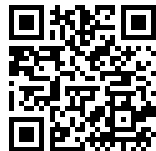

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD;

OR,

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

BY

HENRY DUNN.

— 1 —

'Thoughts that it would take a bold man to utter on a platform to-day, may to-morrow be carried like a tide-wave over the land, and may the next day have become a confessed basis of national action.'—*Dean Alfred.*

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PREFACE.

THE mere fact that, at the present day, the doctrine of eternal punishment is, by implication at least,* *generally preached while rarely believed in* either by the teacher or the taught, should of itself be an occasion of serious concern to all who feel that the power of the pulpit must above all things depend on its truthfulness.

The reason for this apparent want of perfect integrity will probably be found in a prevailing, and not unjust impression, that *negations* do not properly belong to the public teacher of Christianity; that *he* has to do mainly, if not exclusively, with that which is *positive*; that it is *his* business to impress truth rather than to displace error; and that he must, above all things, avoid statements which, although only *intended* to limit or balance, inevitably *tend* to loosen the connection which subsists between doctrine and doctrine.

Further, it must in fairness be allowed that what is usually understood to be evangelical theology,

* In relation to a doctrine like this, which is taught in catechisms for the young, embodied in hymns, and still held to be a part of the 'faith once delivered to the saints,' it may surely be said that he who does not deny *affirms*.

not only assumes the eternity of future punishment in forms too terrible to contemplate, but does it so distinctly that it is impossible *formally* to reject this element without seriously modifying the entire system of which it is a part.

I say 'formally,' because while the doctrine in question has long since lost much of its ancient power over the minds of men, its retention, as an important part of every recognised 'body of divinity' has always been contended for. The great majority of religious persons, it is well known, never thoroughly *realize* what they profess to believe on this subject. Scarcely any one of them supposes that his own dearest friends or relations will suffer eternal torment. Almost all take for granted that in some way or other, either by a glance at the cross in the article of death, by virtue of baptism, or by some unrevealed method of mercy, *their own flesh and blood* will be spared so terrible a doom.

Yet few will give up the theory. Its removal from the creeds, they say, would lead men to deny their utter depravity; would cause them to regard sin, if not as a trifle, yet as much less important than it is now generally supposed to be; would lower the value of the atonement, and would occasion divine grace, as manifested in the conversion of sinners, to be little thought of or cared for. It is well, they admit, to abandon the old formula, that 'sin committed against an infinite being must be

an infinite evil, and therefore must receive an infinite punishment, from which nothing short of an infinite atonement can deliver;’ for in this logical form it perhaps cannot be sustained. But it is quite another thing deliberately to deny that human guilt *deserves*, or that it will certainly receive a punishment which will be everlasting in duration.

To preach a mere negation, they say, is out of the question: for until it can be shown that *the positive revelations of Scripture* are in harmony therewith; that what is taught us regarding the redemption of the world by the Lord Jesus Christ—the necessity of regeneration,—the calling of the elect,—the resurrection of the body,—the last judgment, and retribution in the world to come—*has a distinct relation* to the non-eternity of punishment, the proclamation of such a doctrine could be only productive of mischief. The result would inevitably be that multitudes, giving up Scripture, would fall back on mere sentimentalities; poetry would take the place of positive fact, and all definite views regarding the entire character of God would become merged in a vague sense of His infinite tenderness.

One theory, which claims to be *positive* in its character, has, they are quite willing to allow, been put forward at various times by Christian men, viz., that which supposes that all the unregenerate will, ‘after ages of stupendous torment,’ be annih-

lated. This scheme, however, most men feel has little to recommend it, since it still leaves countless myriads of those for whom Christ died *unredeemed*; sentenced to suffer, after a brief life of labour and sorrow, agonies which are to be inconceivable in character, prolonged through ages, and consummated only in utter destruction. How, on this theory, Christ can be said to have been the Saviour of the world, or to have destroyed the works of the devil, in any sense materially different from that which the Puritans held, it is not easy to see. Nor, however infinite the difference between the torment of ages and that which is eternal, can we perceive that the heart is thereby relieved of much of its anguish, since *beyond* the idea of ages no human mind can travel.

Some other and more satisfactory reconciliation between the Old and the New must be forthcoming before the eternity of future punishment will cease to be regarded as part of the Divine testimony. Even if the doctrine be but a tradition, it perhaps *ought* not to be altogether cast aside, unless it can be shown from Scripture that its abandonment is essential to the proclamation of the Gospel *as Christ taught it*; to *deeper* convictions than now prevail as to the CERTAINTY of future retribution; to *increased* diligence and watchfulness in the Divine life; and to a more *habitual and abiding sense* that faith in Christ is essential, rather because He is

the root of all goodness in the creature than because He is the only ark of safety. Wrath might perchance have been withheld had Christ never died ; but likeness to God, restoration to the Divine image, a partaking of the Divine nature, could never have been enjoyed apart from union to Him who died that we might live, and who ever liveth to make intercession for us.

The Gospel of the Kingdom fulfils the required conditions, since, uniting the past with the present, and both with a glorious future, in which every one will find his own place, it alone reconciles Divine sovereignty with human responsibility, provides for the recovery of the lost without derogation from right, and makes redemption as universal as it can be without the destruction of that amount of free will which is essential to voluntary obedience, and inseparable from all that is involved in the formation of character.

It does more. It bids men seek not for mere *safety*, but for completeness and perfection of character in likeness to Christ. Had this been taught as it ought to have been, we should not now be told, as we are and with too much truth, that the great, serious, middle class of this country limit the main concerns of life to 'the concern for making money, and the concern for saving their souls from eternal perdition.'

INTRODUCTION.

WHEN our Lord was upon earth, the stress of the controversy betwixt Himself and the Jews chiefly turned on *the nature* of that kingdom which Moses and the prophets had declared should come, and which He and His forerunner had alike announced to be 'at hand.'

The same question is still agitated among ourselves, but in another form. That which Christian men now differ about is, not whether 'the kingdom of God' is carnal or spiritual, but whether it is objective or merely subjective, present or future.

To say, as many do, that it is *both*, is simply to evade the point at issue, which is this:—whether or no, by the phrase 'the kingdom of God,' or of 'heaven,' Jesus intended to denote His own *visible triumph on earth* over all that Satan has done from the beginning; or whether He only meant thereby to indicate that *invisible rule* in the hearts of believers which He always has exercised and always will. The former, of course, includes the latter; but the latter by no means necessarily includes the former. For Christ may rule now, as He certainly does, 'in the midst of His enemies,' and yet not be *manifestly* the conqueror of evil; or, on the other hand, He may reign hereafter, as we are assured He will, over all creation without visibly triumphing *as Son of man* over Satan, or destroying his works.

The Church in this, as in too many other matters, is divided against itself. 'The germs of Gnostic idealism,' which, as Olshausen says, 'sprang up as early as the apostolic times,' denying 'in the doctrine of the kingdom of God any real outward manifestation of the Divine dominion on earth in the future,' continually reappear, and now so extensively prevail that multitudes have ceased to attach any definite idea to what is said in Scripture regarding the kingdom of heaven, and content themselves with a vague hope that, in some yet unrevealed way, the reign of God over men will one day become universal.

'Modern criticism,' while admitting that 'the kingdom' in Scripture *means* the objective rule of Christ on earth, cuts through all difficulties by denying the authoritative character of the record. One of the latest and ablest historians of this school of thought thus expresses himself:—

'Did Jesus *believe* that He would return in a visible form to inaugurate His reign as Messiah? It is plain that His discourse here (Matt. xxi.), and many other sayings reported by the Synoptists, especially Matt. x. 23; xxiii. 36—39; xxiv. 34; xxvi. 64, contain an *explicit prediction* of His speedy return to preside at the great judgment of mankind.'¹

Elsewhere it is observed that 'Paul speaks of the Lord's coming with all His saints; of His descending from heaven with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God,' and such like. Now 'Paul assures us that he received nothing from the other apostles, but that all his Christian ideas came from immediate revelation; which shows that the eschatological element (the doctrine of the last things)

¹ Davidson's Introduction to the Study of the New Testament, vol. i., p. 501.

in Matthew's Gospel and the Apocalypse *was an essential part of primitive Christianity*. Nor is it confined to Paul's epistles. It appears in the letter to the Hebrews. Peter's epistles teach the same thing. The epistles of John express it also. James recommends patience unto the coming of the Lord, which he declares to be near. And Jude proves from the existence of mockers that it is the last time. The description of Christ's advent thus expected by the New Testament writers is developed in the twenty-fourth chapter of the first Gospel, where the ideas of retribution appear in a solemn judicial process, preceded by great distress; and the Messiah reveals himself in splendour, ushering in a new dispensation, in which the faithful should be recompensed for present sufferings.¹

Is this doctrine, then, to be received as truth? By no means, say these critics. And for this reason:—

'The traditional had sufficient time before the canonical Gospel was written to mould and modify facts. Hence the historical credibility of certain portions is justly suspicious. Both form and substance are coloured with myth here and there. The present Greek Gospel being a growth, and having been written above half a century after the events which it narrates, was affected by the influences of an uncritical age, as well as of convulsive changes and great revolutions that shook the Jewish and Gentile world, filling men's minds with fear and wonder. The only criterion we have for separating the genuine from the non-historical is the interpreter's sound judgment or critical sagacity.'²

Of the Apocalypse it is said, 'The writer did not suppose, any more than Paul, that the coming of Christ was aught else than literal and physical, for the purpose

¹ *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 321-2. ² Pp. 563-4.

of destroying His enemies and setting up a new kingdom in restored Jerusalem.' * * * 'His conception of the kingdom is earthly and heavenly together.' * * * 'The glorified earth is the heaven of the Apocalypse.'¹

'The Messianic hopes of the seer were not fulfilled as his fancy and faith projected them, though he did not utter them as mere poetry without belief in their objective realization.'² 'The enquirer feels that the more he examines, the stronger is his belief that the book does not breathe the same spirit as that of the fourth Gospel, and does not accord with the Church's destination.'³ Yet, 'as far as the individuality of John is reflected in the New Testament and by tradition, it is in harmony with the contents of the Apocalypse. The sons of Zebedee were impetuous spirits, whose feelings easily led them into excess or revenge. * * * Very faithfully are these traits reflected in the book before us (the Apocalypse), whose tone betrays an impassioned spirit full of rage against the despisers of God and His anointed One, with images of dragons, murder, blood and fire, vials of wrath.'⁴ The *central idea* of the book is the Lord's second coming, constituting its prophetic and hortatory character. Christ will soon appear to destroy His enemies and reward His followers in that new kingdom which He is to establish.'⁵

Such are the conclusions of 'the latest criticism,'⁶ which rejects as utterly untenable the notion 'that Christ's

¹ *Ibid.*, vol. i., P. 355.

² P. 358.

³ P. 366.

⁴ Pp. 324-5.

⁵ P. 353.

⁶ It is referred to *here* only to show that in the opinion even of those who reject the doctrine of the Second Advent as a mere fancy, there can be no doubt whatever as to the teaching of 'the Book.' Let this fact at least be realized. And while we deny most strenuously that the Gospels, as we have them, are untrustworthy; while we think it most extravagant to suppose that

coming is to be taken in an unnatural and allegorical sense, and explained away into the events connected with the destruction of Jerusalem and the subsequent triumph of Christianity.' Such methods of interpretation, it is obvious, *can* only end, as they are now doing, in scepticism or in mere sentimentality.

That the Bible is to be interpreted like any other book, viz., by the meaning of its words, the connection of its sentences, the settlement of its text, and the evidence of facts, is not only true,—it furnishes the only security we can have for fair dealing with it. Two things, however, must be borne in mind when this principle is acted upon. On the one hand, it must be remembered that the study of the Bible cannot be altogether separated from questions, some of which are purely *literary*; on the other, that there is in Scripture a solemn *undertone*, which, like the voice of Him whom it reveals, is not distinguishable by all. '*My sheep hear My voice.*'

Bearing these two things in mind; neither neglecting nor despising learning or authority, thankfully receiving help from whatever quarter it may come, and relying on promises made to those who in the spirit of humble obedience search diligently, private judgment will easily find its appropriate field, and the folly of regarding the document as *unaccredited* until every literary question to which it has

no record of the life and words of Jesus was made until tradition had moulded and modified facts, and coloured both form and substance with myth; while we decline to bow before criticisms the value of which, it is admitted, depend on the judgment or want of judgment of scholars whose sagacity we have no means of testing, and who may or may not be possessed of that 'vision and faculty Divine' which all confess to be essential in interpreting the Bible, let us at least be careful not to sanction the liberties they take, by ourselves adopting spiritualizing processes of interpretation which are quite as destructive as the Rationalism we condemn.

given rise has been satisfactorily adjusted will be seen in its true light. Then, too, will it be perceived that in the comprehension of a Divine revelation the state of the heart towards the Revealer *must* be an important element; that in the absence of candour, humility, and love, the record is almost sure to be *misread*; that it necessarily relates largely to matters which can only be understood by practical experience of their nature and power; that it supposes on the part of the reader a subdued will, a lowly spirit, a trustful and believing heart,—a state of mind in which consciousness of ignorance and anxiety to be taught mingles with the conviction that God is willing to teach. Where these qualities are wanting, clouds and darkness will settle on the page; where they are present, there will always be found—however deficient the reader may be in this world's lore—sufficient light for the discernment of that amount of truth which is essential to the spiritual life and health of the particular student.

How much such a man may *not* know; how much ignorance may still be unremoved; how much prejudice—how much positive error may mingle with the truth that has been attained, can be known only to Him who forbids the judgment of others; who nowhere leads us to suppose that what has been meted to one is the standard by which another is to be measured; and who therefore demands, above all things, that we shall abstain from condemning what we cannot understand, and from despising anything the value of which we may be incapable of appreciating.

Under these limitations, if they may be called such, 'Free Discussion on Religious Topics'¹ is both a right and

¹ A little pamphlet under this title, by Dr. Hinds, late Bishop of Norwich, has just appeared, bearing for the most part on the peculiar condition of the Church of England at this moment.

a duty; a *right* derivable, so far as man is concerned, from the fact that all Protestant Churches, whether established or seceding, have become what they are '*through a process of free discussion,*' first by private individuals and then by representative men. The *limits* of such discussion must of course be co-extensive with the range embraced in the formation or establishment of existing religious bodies; the *danger* of it, whether regarded as unsettling men's minds or as stimulating them to change, must be accepted as inseparable from the laws of Providence; the *time* for it is when, from whatever cause, questions long considered as settled are reopened by general consent, and the *ripeness* of the age for their examination is thus made manifest.

Whenever this is the case—as it certainly appears to be at the present day—a religious crisis, if it has not arrived, is assuredly very near. Then is it that Christian *fearlessness* is above all things essential to the conservation of whatever is really Divine. Then is it that the words of the prophet should ring in the ears of every teacher in the land: 'He that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord' (Jer. xxiii. 28.)

And this is a faithfulness which will be little affected by popularity or persecution, by success or failure, by conquest or defeat. For, as Dr. Arnold has somewhere said, 'It is not all truth that triumphs in the world, nor all good; but only truth and good up to a certain point. Let them once pass this point, and their progress pauses. Fewer and fewer are those who still press on in their company; until at last even these fail, and there is a perfection at which they are deserted by all men, and are in the presence of God and of Christ alone.'

CHAPTER I.

THE GOSPEL AND THE JEW.

THE gospel of Jesus Christ,—*what is it?* The good news proclaimed to mankind by the Lord and His apostles. In what does it consist?

A strange question, some will say, to ask in the nineteenth century. Yet perhaps not more strange than needful.

Dr. Campbell, in one of his 'Preliminary Dissertations,'* observes that gospel, or 'good tidings,' is in the New Testament commonly introduced 'either in a quotation from the prophets or in evident allusion to their words.' Thus *πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται*, which our translators render —'To the poor the gospel is preached' (Matt. xi. 5; Luke vii. 22), the whole context shows to be in allusion to what is said by the prophet Isaiah (lxi. 1), where the corresponding phrase is rendered 'preach good tidings to the meek.' Whatever, therefore, is intended by the term 'good tidings,' when used by Isaiah, is implied by the term 'gospel' as used by our Lord.

The *word* gospel (*εὐαγγέλιον*) occurs in the New Testament for the first time in Matthew (iv. 23), where it is associated with what is called 'the kingdom.' Jesus, we are told, went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching 'the gospel of the kingdom.' Mark adds, 'And saying, *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel*' (i. 15).

* Diss. v., Vol. I., pt. ii., p. 138.

Charged with this message, and with none other, first the twelve (Matt. x. 7), and subsequently the seventy (Luke x. 9), are sent forth. They are to preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' They are to heal the sick, and to say, 'The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.' *

The later teaching of the Lord is to the same effect. In the discourse on the Mount of Olives He tells the disciples, 'This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness' (Matt. xxiv. 14). A promise of the kingdom of heaven mingles with the beatitudes (Matt. v. 3, 10, 20); forms the chief theme of subsequent addresses; was the special doctrine taught to Nicodemus (John iii. 3—5); and is the subject which, above all others, occupied the forty days which elapsed between the resurrection and ascension (Acts i. 3). After Pentecost, Philip the evangelist, and therefore we may suppose the rest, who with him were scattered abroad in consequence of the persecution that arose after the death of Stephen, proclaim the same truth in Judea, in Samaria, and elsewhere (Acts viii. 12).

Some light may perhaps be thrown on this Jewish gospel if we reflect for a while on the views held regarding the kingdom by the more devout and spiritual of the Israelites; and also on the moral and spiritual condition of the people to whom the message was addressed.

And here let it be distinctly understood, that in seeking first of all to ascertain what views were held by the Jews regarding the kingdom *before* John the Baptist proclaimed

* 'Come nigh unto you.' In what sense we shall have hereafter to inquire. The mission of the seventy was altogether preparatory. They were, like John the Baptist, to pioneer the way of the Lord,—nothing more. Their message, therefore, is the same as that of John. They were sent 'two and two before His face *whither He himself would come.*' ..

its approach, we shall confine our attention to a particular class,—to the men who in all ages had patiently ‘waited for the consolation of Israel.’ *These*, instructed by the prophets, held that only in connection with a new heart and a right spirit could ‘the kingdom’ be enjoyed (Jer. xxxi. 31—34). The scribes and Pharisees, on the contrary, so far as they were formalists, maintained that it was the inheritance of every Jew, *because* he was a child of Abraham.

Between these two classes a third occasionally appears, consisting of persons but partially enlightened, yet, in the main, seekers after truth. Nicodemus seems to have belonged to this party. The scribe who was ‘not far from the kingdom of God’ was probably another (Mark xii. 34). The young ruler whom Christ ‘loved’ might be a third.

Our Lord in His teaching was to this class of persons what He was to the Mosaic law,—an Interpreter; He developed alike what was *in them* and *in it*. If He had not been *this* to all sincere inquirers, His instructions would have been powerless; for no spiritual teaching is of any avail which does not appeal to and correspond with something in the heart of the man to whom it is addressed.

We ask, then, ‘What *had* been taught in Old Testament scripture regarding the coming kingdom of Messiah?’

David is, perhaps, the first who distinctly refers to it. He does so when, publicly giving thanks for the free-will offerings of the people towards the building of the temple, he blessed the Lord and said, ‘All that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; *Thine is the kingdom*, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all’ (1 Chron. xxix. 11).

Did this passage stand alone it might naturally be supposed to refer only to the universal sovereignty of God.

over all the creatures He has made. But it receives a more definite interpretation from the Psalms. *There*, 'the kingdom' is the Lord's in the sense of His being 'governor among the nations,' and its manifestation is when 'all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him.' Then shall 'the meek eat and be satisfied' (Psa. xxii. 26—28).

But more. In other sacred songs, equally consolatory and predictive, 'the kingdom' is connected with David and with Judea. 'I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David My servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips. Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before Me' (Psa. lxxxix.).

The prophets, each in turn, confirm the expectation thus excited. Micah distinctly affirms that in the last days the law shall go forth out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 'Unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; *the kingdom* shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem' (Micah iv. 2—8).

Isaiah, speaking of Messiah, says, 'Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, *upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom*, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this' (Isa. ix. 7).

Jeremiah, referring to the same period, says, 'At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem' (Jer. iii. 17).

Zechariah declares that the man whose name is THE BRANCH 'shall build the temple of the Lord, and shall bear His glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne, and shall be a priest upon His throne' (Zech. vi. 12, 13).

We have *here* nothing to do with our modern interpretations of these prophecies. We have not even to ask whether such interpretations be right or wrong. Our inquiry simply is, 'How did the most devout and spiritual of the Jewish people in all ages understand them?' What impression was left upon their minds when these and similar prophecies were meditated upon in secret, or expounded in the synagogues by the best of the Rabbis?

What that impression was we learn from several incidents that come before us in the New Testament. We see it in the request of the mother of Zebedee's children,—'Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on the left, *in Thy kingdom*' (Matt. xx. 21). We see it again in the cries of the multitude during the entry into Jerusalem,—'Blessed be *the kingdom* of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord' (Mark xi. 10). We observe it 'in Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counsellor, which also *waited for the kingdom* of God' (Mark xv. 43). It comes out in the prayer of the penitent thief,—'Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom' (Luke xxiii. 42).

This Jewish notion—whether well or ill founded—would certainly receive strong confirmation in devout minds, if it were known—as we may suppose it was—that the angel, in announcing to Mary the birth of Jesus, had said that the child to be born shall be 'called the Son of the Highest; that the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; that he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and that of his kingdom

there shall be no end' (Luke i. 32, 33). It obviously *survives* all the instructions of the Lord both during His ministry on earth and in the special interviews of the forty days, since it finds expression in the very last inquiry of the disciples,—'Lord, wilt Thou at this time *restore again the kingdom* to Israel?' (Acts i. 6).

Jesus himself had spoken of the Jews as '*the children of the kingdom*' (Matt. viii. 12), and none of His denunciations had been more distasteful and irritating to them than that in which He had declared that *the kingdom* should be 'taken away from them, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof; that publicans and harlots should go in before them' (Matt. xxi. 31, 43). If the notion of an objective kingdom on earth, such as was anticipated by the most devout of Jewish inquirers, was *essentially* wrong, it is certainly very extraordinary that Jesus nowhere corrects the error, since on another occasion He says explicitly, '*If it were not so, I would have told you*' (John xiv. 2).

Let this, however, be as it may, it is beyond dispute that the Jews, the most godly among them as well as the nation at large, understood by '*the kingdom*' a reign of Messiah on earth, which should involve, among other things, the deliverance and exaltation of their country. It was because this view of the kingdom was understood on all sides to be a true one, that no person whatever, so far as we know, felt it necessary to ask John what was implied in the coming reign he was announcing.

We may now with advantage look at the moral and spiritual condition of the Jewish people at this time.

Were they without a Saviour? Were they a people perishing in their iniquity? Was each individual Israelite, man or woman, then thronging the streets of Jerusalem, 'a

lost sinner' in the sense which we associate with these words? I am not speaking of the little company of spiritual persons who in true faith waited for the advent of Messiah, but of the people at large. Were *they* practically without God in the world?

Scripture certainly leaves no such impression. The moral condition of the Jews, when the Baptist appeared, does not seem to have been materially different from that which had been the condition of their forefathers under Moses and Joshua, under David and Solomon, in the days of the prophets, in Babylon, or after the return. There was the same admixture of good and evil; less superstition, probably, than in earlier times, but more worldliness; a greater disposition among certain classes to time-serving and hypocrisy in religious profession; but less inclination to depart from the worship of the one God, the living and the true.

Free from idolatry and its accompanying abominations, the Jewish people, when looked at in this aspect, were now far better and purer than they had been at various periods of their history. The nation, too, was still in covenant with God; a nation that, however fallen or depraved, had, even in the midst of the most terrific judgments, always been cheered by the assurance of final restoration, under a new covenant, resting on absolute and veritable forgiveness of sins (Isa. lx. 10—21; Jer. xxxi. 8—14, 31—37).

On this point what words can be stronger or clearer than those of Jeremiah?—'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: . . . I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people.'

. . . I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more' (Jer. xxxi. 31—34).

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (viii. 13) distinctly teaches that the new covenant is that of which Christ is the mediator. The *open question* is, 'Whom does it include?' Does the prophet mean that the men to whom he spoke would one day be forgiven? or do the words apply only to those who should hereafter believe on Messiah, either when He was first revealed or during the past days? Zechariah had told them that a time should come when Israel would look upon Him whom they had pierced, and mourn with deep grief, even as one mourneth for a firstborn (Zech. xii. 10). Were not the men of Jeremiah's day to be included in that goodly company? If they were, why not also the men who lived in our Lord's day? It need scarcely be observed that *change of heart* cannot apply to a nation in its *corporate* capacity; such a change must refer to the individuals of whom it is composed, for the sin to be forgiven and forgotten is personal sin committed during a time of impenitence.

It is clear enough that the Jews, whether right or wrong in so doing, *regarded themselves* as a saved people, and, as such, heirs to all the promises embodied in the discourses of the prophets. The popular notion was that a Jew could not be lost, and recent investigations into the Talmud have shown that the modern doctrine of eternal punishment was unknown to them.

'That there is in the Old Testament,' says the Archbishop of York, 'a looking forward to an important future for the Jewish nation cannot be denied. In the captivity, when nothing met the eye save that which threatened national extinction and prompted to despair, the people listened to the promises of Jeremiah and Ezekiel of a glory that yet

awaited them. These hopes of the future that are the characteristics of the Jewish national life are linked, almost from the first, with the coming of *a person*. . . . Every event that happens to the Jews is made the occasion of some declaration about that which God has yet in store for them; every wind that blows sets some string vibrating of that harp of inspiration that broke into full harmony when the angels sang to the shepherds, "Glory to God in the highest." The prophets speak of Him as a Conqueror, as a Judge, as a Redeemer from sin, as a Ruler of David's house, who should come to restore the Jewish nation and to purify the Church. The heathen shall share the blessing prepared for the chosen people. . . . It does so happen that in the known prophets of the captivity—Jeremiah and Ezekiel—the sufferings of Messiah are hardly mentioned; and, amidst strong rebukes for sin, God promises the renewal of His covenant with the people, and offers them pardon and peace.*

Further—and this is of much deeper import,—the Israelites were not approached by the Lord and His disciples as lost persons hanging over the bottomless pit. The bare possibility of their being in such a condition is never hinted at.

That Jews, like others, were exposed, if unrepentant here, to retribution hereafter, was never doubted. Daniel had taught them that in the last days 'many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (xii. 2); 'everlasting life' being, as we shall hereafter see, a term equivalent to 'the kingdom;' 'shame and everlasting contempt' pointing as plainly to what Isaiah describes as the condition of irreclaimable transgressors in

* 'Life in the Light of God's Word.'

the day of Israel's exaltation,—the time of the new heavens and the new earth:—'And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall *all flesh* come to worship before Me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth, and look upon *the carcasses* of the men that have transgressed against Me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh' (lxvi. 23, 24).

Other Old Testament scriptures, in like manner, speak of sinners as 'silent in darkness' (1 Sam. ii. 9); as 'reserved to the day of destruction' (Job xxi. 30); as persons whose names 'shall be put out for ever and ever' (P'sa. ix. 5); on whom He will 'rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest' (xi. 6); who 'shall not inhabit the earth' (Prov. x. 30); who shall be slain by 'the breath of the lips of Messiah'; who shall be made as 'ashes under the soles of the feet of the righteous' (Mal. iv. 3).

In the New Testament our Lord simply repeats and endorses the words of Isaiah, indicating thereby what was to be understood by the Gehenna of which He was speaking. It was the place where carcasses were thrown, and where, corrupting and consuming, 'their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched' (Mark ix. 44). Future retribution was taught in every synagogue, and—except by the Sadducees—generally believed in. The parable of Dives and Lazarus *assumes* that the expectation of rewards and punishments after death was commonly entertained.

What classes of persons were by the Jews included under the term 'wicked' it is not difficult to gather. Primarily, and *as a rule*, the idolatrous enemies of Israel—their seducers and oppressors, constituted the great body of transgressors; *exceptionally*, apostate Jews, men of violence and blood, flagrant opposers of God and goodness, were com-

prehended ; but there is nothing whatever, either in the sacred writings or in any other quarter, to indicate even a suspicion, on the part either of priest or prophet, that mankind *as a race*, in consequence of Adam's fall, were born under a liability to eternal misery after death,—that all alike, Jew and Gentile, were *by nature* involved in this one great and common condemnation.

The general opinion which prevailed in Judea regarding the state of men after death may be thus summed up :— A limited number—the Sadducees,—disregarding what had been taught by the prophets, disbelieved altogether in a life to come ; but the bulk of the people, represented by the Pharisees, regarded future happiness as the heritage of the nation. Isaiah had consoled them with this expectation as *making up* for the failure of other hopes. He admits the extent of their disappointments, and allows that they have not wrought any deliverance in the earth. But this is the consolation,—‘Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust : for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead’* (Isa. xxvi. 19).

The heathen, regarded as tributary to Israel, they believed would also live again, in accordance with the promises of restoration *they* had received ; but it was to be only as *the subjects* of the chosen race, who as kings in the kingdom of God were to rule over them. What saith the prophet ? ‘The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee. Thy gates shall

* It has been argued that these words merely imply that there shall one day be a great revival of the nation ; but this cannot be allowed ; the fact is not to be set aside that on these and similar passages the Jews rested their belief in the resurrection.

be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all them that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet.' And this is to be when 'the sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory' (Isa. lx. 10, 11, 14—19).

Further, whatever view may be taken of the origin or import of the Mosaic sacrifices, it cannot be denied that they were regarded by those who offered them as *atonement*—in the sense of securing forgiveness. *With* shedding of blood came remission. The words of Moses on this point are as definite as they well can be:—'If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the Lord, he shall bring his trespass offering, and the priest shall make an atonement for him before the Lord: *and it shall be forgiven him for anything of all that he hath done*' (Lev. vi. 2—7).

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews does not mean to deny this when he says, 'It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin' (x. 4). He merely asserts that such sacrifices need perpetual renewal, contrasting them in this respect with the great sacrifice that was once for all offered by the Lord Jesus (x. 5—8). The shedding of blood in each case was to purify for worship,—for spiritual service.

To affirm that Jewish sacrifices availed only for ceremonial purification, and were but of temporary efficacy, except when they were interpreted as we interpret them—viz., as types and shadows of the death of Christ,—is to forget that no trace of any such appointed correspondence

appears to have entered the Jewish mind; that not even the disciples had any discernment of it until after Pentecost.

What the prophets had taught was, *not* the necessity of discerning in sacrifices the offering of Messiah that was to come, but that *without true penitence* and obedience to Divine commands sacrifice could not be acceptable (Micah vi. 6—8). David, too, had declared that ‘the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and a contrite heart,’ and that unless these were present the burnt offering could not be a sacrifice of righteousness with which God would be well pleased (Psa. li. 17—19; xl. 6—8).

The great day of atonement was a national act, which was distinguished from other services, not only by its broad and national character, but apparently by something like a deeper reference to the sin which belongs to the nature of man. ‘Ewald observes that although the least uncleanness of an individual might be atoned by the rites of the law, which could be observed at other times, there was a consciousness of secret and indefinite sin pervading the congregation which was aptly met by this great annual fast.’* That this indefinite consciousness of sin *was* met by the services of that day there can be no doubt. No Jew would count himself a lost man after honestly participating in the expiations then offered. If he did, what must he have thought of a ceremonial which terminated in itself?

It may, however, be said, ‘If the Jew was a forgiven sinner, what is to be understood by expressions which speak of him as unsaved?’ Our Lord says on one occasion to the Jews, ‘These things I say, *that ye might be saved*’ (John v. 34). And on another, ‘The Son of man is come to save *that which was lost*’ (Matt. xviii. 11). And again, ‘The

* Art., Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible. .

Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but *to save them*' (Luke ix. 56). And again, 'He that believeth shall be saved.' Surely these passages imply, if they imply anything, that before the coming of Christ the Jews were lost.

A prior question must be looked at before any satisfactory reply can be given to the objection thus put. It is this,—What is the sense in which the terms 'lost' and 'saved' are used in Scripture? What idea did their use convey to the Jewish mind? Certainly not that which they now convey to us. Lost, in Scripture, by no means necessarily implies *irrecoverably lost*, or doomed to destruction. It commonly means either *lost for a time*, as in the parables of the lost sheep, the lost piece of money, and the prodigal son; *or*, lost in the sense of *wandering in darkness*—bewildered. In this sense it is that Jesus says, 'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matt. xv. 24). In only one instance is it used as indicating a fatal fall, viz., in the case of Judas,—'Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled' (John xvii. 12). Jeremiah represents the true thought when he mourns, saying, 'My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their restingplace' (Jer. l. 6).

'Saved,' in like manner, is a word used in different senses. In the Old Testament it is sometimes put for deliverances wrought by human agency (1 Sam. xiv. 45); sometimes for Divine protection and blessing (Exod. xiv. 13; 1 Chron. xvi. 23—35; Psa. xxvii. 1); sometimes for a state of mind (Psa. li. 12); and sometimes for the everlasting blessedness of Israel (Isa. xxv. 6—9). Salvation, as it is now generally understood, in the sense of deliverance from

hell, is a term unknown to the Old Testament, since the word 'hell' *there* (sheol) invariably means the grave or the invisible world.

In the New Testament 'save' first occurs in the declaration of the angel regarding Jesus (*i. e.*, Saviour), 'He shall save His people *from their sins*' (Matt. i. 21). Sometimes, however, it is put for that which is higher than even deliverance from the bondage of sin, even for a present union with Christ and the partaking of a Divine nature (Ephes. ii. 10). Thus regarded all becomes plain.*

We misconceive the Jew altogether if we imagine that he had any feeling at all corresponding to that which animates multitudes among ourselves,—*viz.*, a strong desire to be saved from future punishment. *He* was not a man to whom mere safety was everything. What he looked for and anticipated was much more than safety in the world to come. It was distinction, high service, rule over the nations, the possession of a boundless kingdom, in which every Israelite should be a kingly priest. So he read the word of the Lord to Moses on the mount, 'Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests' (Exod. xix. 6). All other nations were, he supposed, to be governed and taught by Israel. This privilege, with all that it involved, he believed would be his simply as a child of Abraham. For the Messiah that was to introduce this kingdom he watched and waited with an unwavering faith from infancy to old age.

It is a mistake to suppose that he looked for *mere* ordinary sovereignty, even though it should be universal, or that he imagined the kingdom would come through the common dispensations of Providence or by the mere progress of events. This could not be the case with any but

* For further illustrations of the use of the term 'saved' in Scripture, see 'Destiny of the Race,' vol. i., pp. 153—201.

Sadducees. For the prophets had taught that the kingdom to be established was *a supernatural one*, and the people generally expected it to be such. They believed that it would be introduced as Zechariah had intimated, by Messiah planting His foot upon the Mount of Olives, which would then cleave in the midst; that the Lord would in this way manifest Himself King over all the earth; that there should be then one Lord, and His name one (Zech. xiv. 4—21). They believed that the resurrection of dead saints would accompany these events, and that David would then rise again and be their king (Jer. xxx. 9; Hos. iii. 5).

And who can wonder at this? No language can be clearer than that of the prophets,—‘David My servant shall be king over them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob My servant, wherein their fathers have dwelt: and My servant David shall be their prince for ever’ (Ezek. xxxvii. 24, 25).

This kingdom Daniel had spoken of as commencing with the advent of Messiah in glory:—‘I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and *a kingdom*, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him’ (Dan. vii. 13—27; ii. 44). When we talk about the carnality of the Jews we should remember that these

prophecies were constantly read in the synagogues, and devoutly believed in. Nor should we neglect to notice what has been already remarked, that while on this point, as on many others, the masses of the people were singularly destitute of spiritual understanding, there were among them persons who well knew, and rejoiced in the knowledge, that only in connection with a clean heart and a right spirit had the higher blessings of the covenant been promised. These, however, were relatively the few.

It was in the midst of expectations like these, and among a people occupying this spiritual standpoint, that the voice of the Baptist was heard crying, 'Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' This was indeed good news. Well might Jerusalem and all Judea hurry out to him, confessing their sins and anxious to be baptized. Well might Jesus be more popular than even John himself when He took up the glad tidings and called it a gospel (Matt. iv. 23).

That the people were now ripe for change is clear: the time was fulfilled (Mark i. 15); the kingdom of God was preached, and for a while all men pressed into it (Luke xvi. 16). *Yet, in any extended sense, it did not come.* How, then, was it 'at hand'? (Matt. iii. 2; iv. 17; x. 7),—'nigh at hand'? (Luke xxi. 31),—'come nigh' unto the Jews? (Luke x. 9).

The answer that must be given to this question does not depend upon any interpretation we may attach to the phrase 'the kingdom;' for if difficulty there be in ascertaining the sense in which the kingdom was *at hand*, it will be found to press equally in whatever light we regard the promised reign. If we say it is *subjective only*, the fact meets us that at that time it was, in such a sense, *far from* Israel rather than nigh; for their state of mind and

heart was altogether out of harmony with any spiritual reign of God.

The ordinary explanation, that by the kingdom being 'at hand' is meant that the Christian dispensation was about to be revealed, is anything but satisfactory. The message *could* not be so understood by the Jews, simply because other associations clustered around a phrase which was familiar in every household. Nor is it easy to see how the announcement of a new dispensation—one of grace to the Gentiles—should be the basis of a call to national reformation in Judea, or, indeed, be expected to excite much interest among a people in their condition.

If the healing of diseases by a word, and still more the exercise of Divine power over evil spirits, may be regarded as foreshadowing the kingdom—and that it did so may be gathered from the context of Luke (x. 9—11), as well as from the exclamation which immediately follows, 'I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven' (ver. 18),—the phrase 'come nigh' is easily explained. In this sense 'no doubt the kingdom of God *came upon*' them (Luke xi. 20), just as it was *among* them in the person of Christ himself (Luke xvii. 21). But none of these texts answer the question, 'In what sense was the kingdom of God *at hand*?' It might be *foreshadowed*, as it certainly was, in miracles of healing, and in the crippling of Satanic power. In that sense it came (Matt. xii. 28). *But it did not come in any general or extended sense, as was anticipated.*

What we want to know is *the sense* in which that kingdom which the prophets had spoken of,—which the most devout of the Israelites expected,—which was illustrated by miracle, and embodied in Jesus of Nazareth, was then *at hand*. To say the Christian dispensation was at hand is *true enough*, but unless it can be shown—which it never

can be—that this was the ‘good news’ which the Baptist proclaimed and the Lord preached, when they cried, ‘Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,’ it is no answer at all to the question needing to be solved.

On the supposition—borne out, as we shall see it is, by the language of Scripture—that the kingdom *was*, what the best of the Jews believed it would be, an objective yet spiritual reign of Christ on earth, the triumph of Messiah over every foe, I do not see how the difficulty can be met except by supposing that if the Jews had not rejected Christ it would *then* have been established; that Jesus would at once have assumed the government of the world; that ancient prediction would have then found a *literal and immediate* fulfilment; that death would then have been swallowed up in victory.* If the time was indeed fulfilled, as we are told it was; if the kingdom was ready to be developed, and would have been developed but for human iniquity, it is not difficult to see in what sense it was ‘at hand,’ or why its manifestation was deferred. The

* A question more curious than profitable may perhaps here be started, viz., ‘In what way would the redemption of the world have been effected had Christ, instead of being rejected, been obeyed and honoured by the Jews? How then would the Gentiles have been brought in and blessed in Abraham? Was not the crucifixion of the Redeemer foreordained with a view to this blessed result?’

Such a question it is impossible for man to answer. God has a thousand methods of accomplishing His purposes, of which we cannot even conceive. ‘For His ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts.’ But it is a mistake to suppose that the crucifixion of Christ was pre-ordained. It was foreseen and predicted, but nothing more. Christ was ‘delivered’ into *the power* of His enemies ‘by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God’ (Acts ii. 23), but by wicked hands He was crucified and slain. For no act of wickedness was ever *foreordained* of God. The Jews could have received the Lord if they had been inclined to do so; they rejected Him *voluntarily*, their wills being as free and their actions as uncontrolled as ours are when at any time we fall under the bondage of evil passions.

singular fact that while the prophets of the Old Testament clearly announce the humiliation and subsequent triumph of Messiah, they never even hint at a dispensation like that under which we live, or indeed even at the possibility of delay, is evidence that they did not even contemplate anything like a 'new testament,'—the result of their national perversity, and of the calling of the Gentiles. That above 1,800 years have already intervened between the coming of Christ and its *predicted* consequences, is a great fact, which can only be explained on the assumption that the Jews in rejecting Christ threw back the kingdom and delayed its manifestation for two thousand years.

Let not this interpretation be thought wild or strange. Among the mysteries of the Divine government there are none greater than the permitted power of Satan and of evil men to hinder the development of good, and well may this be called 'the mystery of God' (Rev. x. 7). But it is vain to deny that such hindrance is possible. Man—explain it as we may—has power to *keep back* both truth and blessing, and in so doing to injure others as well as himself. 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in' (Matt. xxiii. 13).

This was what the Pharisees did, and who can say to what extent the professing church of Christ has followed in the same path? For still is it true that 'the sinful will of man, *impotent for good* without God's help, is permitted an awful power to the prevention of good. It seems well-nigh profane to say that God cannot act out His love for man if man resists Him; yet this is in one sense true and scriptural. 'He could do there no mighty work, because of their unbelief.'

'Yet shall not one promise of Jewish prophet, of apostles, or of the Lord himself in the end be found to have perished. We have put back the hand upon the dial; but it moves, and it shall one day strike. Jerusalem was founded that there might be "salvation in Zion for Israel My glory;" but unfaithfulness wearied the Lord, and He gave it to the spoiler. The Church was founded a second time, but she has never claimed her own, has never moved to follow her Lord but with lame and crippled feet. *Yet shall there be a third Zion*, a new Jerusalem, wherein all the promises of God shall meet, and the wealth of His goodness shall be fully seen. Christ shall one day be universal King. The manner may be dark, but the thing shall be.'*

The apprehension that 'the kingdom' was not to be theirs simply as Israelites broke upon the Jewish people slowly. John had indicated what was coming when he received the scribes and Pharisees with the unwelcome command, 'Bring forth fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.'

Still more clearly had he taught the same lesson when he told them that One would follow him 'whose fan was in His hand, and who would thoroughly purge His floor;' One who would 'gather the wheat into His garner, but burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire,' *i. e.*, fire that could not be quenched until its work was accomplished. What these words meant is evident from the context. They refer to the ruin and destruction of the nation—'wrath to come,'—wrath impending,—for already 'the axe' was 'laid to the root of the trees.' †

* 'Sermons,' by Archbishop Thomson.

† There is no reason whatever to suppose that John, when warning men

It was not, however, till Christ repeated and impressed the truth that the temple would be overthrown; that the nation would be scattered; that only a certain class—the ‘poor in spirit,’ the ‘meek,’ the ‘persecuted for righteousness’ sake’—would inherit the kingdom: it was not till He taught that the proud and selfish would be shut out, that Gentiles, publicans, and harlots would go in before these; it was not till these things were uttered in their hearing, and repeated and impressed in a variety of forms, that hatred was thoroughly aroused, and the blood of the Teacher sought. The gospel, so lately welcomed with enthusiasm, was now no longer good news to them; it was a lie. The Teacher, once so run after, was now, they said, a deceiver, an impostor, and a blasphemer.

Nationally this rejection of Christ was a deliberate refusal to accept Messiah, whom God had sent to reign over them; and it involved national ruin, utter and irremediable. *Individually*—that is, to those who had heard the words and witnessed the miracles of Jesus, who had ‘seen and hated’ the Son of God—it was equivalent to hating goodness. *By* such it was a counting of themselves unworthy of eternal life. *Of* such the Lord himself says, ‘He that believeth not is condemned already;’ condemned ‘because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.’ ‘And this is the condemnation’—affixing it clearly to those only who had both seen and hated,—‘that light is

to flee from the wrath to come, was speaking of the judgments of eternity. It is obvious that he used the phrase in the sense in which our Lord afterwards applied it, viz., as a warning of the approaching ruin of the nation. ‘These be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.’ ‘There shall be great distress in the land, and *wrath upon this people*’ (Luke xxi. 22, 23). Dean Alford says, ‘John is now speaking in the true character of a prophet, foretelling the wrath soon to be poured on the Jewish nation.’ (So also Dr. Gill and others.)

come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil' (John iii. 18, 19).

As to *the extent* of the condemnation, what it would involve either in this world or the next, *nothing is said*; probably because the guilt accompanying the rejection of Christ would vary in each individual case, being increased or diminished by the amount of conviction resisted; and according to the guilt would be the award.

What we have chiefly to notice, however, is that the gospel rejected was clearly that of the kingdom *as presented by the Lord Jesus*. There is not the slightest indication to be found in the evangelists that any gospel *corresponding to what we understand by that term* was either offered or refused.

This may seem a bold assertion, and will doubtless by many be regarded as unwarranted. But unless it can be shown that when John the Baptist exclaimed, 'Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world' (John i. 29),* the disciples understood that phrase as we

* '*Behold the Lamb of God.*' "This is one of the most important and difficult sayings in the New Testament. The question to be answered is—'In calling Jesus by so definite a name, *to what* did John refer?' The title must refer to some known and particular lamb, and cannot be a mere figure for a just and holy man. John wished to designate Jesus as the Messiah; he calls Him the Lamb of God; he therefore referred to some definite lamb, revealed by God.

"Can John have referred to the *paschal lamb*? I think not,—and for this reason; the dominant idea in the paschal sacrifice has no connection, in any sense of the words, with taking away sin, although by the light thrown back on it *since* the Spirit has opened the things of Christ *we* discern this typical meaning in the sprinkling of the blood (see 1 Cor. v. 7). In the *Jewish mind*, no mention being made of sin, or the removing of sin in any connection with the paschal lamb, the two could not be brought forward in such an announcement as this in close connection with one another.

"Can the reference be to *the lamb of the daily morning and evening sacrifice*, or to the sacrificial lamb? With the same reservation as above I think not.

understand it—'Behold the expiatory sacrifice for sin foreshadowed in the sacrifices of the temple,'—which from their subsequent ignorance and darkness it is plain they did not; unless it can be maintained that Nicodemus understood our Lord to say, when He declared that 'as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (John iii. 14, 15), that he and those about him were hasting to destruction, and could only be saved from hell by personal faith in the atoning sacrifice of the Lord;—unless, I say, this can be shown—and I do not see how it can be,—the admission, however unwillingly it may be done, must be made, that the gospel, *as we understand it*, was neither offered to nor refused by the Jewish people. The gospel preached to them was plainly that of the kingdom, *and nothing else*.

There remains but one reference, and that is to the *prophetic announcement* in Isa. liii. 7. The whole of that latter section of Isaiah is Messianic, and was so understood by the Jews.

"But it is objected that this view of a suffering Messiah, and of expiation by the sufferings of one, was alien from the Jewish expectations; and that the Baptist (Matt. xi. 3) cannot himself have had any such view. But the answer to this may be found in the fact that the power of the Holy Spirit, which enabled him to recognise by a special sign the Redeemer, also *spoke in him*, and therefore his words would not be the result of education merely, or his own reasoning, but of that kind of intuitive perception of Divine truth which those had who had been for any special purpose the organs of the Holy Ghost."—(Abridged from Dean Alford's note on John i. 29, Comm., vol. i., pp. 626-7.)

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW BIRTH.

IN a previous chapter I have endeavoured to show that, whatever might be the views of the Jew with regard to future retribution, he had no conception that his state before God was one which, under any circumstances, implied his exposure to eternal misery. No such doctrine was known in Israel.

To assert, therefore, as is commonly done, that our Lord's declaration to Nicodemus practically was, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot be saved from eternal ruin,' is to *misread* the words of the Master. For had that been the meaning of Jesus, He would never have said to the ruler, 'Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?' The doctrine would have been at once a novelty and a grief. It would have altered altogether the supposed standpoint of the Jew. It would have been anything but gospel, or good news, to the nation at large.

The text usually quoted in proof that the doctrine of regeneration, as we hold it, *ought* to have been familiar, is found in the prophecy of Ezekiel, 'Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?' (Ezek. xviii. 31). But a careful examination of the context will show that the prophet is speaking of something different from that heavenly birth, the necessity for which our Lord urges. The death there referred to is temporal death, incurred by infractions of the ceremonial law.

Not so novel, however, was the actual saying, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see *the kingdom of God.*' This Nicodemus should have known, for the prophets had again and again taught the lesson.

Ezekiel had distinctly told them that when Jehovah should gather Israel, He would put a new spirit within them; would 'take the stony heart out of their flesh, and would give them a heart of flesh' (Ezek. xi. 19).

Jeremiah, in almost the same words, had similarly characterized the day of restoration (xxx. 33). Isaiah had said that *then* all their children should be taught of God (liv. 13); and Micah had enforced the same truth in connection with the period when the nations should come and go up to the house of the God of Jacob (iv. 2).

The point to be noticed is that, in the OLD TESTAMENT, regeneration is always associated with that new and higher life into which the chosen people hoped one day to enter. It is never applied to mankind generally. A passage in Isaiah (xxv. 8) seems to indicate that whatever may be involved in 'the removal of the face of the covering cast over *all people*, and the vail that is spread over all nations,' *this* work, as bearing on the race, will not be accomplished before 'death is swallowed up in victory.' *Then* shall the Lord God 'wipe away tears from all faces,' and 'the rebuke of His people shall He take away.' It is needless to observe that Paul connects this passage with the resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 54).

The teaching of the Old Testament in regard to the new birth was expressed when the Levites sang in the temple, 'The meek [and they only] shall *inherit* the earth' (Psa. xxxvii. 11); 'God will beautify the meek *with salvation*' (Psa. cxlix. 4).

If, therefore, we find, as we do, that Christ was hated for

enforcing this truth, we must bear in mind that the teaching was startling and offensive, not because it was new, but because it was humbling; because it stained pride; because it shut out of the kingdom the very forms of character that were then most honoured and cherished.*

I repeat, the Lord would never have told Nicodemus that the doctrine in question was one with which *he* ought to have been acquainted,—one already revealed,—an earthly as distinguished from a heavenly thing, had He not *meant* by it precisely what the prophets meant when they spake regarding it; had He not intended to teach that entrance into the kingdom was a much higher thing than mere deliverance from hell.

In this higher sense alone—as a distinction involving ‘glory, honour, and immortality’—was the necessity of the new birth impressed on every disciple; not, indeed, in the very same words, but to the same effect as in the case of Nicodemus; *e. g.*, ‘Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter *into the kingdom of heaven*’ (Matt. xviii. 3). And again, ‘Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes

* When our Lord says to Nicodemus, ‘Except a man be born of *water* and of the Spirit,’ it can scarcely be doubted that He referred to baptism,—*the baptism of John*, the only baptism then instituted. *Why* such importance is attached to that rite is also plain enough. It represented *the public avowal* of the ruler’s faith. Nicodemus wanted to be a secret disciple. On this account he had come to Jesus by night. There is little room for doubt that he was one of those chief rulers who believed Christ to be sent of God, but ‘because of the Pharisees did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God’ (John xii. 42, 43). It was on this account that Jesus insisted on the *outward avowal* as well as the inward change. It was not enough even to be ‘born of the Spirit;’ he must be born of water also. If he refused this test—the badge of his discipleship—he must be content to rank with the Pharisees and lawyers, who ‘rejected the counsel of God against themselves, *being not baptized of John*’ (Luke vii. 30).

and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. v. 20).

A careful examination of every text in which the new birth is referred to in Scripture will support what has been advanced. Everywhere it implies the utter abnegation of self, of worldly opinion, and of all mundane interests likely to interfere with spiritual progress. Everywhere is it regarded as a special endowment, bestowed according to the sovereign good pleasure of God; *e. g.*, 'To as many as received Him, to them gave He power [in the margin, right or privilege] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God' (John i. 12, 13). The same doctrine is taught by our Lord at Capernaum in the words, 'Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day' (John vi. 44). And again by Paul and Barnabas at Antioch in Pisidia: 'As many as were ordained [set in order] to eternal life believed' (Acts xiii. 48). It is in this light that James is to be understood when he writes to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, saying, 'Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights. Of His own will *begat He us* with the word of truth, that we should be *a kind of firstfruits* of His creatures' (Jas. i. 17, 18).

And here it should be noticed that in Scripture 'life,' 'eternal life,' and similar expressions—frequently used as synonymous with 'the kingdom' (comp. Mark ix. 45 with ver. 47, and Mark x. 17 with ver. 23),—are always connected with special privilege, and commonly indicate that the man who is to enjoy them does so by Divine choice:

'I give unto them eternal life,' says Christ of His true disciples; 'My Father gave them Me' (John x. 28, 29). Again, 'Thou hast given Him [the Christ] power over all flesh, that He should *give* eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him' (xvii. 2). Again, 'This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth [discerneth] the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day' (vi. 40);—not surely in the general resurrection, of which all will be partakers, but in that 'first resurrection' from among the dead which is to be the privilege of the saints (Rev. xx. 5, 6); that resurrection of which St. Paul speaks when he says, 'If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.'

A change so radical as this—a change from first to last spoken of as supernatural, the work of God alone; a 'power' or privilege given to *some*, but not to all; a gift bestowed only on as many 'as were ordained to eternal life'—*could not* be considered as essential to the deliverance of every man from eternal ruin. *Nor was it.* Its extension in this sense, to *all*, has been the work of a well-meant but injudicious desire to deepen impression, and to exalt the Divine sovereignty.

But all exaggerations, however well intended, are sure ultimately to defeat the end they are intended to answer. Eminently has this been the case with the *modern doctrine* of the new birth. Its effect has been to place Divine sovereignty in something like antagonism with human responsibility; to destroy the very important distinctions which everywhere obtain between Christian and Christian; to confound in one common salvation the infant of days and the experienced saint; to excuse inconsistencies of life which the Lord would not have tolerated; and to

make death-bed repentance equivalent to a long life of self-denying or suffering service.

The question of that young man whom Jesus loved—‘Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’—certainly did not mean, ‘How can I escape from eternal perdition?’ but ‘How can I obtain treasure in the skies,—the highest honours in the world to come?’

The answer of the Lord indicates the nature of the question. It is, ‘If thou wilt *be perfect*, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven,’—an injunction adapted to his particular case, but by no means of universal application. He goes away sorrowful, and Jesus says to the disciples, ‘Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into *the kingdom of heaven*’ (Matt. xix. 16—26). The disciples, it is true, ‘exceedingly amazed,’ say to each other, ‘Who then can be saved?’ but the observation merely shows that at this time they, in common with others, supposed that the salvation of a Jew carried with it of necessity an entrance into the kingdom. The question of Peter which immediately follows, What special reward shall we have who have forsaken all and followed Thee? brings out the reply that *all* such should inherit ‘everlasting life;’ and that *they*, the twelve, sitting on thrones, should judge the twelve tribes of Israel.

The later teaching on this head of St. Paul and others to Gentiles will come under notice shortly. At present it is only necessary to affirm that the doctrine of the new birth, *when taught by our Lord to the Jews*, was the same doctrine that had been taught by the prophets, and that it had the same application. It was not on His lips a new doctrine, viz., that without regeneration on earth no Jew could be saved from hell when he died; but *the old*

doctrine, that those only who experienced this change would form part of that 'kingdom of priests' which He had come to call to Himself. The hatred excited by His teaching arose, as we have just observed, out of its opposition to the prevailing belief that entrance into the kingdom was *the natural and inalienable right* of every child of Abraham.

We have now only to observe, in addition to what has already been noticed, that 'the kingdom' seems to be regarded as inseparable from the new birth when the Lord speaks of the inability of the multitude to enter into His teaching regarding it. 'Why teachest Thou them in parables?' was the very natural inquiry of the disciples. The answer is full of meaning,—'Because it is *given to you* to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to *them it is not given*' (Matt. xiii. 10, 11).

Had the doctrine related to the salvation of the people from hell it would have belonged to them quite as much, nay, more than to the disciples; had the kingdom our Lord taught been merely that sort of accommodation to popular prejudice which some suppose it was, it would not have been unintelligible to the people; it is obvious that they were left in darkness simply because they were not in a fitting moral condition for the reception of this truth. A previous work had to be performed in them; they needed that spiritual gift,—the new birth, without which they could not *discern* the kingdom of God.

These people, although 'beloved for the fathers' sakes,' were at this time so beclouded by ignorance, prejudice, and sin, that it was impossible for them *then* to receive aright the mysteries of the kingdom. What may be termed lower truth had to be understood before higher

could be presented with advantage, for 'unto him' only 'that hath can more be given.'

And is this so inconceivable? Do we see nothing like it now? Before Scripture can be of much advantage to him who reads, is there not something needed *in the reader*? 'Reading Scripture,' observes an experienced minister, 'like being near Christ, is a means of blessing; but may be useless, and may be a curse. My experience goes to show that few people are fit to *know much*,—few are fit to be *near* Christ, and to have His mind opened to them. Few *want* the truth; and to have the truth without loving it is perhaps the surest way of making men devilish. Surely there is a providence in the way Christ and the truth is kept from those who are careless, or who would injure themselves by it. Herod, who had slain John, could get no word from Christ when He was brought before him. So souls who have crushed the lower forms of truth presented to them will get nothing out of the Bible.'

But to return to the multitudes, even to those of whom Christ said, '*In them* is fulfilled the prophecy which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive,—were they despised or forgotten? Clearly not. They are spoken of as a harvest *waiting to be reaped* (Matt. ix. 37). And until that time comes an unceasing stream of beneficence flows to them from the Lord. He, as if in anticipation of the healing of their souls, seems never weary of healing their bodily diseases (Matt. xiv. 14). He casts devils out of them (viii. 28—34). He pardons their sins,—whatever that forgiveness may be supposed to include or to imply (ix. 2). He accepts of the simplest faith an ignorant soul can offer—faith in the Saviour's power and willingness

to cure bodily disease (ix. 20—28). Everything He does is in harmony with the announcement to the shepherds that His advent was a declaration of peace and good-will to men (Luke ii. 14).

It is impossible to conceive that, dealing with them thus the Lord could regard them as eternally lost, hour by hour, dropping at once into the grave and into the bottomless pit. Yet this must be the conclusion if we are to accept the popular interpretation of such texts as 'He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.' For these people, although in a certain sense familiar with Christ, were yet *not* believers on Him.

The explanation is to be found, and found only, in the declaration that they were not weeds to be destroyed, but a harvest to be reaped (Matt. ix. 37); that they did not perceive, and could not comprehend the nature of the kingdom, because they had not been born again; that they were not included in those 'first-fruits' of which James speaks; that they belonged to that later ingathering which is one day to complete the Redeemer's triumph.

Is it not, then, safe to affirm that *the gospel as understood by ourselves* was neither offered to nor refused by those who lived in our Lord's day; that to the spiritually enlightened, whether poor or rich, instructed or ignorant in this world's lore, '*the kingdom*,' and that alone, was preached; that to 'the poor in spirit,' the renewed in heart, this was emphatically 'the good news,' since it threw open to them the inheritance which their proud oppressors had forfeited; but that to the ungodly crowd this offer of a royal priesthood was literally *nothing at all*. The Lord himself distinctly asserts this: 'Therefore speak I to them in parables; because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand' (Matt. xiii. 13).

CHAPTER III.

REMISSION OF SINS AND THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

THE sermon of Peter after Pentecost is commonly quoted as evidence of the lost condition of the Jewish people. A little consideration will, however, show that it has no such bearing, inasmuch as it is not an appeal founded on the assumption that his hearers were even now, after the crucifixion of the Son of God, heirs of everlasting woe; but an endeavour to convince those who listened that Jesus, in whose death they had, for the most part, been actively or passively implicated, was indeed the Messiah.

The assembled multitude mainly consisted of 'devout' Jews out of every nation under heaven, who had been drawn together by the news that the disciples of Christ were now speaking in divers tongues. These men Peter convinced that the crucified was both Lord and Christ; in consequence of which they cried out—doubtless in deep grief, for their hearts had been pricked—'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' The reply is, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost' (Acts ii. 38).

Two questions now present themselves, viz., What is here intended by the remission of sins? and what by the gift of the Holy Ghost?

The phrase 'remission of sins' not unfrequently occurs in the New Testament. It is used by John the Baptist as characteristic of *his* baptism (Mark i. 4). It is spoken of

by the Lord Himself in one of His latest interviews with the apostles after the resurrection (Luke xxiv. 47), and again at the institution of the supper (Matt. xxvi. 28). It is associated by Zacharias with 'knowledge of salvation' (Luke i. 77), and by Paul with the death of Christ. Power to grant this remission is given to the apostles in the words, 'Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained' (John xx. 23). In none of these cases, however, does the phrase mean what we commonly understand by remission—the withdrawal of liability to the penalties of transgression in the world to come.

If we look into the matter narrowly we shall find that the term is a *technical* one, and that it has therefore a special signification. The last instance in which it is used by the Lord Jesus, viz., in the investment of the apostles with power to grant remission, will probably throw light on those that precede it. For in this instance it is clear that nothing is intended which could bear on the awards of the world that is to come. The power given was unquestionably limited to the removal of *some consequence of sin affecting the transgressor in this life*.

'Remission' was often used in this limited sense by our Lord Himself, who was the first human being who ever claimed the power of removing afflictions supposed to be the direct and penal consequences of sin. He first uses the language, 'Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee' (Matt. ix. 2). And when the scribes said within themselves, 'This man blasphemeth,' He alone could reply, 'Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith He to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed,

and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house.' In this case it is obvious that Jesus used the phrase, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee,' as meaning, Thy infirmity, which was penal, is removed. So also at the pool of Bethesda, 'Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee' (John v. 8—14).

Now, if the Saviour Himself ordinarily implied by the forgiveness of sins, *as exercised on earth*, only the removal of its special and temporary consequences, what can be more natural than the conclusion that in investing the apostles with power thus to remit, the words He used must have had the same limitation of meaning.

The entire history of the planting of the Christian Church forms one continuous illustration of the truth of this supposition. Everywhere we see the apostles smiting and healing; everywhere using the power with which they were invested for the purpose of asserting their apostolical authority; everywhere sustaining *by this penal discipline* the purity of the Church. To anything beyond this they never pretended for a moment.

The promised remission of sin in connection with John's baptism was different only in so far as it had relation to the mind rather than to the body. But the principle involved was the same. It meant in the mouth of the Baptist the removal of that ignorance and prejudice, at once sin and a consequence of sin, which disabled the Jews from perceiving the true character of the Messiah that was to come. This obstacle he taught them would be removed only in connection with repentance and a public avowal of guilt. Thus it was that the prophet of the Highest went 'before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,' and 'to give *knowledge of salvation* unto His people *by the remission of sins.*'

With these examples before us we have little difficulty in ascertaining what Peter meant when he called on his hearers one and all to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. It is evident he meant by that phrase the removal of the darkness and unbelief which had led even 'devout' Jews to reject their Saviour; the removal of 'the vail' which Isaiah had connected with the coming of Messiah, and which should be taken from 'all nations' at the resurrection (Isa. xxv. 7—8). To this covering Paul refers when he speaks of the vail of ignorance, blindness, and hardness of heart which kept the Jews from understanding the Scriptures of the Old Testament; a vail which is still cast over, or rather *left over*, the minds of that people on account of their wilful and malicious rejection of the light given them (John ix. 39; 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15).

That the forgiveness of sins *sometimes* means in Scripture something much higher than the removal of its earthly consequences is not disputed. Nothing is maintained beyond this, that it is not always used in this higher sense—that *in the passages we have been considering* the more limited sense is the true one.

The second question may be answered in few words. The gift of the Holy Spirit, received after baptism, was the Pentecostal gift—the gift of speaking with tongues, a gift apparently enjoyed in the apostolic age by all believers who were engaged in evangelistic service. The narratives given in the Acts of the Apostles demonstrate this. Take the case of Cornelius and his friends as an example:—'While Peter yet spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that

on the Gentiles also was poured out the *gift of the Holy Ghost*. For *they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.*' Here the gift precedes the baptism. 'Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?' (Acts viii. 15—19; x. 44—48; xi. 15; xix. 6).

Reviewing, then, all that is written, whether relating to Nicodemus, to Peter's first sermon, or to subsequent discourses recorded in the Acts, no reason appears for modifying the assertion that the Jews were not a 'lost' people in the sense we ordinarily attach to that word; that the Gospel preached to them was that of the kingdom; that on the acceptance or rejection of that Gospel turned *the position* in eternity of those to whom it was presented; but that it did not affect any who were too ignorant to comprehend its character, or too much under the dominion of their religious guides to venture on independent action.

These were left in precisely the same condition as their forefathers—redeemed, saved, in covenant with God; looking for deliverance in that glorious future which the prophets had assured them should come, but *not the less in their sins*, exposed to the calamities about to come upon the nation, and liable to that future retribution which awaits every man for his personal transgressions.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GOSPEL AND THE GENTILE.

THE next question, growing indeed out of the preceding one,—is this: ‘If the gospel of the kingdom was the only gospel preached to the Jew, what was the gospel offered to the Gentile?’

The nature of the reply that may be given will of course mainly depend on the amount of faith exercised as to the inspired character of what is taught by the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and as to the *continuity* perceived or denied in the various revelations of Scripture.

If we regard the New Testament as *separable* from the old; if, as some have affirmed, the only true reign of Christ is His subjective rule in the hearts of His children; if the kingdom is altogether *within* a man; if ‘the whole tone of the Magnificat, Benedictus, and Nunc Dimittis’ evidences a *delusive* belief, rooted in the minds of the pious Jews, that the coming of the Messiah was to be attended with special benefits to their nation; if Peter and John, under this delusion, addressed the multitudes at Pentecost; if, owing to the limitations which belong to human nature, the Son of God in some respects shared in these erroneous views,—for all these things have been asserted by Christian men,—*then* to expect an objective kingdom yet in the future is simply to go back to Judaism, and to allow its ‘beggarly elements’ to becloud the later and more spiritual glories of an economy which, in a sense unknown before, is the dispensation of the Spirit. Men who hold these sentiments will not care in what terms the gospel may be pre-

sented either in the Acts or in the Epistles. They start with the assumption that Christians have little or nothing to do with Jewish modes of thought, Jewish prophecies, or Jewish interpretations, and they will not listen for a moment to anything that identifies Christianity with the old economy.

Not such, however, is the teaching of the New Testament. *There* the only difference recognized between Jew and Gentile is that of position. To the one belonged 'the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises' (Rom. ix. 4). To the other pertained none of these things. He was 'an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world' (Eph. ii. 12).

It was to men in this condition—aliens and without hope—that the gospel now came; and the question is, What was it *to them*? Was it in their case also the gospel of the kingdom, or was it simply the good news that salvation from eternal ruin could be obtained by faith in Christ?

We have already considered what may be termed the *understood* position of the Jew before God. We have now to ask, What was the condition of the heathen? They lived then as they live now, without hope and without God in *this* world. Were they doomed to a still more hopeless existence in that which is to come?

To obtain a full and complete reply to this question, it would be necessary to ascertain what has, according to Scripture, been the actual condition in this respect of the children of men ever since the fall; for the position of the heathen in apostolic times cannot have been materially different from that of the ante-diluvians,—from that of

‘the stranger’ who mingled with the Israelites in the days of David and Solomon, or from that of the myriads who now people India and China. The point at issue may, in fact, be put thus:—‘Was it as a redeemed man or as a lost sinner that Adam issued from paradise, and that his immediate descendants—Cain not excepted—went forth to till the ground, to be fruitful and to multiply?’

A thorough investigation into this great subject cannot, of course, be attempted here; but it may be observed in relation thereto, that *at the very opening* of the Divine record, in the account given of the expulsion from the garden, condemnation and promise, judgment and hope stand side by side,—the sentence on our first parents, *so far as it stretched beyond time*, seeming to be virtually revoked by the accompanying assurance that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent: and *at the end of it* we are distinctly told that ‘the lamb was slain from the foundation of the world’ (Rev. xiii. 8); that the church was at the same period chosen in Christ (Eph. i. 4; 2 Tim. i. 9); and that the work of God was then finished (Heb. iv. 3).

Putting these things together it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that whatever obstacle in the way of man’s forgiveness might be supposed to exist in the requirements of the Divine law, that hindrance must have been removed in the counsels of eternity; and that although the *manifestation to man* of pardon through a Redeemer was delayed till the fulness of time should come, the redemption itself was, in the Divine mind, effected ‘from the foundation of the world.’ Whatever, therefore, may precisely be intended by the declaration that the lamb was *then* slain, it seems at least to imply that on the ground of some great transaction, not simply foreseen, or

foreordained but *performed* in eternity, man, from the hour of the fall, was placed under mercy.

For our present purpose, however, it is only necessary to accept the teaching of the apostle when he tells us that 'the creature was made subject to vanity, *not willingly,*' and that it shall one day be delivered from the bondage of corruption by Him who hath subjected the same *in hope* (Rom. viii. 20, 21). What is this but to say that man, having come into the world burdened with a sinful nature without any choice of his own, shall one day find his deliverance, to some extent at least, accomplished without any effort of his own; that while all men, more or less, suffer *the consequences* of sins which—although personal and voluntary—are yet intimately connected with the primal transgression, all shall enter also into the length and breadth of the primal promise.

The historical facts of Scripture seem to bear out this interpretation of the apostle's words. After the fall and consequent expulsion from paradise, men, in process of time, fill the earth with violence, and, with the exception of one family, are swept away by a flood. But, as if to warn us against misapprehension, we are expressly told by an inspired apostle, that to these very people, who had perished by a great judicial act of God, 'was the gospel preached, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.' For Christ 'being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the spirit, went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was a preparing' (1 Pet. iii. 18—20; iv. 6).

The new world, emerging from the waters, but too rapidly follows in the footsteps of its predecessor. Rebellion

raises its head and tongues are confounded (Gen. xi. 8); profligacy abounds, and Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed by fire from heaven; the great heathen empires rise and obtain dominion, and the knowledge of the Holy One appears to be once more passing from the earth.

But the purposes of God cannot be overthrown; although He is far from taking what would seem to man a short and easy method of accomplishing His end. Evil has evidently its work to do in the world, and therefore He will not root it out. Man is to become what God would have him to be, only by processes—however long or tedious or painful they may seem to us—which are in perfect harmony with his nature as a being created in the image of God, able to render, and therefore intended to render, *voluntary* homage to his Creator, to *choose* Him as his chief good, and to reject evil, because he has at length come to discern its true character. Free to stand, and therefore free to fall. A creature, and therefore necessarily dependent on the Creator for breath and being; yet, O mystery of mysteries! independent enough to be responsible for his conduct, for his motives, for his words, and for his cherished thoughts.

Such being the case, it need excite little wonder that from the very first God's ways should not be as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts. He proceeds, so to speak, calmly, slowly, and as one with whom a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. He separates Abraham *while yet an idolater* from his people and from his false worship; makes a covenant with him, and assures him that in his seed 'shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.' The twelve sons of Jacob—the heads of the separated nation—are not, so far as appears, personally better than the descendants of Esau, or than

the Egyptians, but they are the children of promise nevertheless; and among them, amid whatever fallings off, is preserved the knowledge and worship of the one God. What Seth, Enoch, and Noah had been to the antediluvians, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were to the post-diluvian inhabitants of the world.

Yet with a difference. These last are separated from other men by laws, customs, and ordinances which mark them out emphatically as a peculiar people. They are an anointed nation of kings and priests (Exod. xix. 6). They are the depositaries of such special light and truth as it pleased God at that time to communicate to man. Their prophets invariably deal with them as a chosen race. Whether they denounce judgments on account of apostasy, or promise blessings on obedience, they always speak of them as distinct from other peoples, to be severely disciplined but not destroyed.

The heathen, however fallen, seem, as to their moral and spiritual condition, to have differed widely at different periods. From time to time individuals appear among them who shame the peculiar people. Pharaoh and Abimelech, each in turn, justly rebukes Abraham for his duplicity and want of faith in God (Gen. xii. 18; xx. 9). Another Pharaoh honours Jacob and shelters his family (Gen. xlvii. 6). Nebuchadnezzar blesses the Most High, and praises and honours Him that liveth for ever (Dan. iv. 34). Cyrus is called God's shepherd and His anointed (Isa. xlv. 28; xlv. 1). Darius writes to all people, and makes a decree that men should fear the God of Daniel, for He is the living God, and His kingdom shall not be destroyed' (Dan. vi. 25. 26). Artaxerxes, *with his counsellors*, freely offer unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem, silver and gold, the holy vessels, and all

things needful for the return of the people to their own land (Ezra vii. 15—23).

Nor is the dealing of God with the heathen, so far as it is revealed, very different from His dealings with His own people. Like Israel, the nations are punished for their sins; but, like Israel also, with a promise of restoration. Egypt, Assyria, Philistia, Tyre, Moab and Ammon are in turns ravaged and destroyed; but 'thus saith the Lord,' 'In that day (the day of restoration) the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of mine hands' (Isa. xix. 25); 'I will make mention of Philistia and Tyre' (Psa. lxxxvii. 4); 'Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days' (Jer. xlviii. 42 and 47); 'The children of Ammon shall be as Gomorrah, yet afterward will I bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon, saith the Lord' (Jer. xlix. 6, comp. Zeph. ii. 9). Even Sodom shall be brought again and given to Israel, though not by covenant (Ezek. xvi. 53—61). These are wonderful words, hard to understand; but not therefore to be *passed over*, as Israel passed over the prophecies which foretold the humiliation of Messiah, simply because she could not comprehend them.

But the time at length comes when gospel or good news is, by the great Apostle of the Gentiles, to be proclaimed among these lost ones. We ask, then, what *was* that gospel? What was *the* gospel that Paul conveyed to *them*? and in what character were they approached? Does he come to them as to men hourly passing into a state of eternal and unutterable misery? or as to persons who, although dead in sin and dark as to their futurity; were, though lost, children of God, and therefore not without the range of His benediction?

The 'Book' must answer. Peter seems to have been the apostle who first 'opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.' His visit to Cornelius, one of the Italian band, is clearly *not* to one supposed to be under Divine wrath. On the contrary, we are told he was a 'devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.'

What, then, is the message to him? Remission of sins through faith in Jesus Christ, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Here, too, remission of sins can only mean the removal of such obstacles to the reception of higher truth as might be supposed to cling to him as a Gentile. For this was precisely what he needed, and the communication of such truth to him was the object of the visit he received. Remission cannot here mean reconciliation to God, for Cornelius was an accepted man before Peter saw him (Acts x. 2—31). Nor can the gift of the Holy Ghost here mean sanctifying grace, for only by the grace of God was the man what he was. The gift was evidently that of tongues; for, as we have already seen, we are expressly told that while Peter spake, 'the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them *speak with tongues*, and magnify God' (Acts x. 44—46).

When Peter subsequently relates what had taken place on this occasion to the apostles and brethren in Judea, the whole company glorify God, saying, 'Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance *unto life*,'—a phrase which we find to be synonymous with 'the kingdom.' The assembled brethren evidently regard the gift, *not* as a sign that those who had received it had been snatched from

eternal destruction, but as indicating the bestowal of a privilege—a bringing of Gentiles into equality with themselves (Acts xi. 17, 18).

Paul's first recorded address to Gentiles is not to idolaters, but to proselytes, in connection with the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia. What that address was we learn from the circumstance of its having been first delivered to the Jews.

The substance of it is that God had in Christ fulfilled the promises made unto the fathers; that through Him (Jesus of Nazareth) was to be preached the forgiveness of sins; that to them (the Jews) was the word of this salvation first sent,* but that since they counted themselves unworthy of everlasting life (the kingdom), he should now turn to the Gentiles.

The proselytes entreat that these words may be preached to them the next Sabbath; they hear gladly; they glorify the word of the Lord, and 'as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' What the Jews are accused of is, that they count themselves unworthy of the distinction they yet coveted. What the Gentiles accept and rejoice in is the promise *to them* of what had hitherto been regarded as a Jewish privilege exclusively (Acts xiii. 38—48). Therefore it was, and on this account alone, that the chief men of the city, and even the devout and honourable women, raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas; expelled them out of their coasts; followed them with hatred to Lystra and Derbe, and did not rest until Paul was stoned and left for dead.

* Salvation, as popularly understood in Judea and by the Jews, always meant the exaltation of Abraham's seed under the Messiah after the resurrection (Isa. xxv. 6—8; xxvi. 19; xlv. 17—23; Ezek. xvi. 53—63; xxxvii. 1—14).

Recovering, he confirms the souls of the disciples by 'exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter *into the kingdom of God*' (Acts xiii. ; xiv. 19—22). To the heathen in his blindness the apostle, as at Lystra, simply denounces idolatry (Acts xiv. 15). To the same men, when turned from idols to serve the true God, he preaches, as we have just seen, the kingdom.

The jailer at Philippi, terrified by the earthquake, and struck by its supernatural character, cries out, 'What must I do to be saved?' apparently thinking only of deliverance from immediate destruction. Paul points him to a higher salvation—salvation from evil, bids him believe on the Lord Jesus, and speaks the word to all that were in the house. He and all his house believe, rejoice in God, and are baptized (Acts xvi. 30—34). The man seems to have been made sensible that in the earthquake the wrath of God was revealed against unrighteousness, and then to have learned through Paul that God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in His blood (death); to declare the Divine righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God (Rom. i. 18; iii. 25). The wrath he had feared was outward, temporal, and immediate. The salvation into which he had entered was inward and eternal, because it involved joy in God and the removal of those obstacles to growth in grace and to the knowledge and love of the truth which idolatry and its kindred abominations occasioned.

At Athens the apostle confines himself to pointing out the sin of idolatry, declaring that God would judge the world 'by that man whom He hath appointed.' He simply deals with these Athenians as with men who must give an account to God of the deeds done in the body; but he

preaches nothing *to them* akin to what we call 'the Gospel.' What he says is, that hitherto God had left idolaters without rebuke, but that now He commands all men everywhere to repent, because He had at length, by the resurrection of Christ, clearly revealed the way in which He would be approached.

The penalty connected with continuance in idolatry is stated in the Epistle to the Romans, as is also the corresponding reward of the righteous. It is summed up in these words,—God 'will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, *eternal life* (the kingdom): but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation (of mind) and anguish (of spirit), upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile' (Rom. ii. 6—9).

The words 'perish' and 'judge,' which immediately follow (ver. 12) obviously imply this retribution, and point, *not* to eternal destruction, but to the condemnation that awaits evil, by whomsoever it may be committed. 'Perish' (*ἀπόλλυμι*) may here mean *injured*, as it does in Rom. xiv. 15, and in 1 Cor. viii. 11; or it may signify *wither* or fade away, as it does in Jas. i. 11 and in 1 Pet. i. 7; or it may be read *destroyed*, in the sense of total destruction—never to live again—as it seems to do in 1 Cor. xv. 18; but it cannot mean eternal misery, for it would then contradict the entire spirit of Scripture, which everywhere teaches that men shall be judged according to the light they have enjoyed.

At Corinth, Paul abides two years and three months, disputing, first in the synagogue and then in the school of Tyrannus, '*persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God*' (Acts xix. 8).

With Felix he reasons of 'righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come' till the governor trembles. But so far as we have it, there is nothing in his teaching at all corresponding to what *we* should consider the preaching of the gospel in its fulness and freeness.

Festus sums up what Paul taught *him* in the statement that 'he affirmed one Jesus, which was dead, to be alive.'

In his defence before Agrippa the Apostle declares that his special commission, in relation to the Gentiles, was 'to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins,' or, as it is elsewhere called, 'the remission of sins;' and that thus the obstacle to their advancement being removed, '*they might share in the inheritance of them that are sanctified*'—that inheritance being 'the kingdom' (Acts xxvi. 18). His preaching, he says, consisted simply in 'witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles' (Acts xxvi. 22, 23). Observe how careful he is to show that he taught that only which the Old Testament Scriptures taught—the coming and kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter preaches 'peace by Jesus Christ (Acts x. 36), who was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead (ver. 42), and that whosoever believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins;' but it is always Christ as the Messiah 'to whom all the prophets witness' (ver. 43); it is the same word 'which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached' (ver. 37).

Beyond what we have now referred to nothing seems revealed in THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES calculated to throw light on the form in which the gospel was presented to the heathen, unless it be the fact—certainly a significant one—that Paul was on one occasion charged by the Jews with acting contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, and ‘setting up another king, one Jesus’ (Acts xvii. 7), an accusation that certainly seems to imply, as De Wette says, that his preaching turned on the coming of Christ as a ruler, and that the leading ideas incorporated in his teaching were connected with that topic. One wonders that *so little* should be recorded, but so it is. That little, however, is instructive. We learn from it—

(1) That preaching to the heathen while they remained such was simply a condemnation of idolatry, based always on the fact that God, by the resurrection of Christ, had *demonstrated* the way in which He would be approached, having in and through Jesus revealed the Divine person and character (Acts xvii. 22—31).

(2) That in no instance, before idolatry was abandoned, did the Apostle Paul aim at anything beyond convincing men of sin, showing to them *what is right*, or righteousness, and declaring a judgment to come (Acts xiv. 15).

(3) That neither to idolaters nor to others is anything said implying a liability to eternal death or misery. Further, explain it as we may, it is a noticeable fact that the Apostle, while intensely anxious about his own people (Rom. x. and xi.), nowhere manifests that sort of anxiety about the future condition of the myriads of idolaters around him which we habitually express in relation to the people of India or China.

The EPISTLES, being addressed to believers *as such*, can only be expected to throw light on what the Gospel was to those who received these letters.

Let us note then some passages which seem to do this. Paul, speaking of the Gospel, calls it in one instance 'the Gospel of God' (Rom. i. 1); in a second, 'the Gospel of Christ' (i. 16); in a third, 'the Gospel of salvation' (Ephes. i. 13); in a fourth, 'the Gospel of the grace of God' (Acts xx. 24); and in a fifth, 'the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth' (Rom. i. 16).

In relation to these passages it may, however, be observed that in the *first* of them the Gospel spoken of is said to be that 'which God had promised afore *by His holy prophets*' (ver. 2), which certainly was 'the kingdom.' The *second* is illustrated by a quotation from Habakkuk, which connects the glad tidings with the time when 'the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.' The good news here is a universal rather than an individual blessing (Hab. ii. 3, 4, 14, comp. Heb. x. 38). In the *third*, the Gospel is as distinctly associated with 'the dispensation of the fulness of times' (Ephes. i. 10). The *fourth* is to be read in the light of the verse immediately following it;—'Among whom,' says the Apostle, 'I have gone preaching *the kingdom of God*' (Acts xx. 25). The last finds its explanation in the Epistle to the Corinthians,—'The kingdom of God is not in word but in power' (1 Cor. iv. 20). It is the power of God to salvation from sin, since it is not, like Judaism, a thing of meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. xiv. 17). It is therefore a kingdom which the unrighteous shall not inherit (1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; Gal. v. 21; Ephes. v. 5).

In the Epistle to the *Romans* the Gospel is said to be that which God had promised afore by His prophets (Rom. i. 2), and yet it had occasioned the Jews to be treated *as enemies* (xi. 28). 'As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for your sakes'—clearly implying that the Gospel, properly so termed, placed the Gentile in a position that once belonged to the Jew—so to speak, *superseded* him. The salvation of the heathen from hell would be no such supercession, nor would it be in any way derogatory to Israel. But the possession of the kingdom by Gentiles, while the Jews, as a nation, are shut out, *does* imply a transference of privilege. What the one gains the other loses.

In the Epistle to the *Corinthians* (2 Cor. iv. 3) the Gospel is said to be *hidden* from men who are 'blinded by the God of this world,' indicating that it is news which can be neither comprehended nor appreciated by such. But if the Gospel be simply the glad tidings of salvation *from hell* by faith in Christ, *this* is, and always has been understood and accepted by the most worldly, who willingly listen to anything that promises *safety* after death. 'The gospel which I preached unto you,' he says is this, 'I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins *according to the Scriptures*' (*i. e.*, according to the testimony and declared purpose of God in the Old Testament), 'and that He rose again the third day,'—still *according to the teaching* of Moses and the prophets (1 Cor. xv. 1—9).

To the *Ephesians* we have already seen that the Apostle preached 'the kingdom of God' as the gospel of grace. In his epistle (i. 14) he speaks of its reception as the earnest of our inheritance—the inheritance being the kingdom. Elsewhere he refers to 'the *mystery* of the Gospel' (vi. 19),

which again seems to find its explanation in the words of Christ to the disciples—'Unto you it is given to know *the mystery* of the kingdom of God' (Mark iv. 11).

The *Colossians* are called upon to give thanks unto the Father who had made them 'meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,' and who had translated them into the kingdom of His dear Son (i. 13). Paul in writing to them refers to *some only* of those who were with him in Rome as 'fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God' (iv. 11), and yet they were all probably risking their lives by the profession of the faith for which Paul was a prisoner.

In the Epistle to the *Thessalonians* 'the Gospel' is the obtaining of *the glory* of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. ii. 14), and the Apostle prays that his converts may be accounted *worthy of the kingdom of God*, for which they suffer (i. 5).

To *Timothy* he says, 'the Gospel' brings life and immortality to light (2 Tim. i. 10), which he connects with Christ's appearing *and his kingdom* (iv. 1); and the afflictions of the Gospel are associated with a calling according to grace given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (i. 9); in this respect corresponding with James (ii. 5), who exclaims, 'Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and *heirs of the kingdom*, which he hath promised to them that love Him.'

The author of the epistle to the *Hebrews* speaks of Christians as receiving 'a kingdom which cannot be moved' (xii. 28), and Peter charges the brethren to 'give diligence to make their calling and election sure,' in order that 'an entrance may be ministered unto them abundantly *into the*

everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' (2 Peter i. 10, 11).

It is surely worthy of notice that not a single text can be found in the New Testament in which, either directly or by implication, 'the Gospel' is stated to be the good news of salvation from hell, being now made possible through faith in Jesus Christ.* Nowhere is it either asserted or assumed that all men who die unrenewed by the Spirit of God are exposed to eternal death, eternal misery, or anything corresponding thereto. 'The Gospel' is *everywhere* the glad tidings of the coming kingdom; but *nowhere* is that phrase regarded as synonymous with the Christian dispensation, with the church, or with heaven; still less with what we call Christendom.

I am not here professing to give a summary of the entire body of apostolic teaching. I am referring only to that teaching so far as it bore upon the doctrine of the kingdom. And it is in doing this that I observe two things: first, that to the idolater, while remaining such, *nothing* is said respecting the kingdom; and secondly, that to the Jew and to the converted idolater, *much* is taught regarding it, with much besides that is evidently considered to be in harmony therewith, such as (1) Proof from the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. (2) That the Prophets had declared that he would appear in humiliation and be rejected of men. (3) That he died for our sins according to these Scriptures.

The sum of the whole is, that apostolic teaching to the Gentile, however varied in its adaptation to the capacity and attainments of the individuals to whom it was im-

* Such texts as, 'I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified,' are considered in the last chapter, entitled 'OBJECTIONS.'

parted, *always pointed to the kingdom* as the final result of that great redemptive work which Messiah by His incarnation, teaching, sufferings, death, and resurrection had both inaugurated and completed.

Yet is it a doctrine *partially reserved*. For 'them that are perfect' the Apostle has 'hidden wisdom'—the wisdom of God in a mystery; something 'which God ordained before the world unto our glory'; something which none of the 'princes of this world knew,' or they would not have crucified the Lord; something which the natural eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man; yet something which God—having prepared it for them that love him—has revealed through His apostles by His spirit (1 Cor. ii. 1—10.—Comp. Matt. xiii. 35).

How erroneous then—in the sense of deficiency—is that view of truth which asserts that 'the word 'Gospel' in the New Testament is applied *exclusively* to the announcement of certain events occurring at a particular time in the history of the world. These are the incarnation, birth, baptism, temptation, ministry, miracles, betrayal, condemnation, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus; that 'St. Paul declares in so many words in what the Gospel consists—the Gospel which he preached, and by which his converts were saved; he declares it to be the record of three facts: 'that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day' (1 Cor. xv. 1—6).^{*} According to this, 'the Gospel of the kingdom' might never have been heard of.

The explanation of the writer would probably be—in the words of another defender of Church principles—that *the*

^{*} 'Church Doctrines and Bible Truth,' by the Rev. M. F. Sadler, M.A., Prebendary of Wells, &c.

Church is 'the new Theocratic kingdom under the headship of Christ which has superseded the old Jewish Theocracy, the one being analogous to the other;' that 'it has pleased God to call the *external* church as well as the invisible church His body;' and that men 'are made subjects of this kingdom and members of the body of Christ by the initiatory sacrament of baptism, just as the Jewish child was admitted into the covenant of circumcision.' If it be so, the kingdom of God is now upon earth, and all hope of a better is vain. Heaven—whatever that word may mean—is in the future, but 'the kingdom' is present. To those who can receive this teaching large portions of Scripture must be utterly unintelligible.

Very different, however, is the reply given by Scripture to the question—What was the Gospel offered to the Gentile?

CHAPTER V.

THE REDEMPTIVE WORK OF CHRIST.

IN the last chapter it was asserted, and not without reason, that the spiritual stand-point of the Gentiles, when the Gospel was first preached to them, was higher than we sometimes suppose it to be; that they were not regarded simply as objects of the Divine indignation; that, as parts of a ransomed race, they had been from the hour of the Fall placed under mercy.

We have now to see how far such a supposition harmonizes with what is revealed regarding the work of Christ on earth.

We say 'on earth,' because if we accept the statement of the beloved Apostle that the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world, we are obliged to admit that the work of Christ on our behalf was not confined to His earthly life; but that from the beginning of time man was dealt with on the ground of some great transaction, not simply foreseen or foreknown, but performed by the Redeemer in the counsels of eternity.

What that transaction precisely was we cannot tell or even imagine. A Divine sacrifice for human sin—whatever it may consist in—must involve many things far beyond our comprehension. But this at least is certain:—whatever difficulties may seem to surround the idea of an expiation in eternity, they cannot be greater,—they cannot be so great as those which embarrass every attempt to show that the satisfaction of Divine justice was found in the crime of those who crucified the Lord Jesus.

“A Divine incarnation first, and then a Divine suffering, is an absolutely incomprehensible revelation. The more men argue over it—and from the beginning the Church did argue over it, and was forced into many refinements of definition in order to exclude positive error and mischief—the more are they in danger of ‘darkening counsel by words without knowledge.’

“I read with comfort, in the presence of conflicting yet confident dogmatism, the express word of our Saviour Jesus Christ, telling us that atonement is not an easy subject; that, difficult as it may be to understand a Divine influence, it is more difficult to apprehend a Divine sacrifice; that the former is, by comparison with the latter, as an earthly thing over against a heavenly; that only He who has been in heaven can reveal redemption, while a master of the natural Israel is culpably ignorant if he knows not of regeneration.”*

The pre-existence of Christ and what He was *to us* before He came to earth is, in all probability, the key to the heavenly mystery, without the recognition of which all our theories about substitution, compensation, equivalent or vicarious retribution, are unmeaning and worthless, if not absolutely productive of mischief. For it *may be* that everything involved both in the incarnation and atonement—everything arising out of the sad scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary, was intended to bear, *not* on God, but on man,—*immediately* upon the Church chosen from the foundation of the world, *ultimately* on every child of Adam.

Reasons for such a belief will not be wanting if *all* that is said in Scripture regarding the atonement be carefully weighed. But the examination must be conducted without

* Dr. Vaughan, of Doncaster, ‘On Earthly Things and Things Heavenly.’ *Good Words*, January, 1868.

fear or favour,—in the light of the context, and apart from the associations which have been thrown around given passages by hereditary teaching, by commentators, by preachers, or by books. It will then be seen that only by assuming obstacles on the part of God to have been already removed can we understand the word that ‘God was in Christ *reconciling the world unto Himself*,’—*not Himself to the world* (2 Cor. v. 19).

But what then, it may be said, was the object of Christ’s life and death *on earth*? Peter shall reply: ‘He was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory; *that your faith and hope might be in God*’ (1 Pet. i. 20, 21). Paul shall witness, when he commands Titus to bid men ‘look for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, *that He might redeem us from all iniquity*, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works’ (Tit. ii. 13, 14). The angel of the Lord had from the first emphatically announced this truth when he said to Joseph, ‘Thou shalt call His name JESUS, for He shall save His people *from their sins*’ (Matt. i. 21).

I am aware that many will maintain that in these passages the punishment of a substitute for man is *assumed*, and that if Christ’s sufferings were not penal, it is impossible to reconcile the fact of their being permitted with the righteous government of God, since the sufferer was sinless. But the difficulty is not so great as at first sight appears; for there are many sorrows that come on men—the holiest and the best—that cannot be connected with their sinfulness. As Mr. McLeod Campbell has well put it,—‘Surely the tears of holy sorrow shed over the sins of others; the tears, for example, of a godly parent over a prodigal child

are not penal; nor, if shed before God in prayer and acknowledged in the merciful answer of prayer in God's dealing with that prodigal, can they be conceived of as having been penal.' Why, then, might not Christ suffer, the sinless on account of the sinful, out of pure love for the sinner and grief over his sin? That God *punishes* sin is readily believed by most men; but that God in Christ *grieves* over sin few can perceive, although equally true. Yet it is this that reveals God and purifies the soul.

In what the sorrows of Gethsemane consisted we cannot tell. The cup there given by the Father is evidently the endurance of evil permitted, *not inflicted*, for the reference to it is followed by the words, 'Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?' That the exclamation on the cross, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' did not imply withdrawal of the Divine favour, or infliction of Divine wrath, will be evident to any one who carefully studies the psalm of which the words in question are the initial verse. The cry of the sufferer is, *My God, why hast Thou left me in the hands of the wicked?* The rest of the psalm supplies the answer, 'He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; *neither hath He hid His face from him*; but when he cried unto Him, He heard' (Psa. xxii. 24).

The work of Christ on earth, then, was essentially a *redeeming* work, although it may not be denied that it was also an *atoning* work, if that word be used in its true sense, that of reconciliation. For the reconciliation of man to his Maker needed to be effected in order to make salvation a reality. In this case, however, the atonement must be regarded, not as *the cause* of the forgiving love of God, but as *the highest form of its manifestation*. And such it was;

the end being, not to placate God, but to redeem man. Christ suffered, 'the just for the unjust,' not that the unjust might escape punishment, but that they might be brought to the wisdom of the just. He died 'that *He might bring us to God.*' The necessity for that death was a moral and spiritual necessity. It consecrated for us a way, a new and living way, into the holiest. It opened a path by which, though rebellious children, we might return to the bosom of the Father. *But it did not dissolve the connection between sin and suffering, for the righteousness of that connection remained unchanged.**

Christ fulfils His work then,—

(1) By revealing *in Himself* all that can be made known of God to man, viz., His *character*, and especially His love, manifested in His kindness to the sinful.

(2) By illustrating in His own life the Divine purity, justice, and love, and by opening up to believers an attainable glory, honour, and immortality.

(3) By leading the way in that 'path of life' through sorrow and suffering which every child of Adam is called to tread; by dying that we might live; by becoming in death the propitiation for our sins; and by opening, through His blood, a way into the holiest for all who believe.

Finally, by calling unto Himself through the Holy Spirit, a Church 'chosen from before the foundation of the world;' by imparting unto those who are to compose that Church 'power to become sons of God' in a new and higher sense than had hitherto been known; by making them parts of Himself,—'the fulness of Him that filleth all in all;' by uniting them in life to their heavenly Father; and by giving them, through death and resurrection, 'power over

* See 'Nature of the Atonement,' by John M'Leod Campbell.

the nations'—a royalty and a priesthood *akin* to that which He should exercise, and having for its object *the same great end*, the final restoration of a lost and ruined world.

It was by the exhibition of God as a *forgiving* God,—as essentially love,—perfectly holy, yet pardoning sin and all manner of iniquity,—that the Lord Jesus sought to reconcile the rebellious to Him against whom they had rebelled. It was by His own self-sacrificing death that He united Jew and Gentile in one body, 'preaching peace' alike 'to those that were afar off and to them that were nigh.' It was by bringing 'life and immortality to light,'—by overcoming death and hades,—by removing the darkness which before His advent hung over the future, that He excited heavenly ambitions, held up sin in its true character as a bondage and a death, and finally delivered those who had hitherto been incapacitated for free and happy service, from everything that hindered their entrance upon a life of liberty and of love.

That the cross of Christ, in whatever aspect it may be contemplated, has a deep meaning and is a profound mystery cannot be doubted; that the offering of the Redeemer rose as a sweet smell before the Creator is unquestionable; but this is not less the case because it was mainly intended to move the heart of the creature. Yet let us not be mistaken here. Christ was emphatically a *sin-bearer*. Having no sins of His own to suffer for, nor any defects of character needing to be corrected by discipline, all He did and endured was necessarily vicarious. His sufferings, whether mental or bodily, whether arising from His deep sympathy with goodness and abhorrence of evil, or from the wickedness and cruelty of man, could only have been occasioned by the sins of others. Thus did 'He bear our sins in His

own body on the tree.' Thus was He on our account subjected to sorrow. Thus 'by His stripes we are healed.'

The difficulty felt by so many in receiving this form of truth, orthodox as it is, arises mainly from false associations, and especially from erroneous notions regarding the pains and penalties of sin, *and the connection of Christ therewith*. The theory commonly held, however it may be concealed or apparently modified, is, that since the *desert* of sin must be measured by the dignity and excellence of the Being against whom it is committed, its punishment *must* be eternal; that while the *law* of God necessitates this sentence on the transgressor, the *love* of God makes Him unwilling to execute it; that consequently Christ is given *to come between* sin and its penalty in the case of all who believe and thankfully accept Him *as their substitute*; and that the revelation of this great fact is 'the Gospel.'

Not such, however, is the teaching of Scripture. *There* no distinction is drawn between God as a Father and God as a Ruler. Nowhere does it intimate that the parental relation is *in itself* incompatible with righteous government. Nowhere does it *imply* that the exercise of official functions by God involves a state of mind, so to speak, which in the case of the wicked overrules the paternal character. With Him functions and feelings can never clash; nor can He, as the representative of the sovereignty of law, ever be called upon to act in any way which is opposed to His gentler attributes.

In Scripture, God is represented as dealing with *all* His children on principles similar to those on which He bids a wise and good earthly parent deal with a perverse and wicked child. He punishes, because it is just and right so to do. But the penalty He attaches to transgression is a righteous and salutary penalty; *righteous*, because recog-

nizing alike the evil of the sin and the weakness of the sinner; *salutary*, because having in it a disciplinary element, adapted * to humble, to subdue, and to render penitent the most obdurate of rebels. As such it *ought* to be inflicted. The omission to inflict it would be an evil and not a good, unless, indeed, repentance and a genuine change of mind in relation to evil has, in any case, rendered the infliction unnecessary. The submissive cry, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him,' is not inconsistent with the appeal, 'If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?'

It was to bring about this change of mind in the children of men, and not to interfere with the just punishment of their sins, that Christ was manifested. His work, as has been already said, was a redeeming work. His blood (His death) effected what the blood of bulls and of goats could not effect—it cleansed the conscience. The sacrifices of old could deliver from the fear of future punishment, but they could do no more; they could not give life or strength. Christ alone delivers from the *power* of sin, and accomplishes the reunion of the human soul with God.

From penalty, so far as it rises out of sin, or is suffered in the form of pain, sickness, or death, Christ clearly does not deliver us. So far as penalty is disciplinary, He sanctifies it. So far as it involves retribution in the world to come, He does not interfere with it, for we shall all—believers as well as others—appear before His judgment-seat to give an account of 'the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad;' and this *in order that* each may receive according to his works.

* Adapted to produce, not *compelling* repentance or love. Hence the final destruction of *some* is always regarded as possible. It is difficult to see how it could be otherwise, if the freedom of man is in any sense real.

Strange is it that we should so commonly forget that penalty is not 'the curse' of the law, but its *sanction*, and as such a blessing, for 'the law is holy, just, and good. The true curse resting on those who violate the Divine law is *demoralization*, and it is from this demoralizing power of disobedience that Christ redeems. Suffering He does not remove. He ennobles it. He glorifies it as the appointed path to God. When it is said that Christ was made 'a curse' for us, it is not meant that He was cursed of God, but that for us He became a curse, *in that legal sense* which is expressed in the words, 'Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.'

It will, I trust, be understood that the foregoing remarks are not intended to set forth the *entire* work of Christ—a subject far too great to be handled incidentally. The object of what has been said is to show that although man as man—the race as a whole—is already saved *from hell*, this fact by no means interferes with what is revealed regarding that great redemption *from sin* which can only be effected by the Lord Jesus; which is ever accomplishing among the children of men; which will never cease to go on accomplishing here or elsewhere until the time shall come when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord of all, to the glory of God the Father.

CHAPTER VI.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

THE following definitions of the phrase 'kingdom of God,' or 'kingdom of heaven'—for as used by the Evangelists the two terms seem to have the same import,—have been given by theologians. They may be regarded as specimens of classes.

(1) 'The kingdom of heaven signifies *the religion of Christ upon earth*—the Gospel dispensation.'—*Bishop Louth.*

(2) 'The kingdom of heaven most frequently denotes *the Gospel dispensation*, but often takes in the kingdom of grace and of heaven.'—*Whitby.*

(3) 'The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God sometimes signify the heavenly state of *perfect blessedness, or the kingdom of glory*, yet they most frequently denote the Gospel dispensation.'—*Dr. Guyse*; so in effect *Matthew Henry* and others.

(4) 'The phrase signifies God's reigning *in and over* his rational creatures.'—*Benson.*

(5) 'The kingdom of heaven sometimes denotes eternal bliss, and sometimes, and more frequently, *the Church of Christ.*'—*Calmet*, edited by Taylor.

(6) 'It has been observed by recent critics that wherever the term kingdom of heaven, or its equivalents, is used in the New Testament, it signifies *not the church nor the Christian religion*, but strictly the kingdom of the Messiah which is to be revealed hereafter.'—*Dean Alford.*

(7) 'The kingdom of heaven—that is, the triumph of good over evil—is no more identical with any earthly organization, either ecclesiastical or secular, than it is with geographical limits

or external pomps. It is something above and beyond and through them all. The kingdom of Christ is not of this world at all.'—*Dean Stanley*.

In pursuing our inquiry as to the teaching of Scripture regarding the kingdom, it will be well to keep these definitions in mind, in order to see how far that which is 'written' confirms or sets them aside.

The various passages of Scripture which refer to the kingdom of God may be conveniently classed under eight heads, viz. :—

- (a) Such as describe the *moral characteristics* of the persons who are to form it.
- (β) Such as indicate their *position and duties*.
- (γ) Such as speak of the kingdom as a *compensation* for earthly suffering on Christ's account, or as a *reward* for eminent service.
- (δ) Such as refer to the *time of its manifestation*.
- (ε) Such as *limit* the inheritance to an elect people.
- (ζ) Such as throw at least a side-light on the *object* of the reign.
- (η) Such as seem intended to *foreshadow the mode* of its existence.
- (θ) Such as connect the kingdom with the second advent, with judgment, and with 'the binding of Satan for a thousand years.'

When these texts have been carefully and conscientiously examined, we may at least hope that it will not be difficult to perceive, with something like definiteness, what the term in question is intended to imply—what the kingdom is intended to be.

No difficulty on this head appears to have been experienced by the Jews. Thoughtful readers of the gospels must have been struck by the circumstance, that while nothing is said, either by John the Baptist, by the Lord himself, or by any of His apostles, explanatory of what was intended to be understood by the coming of that kingdom which they all in turn announce, no one, during any period of their ministry, seems to have thought it needful to make inquiry regarding its nature. It seemed unnecessary to do so. For what *could* the kingdom be but that of which all the prophets had spoken, and which, amid the various errors that mingled with Jewish ideas in relation to it, was the great object of Israelitish expectation from the cradle to the grave.

With us, however, the case is otherwise. As Protestants we rightly refuse to accept that idea of the kingdom which is embodied in the polity of Rome. As Christians we shrink with equal propriety from what we have been accustomed to think the low and carnal conceptions of the Jews regarding it. Definite views on this subject we seem to consider unattainable.

The general notion that finds acceptance amongst us is, that the term simply means *the rule or reign of God*, and that this reign is realized on earth just in proportion as society becomes Christianized, and believers multiply in the world. As a *subjective* thing, manifested in all true Christians, we gladly accept and believe in it. As an *objective* thing we hold to it only so far as it may be now seen in the Christian community, or will at a future day be more visible during the period called 'the Millennium.' To most men the *present* aspect of the kingdom is—the Church; the *future* aspect of it—heaven.

The kingdom of God, says a recent writer, 'comes to the

kingdoms of this world like a breath of Divine inspiration ; it is a descent of heavenly truth, heavenly love, and heavenly life into the sphere of the earthly, to make it live anew ; for all business, all domestic life, all government, all thought, all art, all learning, are waiting, are panting for the living baptism of Christ.'

On this statement it is unnecessary at present to form any judgment. Our duty is rather to inquire whether such an improved condition of society, *on the supposition of its existence*, corresponds to what is taught in Scripture regarding the kingdom. I say 'on the supposition,' for it is anything, I think, but true that either business, or art, or thought, or learning *are* panting for the baptism of Christ. The author of 'Ecce Homo,' speaking of the city of God as set up by Christ before the eyes of men, and of the New Jerusalem as having already descended out of heaven—'no insubstantial city such as we fancy in the clouds, but a visible corporation, whose members met together to eat bread and drink wine, and into which they were initiated by bodily immersion in water,' thus records his view of the result,—'Perhaps the truth is that there has scarcely been a town in any Christian country since the time of Christ where a century has passed away without exhibiting a character of such elevation that his mere presence has shamed the bad and made the good better, and has been felt at times like the presence of God himself.' But he adds, 'Human nature has inevitably developed downwards as well as upwards, and if the Christian ages be compared with those of heathenism, they are found worse as well as better, and *it is possible to make it a question whether mankind has gained on the whole.*'

Without giving any opinion as to whether the supposed fact of an improved general state of society, on the whole,

does or does not admit of question (Mr. Gladstone thinks it cannot do so), it may surely be remarked that *on the supposition of this dispensation being one of selection rather than of universality*, this result of the diffusion of Christianity for above 1800 years is precisely what might have been expected—the *ennobling* of the few, the partial elevation of the many.

The term 'kingdom of God' occurs in the New Testament about seventy times; 'kingdom of heaven' about twenty times; and other references to this same kingdom probably thirty times more.

The signification of the term is apparently not always the same. Sometimes, *although rarely*, it seems to imply that which is subjective—a moral and spiritual condition. It does so, if what our Lord said to the Pharisees, who demanded *when* the kingdom of God should come, really was 'the kingdom of God is *within* you.' But this is not the fact. The marginal reading is the true one, 'The kingdom of God is *among* you;' for the kingdom could not be said to be *within* the Pharisees to whom He was speaking. The expression probably means that the kingdom was embodied in Himself, the Lord of it. St. Paul, when viewing this reign of God subjectively, and contrasting it with Judaism, says it is 'not meat and drink,' but 'righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost' (Rom. xiv. 17).

This, however, is an *exceptional* instance. As a rule, the phrase implies that which is objective. It is a reign of God announced as *approaching*, and therefore *different* in some respects from that which has been exercised by the Divine Being from the beginning. It is a promised dominion which *the saints* are to exercise—a government

of which the poor of this world, rich in faith, are under Christ the 'heirs' (Jas. ii. 5).

In sustaining this view, it is by no means necessary to deny that the kingdom, as an *invisible* thing—like the elect Church of God with which it is identified—has a *present* existence. This no one disputes. What we are inquiring into is not the invisible kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, whether now on earth or in hades, but the visible manifestation of it. We are not asking after that which now is, which always has been, and which ever will be—the invisible reign of Christ over the subdued hearts of all His people; but after that which is yet '*to come*,' and to come as the reward of the Redeemer's sufferings—the public, open, and fully manifested triumph of Christ over all His enemies. The question is not whether Christ has a kingdom in the affections of believers—everybody allows *that*—but whether what is called in Scripture 'the kingdom of God' is or is not *more than this*? whether it is not a declaration that *on earth* Christ will one day be manifested Lord of all, and supposing it to be so, what is revealed regarding that reign?

The inquiry involves another question, viz., Whether such phrases as a '*new earth*' and the '*meeek inheriting*' it, and such like, are mere figures of speech, intended to represent *either* the great moral change which takes place when Christ is received into the heart, and the blessed peace and rest into which it is supposed such will ultimately enter in heaven, *or whether they are intended to set forth objective realities*? In short, in one form or other, it comes to this, 'Will there or will there not be any *visible* triumph of Christ on the very earth in which His humiliation took place?'

What is revealed relating thereto will of course be inter-

preted according to the view taken of *the development of doctrine* in the New Testament. If Pauline Christianity is higher than that which was *primitive*; if the earliest forms of thought as expressed in the Gospels are Ebionite, and must be regarded as superseded by the higher utterances either of Paul or John, we shall necessarily set very light by Jewish teaching, come from whom it will. The Holy Spirit, speaking through Paul and John, will then be supposed to control, if not in some instances to override, the teachings of Jesus himself. If this be granted, however, it is difficult to see why the principle should not be carried further, and Mr. Newman's doctrine of development relating to the Church also be received, in which case Rome is the only consistent resting-place.

Let us now note what Scripture says regarding the kingdom, keeping to the classification already proposed. Doing so, we are led to examine the passages which refer to it in the following order:—

(a) Texts that describe the *moral characteristics* of those who are *to form* the kingdom.

These clearly bring before us a class of persons who may be called without exaggeration 'pilgrims and strangers upon earth.' They are men who are *worthy* of the position (2 Thess. i. 5), and therefore much more than mere religious professors (Matt. v. 20; vii. 21). They are persons who have on earth been by Divine grace emancipated from the love of money and of what money can procure (Mark x. 23; Luke xviii. 24). They are such as have given up for this distinction things dear as a right eye or a right hand—*everything* that has to them appeared likely to stand in the way of its acquisition (Mark ix. 47). The attainment of *the kingdom* has been to them the one and prime object of

pursuit in life (Matt. vi. 33; Luke xii. 31). They have regarded this kingdom as the pearl of great price (Matt. xiii. 45, 46). They have considered it the treasure hid in the field, for which a wise man selleth all that he hath (ver. 44). In this course they have persevered unto the end, and have finally overcome (Rev. ii. 26). No man looking back is fit for it (Luke ix. 62). In every one of these texts 'the kingdom' is specially mentioned as the prize to be gained or lost.

Nicodemus is told by our Lord himself, that unless a man be born again (born from above, *marg.*), he cannot see *the kingdom of God*. The disciples are taught that unless *they* are converted and become as little children they shall not enter therein—that 'of such is *the kingdom of God*' (Matt. xviii. 3; Mark x. 14, 15). The Jews are informed that it should be taken from them because they did not bring forth the fruits thereof (Matt. xxi. 43).

Surely there is implied in these particulars a much higher style of character than is common amongst us; *something more* than that ordinary faith and repentance which is usually considered essential to salvation—something akin to what Paul means when he distinguishes between those who shall have an *abundant* entrance and those who shall be saved 'so as by fire.' The persons thus spoken of, whoever they may be, must unquestionably be considered the *élite* of earth—its holiest and its best—made such by sharp discipline, by hard temptation, and by earnest prayer.

Just in proportion as men cultivate Divine dispositions they approach near unto the Lord; and so there are always some who are 'not far from the kingdom of God,' yet never reach it (Mark xii. 34). The promise of the Lord to Peter, 'I will give unto thee *the keys* of the king-

dom of heaven' (Matt. xvi. 18) can of course only mean, 'I will make thee acquainted with *the width* of the kingdom, and authorize thee to open it to the Gentile as well as to the Jew.' In this sense, whatsoever he bound on earth was bound in heaven—a promise subsequently extended to the whole of the apostles. The meaning of this binding, whatever it may be, is not affected by the interpretation we give to the word 'kingdom.'

(β) Texts that describe the *position and duties* of those who are admitted to the kingdom.

And here we notice, first, that all persons 'called' in Scripture to the kingdom are alike called to be *kings*, however varied may be their rank or responsibility. To one it will be said, 'Because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over *ten* cities.' To another, 'Be thou also over *five* cities' (Luke xix. 17, 18).

The promise of this particular distinction is explicit:—'I appoint unto you a kingdom,' says Christ to His apostles, '*as My Father hath appointed unto Me*' (Luke xxii. 29). The latter clause is equivalent to saying, 'You shall be kings *in the same sense* that I am a king.' He adds, You shall, as tributary monarchs, sit at the royal table. 'I appoint unto you a kingdom, that ye may eat and drink at my table *in my kingdom*, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel' (ver. 30).

Granting that there is something special in this promise, it nevertheless remains true that kingship is not confined to the twelve. It is men out of every tongue and kindred and people and nation who sing, as a part of the new song, 'We shall *reign* on the earth' (Rev. v. 10). For thus saith the Lord, 'He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, *to him* will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron' (Rev. ii. 26 ;

comp. Psa. ii. 9). It was to this royalty, and to nothing short of it, that the pious Israelite perpetually looked forward. Whatever seemed to indicate its approach was always regarded by him as a sign of Divine favour. In the hope of entering upon such a reign the most devout and heavenly minded of the Hebrew people lived and died. Is it so wonderful, then, that Christians should be called to cherish a like noble and world-staining ambition ?

If it be objected here—as it probably may—that a kingdom is a consolidated, law-abiding, and law-honouring organization; that it supposes *subjects* as well as rulers; that the term is unmeaning if all who enter it are to be kings, it is only necessary to reply that no one supposes the kingdom spoken of will be one without subjects. There are unquestionably nations to be ruled and to be taught. The phrase, ‘the kingdom,’ is not a new one *as applied only to rulers*, for the Jews were very early told by God himself that if they would obey His voice and keep His covenant they should be unto Him ‘a kingdom of priests;’ and Peter speaks of all true Christians as forming a royal priesthood (1 Pet. ii. 9).

In both these cases persons needing to be ruled and taught are necessarily supposed. They are not *mentioned* in either, simply because it is the ruling class alone who are ‘the called’ of God, and to them only is the promise addressed. The ‘*joint heirs*’ with the king are not the *subjects* of the kingdom; yet there is certainly a sense in which the governors and the governed may each in their own way enter the kingdom.

The *duties* involved in this kingship are expressed in the title given to those who are called to it—a kingdom of *priests*. They are men, therefore, who are both to rule and to teach; *to rule* as Christ’s vicegerents and in His spirit;

to teach only in accordance with His instructions. They are, like Him, to be the servants of all even in governing all ; and there is little doubt but that, by the same identity of nature, they will speak as never man spake in this lower state of being. The reign, therefore, will not be one of self-will, but of God's will ; not of selfish aggrandisement, but of self-sacrifice ; not of pride, but of humility ; not of power merely, but of love.

I know it is generally *assumed* that there will be no sin within reach of the blessed in the next world or age ; that when men leave earth they become at once either perfected saints, confirmed in all goodness, or the hopeless inheritors of an eternity of sin and misery. Such is *the inference* generally drawn from the statements of Scripture, although on what authority it is difficult to say. In the New Jerusalem of the Apocalypse, which is generally regarded as a symbolic representation of the abodes of the redeemed, *nothing* indeed can enter that defileth or partakes of falsity ; but it is equally plain that nations outside are spoken of as in process of healing by influences from within (comp. Rev. xxi. 22—27 and xxii. 1—7). Why may not the elect of God, perfected and purified, come in contact with evil, even as a good and wise physician is in constant contact with bodily disease ? Why may they not meet it with remedies, even as Christ met it on earth ? Are they not to be in all respects like Him ? Are they not to enter into His joy ?

But it is said all this supposes that Christ will again come to earth, and He is dishonoured by the supposition. Is it so ? Why, then, was John shown 'that great city, the holy Jerusalem, *descending out of heaven* from God ? and why was he made to hear the 'great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is *with men*, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people,

and God himself shall be with them, and be their God' ? (Rev. xxi. 1—10). To reject what Scripture says about Christ's return to earth on this ground is at the best but to fall into the well-meant but justly rebuked error of Peter, who could not endure the thought that Jesus, whom he had so loved and honoured, and whom he had just avowed to be the sent of God, 'should suffer many things and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests and scribes, and be killed,' even though after three days He should rise again (Mark viii. 29—33). He who stooped to suffer and to die will not account it any humiliation to dwell again among men as their prophet, priest, and king. With curious questions relating to that reign we have, neither here nor elsewhere, anything to do.

It is surely forgotten that the kingship of Christ is as *special* as His prophetic or priestly offices; that its manifestation is as needful to the redemption of man as His humiliation; that this special reign is in no degree interfered with or rendered unnecessary by the fact that as the Eternal Word He never was anything else but the king immortal. Is He not declared to be a royal priest, a priest after the order of Melchisedek, a priest upon a throne? Did He not, *as man*, die for insisting that He was a king? (John xix. 12). Did he not tell the high priest that hereafter he should see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in 'the clouds of heaven'? (Matt. xxvi. 64). Did He not reply to the question of Pilate, 'Art thou a king, then?' '*Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth*' (John xviii. 37). And did not the Roman unconsciously support that testimony when he insisted in inscribing upon the cross, 'Jesus of Nazareth, *the king of the Jews*'?

Again, what mean the words, 'I appoint unto you a kingdom, as *My Father hath appointed unto Me*'? (Luke xxii. 29). What kingdom is here meant? Certainly not that which was always the Lord's, as God over all. It is a kingdom *given* to Jesus the Christ as *the reward* of His sufferings in the redemption of mankind. It is given therefore to *the man* Christ Jesus. It is for the same reason a *human* kingdom, and will be ruled over by Christ on earth in a sinless, human, but spiritual body. As such He will be *the avenger* of His saints, a belief which has now all but perished from the earth, and a fact which gives signal point to His own solemn declaration, 'Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh (to do it), shall He find faith on the earth?' (Luke xviii. 7; see also 2 Thess. i. 7 and 2 Pet. iii. 7).

Further, if 'the kingdom' to which God has 'appointed' the Lord Jesus be not a *human* kingdom, and distinct from the everlasting dominion He always had, how can it be said *to come*? That which is already manifested has not yet to come. Again, if the kingdom be merely subjective, it is plain enough that the kingdom of David could be no type or earnest of it. No rational explanation, in short, *can* be given of what is said in Scripture regarding *the kingdom* which does not suppose, in some form or other, a visible dominion over a redeemed world by the Lord Jesus—a dominion in which all enemies are seen to be subdued, the wicked punished, and the righteous rewarded. That this will one day be manifested, and that Christ, then exercising all Divine attributes, will openly claim for Himself the homage of the universe, seems to me the clear teaching of Scripture.

Is He not therefore called the 'prince (or chief) of the

kings of *the earth*'? (Rev. i. 5). And is not this very title closely associated with the making of His saints 'kings and priests' when 'He comes with clouds, and every eye shall see Him' (ver. 6, 7). Is He not *in this sense* 'King of kings and Lord of lords'? And is the promised manifestation of this glory, and the promised share in it which His saints are to have, all to be put aside as fictitious and dramatic—mere figure of speech, intended to show that He still is what He always has been, 'God over all, blessed for evermore'? Might it not be added, Is all this to be ignored, in order that the world *as it is* and the Church *as it is* may be undisturbed—the one in its supposed gradual elevation, the other in its imaginary career of conquest?

There are those I know who, with the best intentions, have brought themselves to believe that the conversion of the world by the ministry of the word and by the influences of the Spirit is a far greater thing than its accomplishment would be by the introduction of any new supernatural agency; that a higher range of motives is brought into action by the simple presentation of Christ crucified than by references to a kingdom which is to be compensative, or in any sense the objective reward of excellence.

It *ought* to be enough to reply to such persons that perhaps they are seeking to be wise above that which is written; that Paul, while a Jew, was fully persuaded that any interference with the course of things then going on was out of the question; that it would be far more for the glory of God to gain the victory through the nation He himself had chosen and educated, than by any dispensation which would seem to imply the failure alike of plan and of promise; but that Paul, when a Christian, cast the objection aside as worthless, lived but to obtain the kingdom under Christ, and made it his last solemn prayer that the

Lord would preserve him to enjoy the reward which had ever been before him as the great aim of his life and the crowning reward of his sufferings (2 Tim. iv. 18). Why should we even seem to forget that the work of the Redeemer was always intended to include, and will not fail to include, *whatever* may be necessary to accomplish the complete destruction of the works of the devil; that it will embrace everything that may be needful to bring about the time when 'every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them' shall unite in the anthem, 'Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever' (Rev. v. 13).

(γ) Texts that speak of 'the kingdom' as a *compensation* for earthly suffering on Christ's account, or as a *reward* for eminent service.

The following may be mentioned:—'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for *theirs* is the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. v. 10). 'There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, *for the kingdom of God's sake*, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting' (Luke xviii. 29, 30). 'Who-soever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called *the least* in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called *great* in the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. v. 19). 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. The time is come 'that Thou shouldest give *reward* unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear Thy name, small and great' (Rev. xi. 15, 18).

That a *reward* of some kind is promised to the eminently faithful and devoted will scarcely be denied, however much the doctrine has in these later days been let slip. The prospect of it seems in Scripture to be set forth as a needful counteractive to the favourite but foolish notion that 'only a few simple truths,' two or three, so-called fundamental doctrines,—for such is the phraseology—are enough to carry men to heaven; *that* being to all who get there the highest possible happiness to which a creature can aspire. Justification by faith is commonly asserted to be the chief of these select doctrines—fundamental without doubt, —yet certainly not more true or more important than the kindred fact that believers, as well as others, shall receive 'according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad' (Rom. xiv. 12; 2 Cor. v. 9, 10). For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels, and then shall He *reward* every man *according to his works*' (Matt. xvi. 27).

The Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle to the Hebrews are distinguished by the earnestness of their exhortations on this head. The one summons believers to diligence in order to make their 'calling and election sure,' that so 'an entrance may be ministered unto them abundantly *into the everlasting kingdom* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' (2 Pet. i. 10, 11). The other charges them to give 'earnest heed to the things they had heard, *lest* at any time they should let them slip' (Heb. ii. 1); bidding them, like Moses 'have respect unto *the recompence of the reward*' (x. 35; xi. 26). What is *meant* by 'the reward' is distinctly stated. It is '*a kingdom that cannot be moved*' (xii. 28); a kingdom the introduction of which is connected with that last great shaking of heaven and earth, in which those things only that cannot be shaken shall remain (ver. 26—28).

This doctrine of *reward in the kingdom* is in Scripture always regarded as an eminently practical one. Nor is it ever deemed a slight thing that the teaching of it should become obscured. Paul prays that the Ephesians might have 'the eyes of their understanding' so enlightened that they might know what was '*the hope of Christ's calling*, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints' (Eph. i. 18). That *call* he tells the Thessalonians was unto God's '*kingdom and glory*' (1 Thess. ii. 12). Peter seems so conscious of the tendency of Christians to let this hope lapse, that he says, 'I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance' (2 Pet. i. 12).

Is it said, 'in remembrance' of what? The context supplies the answer. 'The everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' (ver. 11.) foreshadowed in that transfiguration of Jesus of which he had been an 'eye-witness' (ver. 16—18).

Men may not like to hear it, but it is nevertheless true, that it is possible for any one of us, whether a believer or not, to *barter* future glory for satisfactions that are present and earthly. The great day of account will alone show what frightful loss may then be suffered by Christian men, who, whether in trade or in the ministry, have stifled their convictions, or *evaded the formation of any*, by turning away from the consideration of subjects which they *ought* to have investigated, simply *lest* inconvenient conclusions should be forced upon them. Alas! there are yet but too many ways in which the birthright may be sold for a mess of pottage. 'They which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize.' The self-indulgent, from the very

nature of the case, cannot be victors in a struggle, one main condition of which is that a man shall be 'temperate in all things,' and 'keep the flesh'—not the passions merely, but all worldly ambitions—'under subjection' (1 Cor. ix. 24—27). 'I press toward the mark,' says Paul to the Philippians 'for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus' (Phil. iii. 14), that calling being, as we have already seen, to God's *kingdom and glory* (1 Thess. ii. 12).

It was to impress this doctrine of reward to the believer in 'the kingdom,' and of the judgment that there awaits him, according to his works, that several of the parables were addressed to the disciples. 'The kingdom of heaven,' says the Lord, is the coming of that time when he that has not forgiven others shall find that his own forgiveness is withheld or revoked (Matt. xviii. 23—35). Again; 'the kingdom of heaven' is that return of the Lord which brings with it an abundant entrance to the watchful, but exclusion to those whose faith has failed (xxv. 1—13). Again, it is the period when each must give an account of that which has been entrusted to him; when the faithful over few things shall be made ruler over many things; and when the slothful and repining shall be cast out (xxv. 14—28).

The connection of this reward with *suffering* for Christ is strikingly taught by Paul when he says, 'I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and *the fellowship of his sufferings*, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead,'—evidently referring to that resurrection which is the immediate precursor of the kingdom. He warns the Corinthians that it is quite possible to build upon the good foundation, and yet find, in the day when the true character of all work shall be made manifest, that instead of receiving

a reward, they may suffer loss, even though they themselves should be 'saved;' yet 'so as by fire' (1 Cor. iii. 12—15). 'We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God' (Acts xiv. 22).

Something, too, is surely to be learned from the fact that the *warnings* of the New Testament are nearly all addressed *to believers*; some of them, no doubt, to persons but partially emancipated from their old heathen habits, such as 1 Cor. vi. 9; Eph. v. 5—7; Gal. v. 19—21; but others to disciples who had enjoyed all the advantages of Jewish culture, and who thought themselves as little liable to fall away as we do: *e. g.*, Matt. v. 29, 30; Mark ix. 45—50. It is to *the disciples* the Lord says, 'Enter ye in at the strait gate.' 'Not every one that saith unto Me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven' (Matt. vii. 13—21).

Need it be said that if the kingdom is the *reward* of service, and a *compensation* for suffering, it must be something very different from the Christian dispensation, from the Church of Christ, or from the popular idea of heaven, if any idea can be attached to what is generally so vague a conception.

(8) Texts that refer to *the time when the kingdom will be manifested*,—when it is to commence, and when to terminate.

Of the day or hour of its appearance nothing is of course said. It is 'not given' to man 'to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power' (Acts i. 7). But we may perhaps find something that will enable us to decide whether 'the kingdom' is present or future,—of this world (or age) or of one yet to come?

On this point Scripture gives no uncertain sound, since the kingdom is *there* always spoken of as *an inheritance*,

and not as a present possession. '*My kingdom is not of this world or age*' (John xviii. 36). 'Flesh and blood cannot *inherit* the kingdom of God' (1 Cor. xv. 50);—a statement which is connected by the Apostle with the Resurrection. Again, he prays that God may *preserve* him 'unto his heavenly kingdom' (2 Tim. iv. 18). The unrighteous, we are told, 'shall not *inherit* the kingdom of God' (1 Cor. vi. 9—10). No such person 'hath any *inheritance*' in the kingdom of Christ and of God' (Ephes. v. 5). The meek 'shall *inherit* the earth' (Matt. v. 5). The poor of this world, rich in faith, are '*the heirs* of the kingdom' (Jas. ii. 5). The Ephesian elders are commended to God who is able to give them '*an inheritance* among all them that are sanctified,'—made holy and set apart for service (comp. Acts xx. 25, and ver. 32). To those on His right hand the Lord says, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, *inherit* the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' (Matt. xxv. 34).

Further, all the prophets *are to be in it* (Luke xiii. 28), and so are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matt. viii. 11). With His apostles, Christ will now again 'drink of the fruit of the vine' (Luke xxii. 18), for then will the pass-over 'be fulfilled in the kingdom of God,' and the eternal safety of the redeemed be consummated. Entering *there*, all rise to a spiritual dignity which eclipses at once their earthly distinctions; for 'he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the greatest of Prophets among mankind (Luke vii. 28).

To pretend that the kingdom spoken of in these passages is the Christian dispensation is ridiculous. To say that they simply mean 'heaven' is certainly more plausible. But in this case it is impossible to avoid asking, 'What is meant by heaven?' Is it nothing more than what has

been called the 'beatific vision?' Is it simply a consciousness of existence in the presence of God? Is it nothing more than the paradise of the soul? What, then, becomes of the resurrection of the body? Is no distinction to be drawn between the state of man in Hades or the invisible immediately after death, and that into which he is to enter after the sounding of the last trumpet? In what sense is the abode of God and of the holy angels called the kingdom? When the Lord teaches his disciples to pray, 'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done *on earth* as in heaven,' does He intend to intimate that heaven and the kingdom are the same thing? That is impossible. When He says, 'The meek shall *inherit the earth*,' does He simply mean that they shall be taken to heaven when they die? This can scarcely be imagined. Again, the expression, 'We shall *reign on the earth*,' cannot merely mean that at the resurrection the persons spoken of should be happy? Such a supposition is to me absurd. Nor is it less so to affirm, as many do, that the saints are *now* reigning; that the meek are *now* inheriting the earth; that the will of God is now done on earth as in heaven.

It may indeed be said,—If the kingdom is to be regarded as *future*, how are we to understand such a passage as that in the Epistle to the Colossians, where believers are called upon to give thanks to God who '*hath translated*' them 'into the kingdom of His dear Son' (Coloss. i. 13), or that in the Apocalypse where Christ is said to *have already made* believers kings and priests (Rev. i. 6).

Surely it is not necessary to observe that the persons said to be 'translated' into the kingdom are *the same* persons who in the preceding verse give thanks unto the Father who hath made them 'meet to be partakers of the *inheritance* of the saints in light;' that they were in the kingdom in

the same sense that the Ephesians while *on earth* were blessed with all spiritual blessings *in heavenly* places (Ephes. i. 3),—the same sense in which the Corinthians are said to be already saved (1 Cor. i. 18).

That there is a sense in which the kingdom may be spoken of, not only as present, but as actually possessed, is certain. For the kingdom is (already) the Lord's, and since *all* things are given to true Christians, they have the kingdom just as they already have 'eternal life.' 'God,' says the apostle John, '*hath given* to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son, (1 John v. 11). Nevertheless, this very life is that of which the justified are only '*made heirs according to hope*' (Tit. iii. 7). Again, granting that it was already actually upon earth in the person of its Lord when the disciples received from His own lips the model of all prayer, it still remains true, and is surely significant, that the supplication they are directed to present is *not*, 'Let thy kingdom grow and increase in our hearts or in the world,' but 'Let thy kingdom *come*, and let thy will be done *on earth* as in heaven.'

The passage in the Apocalypse which speaks of believers as already kings and priests is explained on the same principles, and *stated* to be *rightly* so explained by a parallel text only three verses further on, 'Thou *hast made* us unto our God kings and priests, and *we shall reign* on the earth' * (Rev. v. 10); the qualification is present; the reign is future.

* Some MSS. read 'we reign,' not 'shall reign,' and commentators apply the text to the Church as even now, in Christ her head, reigning on the earth. But authorities differ as to the reading; while chap. ii. 26, 27, seems to justify the English version. It is difficult to see how it could be said of the Church at one and the same time, 'she is reigning on the earth,' when she, or rather the apostles, were 'made as the filth of the world, and the *offscouring* of all things' (1 Cor. iv. 13).

Of the *commencement* of the kingdom,—so far as its *preliminary* manifestation among men is concerned,—at the second advent of the Lord, we shall have hereafter to speak. It is said that it will be '*nigh at hand*' only when 'the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled;' when violent convulsions and signs in the heavenly bodies shall fill men with fear, and when the Son of man shall be seen 'coming in a cloud with power and great glory.' When these things come to pass, 'the kingdom of God is nigh at hand' (Luke xxi. 24—31). When the Pharisees asked 'when the kingdom of God should come, the answer was, 'It cometh not with observation, (for it is even now among you), nor by gradual development, but suddenly as the 'lightning,' unexpectedly as 'the flood' (Luke xvii. 20—28).

Of its *termination*—so far as any of its objects are temporary—we are not left in doubt. It *ends*, when all the purposes for which it was set up are accomplished,—but not before. *Then* will it be presented to the Father *as complete*; presented, but not abandoned; completed, but neither destroyed nor deserted by its Lord. Then, when Christ hath put all things under His feet, shall the kingdom be presented to the Father, and the 'Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all' (1 Cor. xv. 28). But the *duration* of the kingdom is not thus limited, for it is an everlasting kingdom (2 Pet. i. 11), and of it there shall be no end (Luke i. 33; see also Psa. cxlv. 13, and Dan. ii. 44).

(ε) Texts that *limit* the inheritance to the 'chosen of God.'

Limitation is of course necessarily *implied* in every text that speaks of the kingdom as a special reward. But it is also *expressed* in such passages as, 'Fear not, *little flock*, for

it is your Father's good pleasure to *give you the kingdom*' (Luke xii. 32); and again, 'Many be called, but few chosen' (Matt. xx. 16), for this passage concludes the parable which commences, 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder;' the object of that parable is to show that the kingdom should be given to those who were called late as well as to those who were called early—to the heathen as well as to the Jew.

Limitation is also taught in the parable of the marriage feast, to which again the kingdom of heaven is likened. The call of the Jew to that great festival is first depicted, and then that of the Gentile; but it is continued only till the house is full, and the wedding furnished with guests (Matt. xxii. 1—10). This parable, too, like the previous one, ends with the declaration that 'many are called, but few are chosen.'

Every text by which the doctrine of election is usually supported might also here be quoted. For *in Scripture* election is not what it is usually represented to be, a gracious purpose of which reprobation is the counterpart,—'an eternal and immutable decree' by which God has 'fore-ordained' all but the elect 'to be punished with unspeakable torments, both of body and soul, with the devil and his angels for ever' ('Assemb. Cat.' 99, 13, and 89),—but to office in the kingdom, and to service for the many. When the two sons of Zebedee ask to sit, the one on the right hand of Christ, and the other on the left *in the kingdom*, the answer is, 'It shall be given to them *for whom it is prepared* of my Father' (Matt. xx. 21—23). The 'calling and *election* to be made sure' is 'into the *everlasting kingdom* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' (2 Pet. i. 10—11); and they who are 'chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world' are so chosen

‘that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in the heavens’ (*marg.*, in the invisible world), ‘and which are on earth, even in Him’ (Ephes. i. 4—10).

The limitation in question is further taught by our Lord himself in the course He pursued in relation to the proclamation of the kingdom when He was on earth. *In the first instance* it was preached by Him to the elect nation without exception. For, ‘after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the good news’ (Mark i. 14—15). On another occasion also when the people followed Him, ‘He received them, and spake unto them *of the kingdom of God*’ (Luke ix. 11). In the latter part of His ministry this doctrine is kept back from the multitude, and taught only to the prepared.

Further, it is equally plain that the doctrine, *when first preached*,—whatever misapprehension might have mingled,—was gladly accepted by all classes. ‘The Law and the Prophets,’ says Jesus to the Pharisees, ‘were until John;’ for, until the appearance of the Baptist they alone were to be regarded. But, he adds, ‘since that time *the kingdom of God* is preached and every man presseth into it,—evidently referring to the eagerness of the people to enter therein. *Then* it was that ‘the kingdom of Heaven suffered violence, and the violent took it by force.’ The lawlessness which led the people, in spite of their rulers, to accept gladly the happy tidings was justified, whatever hindrances might be thrown in their way by those who sat in Moses’ seat. That *some did* hinder men from listening to those who preached it, we know from the condemnation they incurred. ‘Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees,

hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in' (Matt. xxiii. 13).

This state of things, however, did not last. The kingdom itself was misunderstood and the doctrine perverted. The true nature of it was lost sight of in eagerness to enjoy present satisfactions. It was on this account that the disciples were so often forbidden to spread abroad anything that was likely to promote these misconceptions. Again and again Jesus retires from the crowds who would willingly have made him their king, and conceals rather than proclaims many signs of his greatness.

For the same reason He soon ceases to preach the kingdom to the multitude,—they were not in a fit condition of mind for its reception. 'To you' (the apostles), says the Lord, 'it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given' (Matt. xiii. 11—15). Therefore to the multitude the doctrine was now taught only in parables, for it involved matters 'which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world' (Matt. xiii. 35). The *fact* of limitation is asserted; the reason given is, 'they do not understand.' To him *that hath* can higher truth only be presented with advantage.* In harmony with these proceedings all teaching regarding the kingdom is now addressed only to an instructed company.

To the Gentiles, when converted, the doctrine is preached *without reserve*; partly, no doubt, because they were an elect body, and partly because they had no pre-conceptions, like the Jews, which were likely to lead them astray. St. Paul says to all his Thessalonian converts,—'Walk worthy of God, *who hath called you to his kingdom and glory*' (1 Thess. ii. 12). At Colosse, too, he speaks of all those

* For further remarks on this subject, see chap. ii.

who were with him as 'fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God,' although but few had been a comfort to him. (Col. iv. 11). All these, however, had to make their 'calling and election to the kingdom *sure*.'

Distinctions of this kind are not unknown to the Old Testament. Malachi speaks of some as the Lord's 'jewels,' or, as the margin reads, '*special treasure*' (iii. 17), terms which from their very nature cannot apply to all who are numbered among the people of God, but must obviously be confined to such as will '*shine as the stars*, for ever and ever' (Dan. xii. 3). It is of 'Life' in this higher sense that the Lord says '*Few there be that find it*' (Matt. vii. 14). That 'life' and 'the kingdom' mean the same thing,—that the terms are used interchangeably is, as has been already observed, evident from comparing Mark ix. 45 with ver. 47. In the one it is said, 'better for thee to enter *halt into life*;' in the other it is, 'to enter *into the kingdom of God*.' In Mark x. 17, 'eternal life' is in the 23rd verse 'the kingdom of God.'

(ζ) Texts which seem to throw at least a side-light on *the object* of the kingdom.

A *special* object it must have, or it would not have been appointed of the Father. Nor would the Lord Jesus have further 'appointed' (Luke xxii. 29) the same kingdom to his disciples, had not its end been one which they could advance, and its work one in which they could share.

We have already seen that the exaltation of Christ as *King*, on the very earth where he before appeared in great humility, would be but the fulfilment of Divine Prophecy; and we have not indistinctly intimated a belief that 'the kingdom' is the appointed agency for bringing about the final triumph of the Redeemer in the universal subjection

of all things to Himself.* The point to be established is the accordance of this persuasion with the revelations of Holy Writ.

Assuming, which may certainly be done, that there is but one name given under heaven whereby men can be saved; and further, that salvation is in all cases *from sin*, —a deliverance effected not by mere power, or by the exercise of any mechanical force, but by moral agencies; by the formation of holy character; by such an experimental acquaintance with good and evil as is involved in the possession of sufficient freedom to love God *voluntarily*, and to choose Him as our chief good, it follows almost of necessity, that in some world or other, and by processes not so very dissimilar to those that are now going on upon the earth, *all* rational and intelligent beings who are to be delivered from the power of evil, and blessed with the divine favour, must be trained and taught in the way of godliness, even after they have been led to 'look on Him whom they have pierced,' and sincerely grieved over their past ingratitude and impenitence.

Now if this be so, and if, in addition to the wilfully impenitent, the myriads who have passed away in infancy, in idiocy, or in an ignorance so dense as to be worse than perpetual childhood, are ever to be brought nigh, it certainly seems reasonable to suppose that any work *to be effected on*

* The probability that *some* will be finally lost, whatever that may imply, seems to be an inevitable conclusion from certain passages in Scripture. Perhaps also from the very nature of intelligent existence and of human responsibility. It is at least *an unauthorized* conclusion to insist that no man can or will utterly destroy himself. But it ill becomes us to conclude that these will be 'the many,' or that when Christ rejoices over the thousands of the redeemed, Satan and his hosts will respond with boasts of the tens of thousands they have for ever ruined. It cannot be so if 'as sin hath abounded, grace shall *much more* abound.'

them of an educational or elevating character, should be accomplished by methods not materially differing from those that are at present employed, viz., by faith in Christ, by the work of the Holy Spirit, and by the teaching of persons who, having themselves experimentally known the bitterness of disobedience, are, of all others, best fitted to win wanderers to the fold of the Redeemer. The *temporary* character of the kingdom in one aspect, and its *eternity* in another, justify the supposition that it is the agency by which those who are *untouched* by the gospel here will be, as a rule, brought in.

How powerful a means for the accomplishment of this end PERFECT GOVERNMENT and INFALLIBLE TEACHING would be it is perhaps impossible for us to estimate. The *want* is acknowledged in the ambitious pretences of so-called Churches. The *wonder* is, not that it shall be one day given, but that it ever should have been withheld. And yet one can scarcely see how it *could* have been obtained (on the supposition that men and not angels are to be employed in the elevation of the race) without humanity being first subjected to a probation, too severe for the multitude, yet adapted to develop *in the few* qualities which will enable them, as fellow-sinners, to raise and educate the fallen.

Now the teachers of truth are but as one to a vast multitude. *Then* they will be multiplied to the full extent necessary to bring obligation home to every child of Adam. The work of the Holy Spirit will still be what it has been in past ages—the source of all goodness, without any interference with the responsibility of man; *never* the superseder of ordinary influences; *al ways* the interpreter of our best desires, and the unailing giver of strength to all who have become conscious of their weakness. Nor is there in this process of recovery anything beyond the realization of God's

original design in creating man in His own image, and making him the lord of all by which he is surrounded. What results will follow this contact of absolute truth and beneficial rule with men who have on earth been little better than the victims of tyranny, of ignorance, and of mistake, is known only to Him who can weigh spirits, who always judges justly, and who is alone capable of deciding what is and what is not a righteous probation for the creature He has made. May we not then say,—

“ This earth is but for learning and for training ;
 Earth's highest work but such as children do :
 The workmen here their priceless skill are gaining ;
 The true life-work is yonder, out of view ” ?

Then, as Mr. Isaac Taylor has so forcibly expressed it in his ‘ Physical Theory of Another Life,’ will ‘ all the practical skill we acquire in managing affairs ; all the versatility, the sagacity, the calculation of chances, the patience and assiduity, the promptitude and facility, as well as the higher virtues which we are learning every day, find scope in a world such as is rationally anticipated when we think of heaven (or rather the kingdom) as the stage of life that is next to follow the discipline of earth.

‘ With no other indication of the destinies of the universe than what may be furnished by the swelling emotions of pity that are now working, pent up in tender and noble hearts, we should hardly fear to err in assuming that a sphere will at length open upon such spirits wherein they shall find millions needing to be governed, taught, rescued, and *led forward from a worse to a better, or from a lower to a higher stage of life.* It is quite as easy to suppose that the Creator should have imparted to human nature the notion and the desire of immortality, without intending to realize it, as that He should have instilled a boundless

benevolence, which is to have no more opportunity to express itself than it may chance to meet with in the present state.'

The supposition, therefore, that God intends in this way to fulfil His original design and to fill the earth with a high, social, and sinless community—a state of things beautifully depicted by Dr. Chalmers in his sermon on the new earth,—is by no means wild or extravagant. The only hindrance to its reception is the utterly unsupported notion that *every man* at death is either perfectly blest or hopelessly lost; that no distinction can be drawn between the glorified and the saved; that all the saved are deified, all the lost given to the devil; that in the world to come he who is not in the closest communion with Christ must inevitably be identified with Satan.

It is difficult to see on what this belief is based. Certainly it finds no support in Scripture, while it is directly opposed to all the facts of this present life. *Here* unquestionably we see, not only men who *love* evil, and men who hate and successfully *resist* evil, but also men—by far the great majority of the race—who with every variety of guilt in so doing, *succumb* to it, yield to temptation, and with more or less struggle and regret are overcome by it. These are the *great facts of life*. What right have we to assume that nothing corresponding to this state of things will exist hereafter? Is nothing to be learned from the circumstance that man was placed on earth *in order that he might be tempted?* for evil was in existence, and in this world of ours too, before Adam was. Is it possible to suppose that under such a state of things—under the frequently mysterious conditions of human existence, the great masses of mankind will be permitted to fall for ever under the sway of the great enemy?

H

But we are not left to suppositions. The writings of Moses and the prophets *distinctly teach* us that the existence of the kingdom involves the restoration of the race. Isaiah (and Paul may be regarded as in this case his interpreter) clearly connects with the resurrection the removal of the veil that has so long been over all nations (compare Isa. xxv. 7, 8 with 1 Cor. xv. 54). Again, speaking of the same period, Jeremiah says, Then shall 'the meek' be named 'the priests of the Lord;' and Isaiah, Judah shall be 'a crown of glory and a royal diadem in the hand of the Lord;' the Gentiles (heathen) 'shall see God's righteousness, and all kings his glory' (Isa. lxii. 2, 3). It is on the words of this prophet (Isa. lxi. 1) that our Lord, in the synagogue of Nazareth founded that remarkable discourse which compelled those who heard it *to wonder* at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth' (Luke iv. 16—22). Peter and John, in like manner, connect the return of Christ with 'the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began' (Acts iii. 21). *Until* that hour comes, 'the heavens must receive' the Lord, and 'the times of refreshing from His presence' be delayed.

Obstacles, to us insuperable, naturally suggest themselves in reference to the literal restoration of ancient nations, and still more to their re-organization in cities or in communities. Nor should we have imagined such a thing to be possible but for the language of the prophets, and the still more striking declarations of our Lord, who so frequently speaks of the judgment of cities *as such*. Sodom, Gomorrah, Nineveh, Bethsaida, Chorazin, Tyre, Sidon are all spoken of as if they were communities intended to have an hereafter. It is this and this alone which leads us to contemplate such a *possibility*, and if in accepting it we find

ourselves like men groping in the dark, we must be content to know that everything relating to God is more or less obscure, and that 'the more we *advance* in any direction, the nearer we reach that point where a noble dimness begins.'

The difficulty, wherever it may lie, belongs, however, rather to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and to the fact of identity after death, than to any view about future restoration. The conception of a new individual existence elsewhere is not strange to us, but the re-constitution of human society, the renewal of our surroundings, so to speak, is almost beyond belief. Yet this seems to be revealed, and to be involved in the future recognition and fellowship of those who have formed our characters here. A literal return of Egypt, Assyria, or even Israel to their original abodes may not take place, and yet something equivalent thereto may be brought about in that great future of which we know so little, by agencies altogether beyond our knowledge or power of imagination.

(η) Texts which appear to foreshadow *the mode* of existence in 'the kingdom,'—the conditions, so to speak, under which it is to be manifested.

And here it must be remembered that *the mode* of all existence after death is, for wise reasons, in great measure concealed from us. Who can tell us anything about what is popularly called Heaven? We may lawfully indulge in our 'physical theories of another life,' but however ingenious or improving may be the treatment, we are obliged to confess them but theories after all. Men of old said,—perhaps tauntingly,—when told of the resurrection, 'With what bodies do they come?' Paul simply replies, 'God giveth to every seed his own body.' There are in the resurrection, 'celestial' bodies and 'bodies terrestrial.' Let

us not therefore expect too much on this head, or despise what is left on record because it is but little.

Probably only *three* passages in Scripture are to be found which throw light on *the mode of existence* which will belong to those who inherit the kingdom.

The *first* is that which records the Transfiguration, when 'the fashion of the countenance' of the Lord was 'altered,' and 'His raiment was white and glistening,' and when Moses and Elias appeared 'in glory.' In this case the ancient prophets were at once recognized by Peter and James and John, who heard them speak, and knew what they were speaking about; and who, instead of being terrified by the vision, cried, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here. If Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias' (Matt. xvii. 1—5). Have we not here 'bodies celestial' and bodies 'terrestrial'? The appearance of Moses and Elias *in glory* naturally suggests that 'the righteous will *shine forth as the sun* in the kingdom of their Father' (Matt. xiii. 43), and that in the resurrection, that which is 'sown a natural body shall be raised a spiritual body' (1 Cor. xv. 44).

The fact that this event took place only 'about an eight days after' Jesus had said to his disciples, 'There be some standing here which shall not taste of death *till they have seen the kingdom of God,*' has naturally led many to suppose that the occurrence was intended to throw light on that subject. And if this was the case, how beautiful is that light! What a charm it casts round the invisible! Where is the man, who, contemplating it with loving faith, can fail to enter into the exclamation, 'Lord, it is good to be here'? What a disclosure of the glory of that kingdom which the world was rejecting in rejecting Christ!

The *second* passage, or rather class of passages, are those

which relate to the various appearances of Jesus to the disciples during the time that elapsed between His resurrection and ascension. He appears to Mary, she supposing Him to be the gardener (John xx. 15); to the disciples when gathered together, as He was previously known to them, showing them His hands and His feet, and imparting to them new and wondrous powers (ver. 19, 23). Again, when Thomas is present, He suffers him to touch His wounds in order that the doubting apostle might be fully convinced of the reality of his Master's presence (ver. 27). Once more, at the Sea of Tiberias, He shows Himself to them, eats with them, comforts and restores the fallen Peter, and works a miracle on their behalf (xxi. 4—14). Finally he was seen of 'above five hundred brethren at once' (1 Cor. xv. 6).

These occurrences all seem to bear on *the mode* of existence in the kingdom, inasmuch as in each case Christ appears in the resurrection body, sometimes at first unknown, but soon well known. Freed from the ordinary conditions of humanity, Jesus meets and mingles among men in the flesh without any apparent difficulty. The body 'celestial,' and the bodies 'terrestrial' have profitable communion. Is not this too, in its degree, a foreshadowing of what will be in the future?

The *third* passage is that which represents the New Jerusalem as coming down from heaven, to be the brilliant abode of the exalted Redeemer and of His saints on earth. 'Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God' (Rev. xxi. 2, 3).

This city is soon after called 'the Bride, the Lamb's wife' (ver. 9, 10). *Within* it is everything that is glorious

and adapted to celestial bodies. *Without* are 'nations' who walk in the light of it, and 'kings of the earth' who 'bring their glory and honour into it' (ver. 23, 24). These last are obviously 'terrestrial.' *Within the city* is 'the tree of life,' bearing its fruits every month. *Without the city* are persons in process of being healed by the leaves of the mystic fruit-bearer (xxii. 2).

This remarkable juxtaposition of things earthly and things heavenly has led many to regard the whole description as figurative. And this, in one sense, it doubtless is. But does it therefore teach us nothing regarding the future life? Is any one justified in saying, as so many do, that the New Jerusalem represents the happiness of the redeemed in heaven, and that the nations outside prefigure men who are either now receiving spiritual benefit from the church on earth, or will do so during the millennium? Interpretations of this character are as arbitrary as they are ill-founded, since they ignore altogether the fact that the symbolic scene depicts what is supposed to exist *after* the final judgment; after Death and Hades have been cast into the Lake of Fire; and in connection with the advent of a new heaven and a new earth. Better abandon the book of the Apocalypse altogether than treat it thus.

It has been said that any change in the conditions of humanity, if men are to exist on earth, cannot reasonably be expected; that amid varying dispensations these have always remained the same; that even the flood was not allowed to interfere with this fixed order; although the difference between a life extending to nearly a thousand years and one rarely indeed reaching a hundred, must, one would think, be very great.

But why should fixity be assumed? Are not changes always going on? Is not death every day introducing

myriads to an altogether new order of existence? And since all these are one day to rise again and to exist somewhere or other *in humanity*, and to receive according to the deeds done in the body, identity must in some form or another necessarily be preserved; in which case the difficulty is the same whether the place of abode be on earth or elsewhere.

(θ) Texts which connect 'the kingdom' with the second advent, with a partial judgment of quick and dead, and with the binding of Satan for a thousand years.

The following are of this character. 'When thou makest a feast,' said our Lord to the Pharisee who invited him to share his hospitality, 'call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind. Thou shalt be recompensed *at the resurrection of the just.*' And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread *in the kingdom of God* (Luke xiv. 14, 15). In this passage the kingdom, the resurrection of the just, and the recompence of love are all bound up together and cannot be separated by any reverential student of the word of God.

Other passages are equally significant. The little flock to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom are bidden, not only to seek it, and to give up everything earthly for it,—they are *to wait for their Lord.* 'Blessed,' He says, 'are those servants whom the Lord *when He cometh shall find watching*' (Luke xii. 31—40).

Almost every apostle in turn dwells on the coming of Christ as the Christian's great hope. Paul bids the Corinthians 'come behind in no gift, *waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*' (1 Cor. i. 7). To the Philippians he writes, 'Our conversation is in heaven, *from whence also we look for the Saviour*' (Phil. iii. 20, 21). He congratulates

the Thessalonians on having 'turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for *His Son from heaven*' (1 Thess. i. 9, 10). To *Titus* he says, 'The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared, teaching us to live *looking for that blessed hope* and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ' (Titus ii. 12, 13). The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, 'Yet a little while, and *He that shall come will come*, and will not tarry' (Heb. x. 36, 37). James writes, 'Be patient, therefore, brethren, *unto the coming of the Lord*. Stablish your hearts, *for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh*' (Jas. v. 7, 8). Peter calls on those whom he addresses thus,—'Hope to the end for the grace that is *to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*' (1 Pet. i. 13); and John says, '*When He shall appear*, we shall be like Him' (1 John iii. 2).

With this 'coming' it is that *reward* is everywhere connected '*When the chief Shepherd shall appear*,' says Peter to the elders, 'ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away' (1 Pet. v. 4). Paul tells Timothy that 'there is laid up for him *a crown* of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give him *at that day*' (2 Tim. iv. 8).

That the Lord Jesus shall (one day) be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God (2 Thess. i. 7, 8), we are not inclined to dispute; but that any kingdom shall then be revealed, the object of which is the restoration of myriads, seems to the great mass of Christians utterly unbelievable. Is it, as we sometimes say, that they think it *too good to be true?* or is it that, like the Jews of old, they cannot bear the thought that those who have never belonged *to them* should at last be found to have belonged to God?

It is to those who hold fast *till He come* that Christ will give 'power over the nations' (Rev. ii. 25, 26). In the institution of the supper the two things expressly connected are the coming of the Lord and the kingdom (comp. 1 Cor. xi. 26 with Mark xiv. 22—25). Paul invariably unites them. 'I charge thee,' he says to Timothy, 'before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead *at His appearing and His kingdom*' (2 Tim. iv. 1).

That the kingdom cannot come till the Lord returns He has himself distinctly taught us. It was because the disciples 'thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear' that He spake the parable of the nobleman who went into a far country '*to receive for himself a kingdom and to return,*' bidding his servants occupy till he came (Luke xix. 12).

Thus far all is clear. But respecting the connection which subsists between this kingdom and the 'thousand years' of the Apocalypse it is not so easy to speak; for, while *much* has been written by students of prophecy regarding this period, *very little* is said in Scripture about it.

What *is* said seems to amount to this: that after a manifestation of Christ, and a series of fearful judgments, ending in the destruction of the last form of Antichrist, Satan will be *bound* for a lengthened but limited period,—by which is probably meant that he will be so restrained as to be unable to act on men as he had formerly done; that those who, during the reign of Antichrist, had laid down their lives rather than acknowledge his supremacy, will then be raised from the dead and live and reign with Christ a thousand years (Rev. xx. 4). But under what conditions this rule will be carried on is not stated.

This is about all that is directly recorded regarding what

is commonly called 'the millennium;' and it certainly seems little on which to build. All that can fairly be inferred is that then Christ will rule the world as a conqueror; that those of His people who have overcome and kept His works unto the end will with him enjoy 'power over the nations,' and as *preliminary* to the reign of love, 'rule them with a rod of iron' (Rev. ii. 26). Everything points to *force*, for all outward and violent manifestations of evil will then be repressed by superior power. This seems to be the period spoken of by the prophet when plagues shall rest on all the nations that come not up to worship at Jerusalem (Zech. xiv. 19). The futile attack on that city when Satan is loosed, indicates that it had been the centre of power during the time of his depression.

The main difference between the millennium and the kingdom is, that during the one (the thousand years) *the persons acted upon* are men in the flesh, multiplying and dying as men do now, and apparently subject to the same limitations—the only risen persons *here named* are the martyrs under the last Antichrist, although other passages *extend* the number of those who are to rule the world under Christ.

During this period war is to cease, and swords to be beaten into ploughshares, but it is *then* also that Christ will '*rebuke many people*' and judge among the nations (Isa. ii. 4; Micah iv. 3). This *gradual* restoration of humanity is in perfect harmony with all God's dealings towards us. The Divine Being—so far, at least, as we know—has never yet wrought any great moral work instantaneously. Conversion in an individual (as distinguished from regeneration, which is a secret process and imparted like life) may sometimes seem to us instantaneous, but this is only because we have been unable to observe the secret processes which have preceded.

The plant lives *to us* only when it appears above the soil; it has, in fact, long been living in the earth. Even from analogy we might be led to expect a preparatory period, like that of the millennium.

What may be the precise position of the Jews during this period is by no means clear; but there seems reason to believe they will be *nationally* higher than any other people, because they will sooner *nationally* turn to Christ. They are the only people at the present day who wait (however darkly) for a manifestation from heaven. With promises such as those which are recorded by Isaiah (lx.) they may well look forward to a glorious future, when 'the Redeemer shall come to Zion and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob' (Isa. lix. 20).

It would seem, therefore, that this period is rather the intermediate link between us and the kingdom, properly so called, than the kingdom itself. Perhaps it is what St. Paul calls 'the dispensation of the fulness of times.' Be this, however, as it may, it is by the advent of Christ *irrevocably united* with the everlasting kingdom. The attempt to overthrow Christ's rule by Gog and Magog only ends, in accordance with the prediction of Ezekiel (xxxviii., xxxix.), in the utter destruction of all opposing power by the direct interference of God and the introduction of the New Jerusalem,* when 'the kingdom' regarded as the final triumph of the Redeemer may properly be said to commence.

The great conflagration will then have taken place; the 'new earth' will have emerged from the ruins of the old; the great white throne will have appeared; earth and sea

* The 'New Jerusalem' is not said to come down from God out of heaven until the last judgment has taken place, and the new heaven and new earth have appeared. During the millennium 'the beloved city' is in existence, and the holy ones are *encamped* (Rev. xx. 9).

will alike have given up their dead, and the general judgment will have passed. On the new earth are now the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, and outside their glorious abode the risen nations in process of healing. Among these may be multitudes who have died during the thousand years. The millennium is temporary and preliminary. The kingdom is permanent. The *first* ends with the destruction of enemies in active opposition; the *last* is complete only when every heart has become consecrated to the service of the Lord.

We have now only to notice the *seven parables* which relate to the 'mysteries' of the kingdom (Matt. xiii. 11); to the progress the doctrine would make in the world; the mixed character of those who would profess to embrace it; and the separation which will eventually take place between the good and the bad.

In the *first* parable the proclamation of the kingdom, or 'the word of the kingdom,' is compared to seed sown in a field, some of it incidentally falling on the roadside among stones or among thorns; and the teaching is, that the doctrine will be received with advantage only when it falls on prepared hearts, on minds more or less instructed in the things of God; for whosoever *hath* to him shall be given (Matt. xiii. 3—23).

The *second* teaches that the doctrine would soon be perverted; tares would be sown by its side, and grow up amid the wheat; a false kingdom would arise claiming to be the true kingdom; error would be so cunningly intermingled with the truth, that entire separation would be impossible before the great day of account (ver. 24—30).

The *third* indicates that although at first but a small and unnoticed seed, the 'word of the kingdom,' mixed in cha-

acter, at once true and false, earthly and heavenly, would, in process of time, become a great tree, extending itself until the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof (ver. 31, 32).

The *fourth* compares it to leaven *hid* in measures of meal, where it works secretly until it has permeated all that was intended to be leavened thereby (ver. 33). Whether leaven *necessarily* implies an evil influence, because it is elsewhere used in that sense, *e. g.*, 'the leaven of Herod,' the 'leaven of the Pharisees,' may be doubtful. But whether the figure be so interpreted or not is of little consequence. The teaching is in each case the same, indicating delay, extension, and mixture.

The *fifth* and *sixth* teach that the true doctrine of the kingdom would *by some* be recognised as great treasure, and as a goodly pearl, for the possession of which everything else would be willingly given up (ver. 44—46).

The *last* informs us that, like a net cast into the sea, the doctrine of the kingdom should gather of every kind, the good being eventually gathered in, the bad cast away (ver. 47—50).

Whether the '*furnace of fire*' (ver. 50) is to be regarded as equivalent to the 'lake of fire' and 'second death' is questionable. Nothing is said which identifies the two. The phrase only occurs in the New Testament here, and appears to be borrowed from the Old, where it is used to signify a state of severe trial and discipline. 'The Lord brought you forth out of *the iron furnace*, even out of Egypt' (Deut. iv. 20; 1 Kings viii. 51; Jer. xi. 4). Isaiah speaks of the *furnace of affliction* (xlviii. 10); and Ezekiel enlarges on the figure at some length (Ezek. xxii. 18—22). The punishment, too, whatever it may be, takes place at *the end of the age*, and before the last judgment. The

'children of the kingdom' (the Jews) will then in like manner be 'cast out into outer darkness'—excluded from the brilliancy of the marriage feast (Matt. viii. 12; comp. Matt. xxii. 13). May not the furnace of fire therefore probably mean a period of severe and fiery tribulation?

These parables, it will be seen, exclusively relate to the *reception* that men would give to the announcement of the coming kingdom, and are not therefore intended to throw any light on its nature or objects.

This is evident from the conclusion of the whole. The householder 'who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old' is not said to be *in* the kingdom, 'but *instructed unto* the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. xiii. 52). The Jews, 'the children of the kingdom,' are in like manner superseded by the Gentiles, *not* because they had apostatized while *in* the kingdom, but because they had not brought forth the appropriate fruit of the doctrine they professed to hold,—of the expectations they cherished (Matt. xxi. 43). When therefore it is said of the angels 'they shall gather *out of his kingdom* all scandals and them which do iniquity,' it is evident that the meaning is, from amongst those who have regarded the kingdom as their own. The passage corresponds to Matt. vii. 21—23.

I am not aware that in the investigation now concluded any text has been omitted which was intended by its inspired author to throw light on the character of the kingdom. If such omission be detected, let the discoverer be assured that its being passed by has been accidental.

The result of our inquiry seems to be this:—

1. That 'the kingdom,' as presented to us in Scripture, is a reign of Christ both objective and spiritual; *objective* in the sense of its being an outward reality, as distinguished from a merely *subjective* condition of mind; *spiritual*, inasmuch as it will be marked by a peculiar indwelling of the Spirit of God in those who constitute it.

2. That it is intended to be the scene of Christ's triumph on earth, and of His saints' reward; a holy ambition to enter it being the characteristic of those who cultivate 'moderation' in all earthly pursuits, and ever keep in mind what may be termed the 'pilgrim and stranger' element in life.

3. That it is a *future* and not a present reign, except in so far as, like 'eternal life,' it is already the possession of the elect of God.

4. That the *position* of those who enter it *as the called and chosen* will be regal. They will all be kings and priests,—a royal priesthood, sitting as such at the table of the King of kings, and sharing at once in his rule and in his joy.

5. That its possession is *limited* to those who have been chosen to it from the foundation of the world; that it is the heritage of those only for whom it has been prepared.

6. That the *object* of the kingdom is to exalt Christ, and through His saints finally to subdue all things to Him; that it therefore involves the instruction of the myriads who have departed this life without any experimental knowledge of the Redeemer, and the restoration of multitudes who have 'stumbled at the Cross, being disobedient,' and have consequently 'fallen and been broken.'

7. That *the mode* of its manifestation has been foreshadowed by the Lord both in His transfiguration and in His appearances to the disciples after His resurrection, as well as by John in the Apocalypse.

Lastly, that 'its coming' cannot be separated from the second advent of Christ, a binding of Satan, and a judgment of quick and dead.

The proof of these particulars, if the term 'proven' can ever be applied with propriety to such investigations, will be found only by those who may think it worth while to give the time and trouble that, in all cases, is required before satisfactory evidence of any truth can be expected to break forth from Scripture.

Those who may still hold that entrance into the kingdom merely implies coming under the rule or reign of God; that the distinction between it and salvation from hell cannot be maintained; that every one is practically in the kingdom who escapes eternal misery; that it comprises all who have died or may die in infancy—believers, who although true Christians have led lives of terrible inconsistency,—death-bed repenters,—*all*, in short, who look to Christ for salvation, must justify their opinion by other arguments than have as yet been adduced; and especially must they reconcile passages that speak of Christ as the Saviour *of the world* (John iii. 17; iv. 42) with such as declare the gate to be 'strait, and few there be that find it'—with such as speak of Christ's people as 'a little flock.'

Those who explain away all references to an objective kingdom as mere figures of speech, or as a popular accommodation to Jewish prejudices and modes of thought, will do well to consider whether by such a process they do not strip scriptural statements of their most striking features; whether, in short, the denial of any kingdom of God, pro-

perly so termed, beyond the Church on earth, or any work of Christ beyond that which He is ever carrying on by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men, does not almost necessarily favour the notion that the historical Christ has passed away, and that He is now only to be found as a new birth in the soul of humanity?

Those who tell us that 'the Gospels give us facts in forms that are exaggerated and unreal,' and who say that 'a mythic haze encompasses the person, life, and discourses of Jesus,' comfort us with the assurance, that after all these later accretions have been removed, 'there will still stand forth, in colours more or less distinct, a person such as the world never saw before—the living type of an ideal humanity, pure and perfect—destined to influence all times, to purify all people among whom His name is pronounced, and to ennoble His followers by lifting them up to the measure of the stature of His fulness.' Thus are we consoled for loss of confidence in the only writings that men have ever yet found 'profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness;' the only writings that have proved their ability to make 'the man of God perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.'

We refuse to be comforted at this cost; and equally do we refuse to give up the hope of the Saviour's personal return to earth, with all that it involves, because there would still remain to us the High Priest and Intercessor before the throne of God, and the Holy Spirit revealing Christ in the heart.

NOTE.

ON THE SECOND ADVENT.

Premillennial advent views, as they are commonly termed, ought not, by sensible people, to be neglected or denounced, because they are so commonly associated with unauthorized speculations. *These* may be either well founded or worthless, profitable or absolutely mischievous, without at all affecting the evidence we have that Christ will return.

Details which are not *revealed* should never occupy a position which is appropriate only to the direct statements of Scripture. Let such be left to the *unwise*. Happy are they who, while dutifully and diligently anxious to ascertain *all* that is revealed regarding the future, are satisfied with what the Book *says*, instead of injuring the cause they are anxious to promote by continually proclaiming much more than it reveals.

Above all, let it never be forgotten that the hope of Christ's speedy return is a *practical* hope. Let it never be imagined that it matters little whether a Christian waits for the re-appearance of his Lord upon earth, or whether he lives in hope of a certain reunion with Him after death; whether his abiding assurance is that he will one day go to Christ, or whether he has a deep conviction that *any day* Christ may come to him. Nothing can be more fallacious than the supposition that these two states of mind are, as to their practical effects, identical.

To insist that they are so is but to say that it matters little whether a man lives by faith or by sight, so long as he is pursuing a right object. Death is a thing of *sight*. It is before our eyes every day. It is as much a reality to the wicked as to the righteous. The *certainty* of it, in many respects, affects all classes alike. The expectation of the return of Christ is, on the contrary, based on confidence in Divine revelation alone. It is, from first to last, a thing of faith. It is *the* motive the Apostle Paul urges as most powerful

to secure moderation in attachment to everything on earth; and the disbelief of it is said by Peter to be characteristic of the scoffer, and a sign of the last days. To expect *death* every day would be a wrong and injurious state of mind, and to *desire* it would be worse. But to *expect and wait for* the coming of Christ as that which may take place *any day* must be beneficial to those who love His appearing; to *desire* it could not be other than evidence of growing fitness to meet Him. Here, then, as in so many other things, we see how good it is to live by faith. Nothing else will ever be found so powerful to overcome the world.

That the 'coming and kingdom' of our Lord Jesus Christ has, in one form or other, been, of late years, largely taught by many evangelical Christians, and (if human testimony is to be believed) not without the frequent production thereby of greater deadness to the world and higher happiness than had previously been enjoyed, should be thankfully acknowledged. But the result has not always been so satisfactory. Sometimes this teaching seems to have been fruitful of uncharitableness towards those who have not been able to receive it; sometimes of vain imaginings and fanatical expectations; sometimes of self-satisfaction and spiritual pride.

There is a reason for this which has not generally been recognized. The doctrine in question has been separated from its end and object. The 'reign' has been regarded, *not* as a provision for restoring the lost, but simply as an occasion for exalting the saved. It has, as a rule, hitherto been little more than a *graft* on high Calvinistic theories. As such, it has favoured the narrowest views of God's love, and been a cause of the most arrogant and exclusive of claims. It has, in short, been put as new wine into old bottles. Need we be surprised that now it bids fair to burst the limits within which it has been confined, and, in so doing, to rend and scatter to the winds the worn-out vessels within which it has been compressed.

CHAPTER VII.

CONSEQUENCES.

LET us now ask ourselves very seriously *where* the conclusions at which we have arrived land us? If what has been maintained in the foregoing pages be true; if throughout the New Testament 'the Kingdom,' with all that it involves, *when regarded as a means to an end*, is declared to be 'the gospel or good news of the grace of God;' if nothing else is presented as such; if the phrase itself is in Scripture used interchangeably with 'Life,' 'Eternal Life,' and similar terms; if, I say, these things be so, it cannot be unsuitable to ask, even with some anxiety, whether this is what we are teaching?

What if it should be found impossible to escape the conviction—however unwilling we may be to arrive at it,—that, on the supposition of preceding statements being scriptural, the Gospel of the present day, published in ten thousand pulpits, and proclaimed through the press in innumerable publications, is (by defect) *not* the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but 'another gospel;' and not the less so because it is so largely preached in the spirit of an angel from heaven? What if it should appear that in our desire to alarm or attract *the individual*, we have suppressed the glad tidings of the deliverance of *the race*; that we have made the Gospel which Christ preached much narrower in its reach than He made it; that we have *contracted* the good news, lest its expansion should be dangerous?

Why should any one be either angry or grieved at the utterance of a thought like this? Great and good men,

honoured in the Church, have long since suggested *the possibility* of such a state of things. Alexander Vinet—the Chalmers of Switzerland, as he has not inappropriately been termed,—warns us solemnly that he holds it to be ‘quite possible that after eighteen centuries of Christianity we may be involved in some tremendous error of which the Christianity of the future will make us ashamed.’ Isaac Taylor has gone further. He says, that ‘while our interpretation of Christianity may be pure enough for private use; good enough in the closet; good as the source of the motives of common life, and good as the ground of hope in death,’ it may yet be in other respects very defective and faulty. He adds, ‘Those who have watched the current of public opinion carefully, know well that the deep sense of uncertainty which of late years has come down over the human spirit, can only be relieved by a thorough and absolute deliverance of the Bible from the trammels that have been imposed upon it by polemical theology.’ And again, ‘At this moment we may be quite sure that no scheme of religious belief will be able to hold its footing abroad in the world, or beyond the walls of closets and saloons, which does not, in some coherent and intelligible manner, make provision for securing our peace of mind, in regard to the present lot and future prospects of the human family.’

The lapsed doctrine of ‘the kingdom’ supplies this want by exhibiting to us the future glory of the Redeemer in close connection with the restoration of myriads and with the final manifestation of Christ’s victory over Satan.

And here it may be as well to re-state what is understood in these pages by *the Gospel of the Kingdom*, as distinguished from what may be termed without offence *the Gospel of the Church*.

THE GOSPEL OF THE CHURCH, as preached amongst us, —allowing, of course, for modifications of thought and expression which are inseparable from the individuality of the human mind,—may probably be summed up in these words:—‘Christ came into the world to save sinners, and whosoever *will* may come unto Him and live.’ Those who preach it, however, constantly assert—and justly—that all men are by nature *unwilling* to come; that, in fact, no one *does* accept the offer save under a special influence of the Holy Spirit; and that of those who have heard the glad tidings in past ages, or who hear them now, comparatively few have obeyed the call and given evidence of spiritual renewal. They admit further that only a fraction of the human family *has ever heard* of the Redeemer, and they are, therefore, obliged to allow that the race, if saved at all, must be saved by methods not yet revealed. Many, of course, take much narrower views, and refuse to entertain the possibility of any door of hope being open either to the heathen or to the nominally Christian world.

The *defect* of this teaching, and that which renders it no gospel to the mass of mankind is, that it keeps back all that is written relative to human restoration, and that—apart from another and special influence bestowed only *on some*—it makes no provision for the salvation of the unwilling, the ‘dead in trespasses and sins;’ that it leaves to the consequences of their ignorance such as have never had Christ preached to them; and that it abandons to their *unwillingness* all who have not experienced that renewing grace by which alone the human heart is ever changed and subdued.

May it not, then, be affirmed that as a revelation of mercy to mankind, the gospel *thus stated* fails to answer its end; since, instead of fulfilling the simple declaration of Scrip-

ture that Christ actually *is* the Saviour of the world, it maintains only that *He is willing to be such* to all who consent to submit and be saved; wicked unwillingness on the part of man being in every case the very evil to be met. *Thus* presented—struggle as we may against the conclusion—the Gospel becomes a message of grace only to the few, while the great mass of mankind, unsaved in any sense, are left to the consequences of their sin and folly.

The contrast between our preaching and that of the first age of Christianity is a striking one—Christ and His apostles proclaimed ‘the Gospel of the Kingdom.’ *We* preach the Gospel of the Church. The impression prevailing amongst us appears to be that the one has superseded the other; that the first was Jewish, that the last is Christian. And yet it cannot be disputed that ‘the Kingdom’ occupies a much wider space in the field of divine revelation than the Church; nor will it be maintained that we are at liberty to dilate any truth, because it may be specially dear to us, until it fills a much wider sphere in our minds than it does in Scripture.

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM, unlike that which is now proclaimed, instead of narrowing, gives fearless utterance to all that is revealed. It proceeds on the verity of the declaration that God is, in deed and in truth, ‘the Saviour of all men,’ although ‘*specially* of those that believe.’ It accepts this word as—what it is said to be—‘a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation,’ and it justifies the Apostle Paul when, under Divine inspiration, he charges his son Timothy, ‘These things command and teach’ (1 Tim. iv. 9—11). It is a gospel which removes all that is painfully dark in the doctrine of election—the higher salvation of the comparatively few on earth being regarded as

the appointed agency for the later and lower salvation of the many in the age to come. It furnishes a strong counteractive against those temptations to self-satisfaction, to indolence, and to the avoidance of the cross which so constantly beset us. It kindles the holiest of ambitions, and, in its own glorious light, darkens the attraction of much that here dazzles while it leads astray.

THE GOSPEL OF THE CHURCH goes on the supposition that earth is the only theatre of human salvation ; that nothing in Scripture justifies us in asserting that the work of Christ can be beneficially brought to bear upon men after death ; that the visible Church therefore—whatever may be understood by that term—is *the appointed agency* by which it pleases God to rescue men from Satan : and that, limited as the number at present may apparently be of those that are saved, a time is coming when, in connection with a large outpouring of the Spirit of God, and a more abundant blessing upon the labourers in the vineyard, the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth.

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM, on the other hand, proceeds on the assumption that the present dispensation is essentially *one of selection*. It does not allow that God has anywhere led us to expect, in relation to the world as now constituted, that the gospel will ever be more than a *rejected testimony*. It regards all that is going on now as merely preparatory. It refers triumph and universality to an age that is yet to come—an age which will be introduced by the re-appearing of Christ, by a partial resurrection from the dead, and by the allotment, according to works, of rewards to those who have here endured unto the end.

Those who insist that to this dispensation the Gospel was

intended to be *much more than a witness*, commonly base their opinion on the command, 'Preach the Gospel to every creature' (lit. to all creation), an instruction which they imagine *implies* at least the possibility of its being made of saving effect to every child of Adam. They say, as Dean Alford has put it, that this command must be taken in connection with the promise, 'Lo, I am with you always to the end of the world;' and that 'inasmuch as the disciples living when the direction was given could not teach all nations, the Lord here founds *the office* of preacher in His Church with all that belongs to it—the duties of the minister, the school teacher, the Scripture reader.'

But do not such advocates, it may be suggested, forget two things: first, that the Gospel thus commanded to be proclaimed was that of 'the Kingdom,' which, says our Lord, 'shall be preached in all the world *for a witness* unto all nations (Matt. xxiv. 14); secondly, that whenever God gives a command He provides all that is necessary to its fulfilment?

Will anybody pretend that the means of fulfilling such a command as this—supposing it to extend to the human race—has ever been afforded? Will any reasonable person say that at this hour, or at any period since the command was first given, it is, or ever has been, possible for true Christians to convey the tidings of salvation to the whole of the human family? He who maintains the possibility of this being done, if every heart were but consecrate to the work, must surely forget how few, even among believers, are fit for such a task; how, if spiritually competent, they could only perform it by the help of a miraculous gift of tongues, and by the neglect of all social and family duties; how, in short, its accomplishment would involve the violation of every condition under which God has placed men.

He who thinks that a work like this might well be effected by the power of money and the multiplication of machinery is not to be reasoned with.

Why, then, should we persist in attaching to the words of the Lord an interpretation of this extravagant character, when a true and reasonable one lies straight before us; when it is obvious that the meaning of the charge is, 'Preach this Gospel of the Kingdom (which has hitherto been confined to Israel,) among all nations; for the promise is not to the Jew only, but to all that are afar off, *even as many as the Lord our God shall call*' (Acts ii. 39) ?

The evils that have arisen from mistaken interpretations of the Lord's command on this point are many and serious.

The first and foremost of these embodies itself in ROMANISM, by which I mean not so much the usurped supremacy of any one particular bishop or church, as that vast ecclesiastical system of which Rome is the substance, and Protestant churches the shadow. This system bases itself on the theory that the Church is appointed by God to be the Saviour of the world, and, when consistently carried out, it claims for the Church certain supernatural endowments for this end.

That the progress of the Gospel in the apostolic age was largely advanced by agencies involving the exercise of Divine power, believers in Scripture will not, of course, dispute. Miracle *then* appeared everywhere. An incarnate God, inspired apostles, wonders of healing, and gifts of tongues all indicated that forces were at work far greater than any that can be wielded by man.

But the apostolic age passed away, and with it both supernatural gifts, and the once prevailing expectation that Christ was about to return and take unto Himself

the Kingdom. The Church therefore reviewed its position, and appears to have arrived at the conclusion that *in it* the Kingdom of Heaven was to be realized; that it was the design of God by its means to accomplish the final triumph of Christ; that a sort of ecclesiastical Judaism *was intended* to take the place of the old economy; that the Altar and the priest were to be revived under a Christian aspect; and that miraculous powers would, in one form or other, give force and efficiency to the new form of procedure.

In the work to which it supposed itself to be thus called the ancient Church laboured with wonderful assiduity. Evidence of the possession of supernatural power was indeed wanting, but faith could supply the deficiency. Miracle, it was said, instead of being as at first addressed to all men, and therefore capable of being tested both by friends and foes, was now *a hidden thing*. But not on that account the less real. Baptism, in water consecrated by the priest, changed both the nature and position of those who received it. It regenerated the convert, and it introduced him into the Kingdom of God. In the Eucharist, under similar conditions, the bread became the body of the Lord, and thus changed, nourished the soul of the man who ate thereof. The priest was the wonder-worker. The Church was the ark of safety. A great attempt to subdue the world by these means was made, and in a certain sense, successfully. The old Roman empire was conquered, and Christianity, in the form then existing, ascended the throne of the Cæsars. With what results the history of Christendom may declare.

Yet it is hard to see, on the supposition that the great work of the Church was indeed the subjection of the world, how it could have been accomplished in any other way.

The office now commonly assigned to the Bible was obviously impossible of fulfilment before the settlement of the canon, the invention of printing, or the possession by men generally of the ability to decipher print so as to benefit thereby. If human salvation then turned on the profitable study of Scripture, it was simply an impossibility. Only through the oral instructions of the priest, aided by symbol and sacrament, *could* the world at large for something like fifteen hundred years have been made acquainted with the truths of Christianity. In the eyes of the Anglican this is adequate proof that the ancient Church, whatever might be its faults or corruptions, was emphatically of God, divinely appointed as the great agent for winning the world to Christ, and therefore, to be still honoured and adhered to.

But what if the whole thing was a mistake? The basis on which all action proceeded a mistake—the church having no commission to convert the world? its method a mistake—Christ having superseded all earthly priesthoods and material sacrifices? its supposed miracles a mistake—the bread, the wine, the water, all being in reality unchanged by priestly offices? Everything, in short, a delusion and a snare *except the desire*, which certainly was in many hearts, to win souls, to promote goodness, and to deliver men from Satan? What then follows but this—that so far as the intent was pure, the work was blessed; but that *as a whole* it necessarily culminated in a terrific apostacy, and in every form of corruption and superstition?

What *would* have been the course of things had this error not been committed, it is, of course, impossible for us to say. But we have at least reason to believe that the same Divine hand which guided, guarded, and enlarged the company of believers that were called out in the apostolic age, would have still preserved (by supernatural aid if

needful) the deposit of truth then left; would have caused it to grow, although perhaps not with observation; and would long ere this have made that strange return to usages savouring of superstition and formalism which we so much deplore, all but impossible.

It may, indeed, well be questioned whether,—if the view here taken of the kingdom be a true one—there ever has been or *can* be any organization or series of organizations on earth capable of being properly termed the visible Church of Christ.

In different parts of the world communities of believers have always existed composed of persons agreeing more or less in their religious opinions, and united to each other either in voluntary Christian fellowship, or by national adhesion to a common creed; and these, when regarded as a whole, are ordinarily spoken of as THE VISIBLE CHURCH.

But they have really no right to this title, unless it can be shown that Christ or His apostles planted them,—a claim which may well be disputed by all who are accustomed to judge institutions as well as men by their fruits.

That hitherto these organizations have been but base imitations of the kingdom one day to be established, can be accounted for only on the supposition—borne out by Scripture—that the church, as a whole, is *here*, from its very nature '*unknown*,' even though so many of its members, regarded individually, are '*well known*;' that its true Life is '*hid with Christ in God*;' that the ruins over which we so often mourn, are not the remains of a Divine Edifice once reared by God, but the débris of a Babel which has been from first to last of human building; that the Temple of which Christ is the corner-stone cannot be made visible until after the resurrection, and that it can

only rise under the personal guidance of its Heavenly Architect.

The rule of Christ, now exercised through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of His children, certainly *seems* to be, so far as man can judge, purely individual. Nowhere is the Divine mind expressed by any corporate association, or by any assembly of believers, large or small. To look for authoritative expositions of the will of Christ in any human association is a delusion, the tendency of which must be to render men indifferent, if not adverse to the coming of any future kingdom of the Redeemer. And it is more than possible that the present breaking up of old beliefs; the comparative powerlessness of Christian effort; and that growing discontent with long-cherished institutions, which is so much complained of, may be but as messengers of the Lord preparing the way for nobler anticipations connected with the kingdom that can never be moved.

Totally opposite in character, yet springing from the same root as Romanism, is that form of CHRISTIAN SCEPTICISM which expresses itself in expectations that in the progress of society, in the advancement of science, in the triumphs of art, in the spread of knowledge, and in the extension of commerce—all to be one day baptized from above—will be found the fulfilment of ancient prophecy, and the coming of the Redeemer's kingdom.

This state of mind may, without impropriety, be called sceptical, because it habitually sets itself against everything supernatural *in the future*, beyond the extension of spiritual influence in connection with what is called the preaching of the Gospel. In the conversion of the nations by this agency,—in growing intelligence, in refinement, in

benevolent activity, and in the reception everywhere of gentle and humane sentiments, Christian men now think they see the gradual but sure obliteration of all distinctions between the Church and the world ; since, according to this theory the world will, sooner or later, merge in the Church, and in fact become one with it.

That such a doctrine should be popular is by no means surprising. Just to the extent to which it is preached will Christianity cease to be an offence. The hatred of the world to Christ *now torpid* will revive in all its ancient intensity whenever the Gospel *of the kingdom* is again accepted to any considerable extent ; whenever it fairly comes in contact with the specious notion—now rapidly gaining ground—that under this dispensation, and by means of the wealth, the science, the improved legislation, and the innumerable benefits which are sure to follow in the wake of an ever-advancing and Christianized civilization, the world will be subdued to Christ, and Christians be practically its rulers. This notion,—a modern repetition of the mistake made by the early Christian Church—is so plausible, so favourable to all the desires of an un-renewed heart, so destructive of everything involved in the thought of a pilgrim and stranger life, that it is all but impossible to make men see its delusiveness, or feel its danger. The folly of those who have maintained that good Christians must of necessity be bad citizens, by scorning patriotism, by abandoning secular duty to the un-godly, and by resigning the world to Satan, has, no doubt, excited much prejudice, even among the followers of Christ, against a doctrine which, rightly understood, lies at the basis of all true faith in the Redeemer and His mission.

Other forms of evil, different from either of the preceding, yet traceable to the same cause, might easily be enu-

merated if it were necessary. The mere fact, however, that any teaching has been perverted and misapplied is, of course, no argument against its truth. But to those who are perpetually telling us of the evil consequences that are sure to arise from any deviation from 'old paths,' it may be as well to say that few things have incidentally led to more abuse than these so-called 'old paths.' How often has the Gospel, read only by the light of the past, been transformed into that false doctrine which teaches that trust in Christ will cover all the misdeeds of the earthly life; that by a single act of the mind in the hour of death the sinner may enter the kingdom of God in triumph; that Christ died to save men from the judgment of the great day, and that if they put their trust in Him he will certainly do so. How often has Faith been preached as if it operated like an Oriental Talisman! How little has been made of the judgment of believers, of the reward according to works, or of the blessings which belong only to those who endure unto the end!

How largely has the Church, under this deficient instruction, been occupied with philosophies of revelation rather than with truths which promote intercourse with God. How frequently has Christianity been reduced to a mere school of doctrine, instead of being treated as a living power intended to lead us through the world by the path in which Christ walked. How often have men been taught that they may by faith *leap* as it were into the highest glory, however dark or inconsistent their course may have been.

'Principles,' it has been well said, 'do not reach their development at once. The piety and devotedness of those who hold them oftentimes keep them in check, so far as individual and personal character is concerned. But it is scarcely possible for any thoughtful person not to be alarmed at the violent oscillation in doctrine from the legal,

and experimental, and practical theology which but a few years ago was general, to that mode of presenting the grace of God which is now becoming all but universal. In tracts, in preaching the Gospel, in periodicals for the instruction of Christians, in addresses to the world and in exhortations to the Church, the grace of God is now so presented as to make it appear that conversion is one of the easiest things it is possible to conceive of.

Granting, as we must do, that good and evil mingle in all things, and that truth, however pure, cannot but suffer from human handling, it still remains certain that the general effect of the evangelical preaching of the last half-century is, in many respects, *far from satisfactory*. Behold the result of it, in a wide-spread desire for safety from punishment, and but little disinterested love of goodness for its own sake; in a standard of conduct among Christians, which, however praiseworthy, is not much, if any, higher than that which is conventionally accepted by all classes; in philanthropy run wild; in humane laws; in growing sympathy with the poor; in increasing refinement; in improved manners; in money freely given for almost every purpose under the sun; in unbounded faith as to the secondary influences of Christianity, and but little confidence in its more direct and elevating power; in a fearful neglect of Scripture study; in feeble convictions; in doubt as to essential differences between the Church and the world; in reviving ritualism; in abounding heresy and strife; in a general disbelief in the return of the Lord, and in growing fears as to the future of society!

These are the leading characteristics of the so-called religious world of the present day. Not all unfavourable, far from it; yet all, with few exceptions, indicative of an extended but low toned piety. Whether the preaching of

'the Gospel of the kingdom' would produce other and higher results, it might be presumptuous to affirm. For, deeply important as that doctrine may be, and connected as it is with the second advent, the judgment of believers, and the brightest hopes for humanity at large, it must not be put forward as a panacea; since, whenever any one truth is assumed to have this character, it is almost certain to be held out of its due proportion, in which case more or less mischief is sure to follow.

No such evil, however, can arise from honest investigation. The doctrine of the kingdom, as here presented, is either true or false, scriptural or unscriptural, of great practical importance, or an idle and mischievous delusion. Let this alternative be fairly recognized. If that view of the Gospel which I have put forward, and which has, apparently at least, been drawn from Scripture, be erroneous and pernicious, it will surely not be difficult to demonstrate its falsity. Let it be tested then by the divine word. 'He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.' But 'he that doeth evil' (in whatever form) 'hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved' (John iii. 20, 21).

To avoid the possibility of misconception, although at the risk of being supposed needlessly to repeat, let us once more state what has been maintained. It may be thus expressed:—

'The Gospel of the grace of God' made known to mankind by Jesus Christ, is not so much an individual as a world-wide blessing; it is the glad tidings not merely of *my* salvation, but of *human* salvation,—the salvation of the race; it is the declaration that redemption is not a mere possi-

bility, but a fact; it is the announcement both of the certainty and nearness of the time when all shall own and adore the Redeemer.

The bringing in of the Elect, glorious as that gathering will be, is not the Gospel; but a call to 'glory, honour and immortality' *based upon* the Gospel,—upon the declaration that it is the Divine will through Christ to restore humanity.

The announcement that God has provided a means by which sinners the most abandoned, may, *if they will*, find deliverance from hell, however true, is not the Gospel; for since the creation, or rather since the fall, God has always provided such means, and has ever been more than willing to receive and to forgive the penitent.

The Cross, wondrous as is the exhibition there made of the Divine Love, is not the Gospel; Calvary is but the culminating point of human wickedness. The Crucifix is not the true symbol of man's deliverance, but *the opened grave*. 'The Kingdom' is the Gospel of the grace of God, and nothing else. *

The 'good news' is, that the work of redemption will be accomplished *in spite of* man's perversity; that the same grace which in all ages has gently constrained *some*, will one day, by processes adapted to their condition, constrain myriads who, in man's esteem have perished in ignorance and unbelief; that neither human depravity, nor Satanic power, neither the world, the flesh, nor the devil shall hinder the ultimate triumph of redeeming love, or prevent the coming of that day when every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess the love, the power, the holiness and the dignity of Him whom God hath appointed Lord of all. Thus, through present mercy to the Elect, the non-elect obtain mercy; and through favour already granted to the few, 'the many' eventually receive favour. For 'God hath

included all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out' (Rom. xi. 33).

The *narrowing* of the message, however good may be the intention, can only tend to lessen the glory of Christ. For as the Bride of the Lamb is 'the Church,' and not the solitary nun, however holy she may be; so *the Crown* of Christ is not the saintly jewels that adorn the diadem, but *redeemed humanity*. 'HE shall have the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.'

But *how*, it may be said, can this 'Gospel of the kingdom' be preached to mankind,—to the idolater, to the profligate, to the nominal Christian, to the awakened sinner as well as to the more confirmed believer? What motive can be brought to bear on men who are delivered from the fear of eternal torment, and invited to love God and goodness apart from threats of everlasting punishment on neglect or refusal?

The question is an important one; for, like everything else,—like the Cross, like justification by faith, like imputed righteousness, this doctrine of restoration may be made a mere opiate, to the delusion and great loss of all who are concerned. But it *need* not be so perverted, nor is it *so liable* to abuse as is ordinary teaching. Only let it be preached *now* as it was in Judea by the Lord, and among the Gentiles by Paul, and no evil can follow.

But before this can be done we must be content to occupy the apostolic stand-point. We must learn to address men *as they did*, not in the language of threat but of invitation. We must seek to move them, not by terror but by love. The message must not be,—'Escape for thy life,' but

'Come to the Redeemer;' not 'Save thy soul,' but 'Follow holiness through faith in Christ;' not 'Love God on pain of eternal misery,' but 'Love Him who first loved you,' and who has manifested that love by placing you in a position *which is not hopeless*,—a position which forbids despair, because the mercy it involves is not limited by time or *dependent* on anything to be accomplished by your own weak and sinful self.

Again, however, I say, Christians must be content to occupy the apostolic stand-point before they can do this. They must believe that men are already saved, in the sense of being redeemed from the absolute and eternal dominion of Satan, if they would effectively present the invitation to *immediate* deliverance. And why should they doubt? They already admit that a sense of pardoning love is not *the end*, but the commencement of the religious life; that what God asks of man is not the submission of the slave who dreads the lash, but the happy obedience of the reconciled child. Why, then, should they be so slow to learn that He has not made this condition of mind dependent on the excitements of a revival, the eloquence of a preacher, or the impressions occasionally produced by a text or a providential calamity (although all these have been and may be again numbered among the ever-varying agencies by which attention is arrested and thought quickened), but provided for it by the broad announcement to every one that (apart from possibilities which forbid presumption*) He is redeemed from final and irremediable ruin; that on that redemption is based the revelations of the Gospel; that 'the call' is to come *at once* to Jesus Christ, and by personal union with Him to obtain *present* salvation from the power of sin; a new

* See Note to p. 65.

heart and a right spirit; 'glory, honour, and immortality' in the world that is to come.

Nor should it be concealed for a moment that he who rejects or neglects this gracious provision for deliverance from evil, and from its future as well as present consequences, must die in his sins and suffer all the loss that his perversity has brought upon him; for it is written 'he that believeth not shall be damned'—that is, judged or condemned; a condemnation implying eternal exclusion from the immediate presence of the Lord,—the everlasting and hopeless loss of a glory that *might* have been attained. Redemption and the processes by which men enter into its blessings are in Scripture never separated. Unrepented sin cannot go unpunished. The rejection of Christ is a loss that cannot be repaired. 'The kingdom' cannot be enjoyed by the unbelieving and the impenitent.

On the other hand, let it not be denied that there are many conditions of existence besides absolute union with Christ on the one hand, or utter abandonment to evil on the other. Every step upward is a gain to him who makes it. It *may be* that the abandonment of gross vice and the cultivation of much that is just and pure and honourable is sometimes accompanied by an amount of self-righteousness, of pride, and of alienation from God which throws such a man further back than ever from an acceptable condition of mind, and of such it is said that the publicans and harlots will go into the kingdom of God before them; but it is not always so, and it *need* not be so. To say, therefore, that improvement to whatever extent,—if not based on the great spiritual change, is no gain; that God places on the same level *all unspiritual* persons whether profligate or virtuous; whether plunged in all the abominations of idolatry, or groping on in the comparative

darkness of mere theism ; whether anxious to promote and to strengthen whatever is kind and benevolent, or immersed in a cold selfishness which shuts out regard for others ; is, to say the least of it, a mischievous error. Yet it would be a still greater error to call men to mere outward reformation, or to teach that anything short of change of heart can meet the requirements of the Divine Spirit, or become the sure and fruitful parent of good works. *The call* is always to the *highest* wherever there is a capacity to understand what is meant by that highest. But the lowest step may be in advance ; may prepare the man for that which is beyond,— may be as much a proof of God's grace *in degree* as regeneration itself.

I do not pretend to estimate either the extent or importance of the changes that would be needed were the Gospel preached to a saved rather than to a lost world. These would doubtless be many and great. For we are living at a time when old things are passing away, while the new are as yet but struggling to be born.

Discords between the facts of life and the theories of theologians, which we formerly little thought of or cared for, now press harshly on the inner life of most of us, and are exciting in the minds of many an impatience which is eminently dangerous. Everything seems now to indicate to thoughtful men that a scheme of providence which obviously requires (as the one placed before us unquestionably does) the present sacrifice of races and generations, cannot *here* be complete. Everywhere, therefore, is it now demanded that something like meaning and completeness shall be given to teachings that so often are little better than disjointed and fragmentary.

The question is, 'Has God, in the revelation He has given us, supplied what is wanting?' Are there elements

in the Gospel which throw light on questions that perplex us, but which have hitherto been too generally overlooked or set aside?

I believe that there are; and, further, that these may be found among the predictions of the Old Testament seers, and in the revelations of the New Testament regarding 'the kingdom of God' as associated with the resurrection of the body. I say *of the body*, for as Mr. Westcott has well expressed it,—'The body is not a burden by which the soul is temporarily weighed down, but *an essential condition of our personality*, to be won and disciplined, and in the end to be transfigured but not destroyed.'

These elements, however, will never be discovered by the timorous, by those who shrink from responsibility, and in these matters flee from the presence of the Lord in hope of hiding in some imaginary Tarshish. Fearlessness is essential to the attainment of truth, and in the present day courage is perhaps more needed in our inquiries regarding the destiny of the race than in any other direction. And for this reason. The restoration of the race—if a revealed truth at all—is not one that can safely be held as an *esoteric* doctrine. It must be proclaimed on the house-tops if it is to have any practical effect on mankind.

The question, therefore, may well return,—*How can it be preached?* Our reply is, Only as a part of the common salvation.

TO THE IDOLATER, the word of the Lord would still be 'Turn from these vanities, for God hath revealed Himself in His Son, and now commands all men everywhere to repent of their false worship, their folly, and their sin. The wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Jesus and the Resurrection alone bring life and light.'

TO THE UNGODLY, whatever may be his profligacy or whatever his professions, the message would be unchanged,—‘Repent, for God hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world by that man whom He hath appointed. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Come to Him who can deliver from sin and misery, who can alone give holiness and happiness. As a man soweth so shall he reap. The Lord will render to every one according to his works. To the man who *feels the burden* of sin, and desires deliverance, the announcement is still at hand of a Redeemer who hath *taken away* sin by the sacrifice of Himself, a Redeemer, strong to overcome and mighty to save.

TO THE BELIEVER all things belong, for he is Christ’s and Christ is God’s. Before him is set ‘the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,’—the Crown, the Kingship, the Priesthood, the ‘abundant entrance into the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.’

Never, as has just been said, is any man ‘*called of God*’ to less than this. To nothing short of immediate faith and repentance; to a present deliverance from evil; to all the blessedness here and hereafter that is implied in union with Christ *now*,—to this and to nothing short of this, is any man ever bidden. Nor can it be doubted that he who neglects or rejects this invitation forsakes his highest good, and *loses what cannot be recovered in any world or age that is to come*.

But though the ‘call’ be one, *the effect* of the call is manifold. The few ‘enter into life;’ the many fall short of it. Yet not in vain has this gospel of the kingdom been preached even to them. Faith, however weak, is not worthless. The Lord, when on earth, did not despise that which reached no further than belief in his power and willingness to heal bodily disease. There were those who were

deemed fit to follow him as personal friends and disciples, and there were those who, although not rejected, were inadmissible to close fellowship. So has it been ever since. The faith that brings with it *a present* union with Christ may not be attained, and yet much may be bestowed that will as certainly affect the condition of the recipient in the world to come, as it affects his character and condition here. Whatever restrains or elevates, whatever enlightens or purifies, although it be but partially, is of this character, and ought therefore never to be despised.

See, then, the work of the Believer while on earth! It is to a great extent the same in kind as was that of his Lord. It is a redeeming work. It is the obligation at all times and at all hazards to promote truth and righteousness, to redeem men from evil of all kinds, to alleviate their distresses, and to bear constant witness in favour of the goodness, the wisdom, and the love of the Father of us all.

He who replies, 'This object is not enough to move *me* to self-denying effort; this aim is not high enough to induce me to go to heathen abroad or to worse than heathen at home,' has yet to learn the first principles of the gospel, and the very elements of Divine compassion.

So far as the followers of Christ have in any age sought to accomplish this work of deliverance,—with whatever errors the endeavour may have been intermingled, or however stimulated it may have been by false expectations,—God has owned and blessed their labours and ever will do so. Thus He blessed in degree the Fathers and their followers, Luther and Calvin, Wesley and Whitfield,—men often working with conflicting theologies, and sometimes indulging bitter feelings towards those who differed from them; but all alike moved by ONE MASTER AFFECTION,—Love to God and Love to man. In sight of this Divine emotion all differences dwindle and all errors fade.

CHAPTER VIII.

OBJECTIONS.

VARIOUS objections to what has been advanced in this volume will, I am aware, present themselves. Let us, then, look at such as we may suppose will be brought forward by honest and conscientious inquirers.

The *first* may probably be this:—‘IS IT POSSIBLE that on matters so important as the nature and character of the Gospel; the command of Christ to preach it; and the final condition of the impenitent, the Church generally, from the decease of the last of the apostles to the present time, *can* have been mistaken?’

That such a *possibility* has been recognised by men eminent in their day for evangelical fervour, for conscientious study of scripture, for eminent piety, and for the highest talent, has already been shown. But there is really no reason why such a state of things should be regarded as eminently *improbable*. For ever since the apostolic age the Church has been existing under the shadow of that great ‘falling away’ which Paul warned the Thessalonians was in his day at hand, and which he told them would not pass until the return of the Lord (2 Thess. ii. 3—8).

This apostacy, unperceived in its origin, stealthy in its approach, and silent in its advance, unquestionably deepened and thickened amid the gradual decay of Roman power; was consolidated by the overthrow of the empire; was partially corrected at the Reformation; regathered strength after that event by the reform of its more flagrant abuses,

and will probably culminate in a 'man of sin' yet to be revealed. Is it strange or inconceivable that the influence of such a 'falling away' should have beclouded even the purest of churches, or that its consequences should have proved serious enough to account for the otherwise inexplicable fact that our Christianity, or rather our modern interpretation of Christianity, should be in many respects so powerless? If it be otherwise, how comes it to pass that the Church is what it is—divided and distracted, at once worldly and unworldly, the salt of the earth, yet with little savour? Why is it at one and the same time so strong and so weak, so noble and yet so mean, so enlightened and yet so enveloped in doubt and darkness?

Again, has it not been 'owned,' by men everywhere honoured, that 'the whole scheme of scripture is not yet understood;' that God has more truth to break out of His holy word than we have yet perceived; that 'it is not at all incredible that a book which has been so long in the possession of mankind should contain many truths as yet undiscovered; and that, if it ever comes to be understood before the restitution of all things, and without miraculous interpositions, it must be in the same way as natural knowledge is come at—by the continuance and progress of learning and liberty, and by particular persons attending to, comparing and pursuing, intimations scattered up and down it which are overlooked and disregarded by the generality of the world? For this is the way in which all improvements are made; by thoughtful men's tracing on obscure hints, as it were dropped us by nature accidentally, or which seem to come into our minds by chance.'*

Can we be Protestants if we hold any other doctrine

* Butler's "Analogy," p. 2, c. iii.; and Robinson's 'Address to the Emigrating Puritans.'

than this—the necessity of digging laboriously and fearlessly for treasures that are hidden? Were the reformers answered when told that if *they* were right the whole church was in error? *Ought* they to have bowed before such an argument and been silent? If not, why should similar objections have weight now?

The *fault* of the reformers was, not that they did too much, but too little. The *occasion* of the fault was their fear, not of the fires of persecution—these they scorned,—but of their good name among their fellows. Coleridge remarks,—‘At the Reformation, the first reformers were beset with an almost morbid anxiety not to be considered heretical in point of doctrine. They knew that the Romanists were on the watch to fasten the brand of heresy upon them whenever a fair pretext could be found; and I have no doubt that it was the excess of this fear which at once led to the burning of Servetus, and also to the thanks offered by all the Protestant churches to Calvin and the Church of Geneva for burning him.’ *

The same fear is dominant still. The narrowness and bigotry, the want of candour and of patience which unhappily characterizes so many good men when brought into contact with opinions differing from their own, is chiefly occasioned by the faithless timidity which dreads above all things the charge of want of orthodoxy. Hence so much mere dogmatism and rampant uncharitableness on the part of those from whom better things might have been expected. ‘Men in general do not understand or appreciate the difficulty of finding truth. All men must act, and therefore all men learn in some degree how difficult it is to act rightly. But all men are not compelled to make an independent search for truth, and those who voluntarily

* “Table Talk,” edited by Henry Nelson Coleridge, p. 113.

undertake to do so are always few. To the world at large it seems quite easy to find truth, and inexcusable to miss it. And no wonder. For, by finding truth, they mean only learning by rote the maxims current around them.* As another has said, 'The supreme and *most difficult of moral acts* appears to be to recognise a new truth, or an old truth in a new form.'

A *second*, and to some a more serious, objection to what has been advanced will be that 'the gospel of the kingdom,' as here set forth, is not what has usually been considered the gospel of the cross; that it is something different from that doctrine of 'Christ and Him crucified,' save which, Paul declares, he was determined 'not to know anything' (1 Cor. ii. 2).

Such persons commonly *assume* not only that the cruel and ignominious death of Jesus was *foreordained* of God, but that *in it* the atonement consisted. Not such, however, is the teaching of scripture. The crucifixion was *predicted*, indeed, most clearly by the Lord Himself, when He said, "After two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified (Matt. xxvi. 2); and again, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me. This He said, signifying what death He should die' (John xii. 32). But it was not predestined. Prediction does not carry with it foreordination. What we are *told* is that Christ was 'delivered *into the power* of His enemies by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God' (Acts ii. 23); and in this sense 'He was crucified through weakness' (2 Cor. xiii. 4). But no more. 'By wicked hands He was crucified and slain.' Nowhere in the word of God is *the cross* spoken of as being, in any sense, *essential* to man's redemption.

* 'Ecce Homo.'

In Scripture it is *the death* of Christ, not the manner of it, that is always associated with human salvation. It is the shed blood (for 'the blood is the life') that purifies; not, however, like the prophet's 'nitre and much soap' (Jer. ii. 22), but by making us one with Christ *in His death*. In this sense it is the blood that redeems (Ephes. i. 7; 1 Pet. i. 19; Rev. v. 9); that nourishes the soul (John vi. 54); that secures pardon (Heb. ix. 22); that gives access to God (Heb. x. 19; ix. 12); that cleanses (1 John i. 7; Rev. i. 5); that purges from sin (Heb. ix. 14); and that fits for service (1 Pet. i. 2). *In it* we have communion with the Lord (1 Cor. x. 16). *By it* we are brought nigh (Ephes. ii. 13); and *through it* we are justified (Rom. v. 9; iii. 25).

That 'the blood' in each case simply means 'the death,' is evident from the fact that the two terms are used interchangeably to express the same thing. 'We are reconciled to God *by the death* of His Son' (Rom. v. 10). We are 'baptized into His death' (Rom. vi. 3). We are 'buried with Him by baptism unto death' (ver. 4). We are 'planted together in the likeness of His death' (ver. 5). He 'tasted death for every man' (Heb. ii. 9). It was through death that He destroyed him who had the power of death (ver. 14). We 'do shew forth the Lord's death till He come' (1 Cor. xi. 26). In Scripture it is the death and resurrection of Christ, and nothing else, that is spoken of as essential to the world's redemption. 'It behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead' (Luke xxiv. 46). And the mere fact that He was *willing* for our sakes thus to humble Himself, to live and to die for us, and to perform perfectly the will of God, was surely enough to constitute the sacrifice by virtue of which sin can be forgiven and man restored. Long-honoured theories about 'satis-

faction' and 'substitution' may not be able to find adequate support if this be admitted; but such a calamity, if it be one, cannot be avoided; simple Christians have to deal, not with theories of any kind, but with revealed truths.

What revelation further teaches is, that Christ 'was made a curse for us,' in the sense that 'cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree' (Gal. iii. 13); that He was 'made sin for us'—treated as a criminal on our account (2 Cor. v. 21); that as 'the Captain of our salvation' He 'was made like unto His brethren,'—sharing, in His sufferings for righteousness' sake, the lot of the noblest and the best in all ages; that as Mediator and Redeemer, He 'was made perfect through sufferings' (Heb. ii. 10); that 'it pleased the Lord to bruise Him and to put Him to grief' (Isa. liii. 10); that He 'put away sin *by the sacrifice* of Himself' (Heb. ix. 26); that He was at once the 'sacrifice' and the 'Lamb.'

Yet *how* He was so, it seems scarcely possible for us fully to conceive. For 'He was not offered upon any altar, not slain by a priest, not burned with fire, not offered either under or by the law; but put to death against even the Decalogue itself—by false witness and by murder.'

Paul undoubtedly, in his epistles, gives great prominence to 'the cross,' but it is evidently only on account of the reproach with which crucifixion was then connected. It was the knowledge that Christ suffered this particular form of death—the death of a slave, of one 'put to open shame'—that was the great stumbling-block both to Jew and Gentile. The apostle neither denies nor extenuates this fact. He scorns any attempt to conceal or to modify the truth by eloquence of speech (1 Cor. i. 17). He simply flings himself, as it were, into the position, and hails the

shame as highest honour. 'God forbid,' he says, 'that I should glory *save in the cross* of our Lord Jesus Christ.' But why? Simply because *thereby* 'the world was crucified unto him, and he unto the world' (Gal. vi. 14). 'I am myself,' he says, 'crucified with Christ;' and again, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh' (v. 24). So to the Romans,—'Our old man is crucified with Him' (Rom. vi. 6). All these passages refer not to any atonement that could be rendered, but to that life of self-denial and renunciation of the world's esteem which is the Christian's peculiar calling. They who refuse thus *to suffer* with their Lord are 'the enemies of the cross of Christ' (Phil. iii. 18).

To the Corinthians he says, 'I determined not to know anything among you *save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*' But again, why? Simply because this doctrine, that a crucified man was the Saviour of the world, was mere 'foolishness' to the would-be-wise. Further, he insists that the cross, and not 'enticing words of man's wisdom,' was 'the power of God unto salvation' from all evil. And if once more we ask, *how* can this be? the answer is at hand,—because it teaches us that spiritual deliverance in every man begins in renunciation of the world's esteem, grows through suffering, and is consummated only in death. The sacred writers continually dwell on this suffering of shame as the highest proof of Christ's love to man and obedience to the Father. 'Who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, *despising the shame*' (Heb. xii. 2). 'He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, *even the death of the cross*' (Phil. ii. 8).

With the death of Christ, His resurrection is in Scripture invariably connected. 'If Christ be not *raised,*' says the apostle, 'your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins' (1 Cor. xv. 17). 'Who is he that condemneth? It is

Christ that died, *yea rather that is risen again*' (Rom. viii. 34). It was through death and resurrection that Christ constituted Himself 'the second Adam,' the head of restored humanity.

Let the *object* of these remarks be borne in mind. They are in reply to the objection that Paul preached 'the Cross' rather than 'the Kingdom;' that the Cross, and not the Kingdom, is the Gospel; that at Pentecost the one took the place of the other, much as the Christian Lord's day first supplemented, and then superseded, the Jewish Sabbath.

No assertion can be more unfounded or unscriptural. Paul and the rest of the apostles, *everywhere* and at all times, preached 'the Kingdom.' Why he preached the Cross also, he has not left us in doubt; and no one acknowledging his inspiration and authority as an apostle will deny that what he did we ought to do. And not the less so because the crucifix, instead of being the symbol of degradation, has now become the emblem of the world's glory, the boast of its highest civilization, and the favourite ornament of its triflers.

A *third* objection will of course be, that the admission of the possibility of any restoration after death necessarily involves the denial of *the eternity* of future punishment.

This it certainly does. But is the only element in future retribution unchangeableness—infinite duration? Has it no end or aim in any case but that of continued suffering? Scripture does not teach this. It says, indeed, 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal; but what right have we to throw the whole stress of the sentence upon *one word*, signifying duration indeed, but used for periods of greatly varying duration?

We have already seen that ordinarily 'life eternal' is but another phrase for 'the kingdom,' and it is so here. 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, *inherit the kingdom* prepared for you from the foundation of the world,' is—no one will dispute it—equivalent to 'the righteous (shall go) into life eternal.' Why, then, may not everlasting punishment, in like manner, simply mean perpetual exclusion from 'the kingdom'? The word translated punishment (*κολασιν*) commonly implies disciplinary judgment. Can no punishment, taking the form of deprivation, be at once everlasting and disciplinary?

Why should we refuse to observe that in Scripture sinners *in active opposition* to Christ at His coming, and sinners by defect, whether Jew or Gentile, are differently dealt with? Why should we so resolutely disregard the distinctions which are made by our Lord between the instructed and the uninstructed, or neglect to notice that all His most awful warnings are addressed to the disciples? Why should we persist in confounding the grave, the invisible world—all that is intended by the words Sheol and Hades,—with whatever is meant by the word Gehenna? Why should we close our eyes to the fact that Scripture speaks of 'little wrath' and 'great wrath,' of 'few stripes' and of 'many stripes,' or affect to believe that such phrases can be intended to describe eternal torments in hell? Why should we suppose that if unbelief does not involve *undying* wrath in God, or if His claim on the creature for *love* is not backed by the threat of untold torment for ever when it is withheld, that *then* one of the most powerful motives to repentance is taken away, and that cold indifference to the spiritual condition of others is but too likely to supersede the charity which now finds its most appropriate exercise in care for the highest welfare of those

by whom we are surrounded? * Why should we talk as if we thought it more important to deliver a man from hell than from evil? We *can* only do so on the supposition (utterly false) that it is a *greater* thing to be instrumental in saving a fellow-creature from eternal misery than from present iniquity; that punishment is a sadder thing than pollution; that pain is worse than sin. Why should we confound, as we perpetually do, passages which speak of the retributions of earth with those that refer to the retributions of the world to come? Why should we continue to quote the text, 'As the tree falleth so it shall be,' as if it had the slightest connection with the final lot of any man?

It is difficult to imagine that there is a *good* man in the whole world who would inflict on any creature, for the worst of crimes, *prolonged torment* (to say nothing of eternity) if he could by any means substitute for it a punishment the tendency and ultimate effect of which should be the restoration of the criminal to a better mind. If a human being exist capable of such cruelty, is there any one who would recognize him as a Christian? Why, then, should we libel God by assuming that He is different from what He would have us to be? Has Christ not called us to forgive our enemies, and to do good to those that hate and despitely use us,

* "The poet Cowper, writing to the Rev. John Newton, observes, 'It is reserved for mercy to subdue the corrupt inclinations of mankind, which threatenings and penalties, through the depravity of the heart, have always had a tendency rather to inflame.' It is curious, too, to observe how the very same objections which are now brought forward against any *unfamiliar* truth, were, in the earlier stages of the evangelical movement, made to what was then regarded as a novelty,—the doctrine of justification by faith. Cowper writes rejoicingly that his brother had at last come to suspect that there were greater things concealed in the Bible than were generally believed or allowed to be there."—"Grimshaw's Life and Correspondence," vol. i., p. 149.

in order that we may be perfect even as our Father who is in Heaven is perfect? (Matt. v. 48).

That the doctrine of the kingdom should set itself against this misrepresentation of the Heavenly Father is no more wonderful than that it should be antagonistic to the abominations of heathenism.

The notion that it would be *dangerous* to admit even the possibility of future restoration, since then mankind would be disposed to *defer* their repentance till the next world dawns upon them, is worth quite as much, and no more, than the kindred assertion that if it is once known that a man can be saved by faith and repentance *in age* after having enjoyed all the pleasures of sin, he will be sure to delay the sacrifice, and so have an advantage over the man who, converted in his youth, has spent his life in the service of God. Who does not know that every man really changed in his latter days, always feels the deepest sorrow for a misspent youth, and who can doubt that this will eminently be the case with all who in other worlds may find themselves in a corresponding condition?

Anything, however, would be better than the wretched and systematic *evasion* which now prevails in orthodox pulpits and evangelical circles on this solemn subject. At the present moment it is absolutely impossible to discover what the professed teachers of truth really *believe* in relation to the future destiny of mankind. Things must indeed have come to a frightful pitch when an orthodox magazine, *six years ago*, was allowed, without contradiction or rebuke, to say distinctly, 'In our time there is much reserve and dissimulation—all who know religious society know that the people are greatly deluded as to the real opinions of their ministers. There is a fear of the Jews which leads men to hide their profound convictions,

and temporize with the multitude. Silence, prevarication, compromise, false subscription, all these sins are common amongst us.* If this statement was justifiable six years ago, what is the case now? for the evil in question instead of lessening has been steadily advancing.

Even *forty years ago* John Foster writes, 'A number, not large, but of great piety and intelligence, of ministers within my acquaintance, have been *disbelievers* of the doctrine of eternal punishment; at the same time, *not feeling themselves imperatively called upon to make a public disavowal*, they content themselves with employing in their ministrations, strong general terms in denouncing the doom of impenitent sinners.'

But is this faith? Is it Christianity? Would any man in primitive times have suffered martyrdom for truth if Believers had felt at liberty in this way to conceal their real sentiments? One is greatly inclined to doubt the 'piety' of these men,—unless, indeed, piety is consistent with being 'fearful' (Rev. xxi. 8), and the love of Christian truth with unfaithfulness. Who can wonder that the evil seed thus sown has produced an abundant harvest of tares, which now so mingle with the wheat that it is almost impossible to separate them. Surely we may say 'an enemy hath done this.'

The real matter of complaint,—and it is a serious charge to make against the Christian Church,—is, that while now, as heretofore, permission is freely accorded to all men, to doubt or to deny eternal punishment, if only they do it vaguely, indeterminately, secretly, any attempt to be *honest* regarding it, to *justify* the denial by a careful appeal to Scripture, is, alike in orthodox and in evangelical circles, regarded as a sin scarcely to be pardoned.

* *Christian Spectator*, July, 1862.

The stronger the evidence adduced in such quarters for believing in future restoration, the greater is the enmity excited; the clearer the proof brought forward, the louder is the denunciation, and the deeper the curse pronounced on the disturber of received opinions. Even *the best*, while benevolently *wishing* that the doctrine of a future restoration may be true, are content to escape the trouble of investigation by *assuming* that nothing is revealed relating thereto, and thus conceal, from themselves, as well as from others their fixed determination not to inquire. To *admit* the possibility, or even probability that a doctrine at variance with our own is true, does not seem to carry with it any obligation to confess error or to teach the truth; but *to search*, and to become convinced that the revelation of God is really something different from what we have hitherto declared it to be, is to get into a position in which reserve becomes *conscious* dishonesty,—a state of mind too painful to be *willingly* encountered. So, to this day, *evasion* is the rule, *examination* the exception, and ‘fear of the Jews’ the prevailing *motive* of conduct.*

* The extreme difficulty of discovering *what* it is that Christian men believe in relation to the future of mankind finds a curious illustration in a little book now before me entitled—‘The Eternal Purpose of God,’ by Adelaide L. Newton; with a prefatory notice by the Rev. Canon M’Neile. In the preface, Dr. M’Neile speaks of the writer of this little book as one who ‘went at once to the Fountain-head.’ ‘She sat,’ he says, ‘at the Master’s feet. She imbibed from Himself, by the immediate action and teaching of the Holy Spirit, the fat things full of marrow which make glad and holy the city of God.’ Nowhere does he intimate the slightest dissent from what is written. Now, what does she say? Listen! ‘Ruin comes from the devil; salvation is in Christ.’ * * * What a picture of (Christ’s victory) is presented in Rev. xxi. 24. The SAVED NATIONS walking in the light of the heavenly city!’ How much larger is God’s scheme of mercy than we imagine! How slow we are to give Him credit for all He says! And again, ‘The Church of the first-born. What does this word imply? Does it not imply that *we* are in the sight of God as the first-fruits of the

A *fourth* objection may perhaps be put thus:—If we are to teach that man, *as man*—that *every* man coming into the world—is born ‘not under the wrath of God,’ but under grace, we shall no more hear the cry, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ We, in fact, pronounce such a cry to be a needless one—based on delusion. Equally needless must it then seem to say to the sinner, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved;’ for if the man is saved already, why should he be pointed to any way by which he may obtain that which he is even now in possession of? Conversion—the passage from death unto life—*then*, too, becomes needless. All spiritual distinctions in short are in this way destroyed, and evangelical religion appears to be, from first to last, ‘a delusion, a mockery, and a snare.’ Can this be the Gospel so long hidden from mankind?

As thus put, we candidly reply, CERTAINLY NOT! Let us, however, look at what has been stated a little more narrowly, and separate, if we can, the true from the false, for these are largely combined.

If the cry, ‘What must I do to be saved,’ *means* ‘from God’s wrath and eternal damnation,’ it is certainly an unscriptural one. The Jailer did not *mean* this. No one in Scripture utters such a cry. Its use in this sense is purely theological and unauthorized. The true cry of a

harvest? The very term implies *priority and pre-eminence* among others, and not totality and completeness in itself to the exclusion of others.’ * * * ‘As truly as it is God’s purpose, in a coming day, to save all Israel, and not merely an election from Israel, so He will save, not the Church only, as taken out of the world, but the very nations of the world from whom we are taken. The present dispensation of election does not annul, it only delays the *universality* of salvation.’ How these statements can be reconciled with any honest belief in the doctrine of eternal punishment, as *fought for* by all good evangelicals, it is hard to see.

convinced sinner is that of Paul, 'Lord what wouldst thou have me do?' or that of Peter's hearers, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' In neither of these cases was *more* meant than a desire to remedy as far as possible the evil that had been committed. The fear of hell does not come into view at all. The men to whom Peter spoke had ignorantly yet guiltily, crucified their Messiah. Paul had persecuted His disciples even unto death. What they ask for is guidance and instruction.

The direction, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,' *as that command is now commonly understood amongst us*, is equally unscriptural; leading sometimes to delusion, sometimes to perplexity, and generally to serious misconceptions regarding the essential nature of Christianity. Put thus barely, the demand is almost sure to be misunderstood, and faith to be regarded as a talisman and nothing more.

Further, when such teaching is illustrated, as it commonly is, by the looking of the Israelites on the brazen serpent,—an illustration, *not used by our Lord as explanatory of faith*, but simply of the 'lifting up' of Himself as the Saviour of the world—belief in Christ is but too likely to become a merely mental process, a momentary act of the mind, not only separable, but too often separated, from any change either of heart or purpose. This is not to 'call on the name of the Lord' (Acts ii. 21), but to say, 'Lord, Lord,' without departing from iniquity.

The teaching of Scripture is, *not*, 'Believe that Christ died *for you*, and you are safe; your guilt is transferred to Him; His righteousness is imputed to you.' But, 'Believe what Christ came to teach. Believe *on Him*, as what He has declared Himself to be—the only Saviour from the love and power of sin.' To say that in the salvation which God has provided, everything is done *for us*, is

simply absurd. 'Justification' is indeed not by works of our own, for nothing we have ever done or can do, *merits* anything; but 'salvation' must be worked out 'with fear and trembling,' and this because 'it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.'

Again, Conversion is not Regeneration. Whitefield was right when he prayed,—as he was accustomed to do,—'Lord, convert us more and more every day;' yet no one held more firmly than he, that 'Regeneration' was a purely Divine act,—a *new life* given by God, and incapable of enlargement or repetition. 'When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren,' did not mean, 'when thou art renewed,' but 'when thou hast seen thine error, and truly repented of it.'

Distinctions are not therefore destroyed by the assertion that all men are under grace. The only difference is, that He who by the Spirit of God has become convinced 'of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come,' instead of being directed to cry for salvation from hell, will be taught to pray, to struggle, and to hope for deliverance from the power of sin by faith in Christ; and to *believe* Him when He says that Satan's power is already gone, that the Prince of this world is already judged. It is on the recognition of this great fact that the final award rests. It is because Satan is judged that God hath appointed a day in which He will judge mankind by the Redeemer.

A *fifth* objection will probably be, that as the gospel now preached has everywhere been more or less owned of God to the conversion and salvation of men, it *must* have been presented in a form which He approves; that therefore change is not only inexpedient, but unlawful; that we *can* have no higher demonstration of the truth of any of our views than the fact that God honours them by

making them powerful to the pulling down of the strongholds of sin and Satan.

Those who rest on this ground should remember that it is no proof that God endorses *our views* because He blesses our endeavours to win men to Christ. The whole history of Christian effort, from the days of the apostles onward, is an answer to such a supposition. God is constantly owning the most imperfect messages, and honouring men who yet indulge in the most unwarranted assertions. How can it be otherwise, unless we believe that *all* truth is already in our possession; unless we deny that Scripture is progressive? Have we yet to learn that given truths are emphatically for given times; and that until the appointed time comes, the particular truth appropriate to, and intended for that age, is always veiled? Can we be ignorant that 'a truth coming before its time, if it has not practically the effect of error, is comparatively inoperative for good; that a truth has its full effect only when the world is ripe for it?'

Mr. Gladstone, in one of his interesting papers on 'Ecce Homo,' observes that one, and perhaps the main, reason why the kingdom of God, while abundantly predicted, is nowhere explained, but is kept in deep shade, *may be* that the Kingdom as well as the Kingship, the appointment of a new dispensation of brotherhood among men, as well as the supremacy of our Lord among that brotherhood, were things *reserved*, 'sown and stored in the apostles' mind to abide their time; like the spark laid up in ashes to await the moment when it shall be kindled into a flame.' It *may* be so, and if it is, 'the Kingdom' will perhaps yet, for years, continue to be generally understood only in its subjective aspects; its appreciation, as an objective reality, being reserved for a day yet to come.

A *sixth* objection will perhaps be, that the admission of an inferior salvation would tend to lower the standard of Christian attainment—already low enough,—and occasion men to be content with something less than that entire change of heart which, it is now professed, is essential to the safety of every man.

To this it might be enough to reply, that the tendency of the doctrine in question would obviously be the very opposite. *At present* little, if anything, is supposed to be lost by low attainment in the Divine life, since death, it is imagined, levels all distinctions among believers. *Then*, the folly of this supposition would be seen, and possibly a holy ambition would be enkindled for distinction in the world to come rather than in this.

Some other difficulties would also be met. It has been said (and truly) that,—explain it as we may,—Christianized society has always included *many* who are ‘pure in morals, disinterested and sympathizing, stoically upright and sensitively honourable, haters of profaneness, thankful and resigned, who yet—so far as man may judge from what he can observe—have never in their whole lives experienced any distinct love to God, any deep sense of sin, or any conscious need of forgiveness. To the last these persons have appeared more interested about the *least* concerns of this world than about the *greatest* of another.’ What ought we to think of such? The *good* in them must have been the work of the Spirit of God; for the fruits they have brought forth come not ‘from beneath,’ neither can they be the mere product of fallen humanity. Yet we can perceive no evidence whatever of a renewed heart. What ought we, then, to conclude in relation to such? ‘Say, are they lost or saved?’ I can find no satisfactory solution of this difficulty if I refuse to listen to St. Paul when he

declares God to be the Saviour of all men, but *especially* of them that believe.

Again, it is unquestionably true that there are injunctions in the Sermon on the Mount which, however admirable in themselves, and however practicable by one who is content to give up this world for the next, cannot be carried out *as they stand, and without compromise*, by any great organized community, representing, as modern governments do, *all classes* in society. They *suppose* a theocracy. Might not this circumstance alone lead us to doubt whether such injunctions were ever intended for nations? whether under this dispensation *national Christianity* was ever contemplated?

As things are, when any nation, *as such*, adopts Christianity, and professes to govern itself by the law of Christ, compromise is inevitable, and the conventionalisms of a *Christianized* community invariably take the place of the sterner and more rigid demands of the Master. But what the nation does *as an organized whole* is seldom surpassed by the individuals of which it is composed. The all but inevitable result, under such conditions, is *the general lowering, in practical life*, of a standard regarded as too high for the world as it is, although the original idea of right as laid down in 'the Book' may still be taught, and, in the abstract, revered.

Nowhere, however, are these 'counsels of perfection,' as they have recently been called, lowered. Nowhere is it implied that in after ages they would be somewhat modified, so as to adapt them to any given state of society. Yet nowhere are they supposed to be *practicable* in the world *as it is*, except in the case of individuals who are prepared to sacrifice self-interest, reputation, nay, life itself, in order to follow the Master. To take one instance only—

The law of Christ certainly seems to be clear in relation to non-resistance. The Christian is 'not to *strive*.' He is 'to return good for evil.' He is 'to overcome evil with good.' But that such a law is not intended for mixed communities, or for nations, is evident from the fact, that apart from miracle it would be impossible to govern any State for a single year on this principle.

Let no one be stumbled because it is said that the same law may be binding upon an individual believer, and yet not binding on the mixed body that constitutes a nation. Rather let him meditate on the fact that while nations, as such, are under law, and are rewarded or punished here according to their obedience or disobedience, the Church of the redeemed is not under law, but under grace. Hence the difference of their codes, of their lives, and of their inheritance in the future.

Do not let us deceive ourselves. The truth is, whether we recognise it or not, that the greater part of the morality practised day by day by all classes is *purely conventional*. We all shrink from adopting any course which seems to condemn others; *sometimes*, like religious slave-owners, playing our pleasant deceptions off in the face of the plainest truths, and *always* forgetful that we are using an instrument subtle enough and elastic enough to accommodate practical life to whatever standard may, at any particular period, happen to prevail in Christianized society. Thus it is man lowers the heavenly to the earthly; and, whether a preacher or a hearer, too often contrives to depress the Divine law to what he considers the absolute requirements of ordinary life.

The scepticism of the eighteenth century sprang up in a soil of this character; that of the nineteenth, destined, I fear, to prove eventually more desolating than its prede-

cessor, because connected with far more activity of mind, and a deeper earnestness in relation to life and its responsibilities, can only be checked by an end being put to the strange contrasts between words and things which now so perplex men.

A *final* objection—if anything like finality can be predicated of minds bent upon refusing everything to which they have been unaccustomed—will probably be, that the points urged have not been *proved*; that the argument advanced in favour of ‘the Gospel of the Kingdom’ does not amount to *demonstration*; that the treatment of the subject has not been *exhaustive*; that nothing short of exhaustive demonstration would justify the acceptance of what has been asserted.

The only reply that can be given to such an objection, if it be made, is, that on these conditions no moral truth whatever can be received, no portion of Divine Revelation heartily accepted. All that Bishop Butler has said on ‘probabilities,’ and on ‘speculative difficulties’ in relation to the Christian religion, bears equally on every truth it reveals. To us, probability is the very guide of life.

As for *exhaustive* treatment, it is not pretended to. That which has been written is simply offered for consideration. It is, indeed, a result of earnest and painstaking inquiry, but not the less of an inquiry the imperfection of which no one can feel more deeply than the writer.

Were it, however, other than imperfect; were everything said that could be said on such a subject, and in the best possible form—were it *proved* that the only Gospel in the New Testament is that of the ‘Kingdom,’ it would still be to little purpose. Some one is reported to have made it his boast that while his opinions had often been changed by what he had heard in Parliament, his vote had always

been with his party. Such a course few would blame. Changes are rarely produced either by evidence or by reasoning. Before evidence can be estimated, prejudice must be removed; and before reasoning will be listened to, the supposed duty—with so many all but imperative—to resist innovation at all hazards must be abandoned. ‘It has been in performing this duty of guarding what was believed to be God’s truth that the greatest errors recorded in the history of spiritual civilization have been fallen into.’ And it is so still. Men never do more to promote error or to injure moral advancement, than when they blindly fancy themselves bound to resist whatever shakes long cherished opinions, or unsettles minds that cling to what they believe in by mere force of adhesion.

The practical effect of this ill-judged bias in favour of the past is, in relation to divine truth, every way mischievous. Where submission is complete, almost every motive for the further examination of the Word of God departs. The Bible then becomes not so much an instructor as a *witness*. Indeed, in some quarters it is not unusual to hear it distinctly asserted, that sacred Scripture was never intended to *teach* doctrine, but only to *prove* it; that to learn primitive truth we must resort to the creeds. If this be true, investigation of Scripture becomes a mere impertinence; the exercise of private judgment is presumption. Many *like* to accept this conclusion. Few hunger and thirst after truth. Some say, and perhaps truly, that they have no time to seek it. Others consider themselves excused because they are too much engaged in impressing what is generally accepted, to feel justified in devoting time and strength to what seems to them new, and, therefore, doubtful. Some fancy that what is not obvious, and cannot be attained without labour, is scarcely

intended for the men of the nineteenth century; and multitudes pride themselves in a fancied humility, which is, after all, only disguised indolence, under the influence of which they profess themselves content to wait for further light until they enter that world where what they know not now shall then be made plain.

How many, too, who professedly repudiate authority habitually live as if they were its slaves. They have had their doubts, but they have suffocated them. They would gladly investigate, but they dare not do so, lest inconvenience or loss should be the result. They love truth, but they are not prepared to become martyrs for truth. If young, they justify delay, in the hope that a few years will place them in a position to speak with more authority. In middle and active life they feel obliged to postpone independent research until present demands on time and strength are somewhat lessened. As age draws on the fear of going *too far* becomes paramount, and the possibility of falling into error more than counterbalances the wish to advance.

Such is life; and what it now is, it probably ever will be. Let us, then, judge no man before the time. To his own master he must stand or fall. But let us not forget that this is the way in which truths perish; that this is one of the many flowery by-paths in which multitudes rest, and resting, fall short of 'the kingdom.'

AN EPISODE.

A FEW weeks ago it happened to me to spend a Sunday morning in a Kentish village, the inhabitants of which consisted, for the most part, of artisans and labourers employed in a neighbouring factory. Within reach of the cluster of houses in which these men chiefly resided were two churches, and four or five chapels belonging to different denominations of Nonconformists. Day schools, Sunday schools, and other means of improvement had existed in or near the village for at least thirty years, and everything appeared to be done for the population that a wise ingenuity in benevolence could devise and carry out.

I had some difficulty in ascertaining what proportion of the inhabitants attended any place of worship, for accurate statistics had not been taken; but the general impression appeared to be that comparatively few availed themselves of these 'means of grace.' The churches were but thinly attended: the chapels were not in better condition. An intelligent person employed in the factory told me he supposed that probably five in a hundred might occasionally attend church, but that *as a rule* the people preferred to remain at home on Sunday, as they evidently did not take any interest whatever in religious matters.

A walk through the village confirmed this opinion. At the corner of every lane little groups of men might be

seen stretched on the grass, chatting, or listening to one reading a newspaper. Others gathered round the public-house, more or less sober, more or less quiet or noisy. The majority remained in their homes, some lazily lounging about the doors, some enjoying themselves with their children, some studying politics, and some searching diligently for the latest piece of sensational intelligence that could be found in one or other of the cheap publications of the day.

It was not difficult to see what these people really were. They were, on the whole, a sober and industrious population; not ignorant, for the younger men had for the most part been trained in the day and Sunday schools; not devoid of domestic virtues, for most of them were good fathers or mothers, and their homes were as happy as the homes of such men well can be. The peculiarity was, that spite of early habit and instruction, they appeared to have a settled aversion to public worship, and seemed fully determined that no religious considerations whatever should interfere with enjoyments which, in their character, were probably neither better nor worse than those of mankind generally.

Many of these people were, of course, careworn, for sickness and sorrow are seldom absent from a poor man's family; and others were obviously hungering after satisfactions they could not reach. On some sin had but too plainly done its work, and proved, as it always does, the parent of that indescribable dissatisfaction which renewed sensuality only aggravates and reflection but deepens. The thought could not be repressed,—‘Whither are these people tending?’ In a few brief years their life of toil will have ended. ‘Is it to be followed only by eternal life in torment?’ or, ‘Are they destined after ages of stu-

pendous misery to be blotted out of existence?' In either case, better had it surely been for each and all of them never to have been born. These men cannot plead ignorance, for instruction has been pressed upon them without ceasing. Alas! it can only be said, 'This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted.'

The instant association of these words with others from the same heavenly lips unexpectedly solved the problem which had been distressing me. He who uttered them regarding the toiling multitudes of Judea spake not in anger but in grief; used them not as indicative of His wrath, but as showing what need there was for fresh manifestations of His love. He mourned over the people as sheep having no shepherd.* He looked upon them not as weeds to be burned, but as a harvest to be reaped. They, like the half heathen Samaritans, were pronounced *ripe*, not for destruction, but for gathering in, and He bids His disciples pray that more labourers might be sent into this harvest of God, for *it* is plenteous, but the labourers are few (Matt. ix. 36—38).

So far as we know, the labourers never came. Did the

* This figure does not represent the people merely as untaught, but ungoverned by any one who could be to them what the shepherd is to his sheep—a guide and a ruler. In Scripture the term "shepherd" is applied in a metaphorical sense to *Cyrus* (Isa. xlv. 8); to *princes and rulers* generally (Jer. ii. 8; xii. 10; xxiii. 1; xxv. 34; Ezek. xxxiv. 2); to *God* (Psa. xxiii. 1); to *Christ* (John x. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 25); to *Apostles* (John xxi. 16); and to *Elders* who teach *authoritatively*, and in that character demand *submission* (1 Pet. v. 2—4; Heb. xiii. 17). The spiritual shepherd in Scripture always unites government with teaching, the primary idea being that of *authoritative rule*. A minister of the Gospel occupies no such position.

harvest then perish? Assuredly not. That which had been ripened by God Himself was not to be thrown away. By their half-conscious weariness of life; by their experience of its emptiness; by their cravings after a good they could not reach; by their lost and wandering condition, these people were testifying, as men do everywhere, to their need of light, of guidance, of control, and they were thus like 'a field already white unto the harvest.' The earthly reaper did not appear, but the heavenly one is never absent. As if in anticipation of His arrival, Jesus 'went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of *the kingdom*, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.'

And is then, I said to myself, the condition of these English villagers so very different from that of the Jews and Samaritans that their lot should be different? I could see no reason why it should, nor could I find in Scripture anything which seemed to indicate so great a diversity. So I walked on, fully assured that, notwithstanding the indifference I had observed and regretted, the heart of the heavenly Father was still warm towards His children, and that in due time—here or hereafter—His hand would be stretched out for their deliverance.

APPENDIX.

HADES, OR THE INVISIBLE WORLD.

THE doctrine of 'the Kingdom,' when regarded as it has been in the preceding pages, as *future*, and as revealing a provision for the reward of the faithful and the restoration of the lost, naturally supposes a doctrine relating to the invisible world which harmonizes therewith. It cannot, therefore, be amiss to inquire whether any teaching of this character is to be found in Scripture? We think there is.

Assuming—which it is necessary to do here for the sake of brevity—that the soul does not sleep till the day of the resurrection; that the testimony of Holy Writ is on this point clear; and that modern notions about departed saints mingling with the angels, joining in their praises and harping with their harps—a doctrine neither accepted nor esteemed in the Primitive Church—has nothing to support it in the word of God, it may be well to consider, in the light of Scripture, what may possibly have been the intention of God in establishing an intermediate state; on the *probable* part it will have in the advancement of character; and on the degree of intercourse which may be supposed to take place *there* between Christian and Christian.

It seems to me impossible to express the probable condition of the soul on entering the invisible world, in terms more graphic and truthful than those which have been employed for

this end by the late Mr. Isaac Taylor. 'The spirit,' says he, 'is then, when freed from the body, to be thrown upon the play of its AFFECTIONS,—whether these be malign or benign, pure or depraved; and it is, moreover, to be thrown upon them in presence of objects of the most stupendous magnitude. In place of the measured and mingled emotions of the present life, there are to be encountered in the next stage of our existence excitements of overwhelming force, and *all of one quality*. And amid them the soul, quiescent in regard to what might move it to wonder or terror, is to be nakedly sensitive to the MORAL QUALITY of what it beholds. Human nature, thus reduced to its most simple element, shall exist in one mood only,—that of AN INTENSE CONSCIOUSNESS OF ITS OWN MORAL CONDITION.' *

In such a world, with ends so exalted to be accomplished, it seems but reasonable to suppose that it will be a state *in the main of silence and reflection*; to the saint, one of peaceful and refreshing stillness, conveying to his spirit a precious foretaste of that holy rest in God which he shall hereafter enjoy. Nor is it at all probable that such a state would have been named by our Lord himself 'paradise,' unless it had been for His children a land of delight, a place of joy as well as of rest. It *must* be so; since, whatever may be the *relative defects* either of that state or of its inhabitants, everything will be animated by that Divine Spirit, the fruits of which, in all worlds, are love, joy, and peace.

Nor should it be forgotten that 'by rest in holy contemplation, far more than in action, is the creature perfected. God may get something from our works. He gets much more when we rest, and so pass out of self and its variability wholly into His will. Looked at in this way, God's day of rest becomes symbolic of our own. It is a day without an evening. Of other days it is said, the evening and the morning make the day. But on the seventh day we read of

* 'Saturday Evening,' p. 389.

no evening,—an omission significant and full of deep teaching. All the days of labour have this evening, for they need it; but now the day of days has come, without an evening. Now no darkness or shades return.*

That saints, in such a condition, may interchange thoughts and words of love and wisdom seems taught us by the relationship between Lazarus and Abraham, and perhaps not less so by the conversation of Moses and Elias with Christ on Mount Tabor. Indeed, some such intercourse between ourselves and those who have *instrumentally* formed our characters on earth, would seem almost essential to that sense of identity which is needful to make the discipline of this world effective in the invisible for further growth in goodness. Nor will diversities of language offer any obstacle to this communion. *Multæ terricolis linguæ, Cœlestibus una.*

That it will be an educational world, a sort of upper school for the believer, I cannot myself doubt. 'If the spiritual and the physical parts of our nature are to be severed, and to be held in disunion during an extended period, and yet are afterwards to be recomposed; it would seem probable that the spiritual part which survives will then be occupied in bringing to maturity some of those powers, or in cherishing those habits, that were the most obstructed by the movements of that physical machinery which falls to the dust.' The soul may then, with a view to its ultimate destiny, be brought, so to speak, 'within and among the stupendous inner movements of the universe; and may get a full view of objects, personages, and actions, the merest glimpse of which, constituted as we are of matter and mind, would dissever the frail structure of nature, or would at least so excite the imagination as to overpower entirely the moral sense.'† If this be so, a residence in the world of spirits would seem all but indispensable to the perfection of character, and to fitness for that still higher life, which is to be entered upon after the resurrection.

* Jukes' 'Types of Genesis.'

† 'Saturday Evening,' pp. 381—383.

How the lapse of *time* will be marked there we know not. There will be no signs in the heavens by which to note its passage, and probably no night there. Time *may* therefore seem to pass with a swiftness that to us is inconceivable. If our happiest hours on earth are those which seem to fly with the greatest rapidity, why should not the sense of *nearness* to perfect bliss be vivid or otherwise in proportion to the moral state of each individual? If it be so, to one years will be but as hours, while to another they may be as weeks or months are to us.

That there will be *innumerable shades of character* in that world can scarcely be doubted, or that these will be marked by corresponding distinctions. Bishop Newton somewhere suggests the remarkable analogy which subsists between the description of heaven (he should have said of *Hades*) which is given in the fourth chapter of the Revelation, as well as in Ezekiel (xl.—xliv.), and that of the *tabernacle service*, which was arranged *according to the pattern* showed to Moses in the mount. These descriptions may possibly be intended to teach us that the holy and blessed service of the invisible world is somewhat adumbrated by that of the Jewish tabernacle.*

Now as the tabernacle, like the temple, had a threefold division, viz., the holiest of all, the holy place, and the outer court, we shall not perhaps be far from the truth if we suppose that in the world of spirits those who are intended to be the 'kings and priests' of the new earth, and who are therefore the peculiar people of God, form a company by themselves, and are *nearer* to God than others; that those who are in a lower state of spiritual development occupy a position which corresponds to 'the holy place;' and that the 'outer court' worshippers are those who, although believers in Christ, have,

* 'The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews favours, by obscure intimations, as well as by the purport of his argument, the Jewish opinion that the tabernacle, and the worship established by Moses in the Arabian desert, were a *symbolic model* of the visible economy of spirits.'—*Isaac Taylor*.

in consequence of their negligence and sin, failed while on earth to rise to that moral and spiritual elevation to which they were called. And yet, as was the case in Judea, they may at other times mingle, acting and reacting on each other in the promotion of truth and holiness.

That the invisible world is to *every* believer a foretaste of everlasting blessedness may safely be assumed; but it by no means follows that it is a world of EQUAL happiness to all. We may *recognize* there our departed Christian friends; nay, we may enjoy their society, and yet by the intercourse be led only the more deeply to regret the wasted opportunities of earth. We may be but outer court worshippers, and they may be in the holiest of all. When *they* rejoice, we may sometimes have to weep. When they reap the reward of their faith and devotedness, we may be suffering *by deprivation* the just recompence of our inconsistency and folly. For some will be 'saved so as by fire.' *Growth* may indeed be anticipated for all; since much that once greatly hindered will be withdrawn for ever. No more will the body be a drag upon the soul. No more will it be the occasion of irritability or evil desire. No more will its necessities chain us to the material, or bring over us weariness and anxiety. But the rate of progress may be very different. For if it be true that human nature in its *present* form is only the rudiment of a more extended existence, we can hardly do otherwise than assume that the future must be so involved in our present constitution as to be affected by it in every step and stage of its advancement. If, then, the 'wood, hay, and stubble' which has been reared on a good foundation will in the invisible have to be separated from the more precious materials which constitute the solid and enduring in Christian character, it follows of course that while *some*, happily *uniting the past with the present*, may be able to sing—and with a far deeper meaning than that of David,—'one thing have I [always] desired of the Lord, that I might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, *others*, unable thus

to harmonize the state they have left with that on which they have entered, will have *to unlearn* much on which they once prided themselves, and painfully *to get rid* of more which, had they been wise, would never have been allowed to gather about them.

Such, as I imagine, is Hades, or the invisible world, *in relation to the believer*; and nothing in Scripture, I think, forbids us to suppose that what has been advanced is mainly true: that while the world of which we speak is but *preparatory* to higher blessedness, and probably to more active employments, it is nevertheless a world of peace, of reflection, and of improvement; a state of communion with God, not less than of fellowship with man; a paradise, the value of which in relation to our eternal destiny we shall probably never understand, and certainly never adequately appreciate, till we ourselves are permitted to enter it.

Of those who depart hence without any good hope of rest in Christ less can be said. But it is by no means improbable that as the opposite department of *Hades*, which is devoted to men who have not been renewed by the Spirit of God, is also a temporary abode, it may, *as a transition state*, be to multitudes disciplinary and educational, even if it be to others simply punitive, and only preparatory to final and endless condemnation,—to *total destruction* both of body and soul in *Gehenna*.

That souls in this condition begin, in the separate state, to reap that which they have sown on earth can scarcely be doubted. Pain and sorrow, 'the fruit of their own devices,' is their natural portion. We gather as much as this at least from the parable of the rich man, since he is described as ever *sorrowing*, and parted from the righteous by an impassable gulf. I say 'sorrowing,' because the word 'torment' does not accurately express our Lord's thought. The word used (Luke xvi. 23) is *βασάνοις*,—the same word that Matthew adopts

(iv. 24) to express the 'divers diseases and torments' to which the sick were exposed; and that which Peter selects to denote the suffering of 'just Lot,' *vexed* (ἐβασάνιζεν) with the filthy conversation of the wicked. In verses 24 and 25 another word is used for 'tormented' (ὀδυνῶμαι), which is in this same Gospel elsewhere translated 'sorrowing' (Luke ii. 48), a phrase which very naturally expresses what we may reasonably suppose to be the rich man's state of mind.

Another peculiarity should also be noticed, viz., that neither the joy nor the suffering seems to be directly inflicted by God, but is rather the natural working out of law acting retributively *on the mind*. In this respect the teachings of this parable differ materially from what we are told regarding the 'lake of fire.' Whether the fact that Dives, when suffering, distinctly expresses pity for others, and desires their timely repentance, is intended to indicate, as some think, that the retributions of *Hades* may be—nay, that in some cases they *are*, disciplinary as well as punitive, many will of course doubt; but it is certainly a very different state of mind from that which is commonly attributed to the lost. It is, at all events, *possible* that, with many, the sorrows of the invisible world may be introductory to that further probation in the world (or age) to come, which Scripture certainly *hints at* (Rev. xxii. 2; Matt. xii. 32).

To those who may be stumbled at the very idea of any probation beyond that of earth as involving the existence of evil out of hell, it may be remarked that from the teachings of the Bible it is an indisputable fact that evil *existed* before it was manifested on earth, that 'the angels who left their first estate' did so, if not under temptation from without, certainly from the workings of evil within them; and that *there is nothing whatever, either in the Bible or in the analogy of God's dealings, which should lead us to suppose that moral trial terminates here for ALL men.*

If then we ask, What, from the teaching, or rather, dim in-

timations of Scripture, may be regarded as the *probable* condition, immediately after death, of persons who while on earth were ignorant of or unaffected by the Gospel—such as the idolatrous heathen, and those among ourselves who live and die in mere brutal animalism? or further, What is the lot of that great mass of nominal Christians, papal or Protestant, who, having enjoyed various degrees of light, have yet been untouched by truth in any sense which would involve either its hearty reception or absolute rejection? we may, I think, without presumption say that, with the rest of mankind, they all pass into what is termed *Hades*, or the invisible world, where the soul, immaterial, and destined for a further and future existence, continues to live apart from its earthly habitation; that they dwell, under whatever conditions, in a locality separated from that of the saints, and in a state corresponding to the character they have formed and confirmed when on earth; that, like the righteous, they too are ‘thrown upon their affections,’ become keenly ‘sensitive to the moral quality of what they behold,’ and exist in one mood only, that of ‘an intense consciousness of their own moral condition.’ We may also, I think, find a justification for the further conjecture that life will with them also be in the main one of silence and reflection, although perhaps not unaccompanied by occasional intercourse with others. Yet of this we may be sure, that the very conditions which will tend to enhance the joy of the righteous will deepen the sorrows of those who have misused their opportunities.

That among the unregenerate there will be *degrees* in sorrow corresponding to differences in character, as exact and as real as the differences which we have already supposed will exist among those who have alike departed from the world in the faith of Christ, may be regarded as certain. The heathen, and those who have *never heard* of Christ will be one class. Those who have heard, but heard amiss,—heard as if they heard not,—will form another. Those who, loving evil better

than good, have deliberately refused to listen to the voice of warning, and 'counted themselves unworthy of eternal life,' will be a third, and a very different class from either of the preceding. Whether, from the parable already noticed, we may infer that those who have died in unbelief will look upon and be able to converse with those who are in a state of rest is by no means clear; since it is always difficult to separate what may be termed the machinery of such a composition from that which constitutes its essential character; but it certainly implies, as I have already observed, that *desires* for the deliverance of others from the world of sorrowing and unrest may spring up in the invisible, a state of mind which at least indicates a conviction that the path trodden has been foolish and evil, and which is certainly *an approach* to the penitent renunciation of it, however late such repentance may have been exercised.

Is it wrong, then, to conclude that, in exact accordance with their moral condition, each separate class of the unrenewed in *Hades*, which is to them 'a prison,' is shut up so to speak alone with his *conscience*, now enlightened to perceive the difference between good and evil; with his *past self*, whatever may have been its precise character; and with his *hopes or fears* for the future, according as the one or the other may predominate in his meditations? Thought, now not to be escaped, may thus burn up one with feverish unrest, and torment another with vain regrets for a wasted life, and ceaseless longings for a peace known to be possessed by those who on earth were ridiculed and despised.

To the Antediluvians—specially mentioned in all probability as those who might be regarded as *the most hopeless*, having perished in their sin by a signal and direct judgment of God—Christ, after His crucifixion, we are plainly told, 'went and preached;' and '*for this cause*,' that they might be 'judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit' (1 Pet. iii. 18—20; iv. 6). Why then that most unnatural desire, so commonly felt, to wrench and

wrest the apostle's words from their obvious meaning, in order to *get rid* of the supposition that later heathen may elsewhere listen to a message never delivered to them on earth? Why should we not rather *cherish* the hope that the glad tidings of redeeming love may *there* fall upon the ears of myriads as sweet music? Is it *unreasonable*—for it is certainly not unscriptural—to suppose that *then*—made conscious of ill desert, and sensible that they did not while on earth, as they might have done, recognize the invisible in the things that are seen (Rom. i. 20)—they may rejoice to hear that deliverance from evil is yet possible even *for them*, and thus long to be brought under a training adapted to their circumstances, and calculated both to elevate and to bless them?

Sharers in the common lot, the common consequence of the fall in Adam, they have eaten of the fruits of the earth in sorrow *all the days of their life*, and in the sweat of their brow have they sustained existence till they returned unto the ground out of which they were taken; and shall it be accounted a strange thing that now, freed from the body, freed also from the labours and occupations connected with its sustenance, freed from the tyranny of blind passion, and freed too from the despotism of wicked rulers, they should at length lift up their souls to God in hope of ultimately obtaining a knowledge of the true character of their hitherto unknown Redeemer? Less than this can scarcely be included in the words, 'Where sin abounded, grace did *much more* abound' (Rom. v. 20).

Nor is the case very different with those who, in various imperfect forms, have heard the Gospel, yet have neglected or misunderstood it. Surely for *them* too there is room for education and improvement. No longer under the '*captivity*' of Satan; no longer bewildered by the incessant occupations and anxieties of mortal life; with no earthly supports to cling to; no 'things that are seen' ever conflicting with, and obscuring the 'things that are unseen;' sensible of their weakness; understanding the nature of moral evil as they

never understood it before, and apprehending the character of God in a way of which they were never before conscious, why may not the choice once more be theirs,—to live or die? In the midst of light they may perchance no longer persevere in the folly which characterized their course while in spiritual darkness.

It may indeed not be certain that in the world of transition of which I speak, any *sure* hope can be enjoyed; it may be impossible that *there* any one should enter into the peace which on earth follows the consciousness of forgiven sin, or be able to speak, as such can, of being 'saved already,' or of having 'passed from death unto life;' but men may surely cease to 'kick against the pricks,' and they may have grace given them to wait, amid the 'fearful looking for of judgment,' with a hope, however faint, that on the 'new earth' they may be permitted to serve God, though it be only as 'hewers of wood or drawers of water.'

I do not of course pretend that all this is clearly revealed; for the *direct teachings* of the Bible relate only to *present* duty. But *there is nothing in Scripture against* what has been said; nothing that *forbids* the hope of mercy beyond the grave. On the contrary, there is very much in the New Testament to encourage such an expectation—very much that distinctly points to a large restoration of those whom most account as lost (John xii. 32; Rom. v. 18, 19; viii. 20; xi. 32; Col. i. 19, 20; Heb. ii. 14; Rev. xxi. 24.)

But the works of God, whether natural or moral, are, as a rule, gradual. Nothing is perfected without labour and toil, and only by very slow steps can it be supposed that those who have *here* neglected the things that belong to their eternal peace will be raised from their lost estate, and made fit for the higher occupations of a better world. Thoughts and feelings far enough from purity and goodness may still cleave to them—for sin has its abode in the soul, not in the body,—and the eradication of evil habits, the sad result of years of self-indulgence and perversity, may require both time and discipline before they can be lost in perfected holiness. Our God, how-

ever, is wonderfully patient, and as He himself tells us, 'long-suffering and full of compassion.' The work of Christ, too, is greater than we sometimes imagine,—His grace *further reaching*, and His pity beyond compare. Let us beware, then, of limiting the Most High; of supposing that we can measure thoughts and intentions which are infinite, or of presuming to assert—which Scripture nowhere does—that a mercy which 'endureth for ever' cannot be exercised in any world but this.

Yet must we not, on the other hand, either deny or seek to evade the thought that a *dread possibility* still remains; that there are those whom silence and sorrow will only harden; that there are those whose spirits will be seared rather than softened by processes which, intended to melt, in their case issue only in deeper insensibility to good. Of such it becomes us not to speak. Stings of conscience, incessant, and unrelieved by distracting occupations, but ever failing to accomplish that for which they have been sent; selfish regrets unmingled with any higher aspiration; envy and hatred dominant, yet without the possibility of gratification; the utter absence of anything like that 'godly sorrow' which leadeth to repentance,—dejection, but no submission,—despair, but no penitence,—remorse, but no grief,—*these* are the characteristics of the man who, finally rejecting the gift of God, is rewarded according to his ways.

That the lot of such, however few they may comparatively be, will be *utter destruction*, seems to be revealed. EVIL IS NOT TO BE ETERNAL; and because it was never intended to be so, God graciously, after the Fall, cut off our first parents from the tree of life, *lest, eating thereof, they should live for ever*. IMMORTAL MONSTERS HAVE NO PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE OF GOD. All life is in Christ. We live because He lives. We rise from the dead because He rose. He alone is the 'Prince of Life,'—the 'firstborn from the dead,'—the 'firstfruits of them that slept,' and so the sure sign and pledge of the last great harvest.

(B.)

THE ETERNITY OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

THE teaching of Scripture regarding the *duration* of punishment in the world to come has so direct a bearing on the doctrine of the Kingdom, that it seems impossible satisfactorily to discuss the one without reference to the other. For if ordinarily received opinions on the *everlasting* continuance in sensitive misery of all who die unrenewed be really scriptural, the doctrine of the Kingdom, *as set forth in the preceding pages*, must be false.

Let us then inquire what Scripture teaches on this head. And here it may be observed that the use of Scripture in this cause has often been an *untruthful* use, since its advocates have *with intent* 'kept back,' or 'held down,' as the apostle expresses it, much of what God has revealed regarding the future—not, indeed, 'in unrighteousness of life,' but from a faithless dread of the evil it is supposed would be produced if the subject were handled in a transparent manner, and without politic reserve.

The pastoral letter of the Archbishop of Canterbury, echoed, as it has been, on all sides, is an instance in point. In this document his Grace bids the clergy to beware of giving any other interpretation to the word *αιωνιος* than that of 'never-ending,' since, whatever be the meaning of the word in the case of the lost, the same must be its meaning in the case of the saved; and *our certainty of never-ending bliss for penitent believers is gone* if the word bears not the same signification in the case of the impenitent and unbelieving. Yet it is as clear as the sun at noonday that, whatever may become of the word in question, other texts in abundance demonstrate the *unending* bliss of the redeemed (*e. g.*, 1 Cor. xv. 53; 1 Thess. iv. 17;

Heb. xii. 28). What must be the weakness of a cause which needs to be supported by such misrepresentations!

It cannot, however, be denied that if Popular Theology be trustworthy, a formidable array of texts may be brought forward to show that, *in spite of all that has been said to the contrary*, Scripture *does* very distinctly teach the doctrine of eternal torment; that even the destruction of the sinner, in any sense implying the cessation of his being, is an impossibility, since the soul, being naturally immortal, must of necessity live for ever in happiness or woe; that everything said in Scripture about the salvation of the soul implies this; and that consequently deliverance from hell is the object which of all others should occupy the attention of a rational being.

These things, we are constantly told, are plainly taught in the word of God. It may not therefore be amiss to show, as briefly as possible, that the texts commonly quoted in support of such assertions are almost invariably *misread*. Let us take them in order:—

(1) Psa. ix. 17: '*The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.*'

Obs. The word here translated 'hell' (sheol) really means 'the grave, or the invisible world.' It is the same word which Jonah uses when in the belly of the fish he speaks of himself as in the belly of 'hell.' It is the same word that Jacob uses when he says that his grey hairs will go down with sorrow to 'the grave.' The *meaning* of the text, therefore, is that God will cut off the wicked *from the earth*.

(2) Psa. xi. 6: '*Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest. This shall be the portion of their cup.*'

Obs. This passage is kindred to the preceding one, and, like

it, refers only to the judgments of God upon the wicked *in this world*. (Compare Job xviii. 8, 11, 15.)

(3) Eccles. xi. 3: '*In the place where the tree falleth, there shall it be,*'—a passage frequently quoted to prove that no change in our moral condition can take place after death.

OBS. The slightest reference to the context will show that the words in question have no relation whatever to the eternal destiny of any man.

(4) Isa. xxxiii. 14: '*The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?*'

OBS. The reply given to the inquiry in the following verse might alone suffice to show that the prophet is not referring to future punishment; since the answer is, '*He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly.*' Matthew Henry says, and very justly, that the fires referred to were those occasioned by Assyrian invaders.

(5) Ezek. iii. 19: '*If thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.*'

OBS. The death here referred to is *temporal* death, inflicted for infractions of the law of Moses. This is evident from the parallel passage in chap. xxxiii. 9, which is followed by the declaration that 'if the wicked restore the pledge, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live.'

(6) Dan. xii. 2: '*And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*'

OBS. This passage is parallel to Isa. lxvi. 24: '*They shall look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against Me; for their worm shall not die, nor their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh.*' 'Con-

tempt' and 'abhorring' evidently mean the same thing. The action of 'the worm' and of 'the fire' is on dead 'carcases,' not on the living soul. The figure indicates the *loathsomeness* of sin, here regarded as weltering in its own corruption.

(7) Matt. iii. 7: '*Flee from the wrath to come.*'

OBS. On this passage see note to chap. i. of this volume, pp. 21, 22, where it is shown that the 'wrath' spoken of is the same that is predicted by our Lord in Luke xxi. 22, 23.

(8) Matt. v. 22: '*Whosoever shall say (to his brother), Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*'

OBS. 'Gehenna' or hell here evidently stands for capital punishment on earth, since in the context it is classed with the minor sentences passed by 'the judgment' (the court of the twenty-three), and by 'the council' (the Sanhedrim). The word 'Gehenna' literally signifies 'the Valley of Hinnom,' where the dead bodies of criminals were from time to time thrown. To call an Israelite *μωρος* 'fool,' or rather, 'apostate' (see Alford), was by the Jewish law a capital offence, and subjected the offender to a punishment called being 'thrust down into hell, or tossed into Gehenna.'—(Quoted from the Talmud by Lightfoot and Schoetgen by Robinson in 'The Evangelists and the Mishna.')

(9) Matt. xiii. 40—50: '*The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity. And shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*'

OBS. On this 'furnace of fire,' and its distinctness from 'the lake of fire which is the second death,' see ch. vi., p. 109.

(10) Matt. xx. 46: '*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.*'

OBS. No argument can be safely based upon the word here translated 'everlasting,' since every one admits that it (*αιων*)

is variously used in Scripture; it sometimes indicates *limitation*, and denotes an age (Matt. xiii. 22); sometimes it expresses a state or period *beyond time*, as it does in the text now under notice. But, properly speaking, nothing can be 'eternal' which has had a beginning. Further, it is, to say the least of it, highly probable that, as the words 'inherit the kingdom' (used in ver. 34) are equivalent to 'life eternal' (used in ver. 46), 'everlasting punishment' stands for perpetual exclusion from the kingdom. (See chap. viii., p. 147.)

It may also be remarked that the word translated 'punishment' is not *τιμωρία*, which expresses the vindictive character of the infliction as satisfying violated law; but *κόλασις*, which has reference to the *correction and bettering* of Him that endures it. (See Archbishop Trench's "Synonyms of the New Testament," p. 23). The theologian, however, overrides the scholar and says that we must not apply these remarks to the New Testament. Why?

(11) Mark ix. 47, 48: '*It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire, where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.*'

Obs. This passage differs from the one already noticed (Matt. v. 22—30), inasmuch as it clearly refers to punishment in the world to come. The words used by our Lord are a quotation from Isaiah (lxvi. 24). *There*, as we have seen, they are applied to 'carcasses,' and Jesus, who quotes them to people familiar with the words of the prophet, does not give even a hint that a different interpretation is to be given to them. (See chap. i. p. 10.) To say, as so many do, that the 'undying worm' stands for eternal remorse, and the 'unquenchable fire' for unending torture, either in material or figurative flame, is *to contradict Scripture*, and to put our own fancies in the place of revealed truth. Fire, when spoken of as being 'unquenchable,' is always regarded as being so only *until* the purpose is answered for which it was lighted

up (Lev. vi. 13 ; 2 Kings xxii. 17 ; Isa. xxxiv. 10 ; Ezek. xx. 47, 48).

(12) Mark ix. 49, 50: '*For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.*' As these words immediately follow what had been said about 'the worm' and the 'unquenchable fire,' some have supposed them to mean that the wicked shall be kept alive for ever in torture.

Obs. This interpretation is a diseased fancy. Richard Baxter considers, and rightly, that the fire intended is that of 'affliction on earth.' The reference seems to be to 'the meat offering' which was by the law required to be salted (Lev. ii. 13). The meaning is, Every one that enters 'the kingdom of God [ver. 47] shall be salted with fire,' *i. e.*, purified by discipline; and every sacrifice that is well pleasing to God must be 'salted with salt,' *i. e.* seasoned with grace to render it acceptable (Col. iv. 6).

(13) Luke xvi. 23: '*And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.*'

Obs. The parable in which these words are found was not spoken in order to reveal heaven and hell to the Pharisees, but to enforce a practical duty,—that of love to the brethren. The place of punishment is not hell (Gehenna), but hades, that world of separate spirits which is one day to be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. xx. 13, 14). The imagery is obviously figurative. The 'bosom of Abraham' simply implies a state of rest and peace. The rich man, apparently distressed by internal fever, asks for water to cool his 'tongue.' We simply learn from the parable that the soul of man at death passes into what is usually termed 'the separate state;' that there it begins to reap what it has sown on earth: the righteous tranquil repose, the foretaste of better things to come,—the wicked pain and sorrow, the fruit of their own devices. With the question of eternal punishment the text has nothing to do.—(See Appendix, 'Hades, or the Invisible World,' p. 166.)

(14) John iii. 36: '*The wrath of God abideth on him,*'—words which are supposed to imply abideth *for ever*.

Obs. The abiding *can* only mean while unbelief continues, or no man, once an unbeliever, could have any hope of deliverance. This text simply asserts what is here undisputed, that while abiding in sin and unbelief no man can be blessed.

(15) Rom. ii. 12: '*For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law.*'

Obs. On this passage see chapter iv., p. 49.

(16) 2 Cor. v. 11: '*Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.*' This text, it is often said, clearly implies that Paul preached the terrors of hell, and that he urged these terrors as a motive to repentance.

Obs. The apostle does not really refer to the *terror* of the Lord at all. The word is wrongly translated, being the same word that Paul uses a little further on in the passage, 'Perfecting holiness in the *fear* of God' (vii. 1). Dean Alford interprets the text thus:—'Being conscious of the fear of the Lord, we are free from double dealing.' Whether translated 'fear' or 'terror,' the word in question ($\phiοβον$) applies to the apostle himself, not to his hearers.

(17) Jude 7: '*Even as Sodom and Gomorrhæ are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*'

Obs. We have already seen that Ezekiel assures us Sodom shall be given to Israel, 'though not by covenant' (see chap. iv., p. 45). The punishment inflicted cannot therefore be irremediable. The words evidently refer to the total destruction of the city. Babylon the Great is by a similar figure spoken of in the Apocalypse as 'tormented' (Rev. xviii. 7, 15).

(18) Rev. xxii. 11: '*He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still.*'

Obs. These words no more imply that he who is unjust *must ever* be so, than they involve a charge to the wicked to continue

in wickedness. As Alford observes, 'there is a solemn irony in them, and the lesson conveyed in its depth is, 'change without delay.' They are like the words of our Lord to His disciples, 'Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand' (Matt. xxvi. 45). A similar mode of expression is found in the prophet Ezekiel (iii. 27; xx. 39).

The above are, I believe, the texts that are *most commonly* brought forward to justify that tremendous dogma, THE ETERNITY OF EVIL and the ENDLESSNESS OF SUFFERING. And surely it may now fairly be asked, What weight have they *as evidence of the truth of the dogma* when honestly examined?

Mr. Minton, of Eaton Chapel, Pimlico, has very recently avowed himself a believer in the ultimate annihilation of the wicked; rather, of their utter destruction, for the only point maintained is, that the sinner will in the end be destroyed, in the sense of ceasing to exist as a living being.*

In support of this doctrine,—if its application be confined to the comparatively few—to possibilities too solemn to be disregarded (see note to chap. v., pp. 65, 94)—much may be said from Scripture. Many of the texts, however, which have been advanced in its favour are far from conclusive. Quotations from the Old Testament which speak of sinners being destroyed, or as 'silent in the grave,' only prove, when taken in connection

* 'The Glory of Christ in the Creation and Reconciliation of all things.' Sermons by the Rev. Samuel Minton, M.A., of Worcester College, Oxford. In a monthly paper just out, Mr. Minton, addressing his congregation, says, 'I cannot forbear again entreating you not to let your minds be disturbed or embittered by the melancholy exhibitions of unchristian spirit which these sermons have occasioned. All who knew anything of Pharisaical bigotry and rancour must have been quite prepared for it. It is very easy, when persons find themselves unable to answer an argument, to denounce their opponent as 'an infidel,' 'heretic,' 'blasphemer,' 'atheist,' all of which terms are being freely applied to me by men and women who call themselves Christians.'

with passages which speak of saints as unable to praise God after death (Psa. vi. 5), that light and immortality were not then brought to light. Other passages in the New Testament, which tell us that 'the wages of sin is death,' that 'our God is a consuming fire,' and such like, by no means oblige us to admit the doctrine of destruction; since without any manipulation they allow of, and commonly receive, a very different interpretation.

It is, however, without doubt, very difficult to give any other meaning to such a passage as that in St. Peter which speaks of some men as 'natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed' (2 Pet. ii. 12), or those in the Revelation which tells us of 'the lake of fire, which is the second death' (Rev. xx. 14; xxi. 8).

Let it, however, not be unnoticed, although no conclusion can be built thereupon, that the same class of characters—the fearful, the unbelieving, the idolatrous, the false, and the licentious—who in the eighth verse of the twenty-first chapter are said to 'have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death,' are in the fifteenth verse of the twenty-second chapter spoken of as '*without*' the heavenly city, which seems to render their ultimate restoration at least possible.

The term 'lake of fire' (λίμνη τοῦ πυρός) is found only in the Apocalypse, in which it occurs FIVE times; *first*, in chap. xix. 20, where 'the beast and the false prophet'—whatever these terms may mean—are said to be 'cast alive into a lake of fire, burning with brimstone;'^{*} *secondly*, in chap. xx. 10, where 'the devil,' that deceived the nations,—in distinction, let it be observed, from *the people* he had deceived, who are 'devoured' by fire 'out of heaven' (ver. 9),—is represented

^{*} Like every other *symbol* of the Apocalypse, this is clearly taken from the Old Testament. The entire text is as the voice of Daniel,—'I beheld, even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame' (Dan. vii. 11).

as being 'cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever;' the *third* instance is in chap. xx. 14, where 'death and hell' ($\psi\acute{\alpha}\delta\eta\varsigma$) are 'cast into the lake of fire;' the *fourth* is in the fifteenth verse, where it is said, 'Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire;' and the last is in chap. xxi. 8, in which we are told that 'the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars (*i. e.*, deceivers,—of course, only if unrepenting,—for "such were some of you," 1 Cor. vi. 11), shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.'

One *apparent exception* to what has been stated certainly exists. It is a text in the Apocalypse (Rev. xiv. 9—11). On this highly symbolic passage I would simply observe that it describes a special judgment threatened only in connection with a particular form of idolatrous worship in the last days; and that the same doom is denounced against *the city*—Babylon, whose overthrow is called her 'torment' (Rev. xviii. 7—10), and 'her smoke' is said, in like manner, to rise up 'for ever and ever' (xix. 3). The exception, therefore, though apparent, is not real.

The objection so often brought forward against the possible destruction of the wicked, that the soul is naturally immortal, falls to the ground the moment it is confronted with Scripture. 'God only hath immortality' (1 Tim. vi. 16). All life is in Christ. 'Because I live, ye shall live also' (John xiv. 19). 'The *gift* of God is eternal life' (Rom. vi. 23). 'No such doctrine as the immortality of the soul,' says Archbishop Whately, 'is *revealed*.' 'The natural immortality of the soul,' observes Richard Watson, 'is contradicted by Scripture, which clearly makes our immortality a gift dependent on the giver.' 'The doctrine and the name,' says Olshausen, 'are alike un-

known to the entire Bible.* The capacity for immortality is one thing; the possession of it by nature is another. The former is a truth; the latter a fiction.

What authority Mr. Minton has discovered for holding that 'the death of the wicked will not be a simple act of annihilation, but a *process* of destruction; that the fire of God's wrath will not consume them at once, but that they will be tormented in it day and night,' I cannot conceive. Nothing is revealed beyond the fact that some 'shall be beaten with few stripes, and some with many stripes;' that 'every man shall receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad.' And it surely cannot be doubted that, however severe may be the retribution in store for the worst, it will still be *righteous* judgment, recognising at once the evil of the sin and the weakness of the sinner.

A careful examination and classification of all the passages which in one form or other speak of men as 'saved' or 'lost,' will lead to the conclusion that the term 'saved,' when used *in its highest sense*, implies a royal priesthood in the Kingdom of God; that it commonly, and *as a rule*, stands for deliverance from the dominion of sin; that it is sometimes employed to signify temporal safety; sometimes a coming out of heathenism; and sometimes security from the judgments of God at the second advent of the Lord, or at the great and final assize. Similar variations may be noticed in the use of the word 'lost.' (See remarks on these terms, chap. i., pp. 14, 15.)

* Minton, p. 37.

(C.)

PROMISED RESTORATION.

THAT a period is one day to come when Satan shall be utterly overthrown, when righteousness shall be universal, when 'the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea,' is, I suppose, the faith of the Church,—the settled expectation of every believer in the Bible.

The differences which prevail amongst us regarding that blessed hope relate, *not to the fact* of its ultimate realization, but to *the time* when it may be anticipated; to *the means* by which it is likely to be brought about; and, finally, to the all-important question whether or no it will embrace the restoration and recovery of any of those who, so far as we can judge, have passed away from earth in a state of impenitence and unbelief.

It is with the *last* of these questions alone that we have here to deal.

What we have to ascertain, if it be possible, is,—

(1) Whether or no anything calculated to throw light on the future restoration or otherwise of at least a portion of the human family is to be gathered from *the general tone and teaching* of the Inspired Volume; and,—

(2) Whether any *specific texts* relating thereto are to be found which ought to be accepted as decisive.

I suppose it will be admitted on all sides that *three things* at least are *clearly revealed* relative to the future of the human race, viz.,—

(1) That—explain it as we may—Christ *has* now, and has always had, in the world what is termed in Scripture an Elect

Church (Rom. viii. 29, 30; Ephes. i. 4); and that this Church is commonly spoken of in the Bible as consisting of *few*, rather than of many (Matt. vii. 14; Luke xii. 32).

(2) That the gospel is everywhere said to be a provision of mercy *intended* not for the few, but for *the many* (John iii. 17; 1 Tim. ii. 3—6; Heb. ii. 9; 1 John ii. 2).

(3) That in some sense or other this provision is declared to be of actual advantage to 'the many' (John xii. 32; Rom. v. 18, 19; xi. 32; Col. i. 19, 20).

Whatever difficulties may present themselves to us in reconciling these apparently conflicting statements, we are certainly bound, if we accept Scripture as a Divine revelation, not to reject any of them, either in the letter or in the spirit; but ever to remember how limited at the best is human knowledge of Divine things, and that 'if any man think that he *knoweth* anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know' (1 Cor. viii. 2).

It will also, without doubt, be admitted that ETERNAL LIFE is always spoken of in Scripture as a *free gift*; in no sense whatever depending on man; in no sense whatever bestowed as a reward of merit. Even those who speak of eternal life as *conditional*, whether the condition be the exercise of what has been termed 'appropriating faith,' or anything else, still teach that the faith itself is a *gift* of God; so that, whatever be the agency by which the blessing is reached, if both the end and the means are alike of grace, the result is the same.

These things being allowed, it certainly seems clear that, so far, no *à priori* argument against future restoration can be advanced from the general tone of Scripture teaching; for if a man's salvation does not turn upon the fulfilment of any condition to be performed here; if no act of faith, *originating with man himself*, is essential to its possession; then there is nothing in the nature of things that should lead us either to say or to think that the extension of pardon beyond this world is either impossible or unlikely.

Let us now inquire whether or no any *specific texts* are to be found which justify us in speaking of restoration as 'promised,' any which ought on this subject to be regarded as conclusive. I think there are.

The first that presents itself is found in the Acts of the Apostles (iii. 19—21), where Peter, very soon after Pentecost, calling upon his countrymen to repent of their rejection and crucifixion of Messiah, speaks of 'times of refreshing,' in connection with the return of Christ, 'whom,' he says, 'the heavens must receive *until the times of restitution of all things*, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.'

I am quite aware that attempts have been made to translate *αχρι* ('until') by *during*, and *αποκαταστασις* ('restitution') by *fulfilment*, so as to make the passage read, 'during the times of the fulfilment of all things;' but this cannot be sustained. Dean Alford says, 'Such a translation is against all precedent.' He understands the text, as almost every one else does, to speak of the 'glorious *restoration of all things*, the *παλιγγενεσια* (Matt. xix. 28), which, as Peter here says, has been the theme of all the prophets from the beginning.'

Others, again, feeling obliged to admit that restitution is here taught, insist that the apostle refers to that work of the Spirit which is ever proceeding in the heart of man on earth; but this cannot be the true interpretation, since conversion is nowhere in Scripture called restitution. Attention to the context alone might, one would think, satisfy any one that Peter and John, on the occasion referred to, were speaking, not of any change which may be produced by the present preaching of the gospel, but of something belonging to the future and the invisible. For it is said that 'as they spake unto the people,' the 'priests and the captain (or ruler) of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus *the resurrection from the dead*' (iv. 1, 2). But why complain of their teaching

about the resurrection? Plainly because it was *in connection therewith*, and through Jesus, that the doctrine of restitution had been taught.

Our next inquiry, therefore, is, *Where* hath God spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets concerning *restoration*?

Some might say, and not without reason, that such a blessing is *implied* in the promise that 'the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head' (Gen. iii. 15); that it is embodied in the assurance to Abraham that in his seed should *all the nations* of the earth be blessed (Gen. xxii. 18); that it is shadowed forth in Ezekiel's mystic vision of a holy land in which the stranger and the Israelite are to have an equal inheritance (Ezek. xlvii. 22, 23); that it was announced by the angels to the shepherds when the heavenly host proclaimed, 'good tidings of great joy, which shall be *to all* (the) *people*' (of Israel), (Luke ii. 10); and that it brightens all that is revealed of a world yet to come.

But those who have yet to be convinced that restoration is taught in Scripture at all will not accept these texts as evidence. Let us turn, then, to others which are *more direct*.

The vision of the dry bones, as explained by the prophet, is of this character. The question put to the prophet is, 'Can these dry bones live?' He is instructed that *they can*, for the valley now stirs with new life; bones come together, 'bone to his bone;' the 'sinews and the flesh' gather around them; the 'skin covers them above;' they live, and 'stand up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.' These bones, the prophet is distinctly informed, are '*the whole house* of Israel;' and he is commanded to say to the people,—'Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, *I will open your graves*, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that

I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord' (Ezek. xxxvii. 1—14).

This portion of Scripture is, I believe, usually expounded as referring *primarily* to the return of the Jews from Babylon; but in its widest sense to the latter days of this dispensation, when the Spirit of God shall give moral and spiritual life to Gentile sinners. On this method of interpretation I only wish to say, that it is certainly not one which commends itself to common sense,—unless, indeed, the Bible is to be interpreted on principles altogether different from those by which we seek to ascertain the meaning of any other book. It is impossible to see what comfort any 'revival' in the latter day could afford to Jews living nearly six hundred years before the coming of Christ, or, indeed, *what relation* such a message could have either to them or to their circumstances. A Bible *thus* interpreted ceases to be a revelation; it is transformed into an enigma.

But if the vision was intended to teach *that* generation (as I believe it was) that, in spite of all apparent discouragement, the word and promise of God would be kept unbroken,—that the scenes then passing before the eyes of the Jewish people were not the termination of God's dealings with them,—that there would be a resurrection of the dead, and that *then* the promises made to Abraham should be perfectly fulfilled,—all is plain. Faith would hopefully look forward to the 'continuing city,' and trust would remain unshaken, however cloudy or dark might be the day of their trial. (See also chap. i., p. 11, on Isa. xxvi. 19.)

Further, Hosea represents God as exclaiming, by his mouth, 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help. I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues: O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from Mine eyes'—*i. e.*, the promise shall be made good (Hos. xiii. 9—14).

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To these instances may be added all those glorious predictions which bring before us 'the lion lying down with the lamb,' swords being 'turned into ploughshares, and spears into pruning-hooks,'—a time when 'the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose,' when 'the eyes of the blind shall be opened,' and 'the ears of the deaf unstopped,' when 'the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads,' when 'they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away' (Isa. xxxv.).

Nor ought we in this connection to overlook the saying of the Redeemer to His disciples, 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, *will draw all men* unto Me' (John xii. 32); or the inspired song of Simeon, 'This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel;' *not*, be it observed, for the fall of some, and the rise of others, but for *the fall and rising again* of the same persons. I lay no special stress on any one of these passages in particular; but how they can, as a whole, be consistently explained, if *restoration* be altogether impossible, I am at a loss to conceive.

Last of all, let us turn to the epistles of the great apostle of the Gentiles, and recapitulate his words to them:—'As by one man's disobedience *the many* were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall *the many* be made righteous' (Rom. v. 19); 'The creature itself (all creation) shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God' (viii. 21); 'If the firstfruit be holy (set apart for God), the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches' (xi. 16); 'For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all' (xi. 32). Thus he writes to the *Romans*.

But not to them only. To the *Corinthians* he says, 'God was in Christ, reconciling *the world* unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them' (2 Cor. v. 19).

To the *Colossians*,—'It pleased the Father that in Him

(Christ) should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him *to reconcile all things unto Himself*; by Him, I say, whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven' (Col. i. 19, 20).

To the *Ephesians*,—God 'hath made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that *in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ*, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him' (Ephes. i. 9, 10).

To *Timothy* he writes,—God will have '*all men to be saved*, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim. ii. 4); Christ 'gave Himself *a ransom for all*' (ii. 6).

To *Titus*,—'The grace of God that *bringeth salvation* hath appeared *to all men*' (Titus ii. 11).

Nor is Peter less explicit. He says,—'The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, *not willing that any should perish*, but that all should come to repentance' (2 Pet. iii. 9).

John writes,—'We testify that the Father hath sent the Son to be the *Saviour of the world*' (1 John iv. 14); 'He is the propitiation for our sins: *and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world*' (1 John ii. 2); 'God sent *not His Son into the world to condemn the world*; but that *the world through Him might be saved*' (John iii. 17); He is 'the Lamb of God, which *taketh away the sin of the world*' (i. 29).

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares that Jesus *by the grace of God tasted 'death for every man'* (Heb. ii. 9).

The testimony of 'the Book' is clear.

(1) God *wills* that all men should come to repentance, and find rest in Christ.

(2) But the conditions of existence, in intelligent and responsible creatures, require that they should possess an amount of freedom which renders self-destruction *possible*.

(3) Nevertheless it is not possible for any creature, human or superhuman, to prevent the final, absolute, and happy union of all creation in the Redeemer, when the 'mystery of God' shall be finished, and all earthly things reach their destined consummation.

'Meanwhile,' as Robert Hall has so beautifully expressed it, 'heaven is attracting to itself whatever is congenial to its nature, is enriching itself by the spoils of earth, and collecting within its capacious bosom whatever is pure, permanent, and divine, leaving nothing for the last fire to consume but the objects and slaves of concupiscence.'

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