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CONTENTS

The Seven Churches: Chapter 5.6: What the Spirit
Said to Philadelphia (Continued) 121

'Milk of the Word' 131

Usefulness 132

The Set Feasts of Jehovah, Chapter 4: The Feasts
as Noted in Other Scriptures 133

God's Sovereignty and Glory in the Salvation of Lost Man,
Chapter 1: The God's Sovereignty in the Testing of Lost Man
(Chapter 1 continued) 137

Our Hope, and Its Practical Influence 148

Note on Lust 153

The Hero and the Servant 154

The Son of God 157

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Preface v

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Subject of Propitiation and Substitution 1

Chapter 2: The Atonement, Leviticus 11:17 15

Chapter 3: The Day of Atonement Leviticus 16 25

Chapter 4: Propitiation 55

Chapter 5: Purchase, Ransom, and Redemption 65

Chapter 6: The Death, the Blood, and the Cross of Christ, in Their
Meaning Regarding the Believer 79

Chapter 7: Died For All, Blood Shed For Many 89

Chapter 8: Propitiation for SINS -- only for Believers -- and,
Propitiation for the World 103

Chapter 9: Bearing Sins was Only on the Cross 115

Chapter 10: The Showing Forth of The Righteousness of God,
Romans 3:19-26 123

Chapter 11: Made the Righteousness of God in Him 151

Chapter 12: The Abandonment on the Cross and Communion
With the Father 165

Appendix 1: Propitiation Not Made in Heaven 171

Scripture Index 181

Subject Index 185

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Types and Symbols of Scripture

This is an 8 1/2" by 11" hardbound book in buckram cloth. The articles are drawn from various sources and part of the Table of Content is given below.

Introductory Notes	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Some General Considerations	1
Is Scripture Typical? A Word on Interpretation	1
Types Are of Different Characters	2
Resemblances and Contrasts	3
Types and Their Teachings	3
What About the Mystery and the Types?	5
Types of Christ	7
Direct Types of Christ with Scriptural Proofs Annexed	7
Indirect Types and Figures of Christ	8
Scripture Imagery	11
Outlines of Lectures On the Tabernacle of Witness, T. Newberry .	127
The Temple	199
The Temple of God	203
The Two Temples	203
The Worship	204
The True Worshipers	205
David on His Throne a Type, C.E.S.	207
Christ the Substance of Every Shadow	217
Inspired Prophecy, W. Kelly	219
Chapter 1: Its Nature	219
Chapter 2: Its Object	227
Chapter 3: Its Occasion	231
Chapter 4: Its Sphere	233
Chapter 5: Its Language	237
Chapter 6: Some Old Testament Prophecies Referred to in the New Testament	241
Chapter 7: General Remarks	243
Symbols, J. N. Darby	247
The Symbols of The Apocalypse Briefly Defined	251
Extract from The Catholic Apostolic Body, Or Irvingites, W. Kelly	263
Subject Index	
Scripture Index: Old testament	
Scripture Index: New Testament	

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Elements of Dispensational Truth
The Seven Churches

Chapter 5.6

What the Spirit Said to Philadelphia

(Continued)

Judgment

None.

Admonition

I come quickly: hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown (Rev. 3:11).

I COME QUICKLY

Mark the further words, "I come quickly." Blessed, indeed, is this for those that are waiting, for those that watch, for those that with joy welcome Him. Mark this also; it is only now, for the first time, so brought before any of these churches. Surely there is something significant in this fact: we have perhaps looked over these messages vaguely, and might have imagined it elsewhere. But here only it is thus. The Lord did give promises that referred to His coming, as for instance to Thyatira, and a solemn warning again to the church-world of Sardis. Here is quite another thing occurring, before the promise comes. And why so? Because it is a part of their spiritual life, and spring of their constant heavenly hope. The Lord, therefore, refers to it graciously as a thing that occupies their heart. He could not have given a word of sweeter comfort to those who enter into His patience. He says, (not, Behold) "I come quickly."¹

In the church of Philadelphia, the character of Christ's coming was put in its true and proper place. Looked at by the church, Christ's coming is for itself. Christ says, "It is for you I am coming," and the church's hope is to see Himself. It is "you" and "myself," He says, that must be together, constituting the proper church character of hope and accomplished joy. Hence in ch. 22, after the Lord has gone through the whole prophecy, He says, "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things, in the churches"- "I am the bright and morning star"; and the presentation of Himself awakens the cry to Him to come. He does

1. *The Bible Treasury* 16:300.

not say, when warning men, "Behold, I come quickly." The Spirit and the bride say, "Come," and then, in heart-assuring reply, He says, "Surely, I come quickly"; to which the church responds, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Thus it is very evident that the coming of the Lord to take the church unto Himself, must be something entirely between Himself and the church alone. But it will not be so with the remnant of Israel, for them the execution of the judgment will be needed, in order to their taking their place in the earth. In fact, the Lord's coming to the earth itself must be attended with the execution of judgment, gathering out of His "kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity." And it is evident that the deliverance of the remnant of Israel connects the coming of the Lord with the execution of judgment upon what despises Him before Israel can possibly get their blessing. And this accounts for the strong cry of vengeance we find throughout the Psalms; take Psa. 94 for instance, "O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself." Now we do not want vengeance in order to be with Christ in blessing. God has given us grace as our portion in every way, and we have to deal entirely with grace. I am not looking for the Lord to come and avenge me on my enemies, for I am expecting to be caught up to meet Him in the air. And, that it may be clearly understood, I would again remark, that throughout the whole Scriptures this cry, in connection with the Lord's coming to the earth, is the language of the remnant of Israel, and not the language of the church of God.

Take Psa. 68:23, "that thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same." These are not the thoughts that occupy my soul in the contemplation of meeting Jesus in the air. If, through grace, I have bowed to the grace of the Lamb, then I have no connection whatever with that which will come under the wrath of the Lamb. It is Himself that I am expecting for the sake of what is in Himself apart from anything else. So also in the description of the future Jewish times of blessing in Isa. 60:12, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish"; while of the New Jerusalem it is said, "The leaves of the tree shall be for the healing of the nations." Israel is the scene of God's righteous judgments; the church is the scene of God's sovereign grace; and it never gets out of this. For the church, as such, never calls for vengeance; it will see the righteousness of the vengeance when God shall avenge the blood of those who have suffered, and rejoice that corruption is destroyed; but its own portion is to be with Christ. The earth will be delivered through judgment; but our portion is to meet the Lord in the air, and to be for ever with Him.²

HOLD FAST THAT WHICH THOU HAST, THAT NO ONE TAKE THY CROWN (v. 11)

Hold fast that Which Thou Hast. Sardis was told:

Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and keep [it] and repent (Rev. 3:3).

Sardis represents the departure from the truth God gave at the reformation. Could there likewise be departure from what Philadelphia represents? What does

2. *Collected Writings* 5:365, 366.

“hold fast that which thou hast” imply concerning departure? Warning that there will be giving up? Are your hands holding tightly? The Lord had not specified something that “I have against thee.” Also, as in the case of Smyrna, He did not pronounce a judgment. But what He does say is:” I come quickly: hold fast what thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” **This is the word to the overcomer and doing that is how he overcomes!** Note it well that this is directly linked with the expectation: “I come quickly.” E. Dennett wrote:

. . . overcoming in this church is totally different from that in the other six. In the five preceding churches — with the exception perhaps of Smyrna -- it is overcoming by separation, or preservation, from the evil in their respective spheres of responsibility. In Laodicea it is by getting out of one state into another; in a word, by acquisition of what is lacking. But overcoming in Philadelphia is simply maintaining -- maintaining that which is already possessed. Thus, “Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh” (i.e. by holding fast) “will I make a pillar in the temple of my God,” &c. The encouragement to hold fast, the reader will mark, is the Lord’s coming. “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast,” &c.

Another thing is obvious. The need of the exhortation sprung and springs from the fact that there was a danger of losing the precious heritage which had been entrusted to them. Hence to retain the truth would involve conflict, as it has ever done all down the line of the history of the Church until the present moment, and as it will increasingly do until the Lord descends from heaven to gather His own into His presence for ever.

Will our readers therefore suffer the word of exhortation? The conviction has been forced upon us, and it is deepened daily, that the one important thing, the one incumbent responsibility at the present moment, is to hold that fast which we have. With some -- as the saints in Sardis for example -- the first duty is to discover that which they have lost; for pulpits from which once were proclaimed the doctrines of grace and the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures are now filled, in many cases, with the advocates of a rationalistic infidelity or of Romish superstitions. Many, on the other hand, and ourselves amongst the number, can thank God that they have hitherto been preserved from the desolating intinences of evil doctrine. Our danger is of a subtler kind. It is not open enemies that we have to dread; every true soldier of the faith delights in warfare with such. Our foes are rather they of our own household -- foes therefore in the garb of friends -- those who stand by and permit the truth to be frittered away. It cannot indeed be denied that truths which, when first recovered and proclaimed, were used of God to rouse thousands of His people out of their slumbers, and which encouraged many to forsake all they held dear for the joy of fuller communion with the mind of the Lord, and for the still deeper joy of a more intimate knowledge of Himself, are now either loosely held -- held in a way that involves no reproach, no cross -- or being tacitly surrendered.

If this tendency increases, the question of Pilate may again be heard,

“What is truth?” The truth is Christ, every part of it being but a ray of the glory that shines from His glorified face at the right hand of God. To hold fast that which we have therefore is to hold fast the truth of all that He is in His person, in His work, in His union with His people, in His head-ship of the body, in all the relationships into which He, in grace, has entered with His own in all the offices which He condescends to fill, and, in a word, in all His divine unfoldings in the precepts He has given to His people. Well then may He challenge us to hold that fast which we have, because it is in reality fidelity to Himself which is thus enjoined. Who of us is willing, by the grace of God, to respond to His appeal? To do so must, we again remind you, involve conflict. Take, for example, the truest Philadelphian the Church has ever seen -- the apostle Paul. Was there ever a moment in his history after his conversion when he could rest from warfare, and from warfare for the truth with those who bore the name of Christ equally with himself? At Antioch he was utterly alone -- Barnabas for the moment forsook him, and Peter was the chief adversary, so that Paul had to withstand him to the face (Gal. 2). What a temptation it must have been to a tender heart like that of Paul’s to have yielded the point in charity for the sake of peace! If he had, what would have been the consequence? This we cannot tell; but it is certain that at that moment the maintenance of the truth of God depended entirely on the fidelity of Paul. He was the only one in that Church at Antioch who held that fast which he had; and if he had let the standard fall, what other hand was there to grasp, and to raise it aloft once again, and to lead on to victory? Nor is this a solitary example. Again and again, in times of danger and controversy, he is found alone, and solely because he would not, through the mercy of God, sacrifice one iota of the sacred deposit which the Lord Himself had committed to his charge. So now in proportion to our fidelity we shall be alone; and it may yet again become true, as the prophet declares, that he that departeth from evil will be accounted mad (Isa. 59:15, marginal rendering).

Do we then advocate controversy? Nothing is more withering to the soul -- for it is a deadly poison -- than controversy, as usually understood. No; what we plead for is a full ministration of Christ, and faithfulness in the defense of the whole truth of Christ. But even if the truth is held and defended apart from Christ, it is of no value, rather an immense damage to the soul. Hence none but those who are walking in communion with a living Christ can hold that fast which they have, in the sense of this scripture; for no keenness of intellect, no argumentative power, will avail in this battle; nothing but the word of God wielded in the power of the Holy Ghost. On this account the exhortation is prefaced by the announcement, “Behold, I come quickly.” The Lord would thus have His soldiers fight as momentarily expecting to see Him face to face. A hymn puts the question --

Shall we of the way be weary,

When we see the Master’s face?

In like manner, who could tire in the conflict for Christ and His truth, when our hearts are cheered and warmed by the expectation of being caught away from

the midst of the strife to meet the Lord in the air?

One caution is necessary. If as the days grow darker, and the characteristics of the perilous times are more and more manifested, conflict for the truth should, as it must, become hotter and hotter, let us with all the more diligence keep our hearts. We must cherish constant and tender affection for all the saints of God, and this can only be done as long as our hearts are in communion with the heart of Christ. If conflict makes us hard or severe, we must unsparingly judge ourselves. Like Israel in the land under Joshua, after every battle we must return to Gilgal, so that in all our warfare only the weapons of the Spirit of God may be employed. (See 2 Cor. 11:6).³

W. Kelly remarked:

But we find that the Lord warns. “*Hold fast that which thou hast*, that none take thy crown.” Do we not know, beloved friends, that never were men more liable to be carried away by feelings, and to be caught with novel teaching? People outside do not believe it; they think if you know one, you know all! We know a very different thing, and that as grace began the thing, so grace alone sustains and completes it. If any people are liable to be moved, we are. The very fact of being alone with Christ, away from the various means of occupying (I might say, of *entertaining*) the saints of God -- for what else could I call the excitement of gathering thousands, with the attraction of music, etc. -- makes us seem ungenial and ungracious in these days of exposure to the efforts of Satan in ways most trying and delusive. Let us cleave to the evident truth of the Lord. It is a caution given to Philadelphia more than to any other -- “*Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*” It is hard for love to look unamiable; but Christ should be beyond all to us, and His love is alone true.⁴

That No One Take Thy Crown. The implication here is that pressures will be brought to bear to give up something, if not all. It is “thy crown,” something distinctive for the Philadelphian. Philadelphia, in the foreshadow view, pictures the recovery of the truth which took place during the 1800s. The warning implies a giving up. Someone wrote:

It is a great grace never to go back from known truth; and none can be so exposed as those who have received much, and of a high order. Watch and pray.

Promise to the Overcomer

He that overcomes, him will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more at all out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven, from my God, and my new name (Rev. 3:12).

3. *The Christian Friend*, pp. 10-14, 1883. See also helpful remarks in *The Bible Treasury* 16:300, 315.

4. W. Kelly, *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 12:127.

In tracing the promises and their connection with what the first man (1 Cor. 15:47-49) has forfeited, another wrote:

The promise which is given to the church of Philadelphia brings us to the culminating point of Israel’s history in its connection with the throne of God; and the earthly center, the focus of this world’s light, the city of the great king. These links which constitute the theocracy, in which they lived and made their boast were all broken, and Jehovah “profaned his throne by casting it to the ground.” The vision of Ezekiel most touchingly relates how the glory (which was the witness of the Lord’s acknowledgment of His people) moved away from its place, till, like Noah’s dove, finding no rest for the sole of its foot, it took back the sad tale of desolation to Him from whom it had come forth. This too has been secured by “the Prince of the kings of the earth” for Himself and for the government of God, and till the day of millennial glory comes, gives it out to those who *now* suffer with Him in communion with Himself. “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God: and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God: and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.” This is the promise to Philadelphia, an assurance that all which had failed on the earth and been forfeited would now be committed no longer to human responsibility, but be seen to come down from God out of heaven to abide for ever. Material pillars and a material temple are superseded; just as stones have been set aside in the spiritual house for *living* stones, and as God and the Lamb finally take the place of the temple and the city, for that which is *perfect* is come. In the meanwhile, the Son of man in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, says, “*I will write upon him that overcometh the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God.*” What new links of living associations with Himself, in the sanctuary and the glory, are these as He thus puts us into connection with the New Jerusalem, the city of the living God, which is to bring back again the glory of God! But besides this catalogue of blessing, the Lord adds, “and I will write upon him *my new name.*” What is this? For many and various are His titles and names of renown. The angels introduced Him as Jesus-Emmanuel, the waters of Jordan gave Him forth as the Messiah or the Christ, the anointed One, the temptation in the wilderness as the victorious Son of man, the cross as the Lamb of God for sinners slain, the sepulcher as the destroyer of him that had the power of death, resurrection as the Captain of our salvation, ascension into the heavens as the Great High Priest and Advocate at the right hand of God, so that we are more than conquerors *through Him* that loved us. Redemption by His blood is the new circle into which everything that yet groans is to be brought; and resurrection by His power, the new holding by which all blessing is maintained for ever. Moreover all His enemies are to be made His footstool. There yet remains a new name in which Christ will be manifestly known when He comes forth to put all “the families in heaven and on earth” into relationship with Himself and God. What a day will that be when God and the Lamb are eternally together, and give a new character to the entire scene! Our present joy is in communion with Christ, in the power of this new name, as we keep the word of

His patience till He comes.⁵

I am waiting, and you must wait; Christ is expecting till His foes be made His footstool. Instead of taking our ease, we must be waiting till He come in, just as He always waited till His Father came in, and as He does now till His Father makes His foes His footstool. I would mark here how emphatically the word “My” comes in throughout this address. It is the practical identification of the saint with “him that is holy and him that is true.” Waiting with Him in rejection from the hands of those who had all the ordinances, and antiquity for them, we shall be sharers with Him in glory. The word “My” is especially connected with everything in the glory. You have been weak in testimony down here, but you have kept the word of My patience, and you shall be a “pillar” of strength in the temple of *My God*, I will write on you the name of *My God*, the name of the city of *My God* . . . which comes down out of heaven from *My God*, and *My* new name. This identification with Christ in patience, and Him in everything, is of the deepest interest and instruction.⁶

We have been exhorted to pay attention to how often the word “my” is used here. “You have been associated with My patience, and now you shall have the same association with God that I have.” “The holy, the true” had said:

kept my word . . . kept the word of my patience.

A PILLAR IN THE TEMPLE OF MY GOD (v. 12)

What Temple is This?

If speaking of a scene of earthly worship, the candlestick gives but a little light; but what of the temple spoken of in the end of this book? “The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it!” And poor prodigals brought there to worship God! Is this a thought indifferent to the heart of the Lord Jesus? Ah no! It is not one spot of the earth; but it is sinners saved by grace gathered round Himself, and God and the Lamb the temple; God and the Lamb all the power of worship.

Do you understand what heavenly worship is? It is the heart finding its joy in its admiration of God’s dealings with itself as a poor sinner. God gives His Son! God gives His Spirit! Do you know what that admiration is? Do you know as the little hymn says, what it is to be “lost in wonder, love, and praise?” His heart has a fulness when all poor sinners are gathered round Him which will never be exhausted.

“And he shall go no more out !” Only a little while and then that morning without clouds; God and the Lamb, and ourselves fixedly there.⁷

Regarding the words “temple of my God” rather than “temple of God,” another wrote: “You have been associated with My patience, and now you shall have the

5. *The Bible Treasury* 8:367.

6. *Collected Writings* 5:342.

7. G. V. Wigram, *The Addresses to the Seven Churches*.

same association with God that I have.”

A Pillar. This seems to stand in contrast to the “little power” (Rev. 3:8) that characterized Philadelphia. The Philadelphian, who had a little power to be here to give Christ His rightful place, answering to “the holy, the true,” amidst the ridicule of Christendom, and alas, even of saints, will then be made a pillar.

“He was held perhaps as outside the ecclesiastical unity and order; he is a pillar in it in heaven . . .”

Here we see how definitely all the promises are connected with the time of glory -- the “new Jerusalem” -- here the heart is lifted up into its own proper dwelling-place. Are we taking the position of heavenly dwellers while walking this earth? Remark in how thorough a manner the saints are connected with the heavenly Jerusalem, the eternal dwelling-place of him that overcometh. He shall be in God’s temple, in contrast with the synagogue of Satan, in the full enjoyment of the things of God (every purpose of His love fully brought out). “Him will I make a pillar.” He who was a faithful but weak one in the earth, when the professing church was great but not fulfilling the purpose of God as the “pillar and ground of the truth,” shall then be the very pillar of strength, and that the very strength of God, because there had been firmness against the power of seduction.⁸

HE SHALL GO NO MORE OUT AT ALL (v. 12)

“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out.” This seems contra-distinguished from the open door. It is supposed that there is a going out of heart now: assuredly a person whose heart does not go out in love is unworthy of the Lord, and does not understand what He is calling him out for. For beyond question, one of its most distinctive qualities is this very thing, this open-door exercise of heart. It is not merely the entertaining and making use of what the Lord gives for yourselves; but as witnesses of His grace and truth, the heart going out towards all that are His, as well as towards those who know Him not. It does not matter what their state of ignorance or need may be. Nay, to tell the truth, why should one mind persons who speak hardly of those they misapprehend? It is small on our part to think too much of it. The path of faith must be unintelligible to those who are outside it. How could such a place as this seriously interest the men of Sardis or Thyatira, or those of whom I have to speak in closing -- Laodicea? . . . Do not suppose that Philadelphia turns into Laodicea.⁹

AND I WILL WRITE UPON HIM THE NAME OF MY GOD (v. 12)

There are three names that will be written on the saints, and here is the first of

8. *Collected Writings* 5:360.

9. *The Bible Treasury* 16:300, 315.

them.

“I will write on him the name of my God [on the faithful one who had not denied my name on earth, when there was nought else for him], and the name of the city of my God [the place of glory and power which God had prepared, for he had looked for a city which had foundations] new Jerusalem which cometh down from heaven from my God [there his thoughts had been], and my new name.” He shall be fully and openly associated with Me in the glory as he was by faith in littleness overlooked when there was nothing but Christ; but Christ for him was all. In God’s day He will be all, such is the promise, so closely associated with Christ Himself in the Philadelphia state of things. I pray the reader to fix his attention on the close association with Christ all through this epistle.¹⁰

In John 20:17 we read:

. . . but go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and [to] my God and your God.

AND THE NAME OF THE CITY OF MY GOD, THE NEW JERUSALEM, WHICH COMES DOWN OUT OF HEAVEN (v. 12)

The city is spoken of as the *new Jerusalem*. Jerusalem, the word means, *will provide peace*: Jehovah-Jireh-Shalom. There is a certain spot of the earth that I have marked off for myself, where there shall be peace. As to the *new Jerusalem*, it really existed before the *old*, that is in God’s counsels. You will find that the foundation names of the city give you strings of glory connected with the Lord Jesus Christ. There are the twelve tribes of Israel, names of glory connected with Him; the same in the twelve apostles, who are connected with the heavenly form of government. The church does not form part of the plan of earth, but part of that for the heavenly man.

Now what is your inheritance? Can you say that nothing short of that which comes out from God is your desire? Christ’s inheritance is a thing that is given to Him. There are two parts in it: one in heaven, the other on earth. The residence is twofold: it “cometh down out of heaven from my God.” The blessed Lord Jesus cares for, prizes, what God has given Him; He cares about the city of His God; He says to the overcomer: Be of good cheer; you shall be made a pillar in the temple of my God; you shall bear the name of the city of my God.¹¹

“I will write upon him the name of my God,” the way in which Christ as a man knows God: “You shall have that name publicly set upon you, as you have not denied My name down here -- ‘the city of my God,’ waited for in faith; this is your place.” Abraham looked for a city, whose builder and maker was God. It was a heavenly city they wanted for themselves on the earth, even when the flesh had built one here. This heavenly citizenship shall then be stamped upon the faithful, in the city of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the stranger on the earth. If men are looking for an ecclesiastical stability, a present establishment of things,

10. *Collected Writings* 30:348.

11. G. V. Wigram, *The Addresses to the Seven Churches*.

they can have it now; but then it is not according to God’s word: if content to walk simply with Christ now, waiting until God owns a city as His (“the city of my God”), they shall have it then: it comes down out of heaven from God. When Charles II was away from his country, those who were attached to his person felt themselves strangers in the land while their master was absent. And so it is with the Christian now; he belongs to Christ; he is a child of the day, waiting for Christ and the day of His appearing.¹²

The new Jerusalem is not a literal city, as has been discussed in previous issues of *Thy Precepts*. It is the bride, as Rev. 21:9, 10 shows. The description in Rev. 21:10-22:5 is particularly in view of the millennium, and the city is characterized by the number twelve, the number of administration. It is the church. The church has a distinct place in the eternal state, as we see in Rev. 21:2. It is the new Jerusalem that is meant by “the tabernacle of God” in Rev. 21:3. The church will be eternally the dwelling place of God (cp. Eph. 3:21), though for the earthly people national and Israelite distinctions will have passed away. Hence we read that “the tabernacle of God [is] with men” (Rev. 21:3).

The name of the city will be written upon the saints composing the true church, the bride of the Lamb. What unspeakable glory that will be in contrast to the pathway of those who are strangers and pilgrims now. The glory shines before us, and we cannot linger here. Here we have no abiding city (Heb. 13:14) but we do have the great privilege of entering into the holiest (Heb. 10:19). But in the new Jerusalem:

the Lord God Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb (Rev. 21:22).

The Philadelphian is a worshiper in spirit and in truth (John 4:24); hence the temple, a settled place of holiness and worship, shall be his portion forever.

AND MY NEW NAME (v. 12)

And now we come to the third name to be written on the saints. It is the name of God’s beloved One, cast out down here on earth, but made higher than the heavens.

The question “What is our Lord’s *new name*?” (Rev. 3:12), is not answered in so many words in the book of “Revelation,” but we think that, in substance, the answer is to be found there.

Is it not remarkable that in the book of “the Revelation” we get the new name of ARNION (*Lamb*) applied to Christ, and that it occurs *twenty-eight times* in the Apocalypse, as we have seen in the preceding jottings, and is found as a name given to HIM nowhere else in the New Testament?

When the same writer, St. John, speaks of Jesus as presented to the Jews in the Baptist’s preaching, He is termed AMNOS (*the Lamb*), and when in the Revelation, Jesus is spoken of as *the Lamb*, the word ARNION is used

12. *Collected Writings* 5:361.

exclusively; and every scholar knows *arnion* is a *diminutive*, and hence a word of *disparagement*. JESUS, the personal name of the Lord on earth, was nailed over the cross as a name of humiliation, scorn, and rejection; the world treated God's AMNOS as ARNION; and God opens the heavens to the Prophet of Patmos, and by him shows to the Churches, as He shall one day do to the world, the One who was treated on earth as ARNION (i.e., as a diminutive creature, a lambkin not worth looking at) "*in the midst of the throne*," and "*the book*" of the title-deeds to the world's dominion given by GOD into His hands!

The whole action of the Apocalypse, is in connection with the enthroning of ARNION on the throne of God -- as He is now on His Father's throne as Son -- and Christ's promise "I will write upon him my new name," seems to be fulfilled in the end of the book, when His "faithful" followers have the name of *Arnion* written upon them, and they are called "The Bride, ARNION's Wife" (Rev. 21).

The places where the word "Lamb" (*Arnion*) occurs in "Revelation" are the following, as above: Rev. 5:6, 8, 12, 13; 6:1, 16; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 12:11; 13:8, 11; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7, 9; 21: 9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 22:1, 3.

In "man's day" {1 Cor. 4:3} the "Lamb" was treated as "small and despised," "a worm and no man"; but "in the day of God," {2 Pet. 3:12 --eternal state} He and His people shall be in the ascendancy, and angels and redeemed men, the earth and the heavens, shall conspire to praise and exalt Him. "Let us go forth therefore, unto Him without the camp, *bearing his reproach*;" and, when the day of His manifestation in glory arrives, "we shall be *glorified together*" {Col. 3:4}.¹³

Call to Hear

He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies (3:13).

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Ed.

'Milk of the Word'

"As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." (1 Pet. 2:2).

Is not this a passage often misconceived of? Does it mean that we are to be always as babes in Christ returning to the first elements for nourishment? I apprehend this is how many take it. But it is not its force, as a little consideration may suffice to show.

There is of course a stage in our life as Christians in which we are necessarily and rightly 'babes.' The apostle John addresses himself to these, (1 John 2). But

13. *The Bible Herald*, 1877, pp. 136, 137. See also G. V. Wigram, *The Addresses to the Seven Churches, in loco*.

the Corinthians were rebuked for the continuance of such a state, and to him carnality was the true synonym for its protraction: "I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as babes in Christ" (1 Cor. 3:1). And both here and in the epistle to the Hebrews he blames them for the necessity they had for 'milk.'

Here in Peter the thought is different. The Word itself is milk, the whole of it, and we are to be not simply as babes, but as *new-born* babes in our desire for it. To a new-born babe what is milk? Its very life, we may say. And such is God's word to us, and such is to be its place in our affections. The Word, the whole of it, is that which God has provided for us, and it would be but dishonoring it and Him who gave it, to extract certain elements from it, and dismiss the rest as not available for food. It is all food, if appropriated as such. The highest and most advanced truths, so-called, do but expand, illustrate, and confirm, the Gospel itself, than which no truth is more wonderful, deeper or 'higher.' We do not leave the Gospel behind as we go on with Scripture, nor even have to turn back to it to find the refreshment it supplies for our souls; but it is the Gospel itself that travels on with us, more and more learnt, more and more developing itself to us continually.

Helps by the Way, New Series 2:196 (1880).

Usefulness

A question often arises about usefulness. Satan often beguiles by it. He may have suggested to John that he would be more useful if he were to compromise a little, and keep out of trouble for the sake of being free for his service to saints. Useful to whom? To God or to men? God may be able to show out more of His glory by laying men aside. The eyes of God rested on Paul a prisoner, seemingly useless (not even always allowed to write), as the field for the display of some of the greatest privileges of truth. The very point when your weakness seems to make you useless is often the very way in which God shows forth His glory. People think it strange that old Christians, useless ones, &c. &c., should be left, and young active ones taken. Do not you be trying to settle God's house for Him; do not say, "What a pity for John to get to Patmos." The Lord wanted him there to communicate something that might serve His people to the end of time. A person may be in difficult circumstances, and you may have it in your power to get him out of them in the power of human nature. And you may do it, and find out that God would have had him in them, because then he could have borne testimony; and you ought not to have measured things by your love for him and your comfort, but by the light of God. We often act on a set of thoughts of which the cord is bound to our own humanity instead of God's glory.

G.V.W., *The Christian Friend* 1881, p. 55.

The Set Feasts of Jehovah

Chapter 4

The Feasts as Noted in Other Scriptures

The Feasts in Deuteronomy 16

The Word of God does not contain mere repetitions. What is repetitive contains differences or appears in a different context. Great and mighty as are the creatorial works of our God and Maker, how wondrous is His Word wherein He is revealed. The works of His hands shall be dissolved; His Word is forever settled in heaven.

Deut. 16 is not a repetition of Lev. 23. In Deut. 16, the feasts are noted in view of their going into the land where Jehovah was going to choose the place where His name would be placed. And in view of that one place we may draw some typical lessons concerning being gathered together unto the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 18:20) on the basis that there is ONE body (Eph. 4:4). There is but one spiritual center now as there was but one geographical center for Israel when God chose the place (Deut. 12,14,16; 1 Chron. 22:1; Psa. 78:67-72; etc.). Are we truly expressing that truth when we assemble with the Lord's people? Hence in Deut. 16:2 we learn that the Passover had to be celebrated in that place. There was but one Passover, though many lambs; and there is but one loaf, though many loaves of bread. The inspired apostle said "bread" not 'breads' or 'loaves' (1 Cor. 10:16). Let us take heed *how* we hear (Luke 8:18). There is but one Passover at the one divine center. There is one Spirit, and one body, and one table, and one cup, and one loaf, and one Lord's supper. If Scripture speaks of more than that, no one has yet showed it to me. If, then, that is the way Scripture presents these things, Christ is worthy that we should practice these truths even if brethren in Christ calumniate us for it. The plain truth is that once the place was set up under Solomon, a Passover eaten in any other place but Jerusalem was not a valid Passover. What? That has no warning for us? If not, it may betray a state of soul that has not profited by the warning in Luke 8:18.

There is a yearly recurrence of these feasts (v. 16). "Three times in a year" is noted. Coupling Passover and Unleavened Bread, we may briefly summarize the chapter's teaching as follows:

	THE FEAST	THE MEANING
1.	Passover and Unleavened Bread	Deliverance from Egypt and a separated walk of faith in holiness
		leads to
2.	Weeks	Spiritual exercises
		which results in
3.	Booths	Joy

"They shall not appear before Jehovah empty" (Deut. 16:17). Does that not speak to our hearts, often wayward and cold? Let us now add a little detail.

1. One of the things that ought to characterize saints at the divine center is *the remembrance*. Christ our Passover was slain, and in divine purpose we were brought out of Egypt, out of the world, when our Savior was slain. "Out of Egypt" is more than shelter within Egypt. They were brought *out* to be brought *into* the land of milk and honey. Divine power was put forth on the 14th; the journey of His people began on the 15th, as we saw in Num. 33:1-3. "Let us keep the feast," says 1 Cor. 5:7. "Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread" (Deut. 16:3). Oh, let us fill our inner being with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Let there be "no leaven seen with thee in all thy borders seven days" (Deut. 16:4). And let none of the Passover remain until morning -- never let us treat the remembrance as common (v. 5). And then let us ever remember that all "places" are excluded but one (v. 6). We shall roast it and eat it at the divine center (vv. 6, 7). We shall ever remember Him in those atoning sufferings in those three hours of darkness when that cry of forsakenness was uttered, and in that atoning death which He accomplished as the very act of His own will in voluntary sacrifice (John 10:18; Eph. 5:2).

2. Spiritual exercises are next. In Christ's disciples it is seen especially in Luke 24:49, Acts 1 and 2:1-4. The feast of weeks takes its starting point from Christ's resurrection. This results in something from us for the pleasure of God (Deut. 16:7).

Compare Deut. 16:11 with Acts 2:42-47. This was the result of spiritual exercise and the power of the Spirit manifested in the life. With this we must remember (Deut. 16:12) from whence we came (Eph. 2:11-13) and also "keep and do these statutes." When the claim of having spiritual exercises is coupled with disobedience to God, we show that we are self-deluded.

3. True spiritual exercise and an obedient walk results in joy. There is joy in spiritual exercises (Deut. 16:11), for we learn God therein. Here the result is "thou shalt be wholly joyful" (Deut. 16:15). Here we have the fullness of the blessing of Christ (Rom. 15:29).

Note well that Deut. 16:13 does not say, 'when thou hast gathered in the produce of thy field and vineyard.' No, no. It is written "of thy *floor* and of thy

winepress.” This typifies that which is *prepared* (not merely gathered) for enjoyment at the divine center. The lesson is that spiritual energy and diligence has prepared for common, collective enjoyment in the divine Presence. Hence *communion* of joy is stressed in v. 14. Thus in v. 15, His saints are seen happy in Himself and enjoying what He gives.

The Feasts in Num. 28 & 29

The point to the enunciation of the feasts in Num. 28 & 29 is not the dispensational significance so much as in Lev. 23, nor are they noted in connection with the teaching of the one divine center as in Deut. 16. Rather, this lengthy statement of the feasts has in view *increased ministry to the pleasure of God in the land flowing with milk and honey*. It is significant how often “my” appears in Num. 28:2. This signifies that the pleasure of God is the dominant thought.

Moses had just seen the land (Num. 27:12,13) that God provided for His people. There was therein an abundance of material with which to minister to His pleasure. We should observe that offerings characterize the two chapters. They are replete with wonderful types of Christ, an exhaustless theme, beyond our little measure to plummet.

Coupled with instruction concerning the seven feasts, we have the continual burnt offering and the sabbath offerings (v. 1-11). These were not voluntary (v. 2). It is the intention of God that there be a continual testimony to the value of Christ as appreciated by Himself (v. 3). He wants it that morning and evening we bring Christ before Him. Lev. 1 shows that we are before God as identified with all that value that He sees in Him, and not merely according to our poor thought. We are taken into favor in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6). What a mighty ascension to glory was His. Was He accepted? “Wherefore God has highly exalted Him” (Phil. 3). We are accepted in Him. The measure of His acceptance is the very measure of ours. His place is our place. His acceptance is commensurate with both the value of His Person and His work. It is His Person that imparts value to the work. This value is only understood in fullness by God. It is His well-beloved; and His will is that we bring Christ before Him morning and evening. Verse 6 shows that the continual burnt-offering was an essential feature that marked the beginning of the Mosaic economy.

Alas that there should be anything less than this when the true worshipers worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:23; Phil. 3:3; Heb. 10:19, 20). Service has its place, but generally in Christendom it has supplanted what is first: worship. The blessing of the tribe of Levi is instructive in this regard. Levi was the priestly tribe because he was on the Lord’s side. Blood did not run thicker than water with him. He was impartial -- a grievous failing among God’s people which He will certainly judge (James 2:1-13, etc.). Deut. 33:8, 9 shows this character of Levi.

Separation from evil unto the Lord results in the next thing; they teach God’s judgments and laws and put incense and whole burnt offerings on God’s alter. (Deut. 33:10). After worship comes the work of his hands, denoting service (Deut. 33:11). The soul taught of God, through the Scripture of truth, will much observe this order throughout Scripture and desire to follow it in practice.

There is the tenth part of the ephah (v. 5). Some in the OT had an ephah. An ephah is three seahs (or measures) which Sarah had in the tent. It is into it that wretched woman of Matt. 13 put leaven. The ephah speaks of the fullness of the Person of the Christ as the food of God and the food of His people. (It does not denote the Trinity). A tenth, a return to God, was offered.

The oil (v. 5) and the drink offering (v. 7) were equal in quantity. The Spirit’s power and the joy are of the same measure.

What about eternity? The sabbath looks on to it. On the sabbath (v. 9) there were two lambs for the burnt-offering and two tenths of the meal offering. There will be everlasting remembrance made of the value of the life and death of Christ.

At the beginning of each month Israel had to sacrifice and offer many things (vv. 11-15). The offerings speak of Christ. Two young bullocks for a burnt offering is a testimony to the Servant devoted entirely to the glory of God in the sacrifice of Himself. The ram denotes His singleness of purpose and the vigor of His consecration. And then there are the seven lambs of the first year without spot. Does it not speak to us of the perfection of the meek and lowly One, led to the slaughter? This, and more, was accompanied by a sin offering -- for these things were offered by those needing a sin offering, and Christ was that also.

I have spent a little more space on vv. 1-15 since we have already spent much space on the feasts. There are just a few remarks to make before closing.

1. Let us keep in mind that the distinctive character of Num. 28, 29 is increased ministry to the pleasure of God in view of His blessing them in the land.
2. God knows the meaning of all of these types even if we don’t, and He enjoys Christ and all that speaks of Him. He appreciates anything of Christ in our walk, ways and praise. What an immense privilege to be allowed, and enabled, to minister to the pleasure of God by bringing His Christ before Him!
3. W. Kelly remarked that the decline in the number of bullocks in 29:12-40 indicates a decline in devotion. Booths has the millennium in view -- and there is no perfection in this world, except in Christ as He walked here.

(Concluded)

Ed.

God's Sovereignty and Glory in the Salvation of Lost Man

Chapter 1

The God's Sovereignty in the Testing of Lost Man

(Chapter 1 continued)

The Standing of Fallen Man

As indicated above, Adam fell from an innocent state to a fallen state, having acquired the knowledge of good and evil, with the will now under the direction of the evil moral nature also acquired in the fall. Adam, as fallen, is viewed in Scripture as head of a fallen race. We speak of two men because Scripture does (1 Cor. 15:47). Natural man is a replication of Adam fallen. The second man is out of heaven. This does not mean that His humanity came from heaven (it came from Mary) but that His *moral origin* is heaven, and so He is not of the world (John 17:14). So He is the heavenly One (1 Cor. 15:47, 48). And, there are two Adams, two heads. The Lord is called the "last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45) assuring us that there will never be another head after Him.

Men are viewed, then, under the first man, Adam, *after he had sinned*. Up to the cross God put fallen man under probation, under testing, to see if fallen man is recoverable. It is well to understand that this position before God is a *standing*, a *standing* in the flesh.¹ The epoch of probation, that ran from Adam fallen to the cross, was not to educate God concerning what result there might be -- which would be a ludicrous thought about the omniscient One -- it was to fully

1. The standing "in the flesh" is noticed in Rom. 7:5; 8:8. The reader will find an explanation of this in *From New Birth to New Creation*, available from the publisher.

demonstrate that fallen man was not recoverable, and to conclude that he was "lost," etc. The sorry spectacle is that most professed Christians have not learned the lesson. At any rate, this testing took many forms which have been reviewed in numbers of books and papers, and runs throughout the writings of J. N. Darby, and will not be repeated here. The final test was the revelation of the Father in the Son:

. . . but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father (John 15:24; see also 14:9-11).

This was the result of the climactic test of fallen man. This means the test of man, standing in fallen, Adamic responsibility, to see if he was recoverable from the fall. The answer is a conclusive *no: man was not recoverable*. This answer is not understood by most who profess to know the Lord. Moreover, the testing of man was *concluded* at the cross.

For myself, I see in the word, and I recognize in myself, the total ruin of man. I see that the cross is the end of all the means that God had employed for gaining the heart of man, and therefore proves that the thing was impossible. God has exhausted all His resources, and man has shown that he was wicked, without remedy, and the cross of Christ condemns man -- sin in the flesh. But this condemnation having been manifested in another's having undergone it, it is the absolute salvation of those who believe; for condemnation, the judgment of sin, is behind us; life was the issue of it in the resurrection. We are dead to sin, and alive to God in Jesus Christ our Lord {Rom. 6:11}. Redemption, the very word, loses its force when one entertains these ideas of the old man.² It becomes an amelioration, a practical deliverance from a moral state, not a redeeming by the accomplished work of another person. Christianity teaches the death of the old man and his just condemnation, then redemption accomplished by Christ, and a new life, eternal life, come down from heaven in His person, and which is communicated to us when Christ enters us by the word. Arminianism, or rather Pelagianism, pretends that man can choose, and that thus the old man is ameliorated by the thing it has accepted. The first step is made without grace,³ and it is the first step which costs truly in this case.⁴

2. {"The old man" is a *generic* expression, pointing to the *standing* in Adam as fallen. It is not the same as the old nature within us. Just so, "the new man" is a generic expression, pointing to the standing we have in Christ. It is not identical to the new nature within us. See F. G. Patterson, *A Chosen Vessel*, ch. 6 -- found reprinted in *Collected Writings of F. G. Patterson*, pp. 228, 229, available from the publisher.}

3. To talk about the Spirit's help and inducements, and however else it is sought to disguise the fact that the first step is made without God in sovereign grace implanting a new nature, does not change the fact. Arminianism is built on alleged free will morally towards God. It is the denial that the first man is really lost, giving an unscriptural meaning to "lost." It is helpful to have the case baldly illustrated. Here is an example from *Words in Season*, Oct. 2001, article "Election (2)," by Dr. H. A. Cameron:

(continued...)

The Issue of Responsibility

MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY IS AN IMPORTANT MATTER

. . . the question of responsibility . . . lies at the root of Calvinism and Arminianism. Responsibility there must and ought always to be; but in respect of acceptance, the first man was the responsible man, and his story ended at the cross, though each has to learn it personally. Our standing is in the Second, who charged Himself indeed with our failures in responsibility (Himself perfect in every trial in it), but laid the ground of perfect acceptance before God: lost on the ground of the first, we are before God on the ground of the finished work of the second {last} Adam -- not a child of Adam, as to our place, but a child of God, "the righteousness of God in him." Before the cross, and up to it, responsibility developed; after it, righteousness revealed, and the original purpose of God, which was in the second {last} Adam, could then be brought out. This opens out what was purely of God, which we have mainly in Ephesians, though elsewhere; and conduct is the display of the divine nature as in Christ. This last is a blessed part of it. The study of what He is is surely the food of the soul. His Person, His work, may carry us deeper in the apprehension of what God is, for it was met and glorified there, and we worship and praise; but with Him we can walk, and know, and learn that none is so gracious as He. What will it not be to see Him as He is!⁵

CONFOUNDING RESPONSIBILITY AND POWER

J. N. Darby wrote:

3. (...continued)

Two preachers were discussing difficulties in theology: one was a white and the other a black brother. Said the white preacher: "Brother Johnson, don't you have any trouble about election?" "No sah," replied the other, "I has no trouble about election. You see this is how I looks at it. God, He votes to save my soul: and the Devil, he votes to damn my soul; and it depends on how I vote, as to how the election goes." This easy solution of course will not satisfy the hardshelled predestinationist, but is there not scriptural warrant to justify the brother's simple position? "God willeth not the death of any. God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." On the other hand "The thief cometh not, but to to steal, and to kill, and to destroy," and the final decision is made by the sinner. "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life." "How often would I . . . but ye would not" (p. 204).

So anyone who disagrees with this silly story and the misuse of the texts cited (concerning their true bearing) is a "hardshelled predestinationist," a very indiscriminating phrase as well as a caricature. How well this illustrates JND's observation: "It is the first step which costs truly in this case."

Moreover, we are sorry to hear that the devil has a vote that is equal to God's alleged vote. Did God give the devil that vote?

Election is the utter condemnation of fallen man and his stubborn will. Arminianism sets up that fallen will as the final arbiter and ultimate controller in salvation. What we have just seen is an excellent illustration of this fact.}

4. *Collected Writings* of J. N. Darby 10:186.

5. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:477, 478.

"All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." These words (the response of the people with one voice, when Moses had taken the book of the covenant and read in their audience, Ex. 24) were the complete confounding of two very distinct principles, which man has been continually mistaking and confounding since the fall of Adam -- responsibility and power. Man is responsible to keep the law perfectly, but by the fall he has lost the power {cp. Rom. 8:7}. This the natural heart cannot understand. One man denies his responsibility, and another assumes his power; grace, and this only, puts a man right on both points.

The reason that "grace, and only this, puts a man right on both points," will be seen before the end of this book. He further noted this:

The principle that responsibility depends on the power of the responsible person is false, save so far as the alleged responsible person is in his nature such as to negative the claim. A stone cannot be responsible nor even a beast, for moral conduct, because they are not in the relationship to which responsibility can attach. But obligation flows from relationship, and where the relationship exists which constitutes it, the obligation subsists: the power to fulfil it has nothing to do with it. The obligation gives a claim to the person to whom the obliged is responsible. I had put the case: A man owes me a thousand pounds; you are a spendthrift, and have not a penny, you have not power to pay really -- therefore I have no claim nor you responsibility. That will not do. Romans cut off their thumbs, and could not hold a spear, to avoid military service: were they held irresponsible?

Man takes another ground of reasoning against God I know, that God put him into this place, or he was born in it, and therefore he is not responsible. This raises another point, that moral responsibility attaches to will, not to power. We do what our own consciences condemn because we like it. My child refuses to come when I call him to go with me; I am going to punish him because he would not: he pleads that he was tied or could not open the door. But I punish him because he refused as to his will to yield to the obligation: I had a knife ready to cut what bound him, a key to open the door: he by his will refused the claim. In a word, responsibility flows from the claim on us arising from the relationship in which we stand. There is not a man in Glasgow that would hold that he had no claim on a man who owed him a thousand pounds because he had no ability to pay it. It has nothing to do with responsibility. We may lightly treat God so, alas! and say, "The woman that thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat"; but he pleads his sin as his excuse. God says, "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree," etc., therefore.⁷

GOD REQUIRES FROM MAN WHAT HE IS NOT ABLE TO PERFORM

In the second part of Romans (5:12 - ch. 8), where "sin in the flesh" (the old nature) is especially in view, we read:

Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the

6. *Collected Writings* 12:276, note.

7. *Letters* 2:168. Read also the letter on pp. 501, 502.

law of God, neither indeed can be (Rom. 8:7).

Man's position before God is stated to be "in the flesh," and man cannot (inability) please God (Rom. 8:8). Yet God holds man responsible. Arminians *reason* on this and say that such a thing cannot be. Their notion, arrived at by the fallen human mind is that if a man cannot pay what is owed to God, then he could not be held responsible. We might expect that they would not so view the matter if someone owed them a huge, personal debt that could not be paid. If a man owed an Arminian \$10,000,000 and could not pay one cent, the consistent Arminian would say to the man, 'since you cannot pay, then you do not owe anything.'

The Arminian, recognizing that man owes a debt, *infers* from this fact that man has the ability to pay. If God commands repentance, the Arminian *infers* from this that man is able to repent. If God says, "whosoever will may come," the Arminian *infers* from this that man has the ability to come. If God says believe the gospel, the Arminian *infers* from this that man can exercise human faith and believe. And if God says, keep the law, is it to be inferred that man can keep the law? So the Arminian produces numbers of Scriptures, from which he *infers* these things, and then claims that those Scriptures *prove* what we really know are false inferences. It is circular reasoning that proves nothing but the self-deception of such circular reasoning. J. L. Stauffer, an Arminian Mennonite does this, citing in 'proof' a quantity of texts.⁸ In reality, *such texts only show that man is responsible, not that he has moral free will towards God.*⁹

Note Deut. 30:19, which is cited. With Deut. 30:19, compare Ezek. 3:21; 18:9,21, etc.; 20:11,21; 33:11; 2 Chron. 6:36; Psa. 130:3; Prov. 20:9. In citing Deut. 30:19, did the Arminian writer think that by choosing life, *eternal life* was meant? The truth is that if one kept the law his *natural life* would continue -- he would not die, he would not earn the wages of sin which is death (Rom. 6:23). Choosing life was by keeping the law perfectly. That cannot give divine life, i.e., the new birth, to a soul. Listen:

For law works wrath (Rom. 4:15).

8. Isa. 1:18; 55:1; Matt. 11:28; Deut. 30:19; Ezek. 18:30; Matt. 11:21; John 3:18,19; Rom. 1:26, 28; 14:12; 2:6; Matt. 23:37; 1 Tim. 2:4; John 5:40; 8:24; 1:12 (*The Eternal Security Teaching*, Harrisonburg: Christian Light Publications, 1976).

9. N. Geisler holds this falsehood that God does not command what is impossible:

Further, PF {i.e., *The Potters Freedom*, by James R. White} is seemingly unashamed to acknowledge that God commands what is impossible (108), being apparently oblivious to the irrationality this attributes to God (op. cit., p. 260, sec. Ed. 2001).

Dr. Geisler is "apparently oblivious to the" undermining of the sovereignty of God in which he is engaged. It appears, then, that he thinks fallen men could keep the law. In fact, it is implicit in the notion of moral free will towards God that God would not command men to do that which they cannot do -- and therefore it is implicit in that teaching that fallen man could keep the law. Well, persons are free to believe any foolishness they want, though ultimately answerable to God for it.

. . . that sin by the commandment might become exceedingly sinful (Rom. 7:13).

Wherefore by works of law no flesh shall be justified before him (Rom. 3:20).

For if a law had been given able to quicken, then indeed righteousness were on the principle of law (Gal. 3:21).

. . . if righteousness [is] by law, then Christ has died for nothing (Gal. 2:21).

Was Israel's history a history of persons choosing life (cp. Deut. 31:16-21; Ezek. 18:25-28; 2 Chron. 36:15, 16; Matt. 21:33-46)? "Quicken" means to make alive, the very action those dead in offences and sins need (Eph. 2:1-5; note the correlative terms -- dead and quicken). Scripture tells us that the law cannot quicken (Gal. 3:21). So when God said choose life, He was speaking of continuance of natural life.¹⁰ Concerning the misuse of such Scriptures someone wrote a letter to a friend that was published under the title, "No Man Becomes a Child of God by an Act of His Own Will." In this letter, the writer addressed the matter we are considering:

. . . And if you should enquire, as some did in the Apostle's days, "Wherefore then the law?" let the Apostle answer: "It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made" (Gal. 3:19). And if you should still say, Why added because of transgressions? take for answer the same Apostle's words in another place, "For by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). And again, "Moreover, the law entered that the offence might abound" (Rom. 5:20). And again, "I had not known sin, but by the law" (Rom. 7:7). And again, "But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (v. 13). Yet once more, "The law worketh wrath" (Rom. 4:15). Now, it seems to me a serious thing, in the face of all these inspired declarations of what ends the law was designed to answer, to affirm that any were saved by "choosing life" according to the tenor of the words of Moses, which have been quoted. Life was then offered them on condition of obedience to the law; and the Holy Ghost solemnly assures us, that "By the deeds

10. Observe well that God said "choose life." The position of the writer cited above is that man has free moral agency and can do what God says. God addressed the law to Israel to keep it. Does that mean, according to the writer, that it could be kept? What kind of a God would that be according to the Arminian system of reasoning and inferences, that would command men to do what they cannot do? Their position is that God does not do such a thing; nay, could not without violating man's free moral agency.

The patent fact is that no sinner ever chose life. No sinner ever kept the law. All have physically died. The trouble is not in the law (Rom. 7:10-12). The truth is that the sinner **cannot** choose life even in the sense meant in the passage -- cannot keep the law. It is not merely that universal death testifies to the fact that man **cannot** keep the law; man's inability is expressly declared in Scripture:

Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God; for neither indeed can it be (Rom. 8:7).

"Neither indeed can be" are words that express inability. So God gave the law, told Israel to keep it, while knowing this was impossible. There it is: proof that God does do such things; and proof that man cannot obey, yet is responsible.

of the law there shall no flesh be justified” (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16, 21:3:11); that is, in other words, *they could not have life on the terms proposed by Moses.*

Of this, Moses himself was quite aware. In the very next chapter to that from which his words are quoted, we find that the Lord appeared and said unto him,

Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them (Deut. 31:16).

They had already broken one covenant of works, in token of which Moses brake the two tables of the law, which were in his hands, when he came down from the mount (see Ex. 32:19). With an unchanged nature, and placed under a similar covenant of works, what could be expected now? What but the results which the Lord assures Moses, and Moses assures the people, would actually ensue?

Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel. For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant. And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed; *for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear* (Deut. 31:19-21).

Can anything be more solemn or decisive than these last words? God declared to Moses, that instead of choosing life that they might live, the people would turn to other gods, provoke Him, and break His covenant; and He speaks of these future acts of evil, as only the display of what he knew to be *at the then present time* working in their hearts. “I know their imagination,” &c. Hence, Moses says to them, “Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the Ark of the covenant of the Lord your God.” Why? That they might choose life, and live by keeping it? Nay, but “that it may be there for a witness against thee.” “For I know thy rebellion,” he proceeds, “and thy stiff neck; behold, whilst I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death” (vv. 26, 27)? “For I know,” says he again to them, “that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands” (v. 29). Surely we need no further answer to those who use Moses’ words to prove that salvation depends on human will. If it did, who could be saved?

Joshua’s words are sometimes quoted for this purpose, as well as those of Moses; and with as little reason or force. After reminding Israel of the condition in which their fathers were, serving other gods, when the Lord took Abraham from the other side of the flood; after rehearsing to them the wonders which God had wrought, and many of which their eyes had beheld; he exhorts them to fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth, and put away other gods; and then

he adds,

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (Josh. 24:15).

The fact is, he does not call upon them to choose between the Lord and idols. He says, “*If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose ye,*” whether ye will serve this class of idols, or that. He, through grace, as we know, was resolved on serving the Lord. But when the people, with good intentions, perhaps, but in a spirit of self-sufficiency, declare that they too will serve the Lord, how does Joshua receive their protestations?

And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good (v. 19).

And when the people still vow and protest “Nay; but we will serve the Lord,” Joshua says to them,

Ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses” (vv. 21, 22).

Ah, yes; to have our words witness against us, is the only result that can flow from our declaring that we choose the Lord and his service. And as though to show in what a poor condition they were for taking such vows upon them, Joshua immediately exhorts them:

Now, therefore, put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel (v. 23).

There were, then, strange gods among them! Their hearts, too, needed inclining to serve the Lord! Plain proof that they were, as we know the human heart ever is, averse to His service.

Of this we have still further evidence in that part of their history which immediately succeeds. The Book of Judges is but the history of their sins, and of the calamities which these brought upon them, with the Lord’s merciful interpositions for their deliverance. Into this I do not now enter. Nor shall I pursue the thread of their history throughout. It would lead me too far. One point, however, must not be omitted; I refer to the ministry of the prophets. It differed materially from the law simply considered. The law left no room for repentance. It demanded obedience, but failing to obtain that, it had nothing to pronounce or bestow but condemnation and the curse. It was obedience, uniform, unvarying obedience, which the law required; not repentance and a return to obedience. But the prophets were sent to propose, as it were, new terms.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon (Isa. 45:7).

Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to Me,

saith the Lord (Jer. 3:1).

Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause Mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever, O house of Israel. Is not my way equal? Are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them -- for his iniquity that he hath done he shall die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live -- he shall not die (Ezek. 18:25-28).

Such was the ministry of the prophets. But was this, to prove, any more than Moses' or Joshua's language respecting the law, that it was possible for man, of his own will, so to turn from his wickedness and do that which is lawful and right, as to live thereby? Surely not. It was a further test -- a milder one -- to prove whether it was in the heart or will of man to turn to God, and serve and obey him. It was as though God said, I will not rigorously enforce the claims of my law. It claims uninterrupted and universal obedience. That you have utterly failed to render, and the law knows nothing of repentance. But now I give you an opportunity to begin again.

If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done, he shall live.

It was a fair offer to blot out all the past, and begin over again; and this offer was made, be it remembered, to those who were complaining that their destinies were not in their own hands. Could a fairer offer have been made? But need I ask you, my brother, whether it were possible for any fallen man to be saved thus? What! by keeping all God's statutes, and doing for the time to come, that which is lawful and right! Surely this would have been for the doer of these things to live by them, which Paul declares to be the righteousness which is of the law. It was simply affording to those who thought they would have done better than their fathers, an opportunity of showing what they could do!

And what was the issue of this trial of man by the new proposals of repentance and amendment of life!

And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people and on His dwellingplace: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy (2 Chron. 36:15, 16).

These patient dealings of God with Israel were resumed after the captivity; and John the Baptist was the last of the long line of those who were thus sent to Israel. "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matt. 11:13). Did I say, the last in the line? Yes, he was the last in the line of servants who were thus

employed; but there was One greater than all these servants of God, who came after them all, on the same errand. Will you turn, my brother, to Matt. 21:33 - 22:14, where you will find the summing up of all we have now been considering together, and that from the lips of our blessed Lord Himself. You know the two parables which constitute this passage. A certain householder plants a vineyard, and lets it out to husbandmen. When the time of the fruit draws near, he sends his servants to the husbandmen, that they may receive it. The husbandmen take the servants, beat one, kill another, and stone another. Again he sends other servants more than the first, and they do to them likewise. Last of all, he sends his son, saying, "They will reverence my son." So that one object for which the Son of God was sent, was to seek fruit of those to whom the vineyard had been entrusted. How was He received?

But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

The meaning of this cannot be mistaken. The Jewish nation were the husbandmen. All the privileges God had bestowed upon them were the vineyard. The obedience He required was the fruit, which they ought to have rendered. The law demanded it, but in vain. Prophet after prophet came seeking it; but maltreatment or death was all that they received. Last of all came Jesus, the heir. Him, also, they put to death . . .

No man becomes a child of God by an act of his own will!

"No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the holy Ghost."

"God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."

"And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him"

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus."

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

"Of His own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures."

"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Commending these scriptures to your most prayerful consideration,

I remain, dear brother, Affectionately yours in Christ

The unbelieving reasoning proceeds to question how a man can be held responsible for his sin if he is not a free moral agent. Well, the fact is that the Word of God does hold him responsible and the Word of God rejects the notion that the sinner has moral free will towards God. Adam unfallen had it and lost it. It has not been recovered by fallen man. If the Word of God teaches both truths, namely, that fallen

man is not a free morally towards God and yet is responsible, it is our part to bow to those facts and not complain, as the writer cited above does, about manufactured difficulties. We are, as Christians, to believe and receive what God says, even if our carnal minds rebel at it. That is how we receive light from Scripture. However, people usually do not reason in this Arminian manner when it comes to their own pocketbook. Let us remind ourselves of this once more:

But in the reasoning of Arminians there is a totally false principle, namely, that our responsibility depends on our power. If I have lent £100,000 {British pounds} to any one, and he has squandered it all, certainly he is not able to pay, but has his responsibility come to an end with his ability? Certainly not. Responsibility depends on the right of the person who has lent it to him, not on the ability of the one who has wrongfully wasted the money. ¹¹

RESPONSIBILITY AND GRACE

We have noted that not having the moral power to pay does not relieve from responsibility. God gave the law knowing that man could not keep it (Rom. 8:7, 8), yet they were held responsible for breaking it. Sovereign grace can meet man's lost condition.

Man in responsibility always fails. Man was never in his innocency the head of a people; and as for Noah, he was, so to speak, a drunken head over the world. In Adam there is only and total failure and judgment executed. Created in innocence and beauty, he distrusts God and listens to the devil, who said that God had jealously kept back the best thing: then lust comes in, next transgression, and all is over as to his state; he shrinks from God, and is turned out of Paradise. The world goes on and is so wicked that God brings in the flood. After that Noah fails directly. And as I have said, the priests never put on their garments of glory and beauty except when consecrated; and the Jews were a law-breaking people. In every place of responsibility the first thing we hear is man's utter failure. Not that there were not exceptions through grace; but, as to man, the inevitable result of responsibility is failure. As to principle Cain completed the sin of man: the main feature of Adam's sin was sin against God, that of Cain's was sin against his neighbor; and these two make up the sum of all sins.

In Paradise we get side by side the two principles about which men have been fighting ever since, namely, man's responsibility and simple communicated grace; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. We find these two trees in Eden: the tree of responsibility, or the knowledge of good and evil; and the tree of life. In Christ alone are both principles fully brought to an issue, God glorified as to them, and blessing secured. He has met the failure in the fruit of the tree of responsibility, and secured eternal life, and the accomplishment of God's counsels in sovereign grace, and that in righteousness. God shut man out of Eden before he ate of the tree of life, and thus reserved His principle of grace for fuller hopes. Indeed to perpetuate life in sin would hardly have been in the

11. *Letters of J. N. Darby* 2:501.

ways of God. ¹²

This book is about God aboundingly acting in sovereign grace after the testing of the first man was completed with the cross -- in spite of the fact that the first man had rejected grace displayed so fully in the Son when He was here. Man had, really, rejected God's grace in rejecting His Son. The issue involved was the presentation of God's grace to man *while under probation* by presenting the Son to man's responsibility to accept Him. Part of that testing was by the Son of God being here as the expression of God's grace and by the revelation of the Father in the Son (John 14:9-11). Both were hated (John 15:24). That hatred received its fullest expression in putting Christ on the cross, yet God used that expression of the wrath of man to praise Him (cp. *Psa. 76:10*). God has so wrought that sin is His servant. This reminds me of the lines in the hymn by J. G. Deck:

The very spear that pierced Thy side,
Drew forth the blood to save.

That illustrates something of the character of God's use of man for His own glory. It was consequent upon the rejection of Christ, the crowning evil act of the first man, that there followed the unfolding of God's purpose from eternity concerning the Man of His purpose. ¹³

The first man put the Son on the cross, ¹⁴ refusing thus the manifestation of God's grace in His Person. Man had been tried by grace before the cross (John 1:14, etc.) and there is presently no 'age of grace' as if man is under trial now regarding grace. The trial of the first man to see if he was recoverable ended at the cross.

Our Hope, and Its Practical Influence

I must not assume, dear reader, Christian though I may be, that you have the Christian hope. Doubtless every one who is not infidel accepts as fact that the Lord is coming again, but that is a very different thing from having it as a really lively and active expectation in the heart. For most of God's people even yet, it is to be feared, that coming is too far away to be anything else than dim and inoperative. The practical thing -- I cannot call it hope with them -- is death, which is actually looked

12. *Collected Writings* 32:232, 233.

13. See *Collected Writings* 26:256, etc.

14. The Lord Jesus was the second man when here in the world, as to His Person. But He took not *the place* of the second man until in resurrection. There are two things about this to note here: (1) the first man cast out the second man; (2) the second man, in resurrection, has displaced the first man. The first man, the man under probation, has been judged by God in the cross. The Christian, as such, is identified with the second man, on the other side of death. A line of truth that has been referred to as "identification truth" was brought out by J. N. Darby in the 1800s (though not labeled in just that way) -- and, I might add, free of the attendant baggage added by some who would not be identified with JND ecclesiastically.

at indeed as the coming of the Lord, or at least, if it be not that, something just as good as that.

Proposing then, if the Lord will, to look, in a series of papers, at what for us is contained in or dates from coming, and (in our next) to quicken our anticipations by the consideration of its probable nearness, I feel that I must first of all briefly review the Scriptural evidences for the hope itself.

(1) That death is the Lord's coming I need say little about. It is but the assertion of those who think themselves wise enough to substitute their own terms for those of Scripture, not one passage of which be produced even seemingly to justify it. "If I will that he tarry till I come" -- the Lord's words as to the apostle John, -- would be rendered simple folly by reading them, "if I will that he tarry till he *die*"; the report that went abroad among them that "that that disciple should *not* die," unwarranted as it might be, still shows that with them Christ's coming was the very opposite of dying. So the common quotation, "watch, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" is part of a long prophecy, which if any one believed to be a prediction of believers dying, it would be really vain to reason with him.

Death is departing to be with Christ, not his coming to us at all; and such texts as "We shall not all sleep," and "we which are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord" show the very opposite anticipations to those in the minds of masses now.

(2) A providential coming, whether to destroy Jerusalem or for whatever else, is not at all more satisfactory as an interpretation. In Luke 21:20-27, the destruction of Jerusalem is *before* the coming of the Lord, not at it, and in Matt. 24:15-31, there is no destruction of the city at all, and it is *after* the tribulation the Lord comes.

Nor could that be providential judgment in which the Son of man comes in the clouds of heaven, with all His angels, in power and great glory, sends His angels to gather His elect from the four winds, receives the wise virgins, rejects the foolish, and separates the sheep from the goats among the nations.

(3) A coming by the Spirit will not fulfil these indications either, whether that be placed (as it is variously) at Pentecost, or as yet future, and to introduce the millennium. As to the last moreover, a future spiritual coming is additionally unscriptural. Spiritually, He is here, and not to come.

(4) There remains the literal unforced rendering of the words, the only timing that is really worthy of Him who does not use ambiguous speech with those to whom as to His children He utters what is in His heart. Other interpretations are but the fantasies of wise and learned men, which the simple have learned from them, no doubt, but which they could never have originated.

(5) This coming is pre-millennial, and in order to the blessing of the earth, although judgment upon those who are destroying it must clear the way for blessing. This is proved abundantly by many passages, too many even to enumerate: it is part of the web and woof of Scripture. I can specify but a few.

The apostle tells us that "the times of refreshing all come from the *presence* of

the Lord," and as to the way of it, that "He shall send Jesus Christ, whom the heavens must receive *until* the times of the restitution of all things," -- the times of *restoring*, not after they have *been* restored (Acts 3:19-21).

It is Israel's conversion that is to be life from the dead to the nations of the world (Rom. 11:15); but Israel is nationally converted only when they look up Him whom they have pierced (Zech. 12:10, 13:1) and that is, when "He cometh with the clouds, am *every* eye shall see Him" (Rev 1:7¹).

Zech. 14 gives us the coming of the Lord in the very midst of Israel's final trouble, His feet standing the Mount of Olives, and all His saints coming with Him; and in that day time Lord is King over all the earth; there is then to be one Lord and His name one.

Rev. 19 gives us first of all the marriage of the Lamb in heaven, and upon His wife the fine linen which is interpreted to be "the righteousness of saints." Then He comes *from* heaven with His armies, upon which the same fine linen covering the Bride is seen when there is the judgment of His human, and angelic (20:1-3) enemies; and then the saints reign with Christ a thousand years before the resurrection of the rest of the dead, and *their* judgment (20). But this connects with a line of truth which must be separately noticed.

(6) The resurrection of the saints is always connected with the coming of the Lord, and separated not only in character but in time from that of the wicked. The text just quoted, people object to as figurative. There is a vision, no doubt, (what the apostle 'saw'), but there is also the interpretation of the vision: "this is the first resurrection" is the *interpretation* of the vision, *and not figure at all*, and also what follows in the 6th verse.²

But the doctrine of the first resurrection is not based upon this text alone. It is everywhere distinguished in the New Testament as "the resurrection *from* the dead" not from *death* merely); a special selective one. Thus in the Lord's answer to the Sadducees, "those that shall be *accounted worthy* to obtain that world and the resurrection *from* the dead . . . are equal unto the angels; and *are the children of God, being* the children of the resurrection" (see 20:35, 36).

Again, in a passage which speaks of the very "order" of the resurrection, it is

1. "All the kindreds of the earth" here is literally "all the tribes of the land," whose mourning is given in Zech. 12.

2. The objection that It is a resurrection of 'souls,' is forgetfulness merely of a very common Scripture phraseology, in which the 'soul', stands for the person himself (see Gen. 12:13. etc. and the whole question treated in "Facts and Theories as to a Future State" part 1, ch. 7.)

The idea that only *martyrs* are spoken of is from want of distinguishing between two separate companies, which are really mentioned, the persons sitting on the thrones as first seen (and who are not raised first then), *and* the 'souls of those beheaded,' etc. The detail I cannot go into here.

said, “Every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits, afterwards *they that are Christ’s*, at His coming” (1 Cor. 15:23) What more misleading, if all were to rise at once?

(7) Instead of the Church being destined to convert the world, the coming of the Lord is to the judgement of Christendom, which by the removal of the wheat becomes simply a tare-field, as the parable I refer to shows, and Israel, not the Church, converted we have already seen, becomes that which “blossoms and buds and fills the face of the earth with fruit (Isa. 27:6). That it is Israel literally to which these, and the Old Testament promises generally belong, the Apostle Paul states in the plainest terms (Rom. 9:3, 4).

This hurried and imperfect statement should suffice to show that the coming of the Lord is not an unpractical doctrine at least, but connects itself with a number of important truths. To call any Scriptural truth indeed unpractical is to dishonor the love that has made it known to us, and to ignore the fact that truth links itself with truth, as error with error. And how little unpractical can that truth be which is to characterize our attitude as Christians: “Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning, and yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, ye may open to Him immediately” (Luke 12:35, 36). How the Lord Himself appreciates such a spirit of watchfulness, the words that follow in this chapter should sufficiently declare.

But let us trace a few of the practical consequences which flow from the real reception of this truth; we are bound to admit that it may be as inoperative as any other whatever it may be, if the mind alone, and not the heart, be concerned with it. If the heart be in it, it is not too much to say that its influence will be exerted over the whole walk and ways.

In the first place, then, as to the gospel itself, the reception of the true doctrine of the Lord’s coming clears it from all suspicion of legality with which the common view almost of necessity imbues it. For His coming being put off to the end of the world, the resurrection and the judgment of saint and sinner a necessarily thrown together. All stand at the same time before the Judge to be “judged according their works,” and, by a sentence given upon this principle, are received to everlasting blessedness or depart to everlasting fire. In this case who but must hesitate to account his salvation a settled thing before the judgment of the great day settles it? And if that be still according to works, what good of talking about our present justification or salvation being “not works?” “Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord,” is the psalmist’s cry: “for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified!” But how can we even plead, “enter not into judgment,” when we know, in fact He *will* enter into judgement, and that with His servants; and then, what? if the Psalmist words are true.

Now I do not pretend here to take up the texts out of the confusion of which this doctrine has been manufactured; they will come before us in due course, this series of papers go on as contemplated. But it is plain that the doctrine of a pre-millennial

coming, and of the resurrection of the saints a thousand years before the wicked, separates widely and at once between these two, and takes the saints out of all possibility of coming into the judgment according to their work which will be the portion of the latter. Nay, the character of the resurrection and its connected events clearly separate them, as the saints are “*raised in glory*,” and caught up to meet the Lord in the air, before He even appears to the world at all: for “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall *we* also appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:4). Certain it is then, however and whenever we shall (as all shall) “give account of ourselves to God,” no question can be raised as to the glory of a saint who is declared a child of God by being a child of the resurrection, and *already glorified!*

But again, as to our character here, what more suited to keep our hearts out of the world than the assurance that He may come at any moment actually to take us out of it and introduce us into all the joys and glories of the Father’s house? People ask, I know, does not the knowledge of an ever impending death act in the same way and with equal power? I ask them in turn, can they really believe it does? and do facts show that it does? Even the very enthusiasm that they often deprecate as connected with the expectation of the Lord’s coming, do they often have to complain of such enthusiasm as connected with death? Even to him who is able to say with the apostle, that ‘death is gain,’ and ‘to depart and be with Christ is far better’ (and doubtless every Christian may and should be able to say that) death is not, and cannot be, what the coming of the Lord is. Death is the dropping of the body, not its redemption. It is personal gain, which may be almost balanced to one’s mind (as in the apostle’s case) by others’ loss. The coming of the Lord is pure gain, pure joy, and no loss whatever. It is the confirmation forever of every spiritual tie. It is the blessing of all believers from the beginning of time. It is the time for which the Lord Himself is waiting, as the gathering of His own purchased people, -- the fruit of the travail of His soul. It is the time too when He shall take His great power, and bring to an end the misrule and disorder under which the earth so long has groaned; the time for which creation looks as for its enfranchisement.

The assertion that death is as powerful a lever as the Lord’s coming for the soul, comes only in fine {sic?} from those who have never known what the latter is; and I think I may safely add, *think it scarcely worth the trouble to enquire*. The Lord Himself has settled for him who will listen to His word, what couples itself with the thought that He delays: “if that evil servant shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth His coming, and shall *begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken*.” And has not this effect followed in the Church’s history? who that knows anything about it will say that it has not?

A third practical consequence connects itself with this. If the world, according to the common thought, is to be gradually leavened with the gospel, of necessity its character will be changed in that proportion. The numerous Scriptures which speak of the “course of this world” being “according to the prince of the power of the air,” -- of “*all* that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride

of life," -- of the world treating the disciples as it treated the Master, and kindred things to these, cease to apply in the present day, as they did of old. Conformity to the world becomes proportionately more in place, and in a *Christian* world, perchance even a duty. And when, to supplement and confirm all this, the promises of earthly blessing to an *earthly* people, Israel, are taken as applying *literally* to a people who belong to heaven, -- the climax of carnal ease and self-indulgence is simply and surely reached.

How different all becomes when we are made to see the real future of the professing Church, and that He who is at the very door judges this alliance with the world only as departure from and lukewarmness to Himself! If Christendom is to be *judged*, and not approved, how earnestly shall I take His word to test the whole state and condition of things around! how little being with the multitude of even His professed followers will assure my heart as to my path being with him.

Be assured, beloved reader, the truth of the Lord's coming is one of the greatest practical importance to the Christian. To make light of it is to make light of Christ's own reiterated and emphatic testimony to His people, and to walk by the light of our own wisdom, gone astray from him . . .

Helps by the Way, New Series 1:160-167 (1879).

Note on Lust

Lust is the stretching forth the hand to take something for *self*. If God say, Take, it is no lust to take. But, if the very crown prepared by God for you were there, and you took it unbidden by Him, it would be lust. God has sheltered us in Christ; "walk in the spirit," then, "and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." Lust is the very essence of the world. "Lo, I come to do *thy* will," was Christ's way. Wherever there is a "Thus saith the Lord," though it be even going to the stake, you will find a joy, a calmness, which you will never find in stolen waters taken for yourself. A path utterly unblameable may be pursued, and yet God may say, I did not put you there; and this comes in to interfere with the sustainment of quiet peace in the heart. Is it with me, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" "Lo I come to do thy will?" recognizing obedience to God as the one great thing.

G.V.W.

The Hero and the Servant

In a world of evil, man, when naturally susceptible to it, is continually under it, and therefore anyone who would help him, can only do so by delivering him from its pressure. Now we find that there is a certain sense of need, and a desire for deliverance in many before it comes. God in His unchanging mercy raises up laborers here and there, to render the desired help, and it is well for us to ascertain on what their usefulness and real service depends. Is it on human energy or on the simplicity of their obedience to Christ? It is not because the laborer has not a true purpose and heart for the Lord, that he drops into the natural or heroic line, but because he is not simply subject to the word of God, and the control of the Spirit. The pressure exists, the deliverance is needed, the earnest laborer tries to effect it, either by human means or simply by the Spirit of God. The point for us to consider is the difference between a service done in a human way, and the same done in the leading of the Spirit. In a scene of evil there must be pressure, though at times from carelessness, as with Israel in the times of the Judges, it reaches a greater height, and thus it is more manifest the way in which every laborer seeks to help. The greater the pressure, the deeper the darkness into which the people of God have fallen; the more distinct and palpable are the lines of action of every leader who is set on delivering them. There never has been a revival of truth, an awakening of souls for the pure word of God, that the leaders in the movement have not more or less been drawn away from the path of Christ unto the human line. There is a true energy of the Spirit abroad. "The Lord gives the word, and great is the company of those who publish it," but the wile of the devil is to induce the laborer to consider for the people more than for the Lord.¹ Aaron, when he had made a golden calf in consideration for the people, is an extreme and fearful example of how one in the greatest eminence can be deluded when he turns his eye from God. A wile or by-path is very specious; it runs so near; and so like the right one, that its real snare lies in the difficulty to discover it. Now the servant of Christ, while always for the Lord, devotes all his energies to the good of man; he is really set entirely for man's blessing; but he begins with Christ and knows no blessing for man outside of or apart from Christ. This is a servant of Christ.

Yet a laborer, though really gifted of God with the truth in his heart, is ensnared and diverted from the path of Christ when he, regarding the state of the people, allows himself to act with respect to it merely, and not simply according to the word of the Lord. Thus it was with king Saul when he offered the burnt offering because he saw that the people were scattered from him (1 Sam. 13:12, 13).

A leader among men does not originate the state of things in which he is foremost, he merely gives it a head in himself. It is not possible for man to introduce any thing entirely new; he may discover things hitherto unknown, and he may

1. {Or, perhaps, to have a place for himself.}

introduce new combinations of known things; it is only the Spirit of the Lord that can set forth or propound what is entirely new and divinely appropriate in any given crisis. This is really Christ's path, the path of wisdom -- an invisible one; and if the servant be not kept in this path, he descends to the human one, which man commends; and as he is useful therein, he makes a mark on society in improving it, and obtains a name among men -- he is a hero or benefactor. First it is admitted that the Lord gives the word, and that great is the company of those who publish it. So far there are many true laborers, but then comes the necessity for caution and waiting on the Lord, lest, though a true laborer in heart, one should be turned to man for the line of action, and not to the Lord simply; that is, man's prudence dictates and defines the manner of serving, and not the Holy Ghost, who is the source of the service itself.

Now the first mark that it is the object {whether it is man or the Lord} of my service which forms my line of action is, that I trust to or use human means to effect or accomplish the service. Unless a laborer walks in faith, has an invisible path, and can introduce something entirely new, he must resort to what is at hand, and like a hero he gives force and prominence to feelings or wants which he has himself, so that others can co-operate with him. A laborer, with the purest intention, given of God, may resort to human means to accomplish it, for he knows no better; but then it is man that is before his mind and not simply the Lord. His thought is from man upward, instead of from the Lord coming down to man; and this was the case with Moses when he first attempted to deliver Israel; He had a true purpose of heart to deliver the people of Israel from the thralldom of Egypt; but not knowing the Lord's mind, and having the people preeminently before his mind, he resorts to the only means at his command; and, herolike, with his own hand slays the Egyptian. Forty years afterwards, when Moses, having learned that the Lord is the source of true service, entered on the purpose of his heart in quite a different way, one entirely new and incomprehensible to man -- one of faith, and thus distinctly of God. In the times of the judges, many human expedients were resorted to in order to effect deliverance, and the Lord favored each with success, and men were greatly signalized. But when Samuel (the answer to the cry of faith) serves, it is by turning to the Lord in prayer; then a new mode of action with a new origin of power is introduced; God and His way of working command one's whole attention: "The Lord thundered on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them" (1 Sam. 7:10). The nearer we are to God, the more our work is in divine power, and the less it is in human effort. If one has the heart and purpose to serve, it is plain enough that if he does not know the divine way, he must resort to the human way, and it is not his purpose or his ability which I impugn, but the line of action in which he seeks to effect his true and good intention; and when such an one turns to human means, in any measure, he drinks of the old wine and spoils his taste; that is, he interferes with his taste for the new; he has stooped to human effort, natural energy, and is unable to understand or see the invisible path of the Spirit of God. And hence the laborer, using human means in any way, persuasive words, sensational appeals, or

thrilling anecdotes, either does not know the Lord's mode of action; or having drunk of the old wine, he does not straightway desire the new, for he saith the old is better.

The second mark that the laborer has man pre-eminently before him for his service is, that he is occupied with results. It is his success which cheers and approves him, and not the simple fact that he has done the work and will of the Lord, and has His approval irrespective of result: he rejoices when, like the disciples of old, he can say, The devils are subject to us through thy word; he knows nothing of the patient toil of the one who can say "I have labored in vain and spent my strength for nought." He is like an Elijah in one day -- a John Baptist in another; well nigh confounded when success or open acknowledgment does not accompany his labors. He knows nothing of the service of Paul at Philippi; baffled, hindered, and suffering every way, and yet when, as it were, all hope was gone of service in that place -- when he is a prisoner -- and human energies are at an end, the jailer, broken down by the power of God, fell down before him, crying, What must I do to be saved? The brightest time in a servant's career is when, to human eyes, he has no results to show; even as it was with Paul in prison at Rome, or with John in Patmos, for the word of the Lord and the testimony of Jesus Christ. It is only the thoroughly dependent servant that can be entrusted with the arduous service of maintaining for God, single handed, against all corners; like an Isaiah, who, having found a holy rest in the glory of God, is prepared to descend to the worst state of things in Israel; or like a Daniel in Babylon, or a Paul before the Roman tribunal. There are Jonahs nowadays pining because their service is not successful; and they must learn, as he did, that their only resource is in God.

The third mark is that laborers who do not rise above man as the object of their service, never lead souls beyond the benefit of salvation. They are occupied with the need of souls, which is right in itself, but there is a great difference whether my service is measured or defined by the need of souls, or by the purpose of God in His love. True, if I could not feel for man as man feels it, I could not meet his need; but on the other hand, if I do not see God's purpose in grace, I cannot present the remedy according to the divine measure; I must present the gospel only to meet man's need; I cannot lead the heart of the needy one into the fulness of God's grace, for this I do not see or apprehend for myself. Consequently the fruits of such labor -- the converts -- are not devoted in self-surrender or world-surrender, though they be true and happy in the assurance of salvation; and simply because it is not Christ personally who is the joy and object of their hearts, but their own forgiveness. Whereas if the gospel were presented as it is in God's heart and purpose, to meet the need of a lost prodigal, it would lead him, not only from the far country to taste of his father's forgiving love, but to enter on a new and unknown sphere of eternal blessedness, within the sacred precincts of His presence; and this can be done by no impressiveness of human effort, but by the Holy Ghost's power alone. The gospel which conducts the soul into the greatest height, is the gospel which must have reached the sinner's greatest depth. For nowhere else is seen as in the height of glory, how every speck of sin, and every taint of unholiness is swept away in the

cross, and there there is an end to human things, to man himself; and the new divine path of life is opened out to the soul; and in this the servant of Christ treads, and to this he leads the soul he serves, and a soul once upon it cannot depart from it or bring in the smallest part of human effort without proportionate loss and defeat.

The fourth mark is that the laborer who employs the human element is always attractive to men. Man is his object, and he becomes a hero to men. I do not say that at no time great numbers are not led together to hear the word of God, but, as at Antioch, it will soon arouse opposition and persecution (Acts 13:50). I merely present the fact that the more popularly the gospel is presented, the larger the attendance and the natural assent to it. A man of eloquence, or a man of position, preaching the gospel will command a congregation, which a man walking in simple dependence, with neither of those adjuncts, seldom will. The human element suits the human mind, and really there are but the two ways -- man's or God's. Now though God uses the human vessel, body and mind, to convey His mind to man, yet it is always by His Spirit; while even a truly gifted laborer, who uses human means to influence man, can necessarily never go beyond man, for man cannot advance a man beyond a man. What is of the flesh is flesh: what is of the Spirit is spirit. No one ever served man as the blessed Lord, and no one was ever left so alone and so unacknowledged here. Where the apostle labored most there all were turned away from him (2 Tim. 1:15). The master builder of the church was reduced in his own person to the experience of a solitaire in chains.

May every worker be a servant of Christ, and then he will be the true benefactor, and well pleasing unto the Lord; and may we keep, and encourage one another, in the one only divine path of service.

From, *A Voice to the Faithful* 6:110-121.

The Son of God

Our Lord's own words, that "no man knoweth the Son, but the Father," may well make us take up with reverence the theme before us. There is none where it is more needful to remember, that it is the province of the Word to judge *us*, not *we* to judge it. We have only "with meekness to receive," bowing the pride of our intellect, and checking the wanderings of our imagination, and restraining the unholy curiosity which would fain so often indulge itself even in the presence of the "deep things of God."

But while there is no subject as to which controversy is more to be deprecated, there is at the same time no point of faith upon which it is more important to have possession of the Scripture truth in its simplicity. The Person of the Son of God is one of faith's foundations. To touch it is to bring everything into question. "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father, but he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also." The Lord give us, beloved reader, unfeigned humility and subjection to the inspired Word, our

only guidance here or elsewhere.

The declaration of the Son of God is given us even in the Old Testament. We know to whom it is said, "Thou art My Son: this day have I begotten Thee" (Psa.2:7). There has been, however, even here, to begin with, a most serious mistake made. The language of the Psalm has been applied to the Lord as a Divine Being; and hence the way opened to low and dishonoring thoughts concerning him; while the forced explanations of those who held the truth substantially did not commend the truth they held.

It should be plain that "this day have I begotten Thee" could only apply to the Lord's birth as man. And the not seeing that as man also He has the title {name} of Son of God, has been the cause of much confusion and perplexity. Yet it is plainly stated in the angel's answer to Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Here there is no room to question that the manner of His conception is the justification of the claim of the "Man, Christ Jesus," to be the "Son of God."

And in Acts 13, the very passage in the Psalm is in this way applied to his begetting as man: "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus, ¹ *as it is also written in the second psalm*, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." It is not resurrection that is spoken of here, as some have thought, for the apostle goes on to speak of that separately directly after: "and as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David."

But while not seeing this claim of the Lord as man to be the Son of God, has been the mistake of some, and while positive error has in this way come in, -- others have made this the whole thing as to His Sonship. They have conceived it to be a lowering of His dignity, and inconsistent with His having equal honor with the Father, to speak of Him as eternally the Son. They call it even an "inferior name," unworthy of Him. They maintain that it is inconsistent with co-eternity as well as with co-equality. Hence they believe Him Son only as man, and deny Him to be Eternal Son, ever in the bosom of the Father. ²

It is impossible to deny, on the other hand, that some maintainers of the Eternal Sonship have drawn from it conclusions of this very kind; and in this

1. "Again" is not in the original, and should be omitted.

2. The commentators Adam Clark and Albert Barnes, among others, maintain this.

very way, the Arianism of the fourth century came in. Scripture, however, which clearly states the doctrine, is in no wise responsible for the conclusions of men, against which, moreover, it carefully and jealously guards us. We have only to cleave fast to it, and the simplest and most childlike among us will be certain to go least astray.

Let us turn, then, to the Scripture statements as to this. We are told that “In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because God *sent his only-begotten Son* into the world, that we might live through Him” (1 John 4:9). 9). The language here is plain and expressive. It surely tells us God had a Son to send. And not, mark, after He was in the world, He sent Him to the Cross; no, but He sent Him into the world. Surely then, before He was in the world, God had a Son to send. Before “that holy timing” was begotten at all on earth, there was a Son, an *only-begotten* Son, in heaven.

This is so clear that not another word ought to be needed; and it is only one out of many like passages. But I have been asked, could not the title {name} of Son be given *by anticipation* here? Might He not have been the decreed, the fore-ordained Son, and so have been spoken of before He actually came into that place, or assumed that relationship?

I would answer by another question, Does not the apostle tell us that this was how God manifested His love to us, in that it was His Son He sent? And would it not in any wise cloud this manifestation, if it were not *One* that in that relationship He sent, but only One who was to become that after being sent?

But again. What glory was it that the Disciples saw in Him who when He was upon earth could say, “I and my Father are One,” and “he that has seen me hath seen the Father”? Was it anything short of *Divine* glory that they saw in the “Word made flesh”? Let them say then, who had seen it, what it was. What do they say of it? “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt ³ among us, and we beheld His glory” -- the glory proper to the Divine Word made flesh: what was it? -- “the glory *as of the Only-begotten of the Father*, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Once more, I do not see how it could be plainer. If it was the Only begotten Son, whom God had sent, it was equally the glory of the Only begotten which shone out from Him while here. Is that, I would ask again, a glory properly Divine or not? Would it be enough if it were the glory only of a Divinely begotten *man*? for man it was, let us remember, true man, that was born of a Virgin; not blended Godhead and manhood. I am sure as to what the heart of

3. “Tabernacled” is the word, as if to assure us it was the full reality of His presence whose glory had filled the tabernacle of old.

every {true-hearted} saint will say: it was true and Divine glory. Then I urge, the apostle can find no better way of describing it to us as such, than to say, that it was “glory *as of the Only-begotten of the Father*,” -- glory such as that!

And when he goes on to add, contrasting that revelation of God then made with the darkness of former dispensations: “No man hath seen God at any time; the Only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him” (John 1:18); surely it is not one begotten on earth that he has in mind, but one from all eternity in the nearest and dearest and most intimate relationship to the Father, who is come to speak of Him.

And once more. If there be a precise and formal statement anywhere, of the two natures in the One Christ Jesus, it will be admitted, perhaps, such a thing is to be found in Rom. 1:3, 4. What then is the apostle Paul’s statement concerning the Lord Jesus there? “Which was made of the seed of David *according to the flesh*”; that is the one, the human side: what is the other? “but declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by resurrection from the dead.” Is this also “according to the flesh?” Clearly not, for it is plainly and pointedly distinguished from it. What He was according to the flesh, His human nature, was, He was of the seed of David. Outside and beyond all that, he was “SON OF GOD.”

Need there be more said? Surely the Word is not indistinct or uncertain in its utterances here. In none of these places could the thought of the title {name} of the Son of God being anticipatively used of Him before He came in flesh and had the place, be possibly admitted. In the last case, He is definitely stated to be Son of God in *distinction* from what He was according to this flesh.

And as to men’s conclusions, Scripture is not responsible for, but, as I have said, guards carefully against them. If they say, the doctrine supposes the Son not equal to the Father, even the Jews rebuke it, who sought to kill Him because He had said, “that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God” (John 5:18).

If, on the other hand, men would draw, as they *have*, alas, drawn, such dishonoring conclusions from the Scripture truth, once more that Word enforces “that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father” (v. 23).

Can they not understand that the poor human relationship is after all but a faint and broken reflection of the Divine, and that to press a resemblance any further than the Word itself sanctions, is to pervert, not to receive, the Word?

“Into {unto} the name of the Father, and Holy Ghost” are we baptized. That Name is the expression of all with which we are for ever identified. May this Triune God keep His saints true to all implied in it.

Helps by the Way 2:35-40 (1874).