

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

A Lecture

Delivered by REV. J. KENNEDY, D. D.,

at Dingwall, September 16, 1883.

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it” – Exodus 20:8-11.

The purpose of this lecture is to direct attention to the divine authority and perpetual obligation of the Fourth Commandment; to consider what it requires; and, under its light, to inquire how the Sabbath law is regarded in our land, and to what extent the Sabbath is sanctified by ourselves.

I. THE DIVINE AUTHORITY AND PERPETUAL OBLIGATION OF THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT. This commandment is the fourth of the statutes composing the moral law, which, because of the number of commandments that are found in it, is usually called the Decalogue. It is the last of those written on the first table of the law, and which declare the form in which love to God should be expressed in obedience. There could be no doubt in the mind of any who compassed Mount Sinai that the law thence promulgated issued from Jehovah, for “the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire, on the top of the mount, in the eyes of the children of Israel.” Amidst “blackness, and darkness, and tempest” shone the flame of the “devouring fire.” The awful blast of the trumpet thundered, and a “voice of words” came forth from the fire. The mountain quaked, and all the earth around it was shaken. It was no wonder that the people were overwhelmed with terror, when even “Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.” Who amidst the assembly, before such a scene as Sinai then presented, hearing the awful thunder and “the voice of words,” and feeling the earth quaking beneath them, could doubt that they were in the presence of Jehovah, and that from Him came the law which, on two tables of stone, was delivered to them by Moses. Thus came from God to Israel the Fourth Commandment, with all the other words of the Decalogue.

The words of the law, spoken by Jehovah’s mouth, were engraved by His finger on tables of stone. Surely this suffices to indicate that this summary of duty was intended by Him to be perpetual. The Ten Commandments alone were thus written by God. Not thus did He write the rules prescribing the typical service of Israel, for the binding obligation of these was intended to be but temporary, and must in due season pass away. But the Decalogue was intended to be perpetual, and there was therefore a divine engraving of it on stone.

But it may be said, yea, it has often been said, that the observance of the Sabbath was made binding, by the law given forth on Sinai, only on the children of Israel. Not so, for the terms of the commandment bring its obligation to bear on “the stranger,” and godly Nehemiah enforced the observance of it on Gentiles as well as on Jews. True, the revelation of the moral law was given exclusively to Israel in the wilderness. They, and they only, heard “the voice of words” coming from the awful glory of “the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire.” But what was then given to them on tables of stone was placed in their custody for all mankind. It was not because they were God’s peculiar people they were under obligation to obey the moral law, but because, like all other rational beings on the face of the earth, they were bound to keep all the commandments of God. It was not the *obligation* but the *revelation* of the Decalogue that was peculiar to Israel.

And as to the Fourth Commandment, it requires only what was required from the beginning. The Sabbath was instituted by God in Eden, and was there both enjoined and observed. The first day of human history was a Sabbath, and those who feared the Lord in the pre-Mosaic times, doubtless, remembered “the Sabbath day to keep it holy.”

Christ distinctly tells us “that the Sabbath was made for man,” not for the Jew only. There was a Sabbath long before there was a Jew. Man, everywhere, and at all times needs, and men of all nations are enjoined, to observe it; and all who despise it act not only unwisely, but wickedly.

And what reason can be given for representing the Sabbath as a Jewish institution? Why should the Fourth Commandment, rather than any other, be represented as but of limited and temporary obligation? There is certainly nothing in the form of it to give it a peculiarity on account of which it should be so regarded and treated. The tribute which it demands for God must surely always be due to Him; and what reason can be given why the memorial of His rest, after the work of creation, should not be continued? And if the giving of a Sabbath to man be a boon, what but a change, affecting the goodness of God, could account for its being withdrawn? The Fourth Commandment is “good,” as well as “just and holy,” and while the goodness of God is unchanged, it cannot cease to require the keeping “holy” of the Sabbath. I could imagine some reason for saying that the Fifth Commandment has a Jewish cast, because the promise subjoined to it refers to “the land which the Lord” their God had given to Israel. This, it might be said, is surely spoken only to the Jews, because of the evident reference to the land of Canaan, which, according to the promise of the Lord, was given exclusively to them. But the question as to its perpetual obligation is conclusively settled in the New Testament, for Paul, writing to the Ephesians, asserts the binding force of that commandment, and calling it “the first commandment with promise,” insists on the perpetual connection between obedience to it and the promise which is subjoined to the precept: “It *is*,” not it *was*, he tells us, “the first commandment with promise.”

The claim of the Fourth Commandment rests on *moral*, not on *positive* grounds. It demands for God what is due to Him in His unchanging supremacy, majesty, and glory. Can we conceive of rational beings under the reign of One who is “infinite, eternal, and unchangeable” in His being, and in all His attributes, not under obligation to separate themselves, at certain seasons, from all employment besides, in order to do homage in worship to the Most High? Why, even to an earthly sovereign – a fellow creature – direct homage is due when the sovereign chooses to require it. The time prescribed for this must be remembered, and used for the appointed purpose. And is it to be imagined that men who, because of their lot on earth, are necessarily employed about mere secular things, can be free from an obligation to detach themselves “from their worldly employments and recreations,” in order to render homage to “the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, and whose name is Holy?” It is inconceivable how any mind, influenced by right views of the greatness of Jehovah, and not forgetful of our entire dependence on His goodness, could approach to think of the obligation of the Fourth Commandment not being *moral, and therefore universal and perpetual*. And if the homage demanded is due to God, He has the right to determine when and how that homage is to be rendered. Our Queen demands a right to fix when a reception takes place, and how those who are to be presented shall appear in her presence. And surely this right must be conceded to God. He has exercised this right, which rests on His supremacy as Jehovah. He has determined that a seventh of each week shall be devoted, so far as possible, in consistency with meeting the claims of necessity and mercy, exclusively to His worship – the ground of that allotment being given us in His own example as Creator. Surely, then, not only is the demand for a Sabbath one resting on unchanging moral grounds, but the portion of time to be observed as a Sabbath is unalterably fixed.

There are thus two fixed points, which can admit of no change, in the requirements of the Fourth Commandment – the one is that there be a Sabbath devoted exclusively to the service of God, and the other is that one day in each week shall be so devoted. Neither of these is at all affected by the change implied in making the *first* day of the week the Christian Sabbath instead of the seventh. This change was made by Him who had a right to do so, and who in view of it declared Himself to be “Lord of the Sabbath.” How could He who appointed the Sabbath at the beginning, and who promulgated the Sabbath law from Sinai, be expected to exercise His lordship over it by setting it aside? It was in view of its continuing to be under His administration, as exalted to the throne, the Son of Man proclaimed Himself its Lord. If He discountenanced a Pharisaic observance of that day, and was so careful, both by precept and example, to rebuke those who substituted a punctilious formality for the true spiritual observance of the Sabbath, is that a reason for supposing that the Sabbath law was to be abrogated? Nay, is not His care, regarding its being rightly observed, a reason why we should be assured of the Lord’s regard for it, and that, under His reign, the Fourth Commandment would be of binding force till time shall be no more.

Was Christ not entitled to effect the change? He was the Creator, in memorial of whose rest the seventh day was appointed to be the Sabbath. In His view all His creation work was good, and He rested in complacency, His eye on all that He had finished. A memorial of that rest we might expect Him to give, and it was given to man, and the Lord made it man’s interest as well as his duty to observe it. And if He who acted thus in connection with His finished work, as Creator, performed a work still greater – a work in which was manifested, as in no other work besides, the glory of all His name, and to which all creation and providence were subordinated, how could we but expect a memorial of His entering into His rest when that work was finished? Instead of the change of day being inconsistent with the perpetual obligation of the Fourth Commandment, it is that perpetual obligation which makes the change imperative. Just because the seventh day was the Sabbath of old, as a memorial of the rest of God after finishing His work as Creator, the first day must be so now, as a memorial of His rest after finishing the work of redemption. The antecedent action of God demands the change. If it He owed to Himself, to make the one day a memorial of His rest after creation, all the more does He owe it to Himself, to set apart the other as a memorial of a rest still more glorious. For it is He who appointed the Sabbath of old, who, in His resurrection from the dead, began to “enter into His rest,” after the work of redemption was finished. The very instinct of the church would crave the giving of a memorial of that day. And it was given, and that too in such a way, as, while not removing the memorial of the Lord’s rest after creation, gave to His rest, after redemption, the place which was due to it, because of the exceeding greatness of the work which preceded it. Sufficient, in the tribute rendered to God, as a concession to the greatness of creation work, is the retaining of the proportion of time to be observed as a Sabbath holy to the Lord. What kind of mind must be that of a man who imagines that, because of the fuller manifestation of the divine glory, and the glorious commendation of divine love, through Christ crucified, a tribute which Jehovah was wont to claim is no longer exacted, and should no longer be rendered!

And that the day was changed by divine authority from the seventh to the first of the week, is sufficiently proved. The example of Christ and the practice of the Apostles, as recorded in the New Testament, sufficiently prove this to be the case. What can be more authoritative, as a directory to the Church, than the example of the Church’s Head and the practice and writing of His inspired Apostles? And we have His example in His coming once and again to His disciples after His resurrection to countenance their meeting for worship on the first day of the week. And the practice of the pre-Ascension days was continued thereafter by the Apostles; and Paul, writing to the Corinthians, mentions “the first day of the week” as the day of gathering together for worship, as well as of “collection for the saints.”

The very lack of an express enactment making the change imperative is an eloquent tribute to the authoritative action of God bearing on the Sabbath in the days of old, and to the value and authority of Christ's example. There was no need of a re-enactment of the Sabbath law, for He who enacted it at first sufficiently declared that He intended it to be perpetual, and with Him is no variableness nor shadow of turning." And if He countenanced the change of the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first, what can be more authoritative than His example as a rule of duty?

Why then, it may be asked, is there such a desire to get rid of the perpetual obligation of the Fourth Commandment, as requiring the observance of the Christian Sabbath? Not, certainly, because there is any reasonable ground for supposing that the Fourth Commandment has been removed from its place in the Decalogue, nor because the change of day is not only *allowable* and *authoritative*, but *morally necessary*. This desire to be rid of a Sabbath law arises from *its being peculiarly testing*. It *requires the actual surrender of one day in seven to be a holy Sabbath to the Lord*. The refusal of such a surrender is a palpable thing, of which even a very slumbering conscience must take note, and regard as sin, and which must be apparent to the eyes of onlookers. It is in order to escape from the strictures of conscience, and to secure boldness to sin before men, that there are such efforts to prove that the Sabbath law is repealed. This is the secret spring of the whole anti-Sabbatarian movement. Ungodly men desire to be free to do as they list on the day of the Lord, and they think they can secure this by an impotent attack on the perpetual authority of the Fourth Commandment. They, forsooth, who are but worms of the dust, are to overthrow the arrangements of the Most High, and over his shattered law are to reach an emancipation from being under responsibility to God! This is their daring behest, and they imagine that by flippant objectioning, which but betrays their ignorance and their profanity, they can secure what they desire, and thus obtain a triumph, which entitles them to be mockers of the saints of God.

II. "WHAT IS REQUIRED IN THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT?" Looked at in the light of this commandment, the Sabbath is a day which the Lord hath "blessed" and "hallowed." He hath set it apart from every other day by so blessing it that it becomes a blessing to all who rightly observe it. No one who has not proved it by a spiritual observance of it can know what a blessing it is, or has a right to pronounce any judgment regarding it. But none ever honestly proved it who did not experience it to be a blessing from the Lord. And the Lord hath "hallowed" it. He has done so in setting it apart from other days as specially His own – as a day to be devoted to His worship.

In accordance with this dedication of it by God, the Sabbath is required to be *remembered* and *kept holy*. In order to "*remember*" it one must think of it as a day which the Lord has blessed, he must be conscious of his need of such a blessing as the Sabbath was intended to be, and be anxious to enjoy it, as well as have the divine authority of the commandment bearing on his conscience. A fixed place in one's memory as a blessed divine institution without this the Sabbath will never have. And he must "*keep it holy*." He must act becomingly towards it as a day which the Lord has hallowed. He must heartily call it "a delight," as it is "holy to the Lord and honourable," and seek grace to preserve him from devoting any portion of it to any work which accords not with the design of God in hallowing it. The worship of God, private and public, is the work to which the hours of one entire day in seven is to be devoted, except in so far as, in connection with our lot on earth and the course of providence, we are called to engage in "works of necessity and mercy." From love to God, expressed in regarding His Sabbath as "a delight," and in seeking the enjoyment of His gracious presence and fellowship on that day, we must be quite willing to withdraw ourselves from "all such employments and recreations as are lawful on other days," and heartily devote ourselves to the service of God.

According to the terms of the commandment, not only is the individual bound to keep the Sabbath holy, but each one having influence is bound to exert that influence in endeavouring to secure the observance of the Sabbath by those who are under him. The *Parent* and the *Master* are thus bound to use their influence. They are specified in the words of the commandment; but the same obligation rests on all who hold a position of influence to a greater or less extent over their fellowmen. All employers of labour, all judges and magistrates, all employed in connection with the executive government of the nation, the legislature, the Sovereign, are all under obligation, imposed by divine authority, to use all their power in securing that the Sabbath of the Lord is hallowed.

III. HOW IS THE SABBATH OBSERVED IN SCOTLAND, AND BY EACH ONE OF OURSELVES? It would be far more pleasant to consider the past than the present of our country's relation to the law of the Sabbath. The time was when the Sabbath law was so observed in Scotland that she was marked, because of this, as singular among all lands; and while her practice was a joy to all lovers of the law of God, it won for her the honour of being reproached by all who were enemies of truth and godliness. To some extent that reproach has not been quite removed. Scotland has not yet become such that her distinctive Sabbatarianism is so blotted out by the increase of practical ungodliness that she can no longer favourably compare with other nations. But it is sad to think of how far her departure from "the good way" of Sabbath-keeping has already gone. What a contrast a Scottish Sabbath now presents to that of earlier times – to that even of the generation which has just passed away! Think of our railway trains rushing over all parts of the country with their thousands of passengers, disturbing the Sabbath quiet and tempting so many to forget that there is a "God in the earth who judgeth righteously" – think of so many open shops along the streets of our cities, on the day of rest, which is the day of God, and receiving such support as tempts ungodly men to extend the traffic – think of the increasing crowds of those to whom the Sabbath has become a day of amusements, who never think of entering a place of worship, and who by their conduct prove that vice is the ally of ungodliness – think of how even those, who are not prepared utterly to abandon the public worship of God, are beginning to act as if an enforced partial attendance in the courts of God's house earns for them a right to do what they please on what remains of the Sabbath – think, too, of the easy tolerance of such practices already so apparent in the unfaithful supineness both of the Church and of the State, while all this desecration of the Sabbath is in progress – and what a contrast the Scottish Sabbath of to-day presents to that of times gone by! And what unspeakably greater contrast is the present observance of the day of the Lord to "what is required in the Fourth Commandment!"

To this sad result, unfaithful discipline, on the part of the churches, has greatly contributed. On a communion Sabbath members of the church are allowed to come to the table of the Lord, who, on all other Sabbaths of the year, care not even to appear to have any regard to the requirements of the law of God, and not a few will leave the table of the Lord to rush to amusements in the evening. And this is endured! And a church, pledged to preserve the purity of the house, and the sanctity of the day of the Lord, endures it! In this respect what a contrast church discipline presents to that of other times. There may have been an extremeness in the mode of exercising discipline in earlier times, but it expressed zeal for the honour of God's law, and for the purity of His house. An opposite extreme has now been reached, which expresses no more creditable feeling than indifference as to the claims of God, and as to the welfare of precious souls.

And the action of the State, in relation to the Sabbath law, combines with that of the churches to hasten Scotland's departure from "the old paths." All legislation in defence of the rest and sanctity of the Sabbath is refused, and almost all forms and measures of Sabbath desecration are tolerated. Of this we, in this county, have had a notable example. A wanton and flagrant desecration of the Sabbath, by railway officials and their servants, occurred, and

not only was there no interference on the part of the executive to put down the excuseless traffic, but all exertions were put forth, by those who should be “a terror to evil-doers,” to protect it, and arrangements made for shooting down the men whose only crime was a pronounced expression of zeal in behalf of the Sabbath law of heaven and of Scotland, in the event of their persisting in their opposition to what they regarded as defiant transgression of the Fourth Commandment. The civil magistrate thus became a praise to evil-doers, and a terror to them that do well. Woe to Scotland when such are those by whom the law is administered! But what was done in connection with the Sabbath desecration at Strome, is, in spirit, in accordance with the rule of all the action, or inaction, bearing on the Sabbath, of the executive throughout our country. An instance so flagrant as that to which I have referred, of a condoning, by those in authority, of the conduct of men who, in their eager thirst for gain, scruple not to trample the law of God under foot, cannot yet be quoted; but the spirit which appeared then in a form so exceptionally pronounced, seems to be that by which our rulers are animated; and, in due time, if the Lord does not graciously interfere, the people of our country will learn tamely to submit to any action in which it may be expressed.

And the leading newspapers of the country add their influence to all that tends to remove the authority of the Fourth Commandment from the consciences of the people. One of these, the most widely circulated, and whose name claims for it the position of being the representative of Scottish opinion, the organ of infidel Liberalism, is never more earnest and envenomed in its paragraphs than when it utters its ignorant sneers at all Sabbath-keeping, and pours out its abuse on those by whom the Sabbath law is defended. On some minds this must tell. The reiteration of its sceptical mockery of what is Scriptural must, to some extent, affect the feeling of those who are unacquainted with the Word of God, and care not seriously to consider any subject to which their attention may be directed. And the number of such may be counted by thousands. There are a few whom its attacks on all that was once deemed sacred in Scotland cannot affect, except with indignation and sorrow – indignation because of how what is sacred is boldly profaned, and sorrow because of how views are propagated which tend to the temporal, as surely as to the spiritual, deterioration of the people. This would seem to be the *aim*, as well as the natural *result* of the work, of the “Scotsman” for, while it pleads for a wholesale Sabbath profanation, it strenuously supports the oppressor against the poor crofters of the Highlands. If any zeal is exhibited by them on behalf of the Sabbath the poor Highlanders are abused as criminals, but when their grievances are being inquired into, all its kindness is reserved for those by whom these were imposed. Remorseless is the cruelty of those who would insist on a continuance of the oppression that offers to our people, as the only alternative, starvation in their fatherland, or emigration to the further ends of the earth, in order that a pampered aristocracy may have their desired amusement. And this is the outcome of the infidel Liberalism of our times! But more cruel still it is to endeavour to induce our working classes to utterly abandon the “godliness,” which has “the promise of this life,” as well as of “that which is to come.”

What infatuation the conduct of our aristocracy and of our rulers indicates, when by the example of the former, and the guilty indifferentism of the latter, the peasantry of this country are induced to treat with contempt the claims of the Fourth Commandment! The next commandment which follows is that which secures for them a right to be respected and obeyed, and in no measure can any one be truly disposed to yield to them their due, who has ceased to pay respect to the claims of God. By refusing to follow and enforce the Sabbath law, they are doing what they can to secure a revolution in our native land. *From the Sabbath-breaking masses will come the great danger of the future*; for a people, trained to disregard the demand of God, that his Sabbath shall be hallowed, and whose grievances remain unredressed, shall soon cease to have any respect for those to whom, according to the law of God, they owe dutiful submission.

IV. BUT HOW IS THE SABBATH OBSERVED AMONG AND BY OURSELVES? This is a question which each one of us is bound to consider, for on each of us rests an obligation to do what the Fourth Commandment requires. Of this obligation you cannot by any possibility get rid. And the obligation is divinely imposed. Some may imagine they are in a position up to which the claim of the Sabbath law does not rise – that it is something to which the vulgar alone are called to have respect. And the poor, amidst the pinching straits of their lot, may think that to them Sabbath-keeping is impossible, and is therefore not required of them. Others still, found among the highest and among the lowest in rank may imagine that, by the aid of men of advanced opinions, they have reached a conclusion which entirely disposes of the Sabbath law, and relieves them of all responsibility in connection with it. And, besides all these, there are many who think that any seemly measure of outward respect for the Sabbath is a full discharge of all that is dutiful; while there are some whose official work is such that they cannot refrain from seeming to respect it. But to each one of all these classes the question is addressed, and to it an answer must be given, if not earlier, most certainly at the bar of the great court of assize at the last day.

How are you affected towards the Sabbath in your heart? Do you rejoice in prospect of it, not because its rest from toil is craved by your wearied body, and by your mind from worrying business, but because it is a day “holy to the Lord, and honourable?” Are you on that account really disposed to call it “a delight?” Does the prospect of enjoying communion with the Lord, and of enjoying “peace” in “His ways,” give you gladness? Does your desire for this induce you to pray to God in prospect of the Sabbath for His presence and His blessing?

And when the Sabbath comes *how are you employed in your closet?* Is there any true spiritual worship there? Do not imagine that there can be any genuine worship in public if there be no true worship in secret. If you seek God at all you will seek Him in your closet. True godliness is not a bit of gaudy patchwork for the eyes of men to observe, it is a spiritual living with God in secret prayer, in which there are wrestlings for His blessing, sighings under the hiding of His face, gladness in the hope of His favour, joy in meditation on His glory and His love as revealed through Jesus Christ, and glimpses by the eye of faith of the coming glory, and foretastes of it such as cause fervent longings for the time when that glory shall be reached. What know you of such exercises as these in your closet on the day of God?

And how is it as to family worship on Sabbath? Is there an altar to God in your household? Do you enjoy the service of compassing it? Do you in that work seek the face and strength of the Lord? O, how sad it is to think of families that never take part in any such service! And sad, too, is the case of all heads of households who regard family worship as an uninteresting routine which, if they dared, they would altogether omit!

And how is it as to household duties on the Sabbath? Is unnecessary work avoided? Are such arrangements made and observed, as will admit of as many members of the household as possible attending in the place of public worship? What is done by parents in the religious instruction of their children? This is a duty binding on every parent, and it must fare ill with every community in which this is neglected. The home is the nursery of the church, and nothing else can supply the place of parental instruction of the young. The tendency in these days is to delegate this work to the teachers in our Sabbath schools. Many parents feel as if the opportunity of sending their children to be instructed elsewhere, had relieved them of all responsibility in connection with their being taught at home. But this is an utter mistake, and is an evil, in connection with our Sabbath school system, which ought to be carefully guarded against. True, there are parents who are both indisposed to be dutiful to their children, and quite incapable of rightly instructing them. Other instruction than that which their parents can give them is required by the children of such as these, but let that be given to them in their

own homes, by office-bearers of the church and Christian friends to whom such work would be “a labour of love.” The parents might thus learn while their children were being taught, and might, by the blessing of God, be stirred up to, and fitted for, the discharge of their duty as instructors of their children.

Our Sabbath school system, in the measure in which it tends to separate parents and children, cannot but have an injurious effect. It causes a separation of them beyond what is immediate. The Sabbath school is becoming the children’s church, as distinguished from the parent’s church, and it is becoming a rarer thing than once it was to see the parents and children together in the house of God. In some places already the extreme has been reached, of the entire absence of children from the house of God, when the gospel is preached, and the proposal has been made and partially acted on of having a quite separate children’s church. And with their work in the Sabbath school, which is naturally looked on as their only public worship on Sabbath, how apt are the children to associate what they have been accustomed to in their ordinary gatherings during the week! And how prejudicially this must tell on their respect for the day of the Lord! Sabbath-keeping cannot therefore be expected to be the fruit of large gatherings of children in Sabbath schools. And the habit of confining the religious teaching of the young to the Sabbath school tends, on the one hand, to make the parents utterly regardless as to their duty, and, on the other, to make the rising generation indifferent as to stated attendance in the house of God. I am afraid that neither Sabbath observance, nor regular Sabbath attendance in the place of worship, shall be found to be the fruit of our Sabbath schools. But they seem to be indispensable, and the Church’s work should, in connection with them, be to do what is possible in order to secure that the children shall be taught at home by parents competent to instruct them, and that the children of undutiful and incompetent parents be taught in circulating little groups in the several households to which they belong.

And what is your Sabbath reading? There never was a time when so many books for Sabbath reading issued from the press. Sunday – the heathenish name for the Lord’s day – is put on the title-page of some of these, and this is almost all that is Sabbatic about them. Tales and illustrations are mingled with singularly light religious pap, in order to gratify a taste that says of the Sabbath, “When will it be gone?” and to which searching the Scriptures is a weariness. There is nothing that ought to take the place of the prayerful study of the word of God; and let your other reading be confined to works which have been approved by the Church and blessed by the Lord.

And what is your public worship? How are you affected towards it? Are you truly conscious of your need of grace to prepare you for engaging in it in a spiritual frame of mind? Do you feel your need of receiving instruction, and are you “more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools?” Know you what it is to feel sad in His house when the Lord withholds His gracious presence? Has “a day in His courts” been to you, in your experience, “better than a thousand?” Or has your coming to the house of God been to you a mere matter of habit – a mere lifeless formality?

These are questions which demand the serious attention of each one of you all. Dare not to make so light of the claims of God, as not to care what answers to these questions you can honestly give.

I desire, before I close, to warn you, and especially the young, against *examples* and *misrepresentations* from which you may be in danger.

I would warn you against the *example of Sabbath walking*. Such an example is presented to you, though certainly not by any who, in their practice, are entitled to your respect. Still, the very habit of seeing others doing what, in your conscience, you cannot approve, may have an evil influence, and as the observed transgression of the law of God increases, in that

measure is the volume of the current which endangers your steadfastness. I know few more excuseless things than this Sabbath walking. If the plea of health is used to justify it, how can men expect *that* to benefit their health which they dare not ask the Lord to bless! And if they can only plead that they do it for recreation, because they feel the Sabbath to be dull, how can they dare to act in a way which so plainly indicates their dislike of the day and of the word of God? And surely what ought chiefly to be sought on the Sabbath is what would be an eternal benefit to the soul; and, if so, what possible advantage, in order to the acquisition of this, can be found in the society or surroundings of those who go forth on His day, openly to exhibit their contempt of the Lord. This way of profaning the Sabbath has often been the beginning of a career of crime. Beware of it, my young friends.

Beware, too, of following the example of those who *cannot dispense with having their letters and newspapers on Sabbath*. No one can listen to the plea of necessity in favour of sending for letters to the Post-office on Sabbath, or of requiring that these be delivered to them. Forsooth, *they* cannot dispense with them, though in London, the busiest and wealthiest city in the world, no letters are received on Sabbath. If the exigencies of business might be pleaded anywhere in behalf of a Sabbath delivery of letters, surely it is there. And in our paltry villages, petty business men must have their letters, to whatever extent this may involve a profanation of the day of rest! And some of our gentry, as if anxious that all should be informed of their contempt for what is sacred, will send their mounted couriers to the country offices, to which they laboured to secure that despatches should be carried. They need not be so careful to exhibit their disregard for the law of God for the information, given in this pronounced form, was already in possession of the public. Men of graceless hearts and benighted minds were not suspected of being able to endure to lack the contents of letters and newspapers, the only kind of reading which they can appreciate, and by which they can be pleased. If they are determined to call the Sabbath a weariness, let them do so to their own eternal ruin; but by no law is a right given to them, by an ostentation of their ungodliness, to grieve the hearts of those who think that “the law of God is holy, and just, and good.”

And be not cheated with infidel objections to careful Sabbath-keeping, however smartly and sneeringly these may be uttered. As the tide of declension is moving on, an impression is produced in the hearts of those who are adrift that all things which they are leaving behind them are but relics of darker times. Adherence to what is antiquated is all that is implied, they say, in the conservatism that cleaves to “the old paths” and “the good way” in which our fathers walked. It is characteristic of young men that they do not like to appear to be behind the age. They must be abreast of the intelligence of a century so enlightened as this is. They must cast away the old clothes of traditionalism, and must learn to sneer at the days and ways that are gone, that they may be like those who assume to be the leaders of thought – the advanced guard of the army of progress. They must neither think nor speak like the men of earlier, and, therefore, more benighted times! To minds of this cast access is easy to the idea of the Sabbath and of Sabbath-keeping being things of the past, and therefore not to be respected. But, my young friends, be not led away by this affectation of progress with its contempt for what is past. There never was a time when in science there was more utterly baseless speculation, and in which more structures of lies were reared within the religious sphere than now. There never was an age of more hasty thinking and of more hazy utterance than the present in all things affecting what is divine and spiritual. But God is unchanging. On that grand truth firmly plant your foot in faith. The law of God is unchanging. That truth is another strong foothold. On these be “stedfast and unmovable” in the midst of all present unsettlement of thought and practice; and all the influence which may be brought to bear upon you will not suffice to cause you to regard Sabbath-keeping as a thing which any generation should leave behind it.

And *careful Sabbath-keeping will be represented to you as a gloomy thing*. And by whom? By those who always carefully refrained from trying what sort of thing it was. If you are, like them, not a lover of the Sabbath yourself, you are quite sure to be a coward before a scaring bugbear such as this. You will find Sabbath-keeping gloomy, not because it is so, but because you dislike to attempt it. Forsooth, there should not be a Sabbath because there are many sinful men who do not like it! God must adapt His laws to the liking of His enemies! If you would wish to know whether Sabbath-keeping is gloomy work, ask those who have tried what it is. They will tell you that it is “a delight.” They would not exchange one moment’s gladness, such as they have enjoyed on the Lord’s day, in His fellowship and service, for all that the world could bestow of its dissipating pleasures. It is just in the measure in which they are not unreserved in their devotion of the day to God, that these, who alone are competent to pronounce a decision, find the Sabbath to be gloomy. The Sabbath requiring to borrow from the world in order that it may not be a gloomy thing to observe it! Can men talk more insanely than when they speak thus? A man happier because he forsakes “the Fountain of living waters,” and betakes himself to “broken cisterns!” Men gloomy, whose joy is to be enlightened with the glory, and touched by the love of God, as compared with those who have no more to make them glad than what can be won in a service whose wages is death! Let neither the enemies of God nor your own evil heart give you your estimate of the Sabbath. Take that only from the word of God, and seek from God a heart that will love what He commends, and move you to walk as He commands, and then certain I am that you will cease to regard the Sabbath as a weariness, or the keeping of it as a thing of gloom. Then will you find as much of gladness in Sabbath keeping as will enable you to disregard the sneers of those who would fain mock you back from the ways of righteousness, and to despise the pleasures by which they would tempt you to desecrate the day of the Lord.

[May & June 1905]

Notes of Lecture

Delivered by REV. NEIL CAMERON
at St. Jude’s, Glasgow, on January 2nd, 1905.

“For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor” – Galatians 2:18.

Once God makes known any truth it becomes the duty of the Church to believe it, and, if need be, to contend for it. He commanded in His Word – “When a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and shall keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.” The Jews in the time of the apostles contended

earnestly for this article of the faith. Had there been no infallible revelation from God abrogating the above, the Jews had God's authority to insist upon its observance in every instance; but God had made known His mind. Peter said to Cornelius and his household – "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean." Jews and Gentiles were made one in Christ, as it is written – "For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father," Peter held this as a part of his faith, and when the Jews contended against it, he, on two occasions, silenced them by an appeal to a direct revelation on that point from God, and by the fact that the Holy Ghost wrought faith in Gentiles' hearts under the hearing of the gospel. This matter came before the apostles and elders at Jerusalem for their decision, and they decreed by the infallible guidance of the Holy Ghost that the Gentiles were not to be circumcised in order that they and the Jews should form one Christian Church. When Peter went down to Antioch he made no difference between Jew or Gentile, but ate and drank with Gentile Christians as one of themselves. But after a period of time certain Christian Jews came down there from Jerusalem, who did not act according to the Word of God and the declared creed of the Apostolic Church, and therefore would not associate with the Gentile converts, because they were not circumcised. Peter took their side, and separated himself and those who were with him from the Gentile converts, and would not now eat with them. Paul, seeing the truth of God and the creed of the Church as well as brotherly fellowship broken, withstood Peter to his face, and rebuked him sharply before them all, because they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel. Our text forms a part of that rebuke administered by the apostle on that occasion. In the words before us there are three things which we desire to consider: –

- I. What have we destroyed?
- II. What is it to build that again?
- III. What are the consequences of building it again?

I. What have we destroyed? – We have not destroyed the Free Church of Scotland; but we have removed a huge system of excrescences which had been foisted on the people under the name Free Church.

1. There were changes made in her form of worship. The Psalms of David were rudely cast aside and uninspired hymns introduced; and instead of praise by the human voice instrumental music was brought into play. These innovations into the public worship of God we have destroyed so far as our Church is concerned, and we have restored the Psalms to their original place in the Church, and the human voice as the only organ in her public praise.

Doctrinally the face of the Free Church became so changed that none of her true sons or daughters could know her. The question was asked repeatedly by them, "Is this the once noble Free Church of Scotland?" The Bible was no longer the supreme standard of appeal in matters of faith and practice, for the Higher Critics brought it into discredit and disrepute within her borders, and set up their own dictum as the only warrant of faith. The most fundamental doctrines of the faith were displaced by Arminian, Pelagian, and Popish heresies. Instead of the doctrine of election, so clearly taught in God's word, the universal love and fatherhood of God was set up, and instead of the doctrine that Christ laid down His life for His sheep, a universal atonement for sheep and goats was set forth. That is, we were

asked to hold as a matter of faith that God loved, and that Christ died for Judas Iscariot as well as John or Peter or any other of the elect. Again, we were commanded to hold as our faith that though Adam may have had some kind of a fall, yet his posterity are born into this world with the image of God on their souls, and therefore have knowledge of God and of their duty, and are capable of doing meritorious works. The Holy Spirit was relegated to help this mighty child of Adam to return to God should He desire Him. Ah! blind leaders of the blind to the pit of hell. What can poor mortal man dead in trespasses and sins do till the Spirit quickens him? They wound up their new creed by installing themselves popes who should decide from year to year what their poor dupes should hold as matter of faith. These spurious and ruinous doctrines were set up in the Free Church as an ensign by the passing of the Declaratory Act of 1892. Strong appeals were sent up to the General Assembly of 1893 demanding its repeal, but by an overwhelming majority they refused to do so. It was at this juncture that the Rev. Donald Macfarlane tabled a protest, and refused to acknowledge them any longer as the Free Church of Scotland. Immediately we were treated as traitors because we could not recognise this harlot as our mother. Thus was destroyed the Declaratory Act with all its erroneous doctrines, and the Word of God and the Confession of Faith restored to their former places in our Church. These fundamental doctrines of the Bible are worth, not only to suffer a little inconvenience for their maintenance, but even the last drop of our heart's blood in their defence.

2. Could we remain in that Church without being under this pernicious Act? Many, who made a great noise against it before it was passed, took this course, and were very angry because we did not follow them. But were they really, though they have often affirmed the contrary, under this Act? Let us see. Why was the Act made? To give relief to students when receiving license, or to office-bearers when being ordained to office in the Church? What relief was it supposed to give? A relief from some of the doctrines set forth in the Confession of Faith, such as the doctrine of election, the fall, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit as the Act itself makes plain. How could the Act give this relief seeing the student or office-bearer had to answer questions put to him to the intent that it would be put beyond doubt that he believed all the doctrines of the Confession? that he would assert, maintain, and defend these doctrines, and that he would oppose all Arminian, Pelagian, etc., doctrines and tenets whatsoever? Two things will have to be taken into consideration. The Declaratory Act states that the doctrines it sets forth are not contrary to the Confession of Faith, and the Church by this Act gives the man being ordained the right to answer the Questions and sign the Formula with a view to the relief given by this Act. Say that at an ordination the moderator stands with the questions to be asked on such occasions in his hand, and that the Declaratory Act is pasted on the wall over against him. He begins to put the questions to the man; the man may answer them quite honestly and above board, or he may answer every one of them with a view to the relief given by the Act on the wall on which the eye of his mind is fixed all the time. How is the moderator to know whether he has an honest man to deal with or not? (Perhaps I take too much for granted by leaving the moderator's honesty in the matter unquestioned.) May he ask him whether he takes the relief the Act gives or not? No. That was done once, and one of the reverend members of the Presbytery rose and warned them should that question be answered he would put a stop immediately to the ordination. This was a most important question, and an answer to it should have been demanded. But so far as we have seen that question has never been asked since. There is ample proof that the very men who affirm so confidently that they were never under it have licensed and ordained men who availed themselves of the relief afforded by the Act through their hands. This not only proves that they were under it, but that, known or unknown to them, they were putting it into practice.

There has never been a more degrading piece of jesuistry than this. License is given by the Church to tell a lie while the man is on his oath that he will tell the whole truth. This immoral practice continued in that Church till the Union in 1900. Then the U.F. Church threw off the mask and declared in the most public manner that she neither believed some of the doctrines of the Bible nor of the Confession of Faith. Of all that has happened in our day, the fact that such a large number of the people of this land follow these atheists causes us the greatest grief and amazement. But has the Free Church done away with it? No; but she has retained it on her statute book, and any student or office-bearer who wishes may answer the Questions and sign the Formula with a view to the relief it gives. Instead of affirming so confidently that they have never been under it, they ought to make sure that it is not yet in full force among them. If Dr. Alexander's heresies are to be tolerated among them, they will require the Declaratory Act at least to cover him. From a perusal of his book we were fully prepared for what has been so ably and truthfully written against it by some of our brethren. But I am away from the thread of my lecture.

The Free Presbyterian Church was formed in 1893 as a protest against erroneous doctrines, carnal forms of public worship, and, very specially, against such a piece of jesuistry as the Declaratory Act, and the use to be made of it in the Church. We expect all students and office-bearers to answer the Questions and sign the Formula with an honest view to the Confession of Faith, and have left no room for Higher Critics within our borders. We do not say this from a self-righteous spirit, but as a matter of fact.

3. In the Free Church, from her infancy, the people looked to certain men as their leaders. Of these leaders there were two kinds – the one party endeavouring to hold the Word of God and the Confession of Faith intact; the other party doing their very utmost to loose the Church from both. The people followed either the one party or the other, according to the bias of their own minds. The Word of God was not made the standard of appeal in their controversies with one another (especially this was true of the Rainy party, as they were called), but a majority without reason or revelation decided between them. The eye of the Church was taken off the awful departures made from God's Word and from her Confession of Faith, and was taken up with the controversy between these men. It became like – "I am of Paul; and I of Apollus; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." As time proved, some of these leaders had the applause of the people more at heart than the holding fast of the faith once delivered to the saints. We were often told that we should follow these leaders, and should neither think nor act but as they lead us; but we neither desired to be leaders, nor to follow any leader but Christ in the affairs of God's house. Even inspired apostles did not ask the Church to follow them, but in so far as they were followers of Christ. So we hope the day will not come in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland when any will be called lord within her pale but Christ alone. "But be ye not called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." No man should be followed in doctrine or practice further than the Word of God corroborates what he says and does. We ask no more for ourselves, and, by the grace of God, we don't intend to grant more to any mere man. Here we took our stand in 1893, and we pray the Lord that grace may be given us to hold it fast.

4. The Free Church ceased to a very large extent to take her stand firmly on the principles and doctrines of the scriptures, but conferred with flesh and blood.

(a) When innovations were being brought into her public worship, it was done on the plea that the people wanted it. Heathen Rome never practised the dictum, "The voice of the people is the voice of God," more thoroughly than was done by the Free Church. There was not a cheep, except by a few, about what saith the Lord in His Word. This has caused so-called Churches in this land to become second-class theatres for a large number of people who are denominated Christians, and who are being deceived that God is well pleased with their sacrilege. This profanation became intolerable to such as believed that God is a Spirit,

and that they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. This came to such a height that some ministers known to us made it quite plain that should their congregations decide to go into the Union of 1900 they would go in along with them. These men had solemnly vowed to God and to the Church that they would all their lifetime assert, maintain, and defend certain well-defined doctrines and principles, and now they were offering to commit the sin of perjury (by ceasing at least to defend these doctrines and principles) at the caprice of their fellow-sinners. "How are the mighty fallen!"

(b) In 1893, when truth needed that some sacrifice should be made in its defence, men began to confer with flesh and blood about the matter. Money and property, salaries and manses, could not be given up for truth and conscience. But we were present when the Rev. D. Macfarlane told his congregation at Raasay that until he did his duty towards God's truth and his own conscience he asked no man's opinion; but now, that he had done what he considered his duty, he asked such of them as approved of the position he had taken to stand up. He told them they would probably lose church, manse, and salary, but that they would maintain truth, which would be incalculable gain. The congregation of Raasay stood up that day to show their approval of all we have above stated, and so did all the congregations of our Church. May the day never come when this Jericho will be built up again within her pale.

II. What is it to build that again?

(1) It is to countenance these things among others outside of our own Church. Nothing conduces more to confirm men in a false position than that such as had to separate from them for truth and conscience sake should turn to them again, or countenance them in any way while the errors which caused the separation remain among them. We see that an apostle sharply rebuked his fellow apostle for countenancing what he knew to be against God's truth and the creed of the Church. We are commanded to abstain from all appearance of evil, especially the evil which we had to flee from, otherwise we shall be like the washed sow returning to wallow in the mire. There is a great cry just now about the Free Church. Where is the Free Church as regards her doctrines and principles? Not with them who have the name. We know of no body in this land who hold the original constitution of the Free Church but the F.P. Church. "In understanding let us be men." The Free Church of to-day has got all the heresies we have mentioned on her statute book and in her worship. Do you discern the face of the Free Church there? So to go to help her in her present position (except to repent) is to build again the things we destroyed.

(2) It is to endeavour to bring any or all of these evils back into the F.P. Church. You will say, "I hope there is little fear of that." But you should remember that the Free Church in 1843 was quite free from all the evils which caused her at last to be broken to fragments. Again it was not the work of one day or one year, but a gradual growth from year to year. If Babylon's little ones will not be dashed against the stones, you cannot so easily dash them when they grow up. But may the curse of Hiel the Bethelite come upon the man or woman who will endeavour to build that Jericho in the Free Presbyterian Church.

III. What are the consequences of building it again? – "I make myself a transgressor." If I could have remained in fellowship with the Free Church when I left it without going against God's truth and my own conscience I made myself a transgressor by destroying the unity of that Church. For we do not consider it was a small matter to have had to separate from that Church. Now if I go to build that same Church, which truth and conscience compelled me to have left, am I not making a transgressor of myself? I have like the dog turned to my own vomit.

When one is ordained in our Church the question is asked – "Do you approve of the Deed of Separation adopted by ministers and elders of this Church at Portree in August of 1893?" The answer must be in the affirmative, otherwise the ordination will have to be stopped.

What is the import of this question? The candidate for office has voluntarily to express on oath his approval of the Deed of Separation. What does the Deed of Separation mean? It means that for certain causes (the Declaratory Act the culminating cause) we cut our connection with the so-called Free Church of 1893. While these causes, stated in that Deed, remain on the Statute Book, or in the practice, of that Church in particular, the man who answered the above question in the affirmative is bound by his own oath to remain separate from that Church, or should he not do so, he has broken his vow, and has made himself a transgressor. "Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit, in malice be children, but in understanding be men."

Should we not put forth every effort to make an end of these heart-rending divisions among the people of our beloved land? Yes, verily. But how can an end be put to them? – is it by departing further from the truth of the gospel? No. Huge unions have been effected already at the expense of truth and principles, but that means a conspiracy against God. The only remedy is to hold fast the form of sound words; to preach law and gospel faithfully; and to pray that the breath would come from the four winds and breathe on the slain that they may live. But to give up the least particle of truth for union with men who have forsaken it, and who show no signs of returning to it, is, in our opinion, to put an end to the Church of Christ publicly in this land. He may maintain His own Church privately in families, and by individuals separately; but would this not be the greatest calamity imaginable? Therefore our duty is plain, which is – "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." If we do this, it will be true of us that – "We have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man" – but otherwise we will make transgressors of ourselves.

[May 1905]

Sermon

By the late Rev. LACHLAN MACKENZIE, Lochcarron.

"And that Rock was Christ" – 1 Corinthians 10:4.

The design of the Apostle is to rectify a mistaken notion in the church of Corinth. They valued themselves upon their privileges, their gifts, and their graces. The Apostle shows us that these privileges were enjoyed by the church of the Jews. And yet he shows that notwithstanding the great things God had done for them, and the great privileges they enjoyed, that many of them were destroyed in the wilderness. He likewise informs us that these things are examples to the Christian church, and he cautions every man who thinks that he stands to take heed lest he fall.

We must not boast of our privileges, for the Jewish Church enjoyed the same privileges as we do; they ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink – they drank the water of the spiritual Rock, and the ROCK was CHRIST. They had the same sacraments for substance which we have. In speaking further upon this subject in particular, by divine aid –

- I. I shall give a brief account of the history to which this alludes.
- II. I shall show in what respects the rock was a type of Christ.

III. That as the rock did not yield water till it was struck, in like manner we must strike the Rock of our salvation that we may obtain refreshing streams for our souls.

I. I shall give a brief account of the history to which this alludes.

When Moses led the children of Israel into the wilderness of Arabia, they were there but a short time when the people complained for want of water, as we learn from the seventeenth chapter of Exodus. Moses is commanded to bring water out of the rock. Again, thirty-eight years afterwards they fall into the same sin of murmuring. The miracle is repeated. Let us then, for a little, fix our attention and thoughts upon this extraordinary event.

Behold, then, this wonderful sight – Moses is commanded to strike the rock. He goes with the rod of God in his hand, and in the presence of upwards of six hundred thousand men, besides women and children, he prepares himself to work the miracle. The multitude have their expectations raised to the highest pitch. Many of them, no doubt, are full of unbelief, and even Moses himself spoke unadvisedly with his lips. We may naturally suppose that he lifted up his hands and his heart to God in the heavens; and though eminent for his faith in the divine power, and in the divine promises, it is probable he might give room to the suggestions of unbelief. He might perhaps say within himself, I shall now be put to shame before this great multitude; and what will God do then for his great name? Was it ever heard that God brought water out of a rock before? But silence, my tumultuous thoughts, God hath spoken, and it is my duty to obey. It is true the thing is unlikely; but what is impossible to that power that said, “Let there be light, and there was light,” and called forth creation out of nothing? But though nothing is impossible to God, is it likely that He will exert His power to work a miracle in favour of a perverse, rebellious people, who are always provoking Him to anger by their obstinacy and unbelief? I proceed, however, in obedience to the divine command. He comes to the rock, and with a strong faith, mixed with a strong unbelief, he strikes the rock in a passion. Behold here a wonderful instance of human weakness! Blessed Moses, the meekest man upon earth, the great favourite of God and the great deliverer of Israel, transported with passion, agitated with unbelief, and tempted at last to speak unadvisedly with his lips.

His faith, however, rises triumphant at last. He strikes the rock twice, the waters flow abundantly like a river – the people are relieved, and God is glorified. But though faith conquers at last, the unbelief and disobedience of the children of God cannot pass unpunished. He is made the glorious instrument of procuring relief to all the people of Israel, and procuring them water for their thirst; but because he gave room to passion and unbelief, he cannot see the land of promise, but only gets a transient view of it from the top of Pisgah. The miracle, however, is a glorious sight – a stroke or two of Moses’ rod brings water out of the rock of flint. And it is likely that Moses, at this time, might experience the fate of all popular leaders, for popularity is a bitter sweet. At one time the people speak of stoning him; at another time they extol him to the skies, and join in singing the song of Moses and Miriam. Their murmuring is converted into thanksgiving; they believe in God and honour His servant Moses. We may well suppose they sung hallelujahs to the God of Israel for this great salvation. They were like to die for thirst; and now they are relieved by seasonable and refreshing streams. The water ran like a river. There was enough, and more than enough, for the whole congregation. They might now say with truth and propriety, What people is like unto thee, O Israel? thou hast thy manna from heaven, and copious and salutary streams from the rock of flint. And may we not likewise suppose that the true Israel among the people would be encouraged from this astonishing event to plead that God would bring water out of the rock in their hearts, and melt them into true repentance and godly sorrow for sin?

I proceed to show, in the next place,

II. In what respects the rock was a type of Christ.

The Apostle here tells us that the Rock was Christ, in the same way in which it is said of the sacramental bread, that it is the body of our Lord. The rock signified or was a type of Christ.

1. The rock did not naturally contain water. Christ had no form or comeliness to the carnal eye. He was a poor man, and a weak man, and crucified in weakness. His cross was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness. The Gospel is hid to those who are lost; but the power of God for salvation to those who believe. Christ is the headstone of the corner to the Church; but the Rock of salvation is a rock of offence to unbelievers and disobedient persons. To the Jews the cross was a stumbling-block – they looked for a carnal Messiah, a great conqueror who was to subdue the world under them. They looked upon such promises or scriptures as these – “Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty” – “He shall rule from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth,” merely in a temporal view. They had heard of the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar, or of Cyrus the deliverer of their church – the victories of Alexander the Great, and the Cæsars of Rome. They supposed that their Messiah would be greater than all these great conquerors. They hoped He would set up His standard in Jerusalem, the royal city of His ancestors – that He would lead His kinsmen the Jews to conquest and to triumph, that all nations would yield to His victorious arms, and that His enemies would lick the dust. They expected riches, honours and pleasures, under the reign of Messiah. How were they disappointed, therefore, when Jesus of Nazareth spoke to them of another kingdom and of other victories! They could not reconcile the mean circumstances in which He appeared to the exalted views they formed of the Messiah whom they expected. This, then, was a stumbling-block to them, not considering that the Messiah must suffer before He was to reign. That there are temporal promises made to the Jewish nation as such, none that reads the Old Testament can deny. And if the Jews had yielded obedience to the Saviour as the promised Messiah, the promises would have begun to operate. It was promised to Abraham that he would have a son, and that his posterity would possess the land of Canaan. This promise was not accomplished till four hundred years thereafter. As their possessing the land of Canaan was suspended upon the condition of obedience to the revealed will of Heaven, if the Jewish nation had embraced the Lord Jesus Christ upon the terms of the gospel, they might have continued yet in their own land. They did not look upon Him as the proper person to fulfil God’s promises to them, and they fulfilled the word of God by rejecting Him. His being the Messiah appeared as unlikely to them as it did to their unbelieving ancestors, that the rock would supply them with water. The Rock of salvation is to them still a rock of offence; and until they believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah, they must die for want of spiritual water. And when they shall be persuaded to strike the Rock of their salvation, they shall obtain refreshing streams to their souls.

But again, to the Greeks the cross of Christ was foolishness. The apostles were sent to preach the gospel to the Gentiles – the doctrine appeared foolishness to them. The doctrine they preached was – “That God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have eternal life.” That the Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God – that He was born of a virgin, in a stable, in the town of Bethlehem – that He was laid in a manger – that He lived a poor man – that He wrought at the carpenter’s business, with Joseph His reputed father, till He was thirty years of age – that He began then to preach the gospel – that He was crucified between two thieves – that He was buried, and rose from the dead – that this is the Saviour whom God sent into the world, that such as believe in Him will be saved; such as do not believe will be damned. This doctrine, though supported by miracles, appeared foolishness to them. It was as unlikely a method of salvation as it was for the unbelieving Israelite to get water out of a rock to quench

his thirst. The Israelite, however, must die for thirst if he did not get water out of the rock, and the sinner must die if he does not accept of salvation through Christ.

2. As the rock yielded water, Christ is a well of water, springing up into everlasting life, to all that believe. Grace is often compared to refreshing streams of water. From the Rock of salvation proceeded the well of salvation. Nothing can be more grateful and refreshing to the weary traveller than water – nothing so comfortable to the soul as grace. The water refreshed and strengthened the children of Israel in the barren desert. In like manner, the salutary streams that flow from the river of life make glad the city of God. With joy, therefore, we may now draw water out of the wells of salvation. The promises of the gospel are full of consolation to sinners, and the waters of the sanctuary are for health or medicine.

3. The rock did not yield water till it was struck, and that by Moses. No other staff could bring water out of the rock but the rod of Moses. In like manner, Christ was struck by the law of God. He was made a curse. Our sins were upon Him. Sin brings the curse of God upon the sinner. All our sins were laid upon the Rock of our salvation, and this brought down all the curses of the broken law upon the Son of God. The law struck Him; as we broke all the commandments of the law, they poured all their curses upon His head. All our breaches of the divine law were imputed to Him, and every command gave its own stroke. Every several stroke fetched water out of the Rock. The justice of God found our sins upon Him, and this drew all the curses of the law upon Him. Every sin procured Him a curse, and every curse procured Him a stroke. But every curse with which the law struck Him procured blessings upon blessings for His church and people. The law cursed Him, and He blessed them. “He was wounded for our sins, and bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.” The rock in the wilderness got but a stroke or two; He got many. Though the children of Israel were like to die for thirst, they cannot get water till Moses strikes the rock. The people might wander ever so long through the wilderness, but they cannot get relief but by his striking the rock for them. Mankind may use other means; but there is no salvation in any other name, nor any way of procuring grace for their souls, but through the merits of Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and no man can come unto the Father but in and through Him; for without Him we can do nothing. It is true, indeed, the nobles digged with their staves, and the people sung, Spring up, O well, sing ye to it; but though this was a duty, it was Moses’ striking the rock that procured water. It is our duty to use our poor endeavours; but it is not endeavours or duties that give us the favour of God, but the merits of Christ alone. He is the First and the Last, the Alpha and Omega; in the great work of our salvation.

4. The rock gave water not for one or two only, but for all the congregation. This water was not for the benefit of a few favourites among the people of Israel, such as Moses and Aaron, Caleb and Joshua – all the congregation had a right to drink of the water. In like manner, the benefits of the Redeemer’s death extend to all the ends of the earth. The gospel feast is a feast for all nations. No Israelite was excluded from that water – no sinner is excluded from this feast, if he does not exclude himself. Any man whatever that comes to take it, is welcome to the water of life. The water of life is free and open for all. The streams that flowed from the rock ran in such abundance that there was enough and to spare for all the people. The gospel is free to all. It is not the monopoly of one kingdom, of one country, or people. It is for the general benefit of mankind; and the day is approaching when it shall be sent to all the ends of the earth. When the water gushed out of the rock at first, such of the people as were nearest got the first drink; but in a short time the whole of them had access to the precious blessing. In the first ages the water of life was like a small rivulet, and few had access to drink – it is now like a large, refreshing stream, making glad the city of God, and planted with trees on each side of it; and the leaves of the trees, as well as the waters of the river, are for the healing of the nations.

Every man in the congregation was welcome to come and drink. We do not read that any man was excluded. Let us make the supposition that some melancholy Israelite made use of the same preposterous reasoning that several poor, sinners use against themselves under the gospel. Let us put the case that he appeared before Moses, and told him that he was afraid to drink because he was a great sinner, and therefore unworthy of the water – that, though others were welcome, he was not, because he was a great sinner. Would not the blessed man of God assure him that the water was as free for him as for any man in the camp? And is not the grace of Christ free for all sinners? If a man says he is afraid to come and drink because he is a great sinner, does not the Word assure him that he that cometh will in nowise be cast out – that if he be a great sinner, Christ is a great Saviour?

5. The rock gave its water to the children of Israel, not because they deserved it, but because they stood in need. The grace of Christ is offered to sinners, not on account of their own merits, but by way of a free gift. Would not any person that reads the history of the children of Israel suppose that people were ridiculing them if they said it was for their good deeds that they obtained water from the rock? But if a person reads the history of mankind in general, will he say that such and such characters merit any thing at the hand of God? What merit has a beggar for stretching his hand to receive alms? or what merit has a traitor for accepting a pardon from his prince? If the people of a whole province should rise in rebellion against their king and lawful governors, can that same people, after they are conquered, plead any merit because they are not so deeply guilty as their leaders? The gospel addresses us as sinners because we are such. It offers pardon to sinners, to rebels of every denomination. It does not suppose any sinner upon the face of the earth to be innocent so as not to stand in need of assistance. The language of our merit-mongers is this – “God, we thank Thee that we are not as other men – we are not such gross sinners as the adulterer and the extortioner. Others may talk of the deceitfulness of sin and the danger arising from original and actual corruption; but we have not such a measure of it as to stand in need of the Gospel. We live a decent life; we pay our debts, and are good neighbours. We stand at an equal distance from the devotion of the bigoted over-righteous enthusiast and the scandalous irregularities of the libertine. We do not choose to examine our conscience by the Word of God for fear religion would put us mad, but we hope to go to heaven before any canting hypocrite in the country.”

When these are the sentiments of people’s heads, no wonder though they should not receive the gospel. The language of the poor Christian is, “Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner.” The law accuses him – a guilty conscience, unbelief, and the suggestions of his grand enemy magnify all his sins. But when his heart is ready to be overwhelmed, the gospel comes in to his relief. The blessings of the gospel are offered him, not because he deserves them – he is conscious he does not – but because he greatly needs them. He sees his need. He is in the wilderness, and must come to the Rock for water to quench his thirst. The nations around them were not distressed with thirst like the children of Israel – they got their water at an easy rate. The people of the world get their comforts often very easily. The people of God are brought into the wilderness – their souls are in distress – they get no comfort in any created enjoyment – they see their misery – they feel their distress – nothing can relieve them but the gospel – the water must come out of the Rock for them – there are plenty of blessings and comforts in the gospel for them – they are free for their use – they are purchased by another. They do not buy them with their money, or merit them with their good deeds; they receive them as the free gift of God through the merits of Christ. Though we deserve the wrath and curse of God, the gospel is free for our acceptance. Christ and all His benefits are offered to sinners without money or price. If we see our need we may come; and all sinners have the free and large offer of the gospel.

6. The water of the Rock followed them, not for a day or a year, but during their stay in the wilderness. The influences of grace follow the people of God till they come to glory.

That many persons may have the appearance of religion, and afterwards turn lukewarm and indifferent, and perhaps turn back to their lusts and idols, and even ridicule religion and religious people, is a truth that falls under our daily observation. But notwithstanding this, the foundation of God standeth sure. The comfort of the doctrine does not belong to those who would turn the grace of God into lasciviousness; but to true Christians who make it their daily prayer to God to give them grace to persevere to the end. The water followed the children of Israel in the wilderness; but upon their rebellion the precious blessing was withheld, till Moses strikes the rock a second time. The comfort of grace may be withheld from such of the people of God as fall into sin, till they renew their repentance, and take hold by faith of the Saviour. We read in the Scriptures of several of the saints who fell into very great sins; but they did not entirely fall away, for they renewed their repentance – they humbled themselves before God, and were received into favour. This is very comfortable doctrine to the Lord's people; but it cannot be a pillow for carnal security to any man. To the man who would reason in this foolish manner, "I am now in a state of grace, I may indulge my lusts, for I cannot fall away," we would answer in the words of Scripture, "Thou hast no part in this matter, for thy heart is not right before God; thou art in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity." It is not the fault of the precious doctrine that sinners abuse it to their own destruction; other doctrines are abused as well as this. Instead of disputing about it, be it the business of our lives to secure the grace of God to our souls, to improve our talents and opportunities, and to go from strength to strength till we arrive safely at Sion. If a man is sincere, I believe he will persevere to the end. If a man once believes in his soul that the grace of God is more precious than created enjoyment, that the joys of heaven are more substantial than the joys of sense, nothing will stop his progress. Do we not see the wonderful effect that avarice and ambition have upon the human mind. And if the love of money, the love of praise, and the gratification of a lust, hurry people forward so that nothing can stop their career, is it to be supposed that the love of grace, the love of Christ, and the love of heaven, can have less effect? Whatever is a man's darling object, he pursues it with perseverance. And when grace gives a new turn to the thoughts, grace follows the soul, as the water of the rock followed the children of Israel, till he safely lands in the heavenly Canaan.

III. That as the rock did not yield water till it was struck, in like manner we must strike the Rock of our salvation that we may obtain refreshing streams for our souls.

The means by which the wisdom of God saw fit to relieve the thirst of the Israelites, was that the rock should be struck in order to supply them with water. It was an unlikely means, and therefore it was greatly calculated to humble them, and bring them to a dependence upon God Almighty alone. They were in great distress; but man's extremity is God's opportunity. We may believe that Moses, as well as the children of Israel, had murmuring thoughts, some secret unbelief, mixed with their faith. But their unbelief did not hinder the precious blessing from flowing to them. We may naturally think that they were in some measure at least brought to submit to the will of God before they could obtain their request. The water was to flow from the rock, and the rock must be struck. We must likewise obtain the water of life by striking the Rock of our salvation. If such an expression may be allowed, God had no difficulty in bringing water out of the rock; the great difficulty was in bringing the people to submit to such a dispensation. There is mercy with God, there is grace in the Saviour, and there should be no difficulty in believing so. But the difficulty is in bringing the proud heart of a sinner to sue for this grace as he ought. The Rock must be struck before the water can be obtained. Moses struck the rock with the rod – we must strike the Rock by the exercise of faith and repentance. We ought to endeavour to believe that we shall obtain our requests. He permits us to use arguments with Him, as if He were a man – "Take with you words," says He. Blessed Job says – "O that I knew where to find Him, and I would fill my mouth with arguments." God is unchangeable; and our prayers cannot change His purpose or alter His

decree. Prayer is the blessed means by which He brings about His gracious purposes towards His people. In Scripture we see the greatest works performed in favour of His people by faith and prayer. Prayer is only faith expressed in words. As the heat and attraction of the sun raises vapours and melts the clouds into softening showers of rain, prayer, as it were, brings faith to perform general and particular acts of believing. It is not the strength of the child that opens the door of his father's house; it is the cry of the child that moves the father's heart to open – it is not his arguments but his paternal feelings that opens the door. He allows him to cry because he delights to hear his voice. I shall mention some of the arguments which poor sinners may use, as these are the strokes by which they bring water out of the Rock.

1. That God sent His Son into the world to save sinners.

We may put the Saviour in mind of His office. His business into the world was to destroy the works of the devil. This work is sin and unbelief – the work of God is faith and holiness. As faith or unbelief prevail, grace or sin will prevail also. Unbelief suggests to the sinner that he has committed such and such sins; faith goes with these very sins to the Saviour for pardon and grace. If we were to stand at a distance from the Saviour because we are sinners, who, then, could be saved? Instead of this, we ought to go to Him as we are, for Saviour and sinner are relative terms. Our being sinners is what makes the Saviour precious to us. “He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

2. That He has saved very great sinners, hardened sinners, that have continued long in sin.

Unbelief may go a step farther than to tell us that we are sinners. We may be great sinners; and some of the people of God, before their conversion, may have continued long in sin. The conscience may be seared, the heart hard, the will stubborn, the mind blind, and the feelings blunt. He may complain of being past feeling. But the Word assures us that all manner of sin shall be forgiven, and that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. We have instances in Scripture of very great sinners that were pardoned and cleansed. And faith may plead this argument – that Christ is not only the Saviour of sinners, but the Saviour of great sinners. He not only can cure the spiritual palsy, but He can raise Lazarus out of the grave of sin in which he had been rotting, not for days, but for years. Is this an imaginary case? I appeal to history and experience. Such trophies of Divine grace may encourage poor sinners to plead with the Saviour to have mercy upon themselves. Are we sinners? Are we great sinners? And have we continued long in sin? Such were Paul, Manasseh, the people of Corinth, and the murderers of Christ. The argument of the Psalmist is, “Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.” Let us acknowledge that our sins are great; but let us plead that we have a great Saviour, able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto Him. If our sins are heinous and highly aggravated, and our unbelief great in proportion, let us plead with Him that He was not only wounded for our sins, and bruised for our iniquities, but that His precious side was pierced – that He encourages us in His Gospel to thrust our hands in His side, and be not faithless, but believing – that by saving great sinners He will show His almighty power as a Saviour. Let us plead this argument.

3. That as we strayed from Him so long that we now have nothing to plead by way of merit, but that we plead His own righteousness.

The language of our hearts sometimes is, that if we had come sooner He would receive us. This thought, however, arises from a desire to be justified by our self-righteousness. There is one way of justification for all, namely, by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us. If we have been great sinners, this must be our plea; at any rate, we must make mention of His righteousness, of His only. Salvation is of grace; and whatever false opinions several people may have when they examine their sins – not by the law of God, but by their own self-love and the maxims of the world around them – we must acknowledge ourselves to be sinners,

and to stand in need of a Saviour. We cannot pretend to extenuate our sins – conscience and the Word of God give a different account of them. Are we sinners? – He is the Saviour. Are we foul? – He is the Fountain. Are we in debt? – He is the Surety. We cannot pay our debt or answer for one of a thousand of our transgressions; but He is the propitiation and we plead this great sacrifice. And though Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, or the beasts upon a thousand hills are not sufficient for a burnt-offering, “the Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world.” That we might formerly believe that our own endeavours, our prayers, our alms, and our duties might recommend us to God; but that now, with the poor publican, we cry, “Lord, have mercy on us sinners.” That we disclaim everything but what the Lord Jesus Christ has done and suffered, and that we build our hope upon Him as the Rock of Ages – that we beg of Himself to bring us from every false foundation, to trust in Himself alone as the Author of salvation to our souls – that we desire to be found in Him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith.

4. That He would get more glory by saving us than by destroying us.

God will be glorified in the condemnation or salvation of all men. He delights in mercy. The salvation of one soul brings more glory to Him than the condemnation of thousands. Salvation is the work of God; misery and destruction is what men bring upon themselves by sin. People can destroy, but cannot save themselves. Misery is the work of men; grace and salvation is the work of God. We may tell the Saviour that our everlasting happiness will procure glory to His name, for all the ransomed of the Lord are jewels in His crown, and will reflect honour upon Him for ever – that the hosannas and hallelujahs of His people will be a greater pleasure to Him than the groans and miseries of His enemies who smart under the hand of His justice.

5. That if He will, He can save; and that we throw ourselves at His feet to do with us what He pleases.

We are sinners, and as such we stand in need of a Saviour. The great work of grace is to humble the soul and bring the sinner, weary and heavy laden, to Christ. We are to receive comfort in the lowest posture of humility and resignation. We deserve nothing; and God is not obliged to give us any good thing unless He chooses of His own good pleasure – any thing He does is of free grace. Though He would condemn us we cannot complain; and therefore let us tell the Saviour that we throw ourselves upon the mercy of God through His merits, and entirely resign ourselves to His will – that though He would destroy us, we adore His justice, and receive the stroke with resignation – we are sinners, and His justice would be clear – that we throw ourselves upon His mercy, for He is a gracious God – that we have murdered our souls, but that we lay hold upon the horns of the altar – that though Solomon put Joab to death at the altar, he is greater than Solomon, and a king of greater mercy – that though the crimes of Joab were too great for Solomon to pardon, our sins are not so great but His blood can wash away their filth and their guilt – that though we tremble at His justice, we have some humble hope in His mercy – and if He would pardon our sins, gratitude would make us to devote our souls and bodies to His service.

6. That instead of a soft heart, we feel our hearts hard – instead of love to God, we feel enmity – instead of genuine gratitude, we feel selfishness; but that He is God, and can cure us – that He is our Physician, and we can tell Him our diseases.

Sin is an awful disease, and such as felt it will acknowledge that it is so of a truth. A proud, self-righteous person would be affronted to suspect his own heart was hard, that he had enmity to what was good, and that he could be capable of ingratitude to the best of beings. But what is the good of concealing our disease? Till we feel our disease, how can we apply for a cure? If a patient cannot bear to be told that his case is so bad that a physician is necessary, or, after applying to the physician, if he conceal from him his most secret and most

dangerous wounds can it be expected that he will cure him? The Saviour would cure us if we would apply to Him, but either pride on the one hand or unbelief on the other hinder us from looking to our hearts and lives. Many of us are like a man who had a deep and dangerous wound in the side and a small cut in the finger. He shows his finger to the doctor, but conceals the wound that affected his life. When asked the reason of such foolish conduct, he replies that such a man applied a plaster to it. Besides, he was afraid the doctor would ask a high fee and oblige him to observe a strict and regular diet; but when the wound begins to pain him, and threatens his life, he must show it to the physician. Such is our case. We ask pardon for what we think small sins – we say nothing to Him about our hearts and the great sin of our nature. We are afraid of mortification and self-denial; but when we feel our pain, and see our misery, we must go to the Saviour – we must tell Him our disease, be it ever so deep or so desperate, “for there is balm in Gilead, and a Physician there.” Do we complain that we are dead in sin without spiritual feeling? “He is the resurrection and the life.” He can raise the dead sinner out of the grave, and give him life, and light and joy. Let us tell Him our case and pour our souls into His bosom – let us tell Him that His healing hand can cure us, that we are afraid to look at the wound because unbelief says it is incurable – that we beg of our Physician to look at it Himself to see if ever the like of it came under His hand before; and though this should be the case, that He is not like other physicians – that we hope he will undertake our cure – that we believe it would not defy His skill or His power to heal our disease – that we pray Him to handle our wounds, for His healing medicines can cure every disease – that we will not believe a bad report of Him – that He can blot out our iniquities for His own sake, and that His blood can cleanse us from all sin.

Lastly, that as He took our nature upon Him, we may speak to Him as our elder brother – that we appeal to His tender heart and feelings – that we are determined to thank and bless Him whatever He does with us – that we shall wait upon Him in the use of means till He comes with His salvation to our souls.

Let unbelief, let the enemies of our souls, do their utmost; the worst they can say is that God will destroy us at last. Let us complain of them to the Saviour – let us tell Him we are determined to bless Him, to seek Him, and to serve Him, as well as we can – that we watch at His gate, knock at His door, and wait His gracious time – and that, though He would frown upon us, the language of our heart is, “The blessing of our souls upon His precious head, through all eternity” – that we deliver up our lusts and our idols, and beg of Himself to open up the door of our hearts, that the King of Glory may come in – that we are resolved to follow Him – that His people shall be our people, and His God our God – that we shall run after Him in the use of all means, attend at the pool of ordinances, and go where we think He shall be passing by. And thus, though we cannot change God, prayer may gradually change our own hearts. When Moses conquered his unbelief so far as to strike the rock, the rock gave water to the congregation; and Christ, the Rock of Salvation, shall give water of comfort to our souls.

INFERENCES.

1. That as the children of Israel drank of the rock, but many of them did not understand the spiritual meaning of it, Christians may have the ordinances and not experience their power. Water is a great temporal blessing. Every bad man, however, among the children of Israel had not the blessing or thing signified by the rock. Means and ordinances are a great blessing also, and they are valuable even for their temporal advantage to society. But the wicked do not reap any spiritual benefit from them. The Gospel is hid to them; and this consideration should make us earnestly beg of God to reveal Christ to our souls.

2. Instead of boasting of our privileges, we should make a good use of them – they cannot save. The Israelites enjoyed astonishing privileges; God wrought wonderful things for them

in the field of Zoan, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness. The greater their privileges were, so much greater were their punishments, when they made a bad use of them. It was not to encourage them in sin that they were privileged so highly, but to make them “a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Our privileges, as Christians, should make us holy in life and conversation. Let us not rest satisfied with eating and drinking in the presence of our Saviour, and wearing His livery by an outward profession; but let us seek an interest in His love, and pray to God to engrave His image upon our hearts.

Lastly, a poor soul may say, I have often struck the Rock, but do not fetch water. Why? Unbelief is the cause. Unbelief made blessed Moses strike the rock twice, and speak unadvisedly with his lips. It is your duty to believe that you shall obtain your request. You cannot believe; but as faith in God’s command, and your duty, you should attempt it. The people present when Lazarus was raised from the dead, in spite of unbelief, could remove the stone from the grave. They did so, and the miracle was wrought. You have attempted to believe, but do not bring water out of the Rock. If you have not, you must strike the Rock over and over again. Continue to strike the Rock. It was the power of God, and not the rod of Moses, that wrought the miracle. It is not your striking that brings water out of the Rock. It is the favour and good-will of God that brings comfort to our souls. We deserve nothing, and therefore we should wait patiently till God gives his gracious answer. May God bless His Word to our souls; and to His name be the glory, through Jesus Christ – AMEN.

[August & September 1905]

Notes of a Sermon.

By the late REV. CHRISTOPHER MUNRO, Strathy.

Preached at Kilmuir, Skye, 1st March, 1867.

“Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with an unquenchable fire” – Matthew 3:12.

In this verse we have a portion of John the Baptist’s description of the work given to Christ as the Father’s Servant. And as this work has an important bearing on the state of all mankind, and therefore on the state of each of us, it is surely a matter that calls for attention and consideration on the part of every man and woman among us. Let us then endeavour to turn our attention to it on this occasion, looking for and depending on the Spirit’s guidance and blessing.

Christ’s work is set before us here very briefly, and is divided into two departments – baptising with the Holy Ghost and purging His threshing floor. It is the latter department that is to form the chief subject of our meditation at present. The figure employed here, to illustrate this solemn and important part of His work, is as well known now as it was when spoken to the inhabitants of all rural and agricultural districts of a country. It is, as we have it written, a threshing floor into which the farmer brings his corn after it is cut and dried, in order to get it threshed; and when it has undergone this process, then he gets it winnowed, after which he carefully gathers up the grain, and lets the chaff either go with the wind; or burns it up, as was the custom in the country of Judea.

Considering the state of my congregation and the command to preach the gospel as fully as possible on every occasion, I must turn their attention –

in the first place to the baptism by the Spirit and by fire, and then,
to the second portion, the winnowing.

I shall then notice how he describes Christ as one mightier than he; and the reasons why he did so are to be found not only in His person but also in His work.

I. The work, as indicated already, consists first in His baptism with the Holy Ghost. I attempted some Sabbaths before this to speak to you concerning the Spirit’s work in quickening the dead, and also concerning some of its fruits, but all I said then, or can say now, on this aspect of His work leaves this subject almost untouched; it is so extensive and profound that it is impossible to exhaust it. Here then we have the work of salvation

described by its effects in the case of the redeemed. Much was antecedently necessary ere they could receive the Holy Ghost, and the fact of His being received, in the manner described here, implies the finishing of all that work given the Son to do in His estate of humiliation. John's work was to preach repentance, declare the advent of the Saviour, baptise with water. But although he had been filled with the Holy Ghost from the womb, and was taught and led by Him in performing his work, he could not give that Spirit to any other; he could baptise none by the Spirit and by fire. Let none from this statement conclude that there is no difference then between teachers who have not the Spirit and those like John who are filled with Him. The giving of the Spirit in His saving influences and operations belongs to Christ. As Mediator and Saviour he was anointed by the Spirit, who was given Him not by measure. He is the head of the Church, which is His body, so that the oil poured on Him, as it was on Aaron, reaches down to His skirts, or is imparted to every member of that body or to every believer. He was anointed by the Father with the Spirit, in the first place, as Immanuel, and then the Spirit was given by Him to others. The whole disposal and distribution of this gift is lodged in the Son as the Head of His Church. The effects or fruits, produced in them in consequence, are summed up here in the figurative word, fire. This teaches us that those baptised had been unclean, and their uncleanness of such a nature as requires fire to purify it. There are some impurities that nothing can remove except fire, especially the impurities of metals; and there is no impurity of any kind which may not be removed by fire, if it can be employed in sufficient quantity, and it removes it by consuming it and so cleanses.

But is it not said that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin?" Yes; Christ's death made expiation for sin, and so it is the only means whereby the guilt of sin is removed, or by which the sinner is delivered from the curse of the law, from the sentence of death under which he is on account of transgressing the law. It is not, however, simply by the blood of Christ that sin as an unclean principle is removed and the soul is cleansed. It is true that it was Christ's death that opened up a way for the Holy Ghost's coming to sinners and taking up His abode in them, and so may be indirectly said to be the cause of their sanctification, but directly and immediately it is the work of the Spirit to sanctify the soul. The guilt of sin then is removed by the blood, but the pollution is removed or consumed by the sanctifying and mighty operation of the Holy Ghost. The uncleanness that is removed by sanctification is unbelief, rebellion of heart and will, the enmity of the carnal mind, love of sin and self, pride, hatred, anger, wrath, etc., or the disposition from which all these evils arise. These are as noxious plants in the soul to be rooted out, or as the lusts of the flesh to be mortified, or as stains to be washed and made white. The Spirit is given and dwells and works in them for these purposes. But is it not said that it is by beholding the glory of Jesus they are "changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord?" In sanctification there is a physical change effected in the soul and also a moral one. The Spirit is the author of the former directly and of the latter by showing Christ as the example and rendering the word effectual to induce them to follow Christ or imitate the example He has left unto His people, so that they become like to Him. And also He causeth all things to work together for their good, that is, for their sanctification and comfort in the Holy Ghost. He worketh in them "both to will and to do;" inclines their wills, draws forth their hope, their desires, their fear, their humility, etc., and enables them to forsake sin and obey His will. By His working in them after this manner, they are led to see sin and hate it, resist it, struggle against it, and overcome it. In this manner He purges them from all their iniquities. He baptises them with the Holy Ghost.

II. The other department of His work is to purge His threshing floor, and this He does in the capacity of a judge. He it is who has the fan in His hand. All judgment is committed to the Son. None else could act the part of the Father's Servant. No angel is fit for this work; no, not the whole multitude of them. Prophets and apostles are unfit for it. They cannot search men's

hearts; no, not one man's heart. Peter could not see that the heart of Simon Magus was not right with God, or not sincere in the profession made by Him until it came to light by His doings. In separating the precious from the vile – all the righteous from all the wicked – infinite and infallible knowledge is necessary. To know and search the hearts of the countless multitudes of mankind is absolutely necessary in order to do the work ascribed here to Christ. To take in all the thoughts, words and actions, all their motives, all their ends, requires an infinite mind, an infinite understanding. Christ then must be God. For if not, this is work which He could never perform, and therefore that could not have been committed unto Him. This work, however, *is* committed to Him, and we have the utmost certainty of His being able to perform it, and therefore there is no doubt of His yet executing it. He knows His sheep; knows them by name; knows their circumstances and the time they live. He knows their works, as He tells the churches of Asia. He knows their thoughts, their desires, their faith, their love, their sealing, for they are all sealed by the Spirit. He knows well what often perplexes them in the day of their effectual calling; He knows their repentance, their obedience, their union to Him, and the fact of His purging them. They are written on the palms of His hands; they are as seals on His arms, and on His heart. He has hold of every one of them.

Christ knows all who are not His people, and shall know them afterwards. “Depart from me, I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity” – He did not know them as His people – shall be His language to every one of the ungodly. He makes a clear and decisive distinction between the clean and the unclean, between wheat and chaff, in His word. The one class is dead, the other living; the one is regenerated and the other unregenerated; the one has the Spirit and the other has Him not. One man fears God, the other has not His fear before his eyes. One loves Christ, the other does not. The believer has grace, the other is destitute thereof. The one pursues holiness, the other pursues sin. The pure in heart are poor in spirit; the unclean are rich and have need of nothing. The former serve God, the latter their lusts. One man is given to prayer, the other either neglects it or rests on it, and prays to be seen of men. The believer is a stranger here, and finds no resting place, no abiding city; the unbeliever makes himself and the world his god and heaven. The former has his treasure in heaven, and therefore his heart there, but the latter minds earthly and carnal things. The former endeavours to live to God, the other lives to himself.

These are very marked and wide distinctions made in the Word between the two classes, and made by Christ through His Spirit, so that we may consider them as one way in which He uses His fan. He purges His Church to some extent on earth. He permits temptations to fall out, by which the unsound or the chaff are made known to be so. The Church, as a visible body, has experienced declensions from the faith and practice of the truth, and when this happened, or does happen, it is He who can purge it or reform it, by sending forth His truth and His light whereby heresies and errors are brought to light, and men are rendered sincere in their profession and zealous for purity of doctrine and discipline and practice. Until He takes His fan in this case, matters will proceed from bad to worse, and no human wisdom or human effort can check the spread of error, of delusion, of corruption of manners among ministers and people. To whatever degree of purity He may bring His Church on earth, we are not led by Scripture to expect that it shall be absolutely free from chaff on earth.

The thorough purging mentioned here must be understood as that to which the Church shall be subjected at the last day – a final judgment – when Christ shall appear, and when all mankind shall be called to His bar. Then He shall separate the chaff from the wheat, or the righteous from the wicked, so that no believers shall be left among the unbelievers, and no unrighteous person allowed to remain among the just. The obscurest penitent shall not be overlooked, nor permitted to be driven away by the winnowing wind, and the best painted formalist shall not be able to stand in judgment; he shall be as conspicuous for the want of the

wedding garment as he who never made any pretence to religion, or as the most openly wicked or undisguised enemy. The eye of the King, come in to see the guests, will at once detect him, and so he will be moved away to the left hand. The wind shall pass over all, and none can stand but the righteous. These shall, like wheat, be gathered, and none left, none lost, but all led safely into the house or mansions prepared for them, and none of them shall go out any more, shall be any more among the wicked or shall lie among the pots. None of them shall be any more tried or tempted by sin or by the world or by the devil. They shall no more fear the results of the great day, for it shall be past to their unspeakable peace and joy for ever and ever. They shall then be where their hearts have been while strangers on earth; they shall then have their soul's desire satisfied. Their desires expressed in groans unutterable shall then come out clearly and find their satisfaction in Him, in whom all fulness dwelleth. And the fear of falling away shall not as much as for a moment mar their perfect peace, joy and felicity. This gathering shall be the work of Christ Himself: this peace, comfort, and satisfaction will be imparted freely and ungrudgingly. Then shall be seen more clearly than ever how all the promises of God are in Him, yea and amen.

Supposing the question was put to them, "Has a single promise failed in the case of a single person here? If so, let him speak out and mention what it is," none would be there to reply. And might not He ask each of them and receive an affirmative answer to such questions as these, "Did not I speak truth when I said 'He that believeth in the Son shall have everlasting life:' 'Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out;'" when I said that 'all things shall work together for good to them that love God:' and when I assured all believers of their being kept through faith unto salvation. Did I not speak the truth also when I promised that My grace would be sufficient for them and My strength made perfect in weakness?" "O yes," would be the universal reply. "Is not My reward better than all I required of you to forsake for Me? Is it not better to be here, wearied and worn out in the good fight, better to come maimed and halt, disowned and hated by the world, than be cast into hell? Look down and take a view of their torments, their privations, pains and agonies, and hear the requests that are not to be gratified, and take a survey of your mansions, of the glorious home built by God, of its walls and gates and streets and inhabitants, and come now, drink of this river, this fountain, eat of this tree. Come and take your fill at the fountain of sovereign, eternal and redeeming love, and say if all My promises are not yea and amen." O yes! Eye hath not seen, and it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive the things prepared by God for His people. The doom of the wicked is as fearful to contemplate as that of the just is delightful and glorious, but they shall be cast into that fire which is unquenchable and eternal. They shall believe when it is too late that all threatened against sin is true, that it deserves the wrath and curse of God for ever and ever, that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; that it had been better never to have been born than to die in sin; better never to have heard of sin and salvation and to have Christ offered and yet to be rejected by them; for their everlasting existence shall be a state of suffering the most intolerable pain that a creature can bear. There is no pain like that of fire.

And this fire shall not serve the purpose of purging them from their dross, like the fire spoken of under the former head of this discourse. It shall never remove one stain or spot. It shall not consume one evil passion or sinful lust, but these in the midst of this furnace shall retain their being and their exercise, the power of the fire only adding to their painful craving that is never destined to be satisfied. It will not purge the conscience from guilt nor warm the heart, but render it as cold as an iceberg towards God and fellow-creatures. It will not melt it, but render it as hard as an adamant stone. Its purpose shall be to punish and not to reform, and the period during which the punishment shall be inflicted is not to come to a termination.

What do these things teach? They teach that we are defiled and unholy by nature and so unfit for heaven, the seat of everlasting blessedness and rest – that unless we are purified we

can not see God in peace, but must be cast away like the dross of silver and gold. We are told that one came who baptises with the Holy Ghost and with fire. This, as you know, is Jesus Christ, who alone can give the Spirit. He still lives and has the residue of the Spirit, so that He is able to baptise *now*. He still carries on this work, and does this to everyone that comes to Him. Have you come unto Him with the conviction that you needed such a baptism? If so, you must be conscious of this need still; you must now feel your need of being washed and purified from all your dross. Give this work to Him; give heed unto His testimonies, unto all He requires of you; for by this the young man shall purify his ways. The Lord's ways are undefiled, whereas the ways of sin are defiled and cannot be touched without receiving some spots. In the Lord's ways there is no defilement; none is contracted, but the soul is cleansed more and more. Let your dependence be on Him for being upheld in His ways and so for being more and more sanctified and made holy. Is not this most desirable for those who abhor themselves and have frequently to cry out "Unclean, unclean?" Come then you, whose complaint is of that nature, apply unto Him, learn of Him, follow Him, and this thy uncleanness shall be removed and thou made whiter than the snow.

Let all learn from this passage the nature of the trial that awaits all of us present here this day. We must all appear before Him, spoken of in our text, who has the fan. Let any or all of us now avoid Christ and refuse to come to Him, yet we must come at last and go through the trial. Are you ready for it, were He to call you now? Could you stand in judgment? He, who has the fan, now calls and invites you to come unto Him. O how long will you refuse, how long be guilty of the folly of despising and rejecting Him who came to cleanse, and besides whom there is none else to do it! Come as you are; think not that you can cleanse yourself; wait not for this, by which many are deceived, and so they put off, till death overtakes them, far away from Christ wallowing in their pollution, and the opportunity, during which they might be washed and purified, gone for ever.

[October 1905]

