Except a man be born again, except a man have his state and nature changed, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God?” Sooner may we come into this world without a natural birth than enter into heaven without the new birth.

[November 1900]

Notes of Lecture.

By the late REV. JOHN DUNCAN, LL.D.,

Delivered on 6th August, 1865, in the Clare Hall, Edinburgh.

“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” – 1 Peter 2:1-3.

The apostle still prosecutes the thought which we have considered of the believers being begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He had been exhorting them to walk worthy of their high calling unto all well-pleasing, as children, to be obedient children, and as each being members of the family of the Father, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, to live in that peace, unity, and love which becomes these, the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. And he had been further exhorting them unto the duty of brotherly love from the consideration of that Word of God by which they had been born again – 1 Peter 1:22 23. “It is an incorruptible seed, and it is in you a seed of incorruptible life; it is incorruptible seed, and therefore your fraternal relation is like your filial, an abiding one.” So he exhorts to brotherly love because of it. He says, “Ye are born of incorruptible seed, and that incorruptible seed is the word which by the gospel is

preached unto you.” “The sower soweth the word,” saith Christ, and that word is seed which is sown on every one of us. The soil differs; the same seed is sown on all. “This is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” To every one of us it is preached, whether we resemble the wayside, or the rocky soil, or the thorny and briery, or the good.

This seed is sown, for this word is preached, this glad tidings of salvation by Jesus Christ, “delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification;” this gospel, God raising up Christ Jesus from the dead and giving Him glory, that the faith and hope of sinful men might be in God. But there comes the question of being born again of the incorruptible seed. To all it is preached, but all are not born again of it. In many the seed is trampled down, or plucked up, or grows with a short-lived growth, which is soon blasted by the noonday heat. It is only they who receive it in an honest and good heart, which no man hath but by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, who brings forth fruit; to them only it is an incorruptible seed. More is necessary than the sowing of seed, in order to the production of fruit. If the seed indeed be not sown, there can be no harvest, and if the seed sown be not good seed, the harvest can be nothing but such as the sowing was. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” But then more is needful, the soil hath much to do with it as well as the seed; the seed, and the soil, and the atmospheric influences.

Sometimes the seed of the Word is sown, nor are the atmospheric influences wanting, but in vain; for we read of ground, which, receiving the dew and rain from heaven, bringeth forth only thorns and briers, and which is nigh unto cursing whose end is to be burned. The seed is sown, the rain descends, yet corresponding fruit is not brought forth. But when the Word is received, not as the word of man, but as the Word of God, when, as our Lord explains in various Gospels, the Word is understood and kept; when it is received in the love of it, that the man may be saved; when the heart is given over to the mould of the doctrine; when the Word is mixed with faith in the hearing thereof, as food is mixed with the gastric and other juices unto digestion; when the Word and the soul agree together; then it becomes a seed within that soul, an incorruptible seed; the man is born again of this incorruptible seed. And he, and all those who like him receive the Word, are the children of God, and brethren and sisters one of another; and are exhorted therefore to “love one another with a pure heart fervently.”

The apostle is led on in chapter 2, verses 1-3, from this idea of the Word as the incorruptible seed of eternal life to the cognate thought of the same Word as sincere milk for the believer’s growth. “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever;” “as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” The same Word, which was considered as the seed of the life, as that whereby we were begotten, is here considered as the food of the new life of which it was the root – “Desire the sincere milk of the word,” is the exhortation, and it is clothed with several circumstances. “Desire the sincere milk of the word;” but first, by way of preparation, he calls on us to put aside the contrasts, “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and all hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word.” Beware of cherishing contraries, inconsistencies. “Break up,” says the prophet, “your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.” The good seed hath been sown; but sow not among thorns, which would grow up and choke the good seed. “Desire the sincere milk of the word;” but lay aside all that is contrary to that, all malice and guile and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings. These things don’t harmonize with the word; to retain them, and take in the word, is to undo all your own labour, the word will not profit you. Man requires food, the newborn child requires milk, but then, neither the food for the man, nor the milk for the child, will nourish them when taken along with poison. These things then are contrary, malice and guile and hypocrisies, and envies and evil speakings. The word is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto us, and malice is inconsistent with

that. For what is the Gospel? It is the declaration of God's wondrous love; the faith of that, the reception of that, or the love of it, is utterly inconsistent with malice, and with guile. For the word is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto us, and this Word of God is true, it is upright. But that it comes from Him who is love itself, it were incredible, and yet there is nothing deceptive in it. And as it is the gospel of God's love, so it is received by faith which rests with simplicity upon the faithfulness of God, who in this wondrous message speaks plainly and simply and undeceivingly. And inconsistent with hypocrisy. For the word to be received truly must be received in the love of it, with faith unfeigned, without all acting of a part, without all pretence and show, without all assumption of the Christian character in the outward acting without the inward being. For that is the meaning of hypocrisy, to act a part as a play-actor does on the stage. He is on the stage, a king or a nobleman, but in reality he is a poor stage-player acting a part, he is not what he gives himself out as, he assumes a character which he has not. Seeming without being, acting without being, that is hypocrisy. And inconsistent with envies. For this word is the word which comes from God who is rich in mercy unto all that call upon Him, so that no man needs to envy another. Envy is quite inconsistent with faith in Him who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not. And inconsistent with all evil speakings. They are quite inconsistent, as with the word, so with the brotherly affection which believers in the word are to cherish one to another. So put away all these. And so doing, receive, "desire the sincere milk of the word."

Desire it, "as newborn babes." The reference is, as we have seen, to the twenty-third verse of the previous chapter, "being born again." He directs our attention to the supernatural birth, called the new birth in opposition to the first and old. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, but that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." But the word here in verse second, "newborn babe," means newly born, the babe just born. The newborn creature hath a character corresponding to the seed of which it was born. It hath a new life, and that new life hath its own powers, its own desires, its own instincts. The newborn babe, immediately from the instinct of the newborn babe, takes to the breast, desires the milk, that it may grow thereby. Not that the newborn babe is in the highest sense intelligently conscious of aim. But He who cares for all, He knows the end and design, and as an end and design is prosecuted by the child, unconscious of that end and design, we call it an instinct. So, born of the seed of the word, desire you the sincere milk of the word. Turn to it with the same naturalness as the newborn babe takes to its mother's breast; it was the seed of which you were born; it is also the nourishment of your new life. Therefore desire it, seek it, apply yourselves to it; take it in with earnestness, with relish; take it in as the means of the preservation of your life, and the means of the increase of your vital powers. "Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." For the new life in regeneration, great and important as that change is, – and it is the most important event that takes place in the life of one, born, as we all have been, altogether in sins, – is yet but a beginning, and the converted man is like a newborn child. As the newborn child hath entered this world, so he hath entered a new world, a world in which all things are new, and all the things are of God who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ. He hath entered into a new life, a life which is to endure, for the seed, of which he was born, is incorruptible. The man is alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, dead unto sins, having crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts, laying aside all malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speakings. Yet he is but a newborn child, he is it, and is only so: and he has to grow, has to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; he is to be fruitful in every good word and work, and increasing in this knowledge. And for this growth, the word is adapted. It is; for "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." He hath to grow in grace, in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, in the knowledge of God's good

and perfect and acceptable will. He hath to grow in every grace; his faith needs confirming, his hope needs brightening, his repentance and humility need deepening, his active powers need not only direction but strengthening. And for all that, the word is fitted. And as it is God's order of things that the life implanted should be supported by means which He has also provided; as He has not made provision for the life implanted continuing without the use of means on our part fitted to support it, He hath in wisdom arranged, that, as the child hath a desire to the milk, so the newborn soul should have a desire unto the sincere milk of the word. And God hath provided, hath secured, that all His newborn children should reach the measure of the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus, that everyone that enters the kingdom of grace, should likewise enter the kingdom of glory. He hath secured that – but He hath secured that wisely in the way in which He converts; and He as certainly and infallibly connects the means and the end, as He does the beginning and the end.

All this the apostle exhorts them to do on this premise or ground: “If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” The words do not imply a doubt; for the epistle is addressed to those who are elect, sanctified, begotten again; it is, “*Seeing* ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” As the new-born babe immediately takes to the breast before it has tasted, but, having tasted the mother's milk, again and again repairs to the breast, so do you, if ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Thus you have there, in this sincere milk of the word, this unmixed, pure, intellectual milk, this milk for the spiritual babes, something that is sweet to the taste; it is the Lord's grace. “The Lord is gracious.” “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” The Lord Jesus Christ is gracious. His grace to the new-born babe desiring the sincere milk of the word, is known by experience. Some proposing to be wise, in these days, have told us that God, because He is infinite, and we finite, cannot be known. Strange enough that these poor philosophers of the schools should all mistake the doctrine of common sense, and of our knowledge of external material objects by direct perception. For if there be a spiritual world, if God be a spiritual Being, and man a spiritual being, and if to man, dead in trespasses and sins, life be communicated, sure enough as there is the awakening of spiritual life, there will be spiritual senses, spiritual perceptions. Yes, the life of the Christian is a life of faith upon the Son of God; and that life has its sight, “looking unto Jesus”; that life has its motive power, “to whom coming”; that life has its taste, “O taste and see that the Lord is good.” By taste we ascertain certain qualities of the object, as being sweet, or bitter, or sour; and God hath, to a great degree, joined together the sweetness and the salutariness of the things so tasted. When we taste we apply our mouth, the organ of taste, to the object, and obtain by taste a peculiar knowledge. You may have known a thing you have never seen, because you have heard about it, and believe it on good and faithful testimony. Yet what a different knowledge it is when you see it; you say “I had long heard about it, I had full proof of it, I fully believed it, but now I see it.” Hence though it does not altogether follow that “seeing is believing” to the extent that there could not be belief before sight – there *is* belief before sight – yet it is another knowledge altogether that the sense of sight produces. So as regards taste. On testimony I might fully believe, though I had never tasted honey in all my life, that honey is sweet, but if I taste honey, I know in another way. That is what is called experiential knowledge.

Well, “if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious,” have tasted the grace by personal experience, by the reception of it on testimony, it is sweet to you. Though you might have known it otherwise, by other's testimony, you did take it into your mouths, you did receive it into your hearts. “Ah, the grace is now in my mouth, that is, my soul, by the faith that believes it, makes trial of it, and the love of God is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto me.” Such weight, such strength, does this give the exhortation; “Desire the sincere milk of the word.” It is as if the apostle said, “What need to press my exhortation? you have, besides my exhortation, your own experience, ye have tasted that the

Lord is gracious. And what does that experience lead to? that ye again desire more the sincere milk of the word.” For it is in the sincere milk of the word that God hath placed His grace, as that not only announces and tells of it, but as it is that which He employs as the means of communicating it to our soul’s experience. “Ye have tasted,” therefore taste more and more and more.

The apostle John wrote his gospel with this intention, as he tells us: “That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.” He also wrote his first epistle with an end which he tells us; “These things have I written unto you that believe in the name of the Son of God, that ye may believe that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe in the name of the Son of God.” He wrote his gospel containing the account of the life, of the sayings and doings, of the sufferings, and death, and resurrection, of the Lord of glory, that men might believe, and believing, have life. He wrote his epistle to them that believe, that they might know that they have eternal life. He does so, giving what are called marks of grace, founding them on the very same doctrine which Christ taught, as that “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” And there is the practical application of that both negatively and positively. Negatively: “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” Positively: “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.” Well, by this, the application of the doctrine which Christ taught, he is to lead the believers to know that they have eternal life. As he wrote to them that believe not that they might believe, and believing, have life, so he wrote to them that believe, that they might know that they have eternal life, and that they might believe on the name of the Son of God. As if he said, “Thus you see what good has come to you by believing, you see now that by believing ye have eternal life.” Therefore what then? “As all the good you have got has come by believing on the name of the Son of God, so all the good you are to get yet will come the same way, by believing on the name of the Son of God. You have had experience of what good comes by believing on the name of the Son of God, therefore continue, therefore grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, increase in faith and love.”

It is the same here. “If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, desire the sincere milk of the word.” The rational, intellectual milk, – distinguishing it from the literal milk which the new born babe desires. The word translated “sincere,” occurs once again in the New Testament, in Romans 12:1; “that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your *reasonable* service.” Reasonable or rational service, contradistinguished from the ceremonial service, which consisted in the presentation to God of the sacrifices of irrational animals. Thus this “sincere milk” means something else than what our version makes the Greek word – “for this word proceeds from God, the highest Reason. Desire therefore this milk, that ye may grow thereby. For to what are we called? To perfection. None of us have reached that yet; some of us, alas! are very far from it; but to that we are called. “Be ye perfect, even as your Father, which is in heaven, is perfect.” The end of our calling is “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;” and Scripture is given, and is profitable for all the ends formerly mentioned; “that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” And if we have not reached perfection, our calling is to go on, “perfecting holiness in the fear of God,” growing up “unto a perfect man.” O then let us take care, let us beware of that of which the apostle so solemnly, so reprovably writes to the Hebrew Church; “When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age.”

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” Now, as has been stated, “newborn babes” here evidently means, “newly born babes;” and “the sincere milk of the word” here cannot be understood of some portions of the word as contradistinguished from other portions of the word, it is the whole Word of God as milk. But in that other place in Hebrews, a distinction is made between milk for babes and strong meat for men. And it behoves teachers rightly to divide the Word of God, “giving to everyone his portion of meat in due season;” and it were well, if Christians were come the length of the knowledge of their own special portions. But it is expected, as we see from that passage in Hebrews, that the newborn babe is to grow up, so that by the use of the milk he may come to the strong man. From the length of the time, God expects it, the apostle says to the Hebrews. He is very kind to the babes; He gives them meat enough, and meat fitted for them, milk, very nutritive and easy to digest. But young men have work to do, and require the strong meat, – strong meat because the participant of it is called to heavy labour.

Now, you, young communicants, “desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” God does not call you to idleness even now, but to be diligent, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And expect good at God’s hand. But expect also, when the Lord has given strength for it, trial, and that you will get work to do. Therefore hearken and hear for the time to come. You cannot always be dandled on the knees. When you need it, condescendingly it will be vouchsafed; but beware of idleness, when, not need, but sloth calls you to the indulgence of it: God is gracious to the need, He will not be stupidly, foolishly, unwisely indulgent to that.

Now, we have a place within the kingdom of God, this word by the gospel is preached unto us. And now have we cause of thankfulness to God that He has given us in His good providence the prospect of speedily enjoying a settled dispensation of the word and the other ordinances of His house. Let us prize the word, let us prize that prospect, let us be very desirous and prayerful that the Lord may unite us together in brotherly love, give us wisdom, and send us one to feed us with knowledge and understanding, bringing out of his treasure things new and old, – as a steward faithful, and as a scribe well-instructed unto that, rightly dividing the word of truth. And let us beware of mixing the word with contraries, not only with false doctrine, contrary in terms to the word, but with tempers, dispositions, and practices which are inconsistent with what the Apostle John so finely calls, *doing the truth*.

Have we tasted that the Lord is gracious? If we have, let us cleave close to Him. Let us seek evermore that the Lord would give us this sweet, this nourishing word of His grace, and grace of His word. And if we have not. There may be some here who have not tasted that the Lord is gracious, who yet in some way believe that the Lord is gracious, who don’t deny the testimony of the word, or the testimony of Christians who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, who believe that Jesus is the Christ, that Christianity is true, that Christianity and Christians are a reality, who believe that the Lord is gracious, and that there are men who have tasted the sweetness of his grace – but yet they themselves have never *tasted* that the Lord is gracious. Now, how long, O how long, shall the meat which is set before you on the gospel table, and which you are saying is very good, you are quite sure is very good, be left untasted by you? Christ, you are sure, is very good, and you believe there are men who have tasted it, there are men who, you cannot doubt, belong to the Lord and own his grace, and have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Well, why will you never do this, taste? You are there looking at the table, perhaps you are looking and thinking, “O that I had it.” “Whosoever will, let him take.” “O taste and see that God is good.” May the Lord so incline and enable you!

[November 1900]

Notes of a Sermon

By the REV. JOHN MACLEOD, M.A., Ullapool.

“And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.” – Joshua 3:17.

The people of Israel were the visible Church of God. Until the New Testament dispensation was inaugurated and the Old was antiquated, they were the Church, and none but they. They were a people marked out by the Lord for Himself; they enjoyed privileges that none enjoyed but they. They were the natural branches in their own olive tree. They dwelt apart, and were not numbered among the nations. Goodness was shown to them that was denied to others – Jacob was loved and Esau was hated. Other nations knew not the Lord’s judgments, but Israel did. They occupied, under the old economy, the place held now by the Church of Christ as a visible organism in this world. At the same time, it was also true with regard to them that they pictured out in their privileges, their call, their troubles, and their deliverances, that spiritual seed that are indeed the children of the promise, that are the seed of Abraham and Sarah, as Isaac was. They were the visible Church, and they picture to us the Church invisible. There is a visible Church and there is a Church invisible. All were not Israel that were outwardly Israelites; nor are all true Christians that bear the name. And it is to our loss to forget the reality of this distinction.

Writing to the Hebrew Christians the apostle illustrates his argument by bringing forward Israel in the wilderness, and what befel them there. With many of them God was not well pleased, and their carcasses fell in the wilderness. They could not enter into the promised rest because of unbelief. A warning is drawn from this: let us fear, for the gospel is preached to us as it was to them. The promise of the land was theirs, yet they did not enter in. The promise

was not mixed with faith. There was needed not alone a promising God, but also a believing people. The mere fact of the promise being announced to them did not secure to them its fulfilment. It did not bind the Lord to make it good to them indiscriminately and independently altogether of whether they believed His word or not. To us, too, the word has come, and in the Christ that word reveals is eternal life or the promise of the inheritance. It is not enough for us that the word has come to our hearing, and that there is eternal life in Christ. We must be in Christ to reach the eternal life that is His for sinners. We must be united to Him, and live, too, a life of faith in Him. We must receive Him, and we must walk in Him. Unless the word is mixed with faith it will not profit. Outward privileges and a name in the Church of God will not suffice. No more will these things profit us than the fact of their being Israelites secured to all who left Egypt with Moses that they should enter into the land of Canaan.

When the history of Israel is viewed in such a light as this the people are regarded as a typical people of the place, standing, and danger of the visible community of those throughout the world, with their children, that acknowledge Jesus to be the Son of God. There was of old a spiritual Israel. In Abraham's family were both Isaac and Ishmael; in Isaac's were both Esau and Jacob. There is still a spiritual Israel. They are known certainly only to Him who searches the heart. But they *are* known to Him; and Israel of old show forth in their history and life many features of the character, history, and privileges of this spiritual Israel.

Now, the narrative of this chapter tells us what happened to Israel, and how they crossed the Jordan; and it lends itself with ease to a spiritual use as illustrative of the history and passing away of the true circumcision. In considering the seventeenth verse let us notice –

- I. – The people, and whom they represent.
- II. – The river, and what it means.
- III. – The way in which this people crossed the river.

I. – The people we find here, on the eastern bank of the Jordan, are the children of Israel. They had come out of Egypt. They had travelled through the wilderness, and now there was nothing dividing them from the land of their possession but Jordan only. Before they had come out of Egypt they were in it, and when they were in Egypt they were as truly there as the Egyptians themselves. Not only were they in Egypt, they also did service to the king of Egypt. And in this respect they pictured forth the nature, state, and condition of the true Israel of God. Those who are God's chosen and called people were by nature children of wrath, as were others. They were dead in trespasses and in sins, as others were. They did the will of the flesh and of the mind, and were the subjects of him who is the god of this world. They were of the world as well as in it; and while they were in it and of it, they were as surely worldlings as any are. If Israel were Pharaoh's slaves, *they* were the devil's. They were in the world and of it, and though there was God's purpose with regard to them to separate them to Himself, yet until He fulfilled His purpose they remained in the world and of it, with nothing to distinguish them from their fellows.

It is true that the Lord knows whom He has chosen. He knows, but we do not. His knowledge is the secret knowledge of Him who knows everything. Secret things belong to Him, and to Him alone, but He is pleased, by His word and providence, to cast light on His secret purpose. Only so far as He has been pleased to reveal His purpose do we know anything about it. He knew Israel in Egypt, and He brought them out of Egypt, but it was not till they were brought out of Egypt that we could say with certainty who they were that He had purposed to bring out with an high hand and an out-stretched arm. While they were still in Egypt they were as surely there as the Egyptians themselves. It is true that a distinction was made between them and their neighbours on the Passover night; and so there is a distinction already made by the blood of the Anti-type of the paschal lamb. Christ has

redeemed His people, and He brings them, one and all, out of their state of natural bondage. The Son sets them free, and they are free indeed. He gives them to know the truth, and thus frees them. But it was only when the Red Sea returned on their foes and drowned them that it was clearly seen who had come out of Egypt and who had not.

In their separation from the people among whom they were, by the blood of the lamb and by the passage of the Red Sea, Israel, as a people, typified the true Israel. Many were sheltered by the blood on the lintels that afterwards fell in the wilderness; and thus when we speak of Israel as typical of the true Israel, we speak not of the individuals that composed the nation. It was the nation, and not the same individuals that left Egypt, that were now on the banks of Jordan, and it is as a nation that they were a type of the true Church of God.

But the people we have here before us not only came out of Egypt, they also came through the wilderness, and found it to be a wilderness indeed. So, too, is the case with the spiritual Israel. When they were brought out of Egypt they were left in the wilderness. They might begin their journey there with a song of gratitude and triumph, but they were none the less in the wilderness now. The children of God are called out of the world, and yet they are left in the world. They were once upon a time at home in it; they were then its children, and it is little wonder they felt at home in it. Their neighbours are still at home in it, for they are still its children; but the children of God have been born from above, and their home is where their Father is – as the children of God, heaven is their home. Their home is where their elder brother is; their home is where their brethren are; their home is where the family shall yet be undivided. And as this world is not their home, they live as strangers. God is not ashamed to be called their God, and He has prepared for them a city. He is not ashamed to call them brethren, and he will not be ashamed to take them home to Himself; but until their homecoming they are strangers, and this world becomes to them a wilderness. In the wilderness they find themselves in a thirsty land. Their soul longs in a dry, parched land where there are no waters, and thus they are taught to appreciate the promises of Him who is not a wilderness to Israel, but who speaks to the poor and the needy, thirsting for water and finding none, and says, “I will open fountains in the midst of the valleys, and rivers in the dry places.” As Israel found the wilderness a wilderness, so the people of the living God find this world to be a desert indeed, and as Israel met with conflict on their journey, so do they.

But Israel of old (to conclude this section) was fed with manna. The wilderness could not sustain them, and they had to be fed from above. So is it with the spiritual Israel. This world will not satisfy them; it will not supply them with the spiritual sustenance they need; and they must be fed from above if they are to be fed at all. They are fed; food has been provided, and they are enabled to partake of it; and in the strength of this food they travel onwards, until at length they come to the borders of the land of promised rest, and nothing parts them from that rest but the waters of Jordan. Thus they come to the point where we find Israel at this time.

II. – The river, and what it means.

Over Jordan was the land of promise. There they were to have rest. It was the land promised to their fathers, but between them and the land rolled the waters of the river. The time was harvest, and the water overflowed its banks. Yet unless these waters were crossed, Israel, though they had come so far, would be shut out from the land. In some respects the land was, and in some it was not, a type of the heavenly rest. It was in this sense that through the type the fathers looked and saw the rest that awaited them. In this land the rest of Israel was to be after their journey from Egypt through the wilderness. In this land they were to serve the Lord and to enjoy His presence. In this land they were to enjoy the riches of the provision He had made for them – it flowed with milk and honey. In these respects the land was a figure of the rest that abides where the saints of the Most High shall dwell. But in the land they were to have fighting. After crossing Jordan they still had an Achan in the camp. Their enjoyment, too, of the land was to be limited by the term of their natural life; and their

enjoyment of it as a people was to be contingent on their faithfulness to the Lord in His covenant. In these respects the land was not a type of the unbroken rest of heaven. After crossing Jordan they had to fight ere they gained possession of the land. It is true that their sword won it not, and their arm saved them not; yet though they won it not by their own fighting, it was not won without their fighting. "Pray, pray," said an aged Christian to a youth; "if the battle is won, it is Christ that wins it for you, but you must be on the field." None are crowned as victors but those that engage in the conflict, and all the hosts of the Lord are victors. They have all been arrayed under the banner of the Captain of salvation; they all have fought, and they all have won. But their fighting is on this side Jordan; it is all in this life, and once this world is left behind, its troubles, trials, conflicts, temptations are no more.

In the sense then that the believer has no more conflict to face once he crosses Jordan, the land is not a type of the better land, and the river is not a type of the dark water that flows in the valley of the shadow of death. The types, however, of the Old Testament are not to be pushed too far, and we need not expect that in every detail and particular the type and what it typifies correspond. Suffice it for us that, taking the matter broadly, we see in the land a figure of the Christian's rest, and in the river a figure of the river of death that all generations until the last shall have to cross in order to be present with the Lord. We see that the spies crossed over Jordan and returned safely, but this does not materially affect our position. It is a subordinate detail, and we need not, on its account, qualify our statement of the general position – that Jordan is a type of death, and that the land is a type of the everlasting rest. Were we inclined to spiritualise details, it would not be difficult to see in the spies' going and their safe return, a picture of faith and hope entering as forerunners and bringing back a message to Israel on Jordan's banks, but we forbear. The river had to be crossed, and Israel were encamped by its side. They were there, old and young; they were there, warrior and matron; they were there, feeble and strong. Of all ages, of each sex, of every quality, they were there; all met together at Jordan's side. So is it with the Church of God. Of every generation, of every clime, old and young, feeble and strong, bond and free, they meet at this point. Jordan has to be crossed ere they enter into possession of the land. The way they never have taken before has to be taken now, and past personal experience will not help them. However old they may be in the service of their Master, however young they may be – babes and sucklings, they all have this journey to make, and the patriarch is not more acquainted with it than is the stripling. The ancient knows no more of it than the infant; they have to tread a path they have never trod before. Though redeemed from the curse and the penalty of sin, the children of God have to face the king of terrors; they are not exempt from mortality. The body is dead because of sin, though the spirit is life because of righteousness. Death is to them spoiled of his sting; his sting is sin, and Christ has spoiled him of it. Instead of being the frowning entrance into the second death, death is to them a door of life. They enter into life, into a fuller, freer, purer, nobler life than ever they enjoyed here. It is not death thus to die; and such an end as this awaits all the Israel of God when they shall go into the presence of the King to abide there for ever and ever. They have to die, but how changed is death to them! It is, it is true, the fruit of sin; had there been no sin, it had not been. It is not to them the wages of sin; it is its result. But though the result of sin, it is transformed. It is under Christ's feet; it is His servant; He sends it on a message of love to tell His loved ones of their promotion. By it He says to them, "Friend, come up higher." It has been emptied of the venom of the curse, and is now actually a covenant blessing to those to whom all things are made new. This, we conceive, is what the river is, and what the river represents.

III. – Let us now see how Israel crossed the river.

Strong men might swim over Jordan even in flood, but this was not the way in which Israel were to cross. Their crossing is a type that speaks to age after age. Strong and weak

were on the same level; rich and poor had the one way to take, and they took it. Old and young alike had to cross, and there was no distinction between one and another. They all, each and all, had to pass over the channel of Jordan, and none was to be safer than another. They were all to be equally secure. What then was the mode adopted? By the command of the Lord, Joshua gave orders that the priests should advance carrying the ark of the covenant, and after them at a distance the people were to come. The priests, the sons of Aaron, advanced, bearing the ark. They reached the edge of the water; their feet were dipped in the waters of the river, and then the waters were stayed. The Lord Himself stayed them; they stood up as an heap, and from the standing place of the priests to the mouth of the river where it falls into the Dead Sea, the channel was dried up. Thus was an highway opened up for the redeemed of the Lord. He Himself opened it, and His people used it. Under shelter of the ark of the covenant, Israel, great and small, high and low, crossed over to the other side. Their crossing would take no long time, ranged as they would be perhaps for miles along the river's bank. They crossed, however, whether in a few moments or in a longer time, and Jordan made way for them; Jordan was driven back.

Now, what does all this mean? How was Jordan driven back? The Lord did it, but He used instrumentality. The priests, bearing the ark, advanced to the brink of the river, and then the waters ceased to flow, and stood up as firmly as though they were frozen by winter's cold. The priesthood of the Old Testament was typical, and the ark was a type. They were typical of Christ, of Christ as priest, of Christ as the ark of the New Testament. Christ in His sacrificial death, tasting death and drinking the cup, is brought before us here. By His death He spoiled death of its sting. As the priests entered the river, so He entered; as the priests were not drowned, so too, in bruising the head of the serpent, His heel only was bruised. He died, but death did not conquer. He conquered death, and He conquered it by dying. By His death He overcame death. The priests' feet were wet; they entered the water, but the water overwhelmed them not. He entered the water indeed, but it could not overwhelm Him. He destroyed death: He opened a safe way and passage over the river of death for all believers. They go not through the water, but only over the channel of the dried-up river.

All Israel took the shelter of the ark. Under its shelter they crossed safely. So with the spiritual Israel; they cross the river of death under shelter and covert of what Christ has done. The channel has to be crossed, but it cannot drown. Among the all things that are theirs is death; it is theirs. They are not its prey; it is theirs; it is transformed. It is only, however, under covert of the atoning death of the Lamb of God that this is to be enjoyed; but it is to be enjoyed, and more than that, it *is* enjoyed. Be they strong or weak, old or young, in the family of God this is secured to them by the death of Christ, that death shall not sweep them away to the Dead Sea of perdition. The strong are here no stronger than the weak, nor are the weak weaker than the strong. To all that are justified by faith in His blood, Christ secures that they shall not perish, for the justification that is from Him secures to them the title to eternal life.

This narrative, however, is very instructive in various details. Israel crossed during harvest, and then the river was wont to flow up to the level of its banks. There is a sense in which death is the harvest, and to all that are out of Christ when the harvest comes this falls as their lot – that they have to cross Jordan in flood, and thus to be swept away by its waters. The people were to keep at a distance from the ark. It cleared the way, yet they were not to come too near it. Redemption is a mystery. It would not be known if it had not been revealed, and now that it has been revealed, its depths are past sounding; they cannot be searched. Profane boldness of speculation about the mysteries of God's word are forbidden. They are not to be treated as common things; they call for reverence and for becoming treatment. In meditating on them we must not lean to our own understanding. Only in so far as we are led into the word of God, and led by that word to know its secrets, do we treat them with the reverence that they deserve and demand. As Israel must not come near the ark, so must not

we deal with unholy familiarity with the mystery of godliness and the mystery of redemption. Again, the priests bearing the ark stood in their place until all Israel crossed over. As long as there is a believer in the world who is to cross into the eternal world by the passage of Jordan, so long does the efficacy of that death in which is his hope keep a clear passage for him into the promised rest. "Christ crucified" in the gospel offer is laid hold of by faith, and thus the shelter of the ark of the covenant is taken, and a safe passage secured over the river. As long as there is one believer to cross, so long will the royal highway be kept open for the royal household. It is their privilege, one and all, to be conquerors, and this enters into their victory, that even in death they are victorious. Though body and soul part company, yet the redeemed spirit passes into the King's immediate presence.

But now suppose that there was in Israel one who was so proud and independent as to refuse such a passage as this. To think that he would take advantage of the passage that the vulgar herd availed themselves of, that *he* should have to stand indebted to the protection of the ark! Why, he could cross Jordan for himself, and needed no such help. If Jordan was deep before, how much deeper was it now? Its waters stood up as an heap; there was no wading possible. Are there any that deal so foolishly with an offered Christ? Alas! there are multitudes. They will not become His debtors; they wilfully disregard Him; they trample Him under foot. There are but the two ways of crossing Jordan; one must either come under the ark's shelter, or he must refuse its protection. Death to the ungodly that never knew the gospel is awful, but privilege increases responsibility, and the death of those that refuse Christ is not only sure as a part of the wages of sin, but it is made sevenfold certain to them. He who would try to wade Jordan with its waters standing up as an heap, would be punished for his pains. He who refuses Christ as his surety and relies not on His finished work and His perfect sacrifice, walks into the heaped-up waters of Jordan, and there is no swimming here.

Christ is still held forth; He is as mighty to save as ever. There is but the one salvation, and that is by faith in His blood. His people, one and all, esteeming their own righteousness to be but filthy rags, rely on Him as their righteousness. Their desire is that they should be found in Him, in His righteousness arrayed. They may have their fears, but their faith causes them to take the safe side of the ark. Some in Israel of old, looking at the heap of waters, might tremblingly say, "What if all that heap descend on me, and I deserve it! I shall be swept hopelessly away." Such there might be in Israel, and such there are in the spiritual Israel. Looking at times with the eye of their heart only to their own desert, they see that this is but righteous, that death should be the end of their hopes. They lose sight of Christ as their surety – not that ever they lose sight of Him as *the* surety. They question not His power to save those that trust in Him; they question their own salvation, because they question their own faith in Christ. They have faith, and yet they question it. The questioning is in them and not in their faith. While they are here they are subject to any or all the assaults of the adversary, and even when passing beyond the range of his arrows they may have their heel wounded. He may wound their heel with cruel questionings even when they are passing finally out of his reach. But if such there were among Israel, the Lord dealt with them not according to their unbelief, but according to their faith. Their soundness of mind led them to take shelter under covert of the ark, and there was security there. So with the spiritual Israel, in spite of all their questionings they cling to Christ. They take shelter under His covert, and not one drop of the flood of wrath shall descend upon them. They are as safe in Him, though weak, as the strongest of His people. He will not suffer them to be lost. He will not belie His word, nor will He lose His glory by the loss of their soul. Now, this is said not to encourage a doubting, questioning spirit, but rather to encourage the true believer in spite of his doubt.

Christ is worthy of such a self-denied trust on our part, that we should yield ourselves unto Him, confident that He will not cast out, but rather that He will perfect that which concerneth us. See to it then, that as a traveller to eternity, you come under the covert of His

blood; then you will find, as Israel found, a clear passage opened to you into the land of promise. You shall then go in and enter into possession. The land and its fulness shall be yours, and you will never forget to whom and to what you are indebted for it all – even to Christ and His precious blood. This is the theme of song for all the redeemed. They are one in this, as they are one in Him. Their song shall be to Him who loved them, and washed them from their sins in His own precious blood, and made them kings and priests unto God; even His Father. Amen.

[December 1900]

A LAST CALL TO BACKSLIDERS.

A Sermon

By REV. J. KENNEDY, D. D.,

Partly Preached at Obsdale.

“Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.” – Jeremiah 6:16.

Messages from the Lord are always true and seasonable, whether His words are those of rebuke or those of comfort. In each case, too, the authority of the message is divine, and should not therefore be challenged. And the tenor of the Messenger's feeling must be according to the words which he speaks in the name of the Lord, and therefore according to the condition of those whom he addresses. Jeremiah received messages from the Lord to his own generation, which was in a sadly degenerate condition. Its spiritual state, and the kind of message which the Lord gave him to deliver, caused his being distinguished as “the weeping prophet.” In times of backsliding all who speak in the Lord's name, and according to His mind, must be like him. The view which they have of the times they live in, and the kind of message which the Lord directs them to deliver, combine to make them sad. The woeful condition of things around them casts its dark shadow on their face, and causes the gloomy and austere aspect, for which they are condemned by those whom the Lord constrains them to rebuke.

“To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear?” Jeremiah was constrained to ask, for he met with none who was disposed to listen to a message from the Lord. “Their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken,” is his account of the people in general. “Behold,” he adds, “the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.” And just in the measure in which they were treating the word of the Lord with contempt, was the Lord charging his soul with an awful message of condemnation, till at last he describes his feeling in such terms as these, “I am full of the fury of the Lord; I am weary with holding in; I will pour it out.” To his eye all classes seemed fast ripening for judgment – and he saw them as the Lord showed them – but “from the prophet to the priest, every one,” he declares, “dealeth falsely.” To those all appeared to be in a most prosperous state. They had entered on “new departures,” but these, as they alleged, were on right lines. They were “advancing”

beyond the position of their fathers, having cast off the shackles of traditionalism, and adopted a more sprightly kind of religion than that of the strict gloomy men of former days, whom that pining prophet Jeremiah so rigidly followed, and who in his presumption born of his want of enlightenment, ventured to tell them that their progress was only towards further sin and judgment. The cry of those to Israel was “peace, peace, when there” was “no peace.” These trimmers to the spirit of the age, were but skimmers of the sea of Israel’s troubles. Strangers to the affliction of a broken heart because of what “an unction from the Holy One” discovered to it, they “slightly healed the hurt of” Judah. But as “the day of vengeance” drew very near, the sinful people cast all shame away – “they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush” – and their sleep deepened, as their shame departed, both effects of the teaching of those who cheated them with lies. When judgment at last came it found the people asleep on sluggards’ beds, and false teachers singing over them the lullaby of “peace, peace.”

But before God’s striving with this “generation of His wrath” shall have come to an end, the Prophet is instructed to address to them the counsel of the text. And he must deliver it as from the Lord. “Thus saith the Lord” must preface all he has to say. He in the Lord’s name lays an arrest on their “new departures.” “*Stand in the ways*” is his cry. “STAND” where the ways meet. For, standing on the crossing, one can stand in all the ways that meet at that point. But advanced men do not like to stand. They are bent on walking, lest their generation should leave them behind. They think they lead, when they are but pushed forward by the age current, whose direction is the same as that “of the way of their own heart.” But “hear or forbear,” “Stand” is the call that comes from heaven.

But what will it avail to stand if you do not “see.” *Stand in the ways and SEE*” is the call of God to you. You must use your eyes. You have been hitherto using your feet without using your eyes. You have gone on blindly in the way of your heart. And by holding your conceited heads so high, you have been exposing your blindness to all who have eyes to see. Get your eyes opened – get eyes that can see things in their relation to eternity and to the glory of God – eyes that can see things as they appear in the light of God’s word. Down with your high heads, and have done with your light stepping, and move not till you “anoint your eyes with eye-salve that you may see.” Cry for mercy to Him who “openeth the eyes of the blind,” for He is near to them who “stand in the ways” and would “see.” And you must “ASK” for guidance, for the ways are manifold, and but one is right. You must ask Him, who guides the simple, to direct you. And you must continue to ask for, till you attain to know, “THE OLD PATHS.” The old paths! No, say the loose-viewed men, whose craving is for “new departures.” We have done with these, and are ambitious only of leaving them all behind. Ah, but, friends, you are not at all so enlightened as you think. If you were truly wise the oldness of the paths would be to you a great recommendation of them. The paths for which you are counselled to ask are “old,” because long ago revealed and recommended by God, and because it was in these, during the days of the past, from the very beginning, the fathers walked “who now inherit the promises.” And ask, “Where is the GOOD way?” – the way of grace – the only way for grace from God to you – the only way for you to God. And when you find this way, “WALK therein” in faith till you reach “the fountain of living waters,” and in “the old paths” of new obedience walk on, with the true heart of a servant, and the warm heart of a son. And then and thus, and only then and thus, “*ye shall find REST for your souls.*” “Thus saith the Lord,” “but they said we will not walk therein.” Do *you* say so? If you do, sleep not till with your heart you unsay it.

In speaking from this text, I am –

I. To view the counsel it offers as addressed to an individual sinner, “to guide his feet into the way of peace.” And

II. To consider it as a message from the Lord to our Church.

I. THE COUNSEL AS ADDRESSED TO AN INDIVIDUAL SINNER. Thus the Lord speaks to you, sinner, who have been moving blindly on in “the way of your heart,” during all that is past of your life, in the direction of everlasting woe. That is the only possible close of your course if you continue to walk on to the end. And forget not that your next breathing may be your last, and that, while in the midst of your carnal ease, you may in a moment be cast down into hell.

“STAND” is the first word of the Lord’s call to you. He would have you to bring your walk hellward to a full stop. And He would speak to you. And are you to press on across this arresting call from heaven? Are you to refuse to stand in order to give a hearing ear to the message of “the Most High?” There are some who can remember when an arresting word from God brought them to a “stand;” and there are others who, like Manasseh, were caught in thorns of affliction, that the arrest of His providence might keep them within hearing of His voice. Have you any memory of this kind? Or have you hitherto managed to suppress every anxious feeling, and every arresting providence, that seemed likely to bring you to a “stand?”

But the Lord calls you to “stand” till you “SEE” the way in which you have been going and the way in which you ought to walk. “*Stand and see*” is His call to you. What will any anxiety avail, though it may bring you to a “stand,” unless you see the evil of your way in the past? and what wisdom can there be in ceasing to stand till you have discovered which is the right way, and how to enter it? And He who calls you to “see” knows that you are blind, and has the “unction” which can enable you to see. Hear His call – “Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out My Spirit unto you; I will make known My words unto you.”

And all the light you need for your guidance the Lord, in the text, calls you to “ASK.” And it is to Himself your request must be addressed, and you must accept no answer to your cry for direction except what comes from Him by His word.

You are instructed to “*ask for the OLD PATHS,*” which God of old revealed to the fathers, and by which the fathers, regarding whom you cannot but feel persuaded that they are now in heaven, have reached the rest which they are there enjoying. What men call *new* paths are paths to suit an old heart’s liking. The new heart walks in the light that began to shine in Eden, and which guided the footsteps of the godly in all the ages of the past. *Religious novelties* are snares for souls, and they who lay them are slaves of him who was “a murderer from the beginning.” “The old paths” are new enough to each one who walks in them to make him callous to the attractions presented by all the novelty-mongers who amuse the world and infest the Church.

And “*ask where is the good way?*” It has fared well with you, in your standing and seeing, if you are determined against every way, but that which, in the reckoning of God, is “good,” and which He recommends to you. It must be a “good way,” that will suit you as a sinner, and it cannot be a good way, as a way in which grace can flow down to you, unless it be a way in which glory can arise to God. Such a way cannot be found apart from Christ. “I am the way, and the truth and the life” Jesus saith, and He adds, “no man cometh to the Father but by Me.” To be in Him, who is “the way,” is what ought to be the object of your absorbing desire. And ere you can be “in Him” you must be “quickened together with” Him; and when you have passed through that change, then you will choose Him as God’s gift to you, and as your way to God, relying on Him because of what He is as the “Word made flesh,” who has a divine commission as Saviour, who hath glorified Him who sent Him, by finishing the work which He gave him to do, in whom all fulness of saving grace abides, and who is “able,” as well as willing, and entitled, “to save unto the uttermost.”

And when you have entered “the good way” “WALK THEREIN” in faith. Jeremiah delivers the same counsel as came from the Lord through Paul when he wrote – “as ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.” And having heartily chosen “the old

paths” in which all who served God were wont to go, “walk therein,” in the fear of the Lord, sustained by His grace, constrained by His love, guided by His word, and aiming at His glory.

To all who thus “walk” the Lord gives the promise – “*ye shall find REST for your souls.*” Thus, and only thus, can true rest be reached. But walking in “the good way” never fails to lead the soul to rest, from self-righteous toil, on the perfect righteousness of the Surety; from anxiety, as to the future, on the fulness of all grace in Christ; and from the aching of a conscious void, caused by the unsatisfied longings of a soul that has never found but vain and fleeting pleasures to meet its crave for what is infinite and eternal, in nearness to Jehovah the Covenant God, as “the fountain of living waters;” and for all the new longings, wherewith the quickened soul is stirred, in the glorious prospect of being “for ever with the Lord,” the Lamb, sinless in the presence, ever active and faultless in the service, for ever filled with the love, and ravished with the shining glory of Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

II. THE TEXT IS SEASONABLE COUNSEL FROM THE LORD TO OUR CHURCH. It would not be so unless our Church were departing from “the old paths,” which the Lord prescribed, and in which the godly fathers walked. Unless there were “new departures,” a call to return to the “old paths” would not be “a word in season.” But “new departures” there are, and these are so often paraded that the very designation of them has become a nuisance. I would more than excuse myself for the frequent use of this designation – chosen instead of “backslidings,” which is the scripture name for aberrations from “the old paths” – if I could extend the loathing with which it is regarded. But our Church has backslidden, let her forsakings of “the old paths” be called “new departures,” or “wise adaptations to altered circumstances,” or “a change of the line of battle to meet the altered tactics of the enemy,” or by any other descriptive name, which ingenuity may weave as a veil to hide the true character of the changed spirit and the altered action of our Church. She has felt the force of the unsettling tide, that is so fast moving those, who profess to be the Lord’s witnesses, in all the Churches, from “the old paths,” in which the Lord blessed the souls and services of the fathers. And the spirit now prevailing is almost quite ready to meet all such commendations of “the old paths,” and all such calls to return to them, as come from the Lord, with the resolute refusal of those who, in Ezekiel’s day, said “We will not walk therein;” and whose reply to the call “Hearken to the sound of the trumpet,” warning the impenitent of approaching judgment, was “We will not hearken.” For there is to a considerable extent within our Church an extravagant conceit of being advanced, a lack of the restraint imposed by Scripture upon reverent minds, a hankering after novelties, arising from inexperience of the “rest” which is promised in the text, an ambition to compete with unbelievers for the honour of being regarded as untraditional and scientific, and an impatience of control, not repressed by any influence such as a faithful exercise of discipline supplies, and which, therefore, ventures to assume the pronounced form of defiance before the face of the Church, and under the eye of the Lord. From the spirit thus indicated nothing that is excellent can reasonably be expected, and amendment can come only when that spirit is mortified.

There are *three* “new departures,” indicated in recent action of the Free Church, to which I would direct attention, and from which the Lord calls those who prompted, and those who joined in, these, to return to “the old paths.”

1. *There is a departure from the position originally taken up by our Church, as occupying the place of an unestablished Church, while resolved to remain aloof from those Churches which regard as unlawful an alliance between Church and State.* That this was our Church’s first position cannot reasonably be denied. In the testimony, appropriate to that position, *there was the actual presentation of a claim, in behalf of Christ as King of His Church and as the Governor among the nations.* If He wears the one crown He surely wears the other, and a full-orbed witness on His side there cannot be unless the rights connected with each crown are claimed for Him – unless *liberty* and *help* to serve Him be in His name demanded from

“the powers that be.” *And this testimony was a manifestly unselfish one.* Those who raised it, and vowed to adhere to it, had willingly forsaken all the temporal advantages of the Establishment, in order to be free to serve according to the law of Christ. They were under no constraint beyond what a sense of duty brought to bear upon their conscience, and the love of Christ brought to bear upon their heart. They could plead for their Church’s right to be established without either enjoying, or expecting to enjoy, the benefit of her being recognised and aided by the State. They could continue, even when deprived of them, and while seeing no prospect of recovering them for themselves, “highly to prize the benefits of establishment,” as giving the Church, which did not barter her liberty for endowment, a position of influence and independence, in financial matters, of those to whom she ministered, as well as a guarantee for independence of the civil courts, in spiritual matters, which no other Church could possess. And they had *patience* to wait for the Lord’s time of answering their prayers for this boon to their native land. Their attitude was a noble one. They did not look regretfully to what they had abandoned; they fixed their eye wistfully on the boon which they, in “the Claim of Right,” asked for future generations in Scotland, and declared it to be their resolution to abide in prayer for the benefit till all their supplications on the earth were exchanged for the joyful praises of heaven.

What possible gain can be attained by a “departure” from such a position? It involves the demand that our nation, through its rulers, should cease from all acknowledgment and aid of the Church of Christ, though he declared to her, “the nation and kingdom that shall not serve thee shall perish, yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.” There might be some semblance of consistency in a Free Church Disestablishment movement, if, while asking for the displacement of the body now in union with the State, on grounds that justified such a demand, her “claim of right,” to the position to be thus made vacant, was presented to, and pressed upon, the Government. But a demand in this form was by Assembly majorities repudiated; and the one crave of those who are responsible for the “new departure,” as before our rulers, is, “cease any longer to acknowledge the supremacy of Christ, and have done with rendering any countenance and aid to His Church.” What was implied in the establishment and endowment of the Church of Scotland, was the only national homage to Christ that could be associated with our native land. And the removal of this is the demand of those in our Church who are guided by “new light” away from “the old paths.” And this is not asked because the Church, now Established, is not in a better adjusted relation to the State, than the Church of that time was, in the days of the fathers, when the Lord made her such a signal blessing to the country. Nor is it asked because of the declining spiritual condition of the Established Church, for those who are doing what they can to secure that our Church shall not be outstripped in the course of backsliding, cannot reasonably, and without falsehood, plead *that* as a reason for their Disestablishment movement. And yet adherence to the Establishment principle is professed by those whose hands are busy in endeavouring to make any practical recognition of it impossible. Credit for loyalty to Christ as “Governor among the nations” is claimed by those who are labouring to persuade our nation to withdraw its only acknowledgment of His authority – its one concession of His rights in His relation to His Church. Men can do so much to maintain a sense of consistency, even when acting a part utterly opposed to their profession, that however opposite to our view their profession and their practice may appear, we must not hasten to call them dishonest, though after all due deliberation we must regard them as mistaken. But in considering the bearing of their influence, on the important interests concerned, we take only their practice into account. Our Church has been led across what was to our fathers a great gulf, but which by political expediency their sons have already bridged, and the Free Church is now a raw regiment in the Liberation army, the end of whose campaign is to secure an utter severance of the civil and the religious – of the government of our country from all avowed connection with the name,

and all acknowledgment of subjection to the authority, of God. Indignation and contempt were wont to be the feelings excited by the declaration that Voluntarism rested on an atheistic basis. But, in the course of providence, Voluntaries themselves have proved by their action that this was no misrepresentation of their principle. The question recently arose as to whether an affirmation, in which there would be no acknowledgment of God, as a substitute for an oath, which implies an appeal to the Most High, should be in future the only condition, on which men, elected to Parliament, might take their seats in our legislature. This attempt to admit, on an atheistic basis, men to a seat in Parliament, has meantime failed, but the army of the Liberationists did their utmost to make it successful, though of the recently added regiment, only some of the prominent officers, and some of those most under their influence, joined in the "advance." The training of the new recruits is not yet quite complete, but if they do not desert, they will in course of time become quite ready to go on.

2. *There are "new departures" in worship.* There are two which I would specially refer to, and they are inseparable, for they are but developments of the same state of feeling.

(1.) There is a facile yielding to the world's encroachments on the time that in other days was devoted to the service of the house of God. There is an eager cry for short sermons and short prayers, to join in which has come to be regarded as indispensable to sustain one's credit for being enlightened and wise. And from whom does it come? From some who occupy the pulpit, and desire to make it more easy to write the requisite number of fine sentences to please a people that have "itching ears" and no aching hearts; from others to whom three hours at the opera, to their consciousness, pass far more quickly than three minutes spent in the reading of the word of God; from those who, in the close atmosphere and hot discussions of an assembly, can spend, with disdain of weariness, a whole day and night, while to have to listen to a sermon for one hour would be regarded as an intolerable infliction; and from those who least attempt to give earnest attention to what they hear, and whose hearts are left behind them with the world when they come to the place of worship. But let not these imagine that they are so advanced as their conceit would have it; for it is an old, old, complaint as to the service of God – "What a weariness is it!" Many generations harped on that string before you were born. If you are anxious to be new in your song, you must adopt some other strain.

And this weariness of spiritual service appears in another form. I remember well being in a certain church in a city in the south, on the Saturday of a communion season, where there were fewer than seventy hearers present. I happened to sit beside an old Christian lady, who said to me – I remember the time when, on such a day as this, it would be necessary for us to be early at the church in order to secure a seat, and on our way to it not one shop would be seen open. To-day there are not seventy hearers in church, and only two office-bearers, and every shop which I passed on my way was open." And this is a fair sample of what remains of meetings for public worship on such a day. In instances not a few, such meetings have declined into extinction.

And why so? Simply because the spirit of the world has succeeded in pressing its demands on the Church. Communion-tables are allowed to be filled by those who, on the Fast-day, rush away from the service, and join the crowds that seem to act as if they were bent on wringing judgments from the hand of God. And office-bearers in our Church join the deserters, and give to amusement a day which ought to be devoted to humiliation and prayer. But their position is safe, for their offence is condoned, and a facile Church homologates the sin and reaps the fruit in spiritual judgment.

"O, but the times are changed, and we must adapt ourselves to them," say the apologists of this "new departure." "The slow, humdrum days of the fathers are gone, and you are not to expect us to lie among the fossils of those dark times." No, friend, I do not desire you to be inactive. It is because you are as mere fossils, in the midst of your surroundings, that I am

disposed to blame you. Among the buried dead are many who were once like you. They chose to wave the banner of the truth while moving along “the course of this world” instead of waving it as good soldiers of Jesus in the face of the foe and in the thick of the battle. It is not the spirit of the age, it is not the pressure of the world, it is not the state of things in providence, it is the unfaithfulness of the Church, that has led to this contempt of the ordinances of the house of God. Haste to be rich may account for the pressure from without, but it is the fear of being faithful which accounts for the yielding.

(2.) There is a “new departure” *in the present attempts to make the mode of worship more sensational*. This might be expected. The spirit, that grudges to God what is claimed by the world, demands that, to make it at all tolerable, something that is relished outside be imported into the service of the house of the Lord. It is this which originated the crave for instrumental music, in the service of praise; but it is woful work for a Church to be gratifying such a desire. And yet the Free Church is being *led* into this “new departure” from “the old paths.”

In order to make it easier for consciences to yield to this carnal crave for sensuousness in worship, the use of musical instruments, and trained choirs, in connection with so-called revival movements, was introduced, and from the eyes of men, of no spiritual discernment, the carnal novelty is hidden, under what they regard as a halo of sacredness. The movement which had this association, whatever besides may be its fruits, will leave behind it, when its wave passes by, an added contempt for the ordinary means of grace, for the doctrines of the Confession of Faith, and for the divine ordinance of a stated gospel ministry. To the Lord alone belongs the right to judge the eternal results to individuals, who were affected by it; but if brokenness of heart, and a humble spirit, are essential to accredit their conversion unto God, there is little seen of this to warrant the hope that it shall fare well with them at their latter end.

In connection with the service of praise, what a Church should first be careful about is that there be broken hearts, touched by divine love, to give out what would be melody in the ears of the Lord; and as to *the mode of expressing praise*, that it should be so simple that all might join in the singing, and that all offensiveness should be avoided. But to sanction the use of choirs and musical instruments is to increase indifference as to what is of paramount importance, and to make it impossible for some of those who alone have praising hearts to take any part in the service of song.

3. *There are evidences of a “new departure” IN DOCTRINE having commenced in the Free Church*. To move off the lines of Confessional teaching is, according to the avowed conviction of all ordained to office in the Free Church, to depart in doctrine from the rule of Scripture; for all these have declared that they believe the doctrines of the Confession to be founded on the Word of God. When they cease to think so, they should cease to hold the position which by their declaration they won. But, instead of abandoning what they cannot honestly retain, they desire that the Church should alter the Confession. To effect this in course of time is not likely to be a very difficult task. Ignoring distinctive Confessional teaching is the prevalent habit of preachers; almost any measure of deviation from its doctrines is tolerated; and a very pronounced condemnation of the Confession’s scheme of doctrine has already been uttered by one of the leaders of the neological party in our Church, which he may expect to be condoned. This manifesto indicates with sufficient distinctness in what the vaunted progress in theology is likely to result, notwithstanding an imposed “reserve,” of which the writer declares that he was conscious.

This “new departure” springs from assuming a rationalistic attitude towards the word of God. The old method of using Scripture texts as satisfactory proofs of a doctrine, is to be exploded. Men, in constructing a theological system, must not start with the idea that the Bible is the Word of God – so inspired by Him that He is its author – but they must first

examine whether it is a book that is worthy of being regarded as divine. Only after this ought they to form any idea of the sense in which it may be regarded as inspired. And only when they have thus sat in judgment on the book, and determined how far it is entitled to respect, ought any doctrines to be deduced by them from it. When they have shaped the Bible according to their liking, and thus made it their own, and not God's – when they cease to think of it as inspired, and as, therefore, not having God for its author – then, with no sense of divine authority to control their thinking, they may construct what system of theology they please – or rather be quite content without one. In the book thus treated there are no “mysteries” – no doctrines incomprehensible to human reason. To explode such an idea is one of the tasks of modern theology. In other words, there are not a peculiar people to whom alone “it is given to know *the mysteries* of the kingdom of God,” though Christ declareth that there were such chosen ones; nor is it true, that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him,” and that “neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned!”

Such is the preliminary training required, according to the new school, for progress in theology. And the progress begins in retrenchment – in lopping off all that is regarded as superfluous. This process commences in casting aside all Old Testament teaching regarding the character and ways of God; then all points of difference between Evangelical Armenians and Calvinists are to be discarded; the doctrine of the fall is to be laid aside, and the story of it discredited; the federal relations of Adam to his posterity, and of Christ to the people given to Him by the Father, are to be ignored; and when all this retrenchment is effected, what remains of Confessional doctrine?

The new theology claims to thoroughly Christianise the idea of God. By this is meant that, in the view of our neologians, there is nothing now appearing in His character but love, such that all men may call Him Father. And yet faith in an historical Christ is not at all essential to acquaintance with this love. How then is the one thing which we ought to associate as a moral attribute with God to be discovered? Faber is to be substituted by them for Calvin, as the theologian to answer this question, for the hymns of the former, and not the Institutes of the latter, are to form the text-book of the new school of theology. And there is nothing incomprehensible about the new God of this new school. They require no help to know all about Him. He is their own creation, and they are not to assume an attitude of reverence and awe before the work of their hands. All sense of authority is away when they are in the presence of their deity. Neither on understanding nor on conscience does the control of divine authority make itself felt. All relations to God, except that of children to a Father, are to be ignored. No sense of subjection to the sovereignty of God, or of exposure to His wrath, is to be countenanced. All ideas of the necessity of an atonement for sin must be abandoned. All, in the manifestation of Jehovah's supremacy, truth, and righteousness, which shines from the face of Christ crucified, is to be ignored, and nothing contemplated in the revelation of God through Messiah, but love – a love whose regards are universal, and under whose benign sway all, even as they are, may regard themselves as the children of God. In the atmosphere pervaded by this universal love, all may lie down at their ease, and sleep off all sense of divine authority, all disquieting thoughts of the divine law, and all impressions of divine justice and holiness, till they feel themselves quite independent of the cross, and quite free from having to express any homage to the crown of Messiah – exempt from all acknowledgment of the sovereignty of God, in the grace of salvation, and from all subjection to it in its claims for obedience.

Towards all this there is a movement within our Church. Were all reserve removed, we might have a more outright exhibition of this “new departure” in doctrine, than is given in the neologian manifesto to which I have referred. Tendencies towards this repudiation of Confessional doctrine appeared in the discussions and findings of the Union Committee, and

the discussions in the Smith case more prominently developed them. Let there be a departure from the Confessional doctrine of the atonement, and let men's faith be shaken in the infallibility of Scripture as a book inspired by God, and of which He therefore is the author, and there is no extreme to which men may not go on a "new departure" thus originated.

But ours is a time when carefulness to adhere to faith in the authority of inspired truth, and zeal for the system of truth which is regarded as scriptural, have begun to be decried under the designations of *traditionalism* and *dogmatism*. Many have ceased to tolerate the restraint which inspired truth must impose, and the authority with which deductions from Bible teaching meet them when they begin to enter on their "new departures." Care, to think according to the mind of God, does not seem to be required by those who have removed from their minds the idea of the Bible being an inspired revelation of the will of God. And to deduce a system of truth from Scripture seems to them a labour altogether uncalled for. Creeds are most inconvenient things to those who are ambitious of being allowed to think as they please. Testing propositions are things which they cannot tolerate. And to them scripture texts are equally obnoxious. The general bearing of Scripture teaching is what they desire as a substitute for both these, because that lies in the volume, and is not easily handled as a test. In the measure in which the neological section of our Church increases in number and influence, will our progress to utter rationalism be accelerated.

And there are others who unwittingly aid them. These are they who find it difficult to cooperate, and to seem to succeed, in evangelistic work, without laying aside what they were accustomed to regard as important truth, and who, by yielding to the pressure of circumstances, have come to regard all doctrinal teaching as a mistake. Many of these had but little to lay aside in abandoning definite instruction regarding the things of God, and the sacrifice was so very small, that there is no drawback to the enjoyment which they now have, in their blind earnestness in dealing with immortal souls.

APPLICATION.

1. From all these "new departures" the Lord calls our Church back to "the old paths." But there seems as yet no prospect of a return. If the reply now to the divine call be what it was in the days of Ezekiel, false prophets may cry "peace, peace," till their throats are hoarse, but divine judgments shall surely overtake the Free Church of Scotland. These will first assume a spiritual form. She will be allowed to decline into utter feebleness before the encroaching power of the world; to lapse into congregationalism in her arrangement of her worship, that she may act the part of a pioneer to "black Prelacy" in Scotland; and to lose all, in faith and devoutness, that would keep her from utter rationalism in her teaching. When spiritual judgment, wrung by unfaithfulness from the hand of God, shall have brought her down to a pass such as this, her people will have become quite indisposed to bear the burden of her support, and their ability to do so may have been removed; and thus, unregretted, may the Church of our fathers, in the coming darkness, utterly disappear. A consummation such as this is inevitable as the terminus of present tendencies, unless the Lord shall pour upon our Zion "the Spirit of grace and supplications."

2. And let each office-bearer and member of our Church remember that there can be no escape from being involved in the guilt of "new departures," except by walking in "the old paths" and in "the good way." You are within the Church, and you are involved in her action unless you faithfully protest. Beware lest the Lord have to complain of you, as of them of old, to whom He said – "Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge, for the house of Israel to stand in the battle, in the day of the Lord."

3. And let each one, as a sinner, think of how he is involved in his own personal transgressions, and in the awful condemnation to which these expose him. O, "Turn from

your evil ways;" "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" "The good way" is still open and near. O, enter into it at the call of God, "and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." To this call of God, what is your response? Is it "We will not walk therein;" or is it the prayer of Ephraim, "Turn me and I shall be turned?" The Lord knoweth which.

[January 1901]