

A Sermon.

By the REV. D. MACFARLANE, DINGWALL.

Preached on Sabbath, 2nd September, 1917.

“The people which sat in darkness saw a great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up” – Matthew 4:16.

The occasion on which Jesus Christ spoke the words of our text was when He left Nazareth and came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim (verse 13). He quoted an Old Testament scripture, spoken by the Prophet Isaiah, as now fulfilled (Isaiah 9:2). The reason of His leaving Nazareth was that He heard that John the Baptist was cast into prison (verse 12), and if the enemies persecuted John, they would also persecute Him unto death, but as His time was not yet come, He fled to a place of safety, as an example to His followers to take all lawful endeavours to preserve their lives, which He commanded them to do when He told them, if they were persecuted in one city, to flee to another. In Isaiah, Galilee of the Gentiles is mentioned as in the vicinity of the place to which the Saviour came. If the Jews rejected Him, others would receive Him. Isaiah spoke of the event as if it had been fulfilled in his own day, to show the certainty of the fulfilment of prophecy in due time.

In speaking from our text, we shall notice: –

I. – The condition in which the people spoken of were; and

II. – The great thing God did for them.

I. – The condition in which the people spoken of were.

1. They were in darkness. A state of sin is spoken of in Scripture as darkness, and the practice of sin as works of darkness. All the fallen race are by nature in this condition.

(1) To be in darkness is to be in misery; “liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.”

(2) Darkness means ignorance. We are by nature ignorant of ourselves, and ignorant of God and of the way of salvation.

2. They were also in the region of death. They were spiritually dead, and dead in law. They could not be in a more dangerous condition in this world. They are described as sitting in darkness and in the region of death, which means that, notwithstanding their deplorable condition, they were careless and indifferent about the salvation of their precious souls. They made no effort to flee from sin and from the wrath to come. Not only that the heathen, who never heard the Gospel, are in the darkness which we have described, but the great majority in the land of the Gospel are in this darkness. If you examine these on their state by nature, you will find that they are ignorant of it. They do not believe the testimony of God’s Word concerning them, and they cherish the false hope of going to heaven when they die; and they are confirmed in this view of themselves by false teachers. If you speak of the necessity of being born again, you will find them as ignorant of that change of nature as Nicodemus was before the Saviour explained it to him. If you examine them on the way of salvation, you will find that they are resting on their own works and not on the finished work of Christ. Nothing can take the covenant of works out of their heart but the grace of God. If you examine them on the subject of eternal punishment, it will be seen that they do not believe that there is such a thing. They say that God is not so cruel as to punish

sinner with an everlasting punishment. Although they admit it as a right thing to punish the thief and the murderer, they deny God's right to punish the transgressors of His law.

Not only that many in the land of the gospel are ignorant of God's works of grace, but they are also ignorant of His works of providence. This is to be clearly seen in our own day. In connection with the present terrible War, how few in our nation acknowledge God's hand in it! They look only at second causes; they speak of the cruelty of the Germans and their Allies, but do not consider that these were rods in God's hand to punish us and other nations for sin. For years before the War began, the young men of our country were indulging in football and other plays, as if these were the chief end of their life. If ministers advised them to give up these pursuits and "to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon his name while he is near," they would not listen to them, but God took another way in His providence to deal with them: He brought them to face the sword by which many of them were killed, and their souls cast into everlasting perdition. We do not mean that all who were killed perished in eternity. Some of them were brought to repentance, and others were godly men before they were called to the front. We do not wonder at all that God works in such a terrible manner in His providence, for the wickedness of the nations has come to a great height.

II. – The great thing God did for them. He sent light to those that were in darkness.

When the Lord sends the Bible to a people, He sends them "a great light." It throws light on the state in which they are by nature, as guilty and corrupt, without any good thing dwelling in them; and in order that they might see the darkness in which they are, He opens the eyes of their understanding by His Spirit to see their condition. They cannot sit in indifference any longer in that state. They arise and begin to ask, "What must I do to be saved?" He sends them the word of the Gospel to show them the only way in which they shall be saved, namely, "to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." How dark we as a nation were before the Gospel came to us! We were sunk in the darkness of idolatry, but, when the Gospel was sent to us, its light dispelled that darkness in the case of many who were made "light in the Lord," although it is sad to observe that we as a nation are going back into that darkness again. The light of the Gospel is still shining to some extent, but the darkness comprehends it not. "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehends it not" (John 1:5). The blind cannot see the light, although it is shining around them.

But, great as the light of the Gospel is, there is a greater light, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It was when He came to the people spoken of in our text, "who sat in darkness," it is said, "light sprung up to them." The Gospel was only a means of bringing Christ to them. It was the white horse which conveyed the Saviour to them. Christ calls Himself the light of the world, and says, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). This light not only came to them, but shined within them. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). What a glorious light Christ is! "He is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person" (Hebrews 1:3). If you have Christ, you have light indeed. If you are without Him you are still in darkness, whatever other light you may have.

Christ's ministers are lights He uses as instruments to enlighten those who are in the darkness of a state of nature. In the book of Revelation they are called "stars," as lights put in candlesticks to give light. The Church is a candlestick, but, as a candlestick cannot give light without a lighted candle being put in it, so the Church cannot give light to the people unless ministers taught of God are set up in it. The Apostle Paul was such a candle, and Christ sent him to "turn men from darkness unto light, and from the power of

Satan unto God” (Acts 26:18). When Christ appeared to him to convert him, a great light from heaven shined round about him (Acts 9:3) which dazzled his eyes, and left him blind till the light of the Gospel removed his blindness, so that he had then the light of life. As the stars borrow their light from the sun, so Gospel ministers receive their light from Christ, “the sun of righteousness.”

For upwards of a thousand years before the Reformation in the sixteenth century, the nations of Europe were in the darkness of idolatry, and sitting at ease in that darkness without considering that generation after generation were dying in their sins and going to everlasting perdition, but God, in love, mercy, and grace sent them the light of the Gospel, by which means He raised up out of the darkness faithful ministers who were the instruments of enlightening many others by preaching the Word of God – law and gospel. Germany, which is now by its “higher criticism” worshipping the god of war instead of the living God, and thereby endeavouring to destroy Christianity, was the cradle of the glorious Reformation. We do not mean that the light of the Gospel was not in any part of Europe during that long period of darkness. It was in some parts, but those who held the light were persecuted, and had to hide themselves in dens and caves of the earth. The seed of the kingdom was kept in these hiding-places, from which sprang the light that largely diffused itself throughout the nations that sat so long in darkness. The light that sprang up then came to our own country, which made it great among the nations of the world, so that hitherto no other nation, however powerful, has been able to conquer it in war. And, so long as our nation kept to the Word of God as the rule of faith and practice, it excelled all other nations in sobriety, righteousness and godliness, but now we, in common with the other nations of Europe, have fallen away from the faith of the Gospel, so that another reformation is much needed. We pray for it, and we believe, on the authority of God’s Word, that a more glorious reformation shall come, after all the nations of Europe are punished for their iniquities. It shall be a universal reformation, pervading all the nations of the world. Its light shall be so bright and extensive that every form of idolatry, superstition, and spiritual darkness shall vanish out of sight before it.

Application.

The light we have been speaking of has come to you. The Gospel came to you; Christ came to you; and His ministering servants came to you. What effect had all this upon you? Are you still in the darkness of which our text speaks, sitting in darkness and hating the light, because your works are evil? If you continue in that darkness till death, there is another darkness, to which you are going; it is an “outer darkness,” out of which you can never be delivered, an everlasting darkness, without the least ray of light. Or, have you been brought out of darkness and enlightened by the Holy Spirit to know Jesus Christ in His divine person, two natures, and threefold offices, as Prophet, Priest, and King? If so, let your light so shine that your neighbours who are still in darkness may be led to the light. Live not unto yourself, but unto Him “who died and rose again.” If you have received the light, it will appear in your conduct. You will be found walking in the way of God’s commandments, and avoiding every appearance of evil. You will be careful to observe God’s way of worship, according to the rule of His word. You cannot tolerate error in doctrine or worship; you cannot worship in modern churches where the organ is used in the service of praise, or where uninspired and unsound hymns are used, instead of the Psalms in the Bible. You shall no doubt be reckoned by many as peculiar and narrow-minded, but that should not move you away from your steadfastness in serving God according to His Word. You will be thanking the Lord for bringing you out of a state of nature to a state of grace, and pitying those who are still in the darkness of their natural state. And the thought of those that died in that state, and are lost in eternity, is overwhelming to you, as you think of them in the place of everlasting perdition,

gnashing their teeth, with unspeakable anguish of spirit and enmity to God for punishing them for their sins. It was this “terror of the Lord” that made the Apostle Paul “persuade men.” You know that, if sinners are saved, they must use the means of grace in order to salvation, and you earnestly urge them to use these means, but not to rest in them as a ground of salvation. A certain minister said that it was difficult to make sinners to begin the work in this way, but that it was more difficult to take them *from* their works. Some perish by open wickedness; others, by self-righteousness. We leave these important matters between you and God, to whom you are to be responsible.

[November 1919]

Outlines of a Sermon.

By the late REV. JOHN MACQUEEN, Daviot, Inverness-shire.

Preached on 29th April, 1883.

(Taken down by a Hearer.)

[These outlines were issued in leaflet form by one of the Daviot congregation.
They are slightly revised, but with no material alteration – ED.]

“Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name” – Malachi 3:16.

- I. – Their Character – They “feared the Lord”;
- II. – Their Conduct – They “spake often one to another”;
- III. – The Listener – “The Lord hearkened and heard”; and
- IV. – The Record – “A book of remembrance was written before him,”
etc.

I. – *Their Character* – They “feared the Lord.”

1. The fear of the Lord was the Old Testament term for genuine piety. Such persons, under the New Testament, are called disciples or believers. The knowledge of Christ and the Gospel, as then revealed, wrought effectually by the power of the Spirit upon men’s hearts, to cleave to God, to fear Him, and to depart from evil. They were to be spared “when wrath burned as an oven” (chapter 4), and they spoke of it together in evil times beforehand. Surely a wise, beneficial practice – a safe example to follow.

2. Godliness then was called the fear of the Lord, because the Spirit of adoption was not so abundantly given to believers as under the New Testament. “The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Christ was not yet glorified.” It was meet that when Christ Himself received the fulness of the Spirit, the Church should receive more of this sweet blessing. Precious grace! implanted in the heart by the Spirit of all grace. A promise for the New Testament Church: “I will *pour* upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplication” (Zechariah 12:10). It was a time of *pouring* then!

3. They feared the Lord, not man. Christ said, “I will show you whom to fear,” etc. The more of His love in the heart, the more will they fear to offend Him. “Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king; but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods.” They stand in awe of the judgments which may befall the Church and the world because of sin. This fear implies the true knowledge of God, love to God, and fear of His holiness and goodness. “How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” How ready are we to be cowed by the fear of man!

II. – *Their Conduct* – “They spake often one to another.”

It appears they knew each other, which the world will deny. If another is within reach, they will find him. Grace has an *affinity* for grace. “He honoureth them that fear God” (Psalm 15:4). This is the qualification grace looks for – not whether they be rich or noble. It was said to the imbecile, Angus Macleod, “You might well wonder, Angus, that Mr. Lillingston brought you into his dining-room.” “Ah,” was the reply, “he might wonder that he ever got the grace to humble him so to act.” There was a time when “the Lord was coming to his temple” – a time of high-handed iniquity. Even in such a time the Lord had a few who felt for His cause and for His glory.

They loved one another, and held meetings, to talk together of the state of the Lord’s cause, to enquire of Him by prayer, and to *mourn* for the backsliding of the Church. Such meetings are highly profitable and mutually edifying – greatly called for in our day!

Such will speak of the gracious experiences of the divine life in the soul. You can only speak of that to one who fears the Lord – others cannot understand it. “Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul” (Psalm

66:16). Oh, I should like to hear you on the subject. The Lord's people are ready to forget the sweet seasons they have had and the truths which revived their hope. In order to that, they must have their memories quickened by the Holy Ghost, which is one of His offices. "But the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, which the Father shall send in my name, shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). How ready to forget what He said, owing to their infirmities and cares, and trusting too much to their own memory and understanding! How often was Christ away, before you understood what His teaching meant! Oh, what need of this work of the Spirit, as well as His comforting and sanctifying! Consider your helplessness and need, and He will bring to your remembrance, and then the truth is as warm and fresh as ever in your heart. Do you pray for the Spirit as a Remembrancer?

It is the same with regard to the dispensations of the Lord's providence. We are deeply moved by some trying dispensation, and ready to suppose we shall never forget this. But how soon the impression becomes dim, except the Spirit affect us with it anew! It was after a long interval Jacob said to his household – "Let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went" (Genesis 35:3). His doings are intended to be remembered.

III. – *The Listener* – "The Lord hearkened and heard." How little is this considered, what is fit to be spoken before God and even before men! Is what you say fit for you to utter, fit for God to hear? This ought to be a restraint upon tongues on Sabbath and week-days. Do we live under the belief that men shall render an account for every idle word spoken? The Lord noticed a conversation going on – for His love is upon these people, and He will observe all that is said by them. He listened and heard every word *distinctly*. He might listen long before He heard anything good spoken of Himself in many a family. "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk, and are sad? (Luke 24:17). They were the things concerning Jesus of Nazareth. Take heed, man, what He hears from you. He hears enough about the world and vanity, but little about Himself. "If ye see him, tell him I am sick of love." O, He knows it. There is nothing done to His people but He will hear. "Jesus heard that they had cast him out." Whoever tells it, He hears all.

What reason have we all to feel ashamed, and lie low in the dust, for what we have uttered amiss before Him! O, that we had spoken more of the Eternal King's beauty and love – more about His *sufferings and death* – pouring out His soul on "the cross" unto death. If we felt this aright, our talk would oftener turn upon the grand theme of "the cross."

IV. – *The Record* – "A book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." It seems that the Listener thought what He heard worthy to be written down and recorded. He keeps a book, then, *the book of His remembrance*, and they have a book. His book is "for them." A book between Him and them is kept. He gives them *the book of conscience* to keep, which at present is but an imperfect copy of the book of His remembrance. However, we can efface nothing from it, though in our own keeping. When conscience is touched by omnipotent power, it then faithfully records for or against us.

But there is many a thing in their book against themselves, which is not in God's book. The foul deeds and sins of youth, which you remember, have been blotted out of God's book, if you have come to the blood of Christ with them. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions," etc. (Isaiah 44:22). He will not leave the awful debt standing against them, when forgiven. "In those days, and at that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none," etc. (Jeremiah 1:20).

God's book is written *for them, i.e.*, on their behalf. Their good things are written in it, because they are ready to forget them themselves. "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee?" (Matthew 25:37). Ah, the cup of cold water will be recorded. Every good word and good thought for Christ is there. The time of their espousals to Christ is in this register and where and when converted (Acts 17:34; Psalm 87:4).

Every injury done to them is noted in the book. He hath a bottle for their tears and a book for their sorrows. "Put my tears into thy bottle; are they not in thy book?" Every kindness done to them is remembered; so the benefactors will not be losers.

But here, we see, the Lord exerciseth the faith of His people in this life. Matters written in a book are not for *immediate settlement*. "The just shall live by faith"; the formalist from hand to mouth. They often pray and see little appearance of being heard – they suffer and seem to be forgotten. Ah! but it comes to the same thing, or rather better for you; your prayers and deeds are recorded, and will surely be answered in the Lord's good time. "The book of records of the chronicles" was read before King Ahasuerus. Mordecai's good deed for the king turned up; and the king said – "What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this?" "Nothing." But the deed was recorded, and now Mordecai begins to reap the reward (Esther 6). Be not discouraged, dear believer, your wrong is not forgotten, your prayer is not forgotten; it shall be heard. He has a tear of yours in His bottle, a wrong of yours in His book! It will turn up to your account. If He do not openly reward you with temporal deliverance, you shall soon have the comfort of it before His throne. O brethren, He is now hearing and booking.

Their *thoughts* are recorded; "that *thought* upon his name." Why the thoughts? Because there is, perhaps, more grace, more of Christ in your thoughts than in any service you ever gave Him outwardly. Take heed to your thoughts. Some of your thoughts are more performed by the Holy Ghost than any outward obedience rendered. The best service ever given to Christ has not come up to the desire in your thoughts. "But the Lord said to David, forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine *heart*" (2 Chronicles 6:8). "I will take *that* for the building." David's thoughts were as good in the estimation of the Lord as Solomon's temple in all its glory. The thoughts of your heart are "your treasure."

Inferences.

- (1) We are deeply concerned to order our thoughts and our words before the Lord.
- (2) His infinite delight in His people, and the care exercised over their interests.
- (3) Their "Advocate" faithfully records their prayers and their trials, and will plead them on their behalf.

[December 1919]

Notes of a Sermon.

By the REV. D. MACFARLANE, Dingwall.
Preached on the 14th March, 1915.

"That, as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:21).

In this chapter we have an account of three kings (or things personified as such) that began to reign in the world – *Sin*, *Death*, and *Grace*. We shall speak in relation to them, as follows:–

- I. – The reign of Sin;
- II. – The reign of Death; and
- III. – The reign of Grace.

I. – The reign of Sin.

How did Sin come to the throne? Not in a lawful way, but as a usurper. He seized the throne by deceit. He was nominated, and recommended by Satan (the father of lies) as a good king. But the king could not get to the throne without the consent of man. By Satan's recommendation and solicitations, man's consent was, alas! gained, and Sin ascended the throne at once. "By one man sin entered into the world" (verse 12). This took place early in the history of the human race. This usurper was the first bad king in the world, and is the cause of all the bad kings and queens that have ever reigned, and that still reign, on earth. His dominion is extensive, embracing the whole earth, with his royal palace in the soul of man, and his subjects all the human race. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The wicked king corrupted the nature of each and all of his subjects, so that they are very loyal to him, and would not have a better king to reign over them. Such is the deplorable condition of all men by nature. How has this king treated his subjects? Most cruelly, for, as soon as he began to reign, he began with sword in hand to wound and kill them, and he slew them all. Has he, then, no subjects? Yes; for the killing was spiritual. "All died in Adam." But this leads us to the second head.

II. – The reign of Death.

It was Sin that opened the door for Death: "And death by sin" (verse 12). "Sin hath reigned unto death." Not his own death, but the death of his subjects. When Death began to reign, Sin did not cease to reign. Both reigned at the same time. The reign of Death is universal over the human race from Adam to the last of his posterity. He inflicts death, which is "the wages of sin," and is threefold: natural death, spiritual death, and eternal death. Adam died spiritually the day he sinned, and all whom he represented died in and with him on the same day. We are spoken of in Scripture as dead (Ephesians 2:1). Not only that we are by nature, and on account of sin – the first sin – born into the world spiritually dead, but we are liable to natural death. Adam died a natural death, and if he did not die eternal death, it is because he was not dealt with according to his own desert. All generations in the past have died, with the exception of Enoch and Elijah, and all generations in the future, to the end of time, shall die, except those living when Christ shall come to judgment. These shall be "changed." All must submit to this rule; young and old, rich and poor, kings and subjects, must die. Death is called the king of terrors (Job 18: 14). He is terrible indeed to all who die without Christ. The most in every generation hitherto have died without Christ, without being "born again," and these know now what eternal death is. King Death shall reign over them for ever without mercy. The penalty of death is *just*, because appointed by God, and justly deserved by man. But there is no terror in death to God's people. Christ robbed it of its sting, and it comes to them as a friend to remove them to heaven to their Father's house.

III. – The reign of Grace.

Grace is the third king, and a good king He is. If the other two kings were bad, this one was very good. If they were very cruel, this one was very merciful. His very name, Grace, is most encouraging to poor lost sinners, for, having no merit of their own to recommend them to God's favour, their only hope for salvation is to be saved by grace. "This is the doing of the Lord, and wondrous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:22). How did this king come to the throne?

Through righteousness. What righteousness? Not man's righteousness, for man by sin lost his original righteousness. It is the righteousness of Christ. Grace – Grace in God – looked down with pity upon our fallen condition, but would not, and could not, come to deliver us but through righteousness. Christ by His righteousness opened the way for Grace to come, and He did come, ascended the throne, and began to reign.

When did Grace begin to reign? Very soon after the fall of the human race, but Christ did not at that early stage come in the flesh to work out the righteousness that was needed. No; but His righteousness was set forth in type, especially in bloody sacrifice, and as soon as that was done, Grace began to reign. He came to the throne in a lawful way, having the authority of God, and His work was a work of mercy. He began at once to raise to life poor sinners that were slain by sin. The first that He quickened and raised from the grave were Adam and Eve, then Abel, and He went on to do His good work, from generation to generation, to this day, and will go on to do His work to the end of time. As Grace reigns through righteousness, His reign is “unto eternal life.” Sin reigned unto death; but Grace reigns unto life, even eternal life.

Grace having begun this good work dethroned Sin, so that he does no longer reign in God's people. Sin is still in them, but not as king to reign over them, or in them, but as a rebel that is doomed to be extirpated. There are rebels in every kingdom on earth, but these have no right to rule, the law is against them, and, as they do not submit to the laws of the kingdom, they must be put to death. So it is with Sin. He causes much trouble in the soul, but he shall at last be destroyed. Sin, in God's people, is like the Pope. Although the Pope lost the temporal power in Europe, he stirs up wars in these countries in order to regain the temporal power, although it is certain, from God's word, that he shall never get it. In like manner, Sin stirs up wars in the soul to regain his former reigning power, although it is sure, according to God's word, that he shall never succeed in getting it. And, as the Pope shall continue his efforts to regain the ascendancy, till he is consumed by the Spirit of God's mouth, and destroyed by the brightness of his coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8), so indwelling Sin shall continue his efforts to regain his lost reigning power in the soul, till he is totally consumed and destroyed by the work of sanctification at the death of the believer.

The blessings brought in by Grace to perishing sinners are “by Jesus Christ our Lord.” By the first Adam, Sin and Death came upon us; by the second Adam, grace and life come to us.
[January 1920]

A Sermon.

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

[This Sermon was preached at Free St. Luke's, Edinburgh (Rev. Dr. Moody Stuart's)
on Communion Monday evening, 15th July, 1867 – ED.]

(Hitherto Unpublished.)

“O how love I thy law” – Psalm 119:97.

This is the expression, you observe, not only of sincere love to the law, but of ardent love to the law. It is an appeal to God about an ardent love to the law: “O how love I thy law.” I

would, entreating the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, think for a little with you on the grounds why the Psalmist and why the saints do love God's law, do love God's law so ardently. Why do they love? Now, all that is rightly moral is founded on the fitness of things; therefore this love, as moral – as indeed it is the sum of all morality – is founded on the amiableness of the law. Love to the law is proper, and right, and fitting, just because the law is amiable. But let us inquire a little deeper into those circumstances about the law on which the amiableness of the law is grounded. Philosophical divines say, “on the fitness of things,” and it is very true; but that is a cold expression. That which then, here, is the fitness of things, is the character of God, and the character of the rational creature of God.

The first foundation of the amiableness of the law is the character of God. We speak, perhaps not in strict propriety, of moral law as eternal [in the sense of “without beginning”]. I do not think in strict propriety, because there is no eternal subject, and eternity of law presupposes an eternal subject. But as we cannot get in eternity past an eternal subject – unless, indeed, we find him, as we may do, in God's decree and purpose to create rational creatures – then the ground of the amiableness of God's law lies deeper, viz., in the moral perfections of God Himself. You have learned in your Catechism, “What is God?” And the answer is: “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.” These perfections of God are distinguished into His communicable and incommunicable perfections. His incommunicable perfections are – infinity, eternity, and immutability; and He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in all His perfections – in His communicable perfections. His communicable perfections are – wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth; and among these, the communicable perfections of God, we may distinguish between the two first – wisdom and power – and the others, which are most properly called God's moral perfections – holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. For wisdom, considered simply as intellect, and if not conjoined with moral perfection, is the wisdom that is “earthly, sensual, devilish”; and so with power, considered simply in itself. But wisdom and power in God are holy, just, and good wisdom and power, and are in God as infinite, eternal, and unchangeable wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. In creating rational spirits, angels, and men, God communicated to them not only being – finite and changeable being, wisdom, and power, but also the other perfections, which we more strictly call the moral perfections of God – holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. And in these lies, fundamentally, the amiableness of God, which mounts up by the incommunicable perfections of infinity, eternity, and unchangeableness, into not only amiableness but *adorable excellence*. Well, *that* fundamentally. And here in the nature of God we have, not strictly speaking, eternal law; because not only was there no eternal subject except in God's decree, but that decree itself was not necessary: no being but God has necessary existence. We still have left God in His wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, clothed with the divinity of His incommunicable perfections: *this* we have left, necessarily existing.

The second foundation of the amiableness of the law is the character of the rational creature of God. God created intelligent, spiritual beings, angels and men. We shall confine ourselves to men. Men are beings of a spiritual nature, and so are capable of holding communion with God, who is a Spirit. They were made in the image of God, and have a finite and – as regards the past – a non-eternal and changeable being. They possess no necessary existence, but a divinely-given existence, and were made partakers at their beginning of the communicable perfections of wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, wherein conspicuously shine the moral perfections of spirituality, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. So, besides the foundation of God's perfections – and specially, though not exclusively, God's moral perfections – we have now a subject of this law. We have God, holy, just, and good; we have man, made in the image of God, holy, just, and good; and between God and man we have a law that man continue to be and act as holy, just, and good.

We have the eternal moral perfections of God, the moral perfections of God's intelligent creature, and the moral law, which binds man in the image of God to be holy, just, and good, and to continue and act as such. Now this, you see, is altogether indissoluble; this cannot go; nothing can destroy this, unless the annihilation of the creature; for the moral perfection of God, in the likeness of which the creature was created, is indestructible. God being what He is, and the nature of man what it is, this law, which binds the holy, just, and good creature of the holy, just, and good God, to preserve and ever exhibit this, of necessity must remain. Well, whatever beauty is not only in man, as coming from the hands of God, and made in His image – not only in the image and reflection – but all the beauty that is in the prototype, the moral nature of God, *that* is the eternal beauty of morality, the eternal beauty of law. "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good," as God is, and as God made man. Hence the nature of all true religion, and a prominent feature in it, is love to God for what God Himself is, and specially for what God is in His moral perfections – those clothed with the beauty of self-existence, infinity, eternity, and immutability. In the infinite and perfect amiableness of God we have the foundation of all religion. "Jehovah is a rock; his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he." "Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool, for the Lord our God is holy."

I might descant on the beauty of what we may call communicated law in Adam, made in the image of God. How beautiful the law! That is what the law requires, and what God has imparted. How beautiful do holiness, justice, goodness and truth make him! And his beauty, his conformity to the law, is conformity to the moral image of God, the lovely One. But I pass from it.

Then we come to another and very peculiar exhibition of the law as lovely, and here I return to that self-same chapter, Romans 7, and these words: "Wherefore the law is holy and the commandment holy, just, and good: For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin." These words, I take it, exhibit the first true view of the law obtained by a sinner with whom the Spirit of God hath begun to take a saving dealing. Paul was a Pharisee, and, speaking of the time when he was that, he says of himself, "Touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless"; but it merely is there the outward righteousness of the law. Here is the sinner's first true view of the law. Nowadays, I am afraid that "law work" has gone very much out of fashion. "I am carnal, sold under sin." These words describe what fallen man is, but it is the language of a renewed man. Let us look at this man. The commandment has come to him; the commandment which is holy, just, and good. "I have seen the law as I never saw it before; I have seen it in the light of what God is, of what He made man to be, a spiritual, holy, just, and good law." Whereupon there is also the discovery of what man as fallen is. "But I am carnal, sold under sin." Why, the unregenerate man thinks that sin is liberty, but not so the man taught of God. He says, "I am *sold* under it." *Sold*. I think the language is borrowed from the book of Judges, which so often speaks of God selling His people. Given over; sold. "I was a free man once, but the recollection is bitter." The law shines on him, which is holy, just, and good; it comes and shows him what he should be, and what he must have been once; it says, "You are a sold man." Now, the man is in a strange position. What makes him cry out, "I am carnal?" The sight of a beauty he never saw before, the law, spiritual, holy, just, and good. And what are we to do with this man? It is a question what can be done with him. Shall the commandment go away? Nay, it is the first sight he has ever seen of what is spiritual, holy, just, and good; all the misery is, "I am carnal, sold under sin." So we find his language going on, expressing the assent of his judgment, the consent of his will, and the delight of his affections to and in this law. And the longer I live, and reflect upon it, the more I am satisfied with many excellent divines that the first step of effectual calling is peculiar to the effectually called, "convincing us of our sin and misery." For it is such a conviction of sin and misery as that the man can no longer be happy without

the law in him, any more than he can be happy under it. This is the death of all Antinomianism, of all legalism, and Pelagian Antinomianism. "The law is holy, and just, and good; I am carnal, sold under sin." His desire is *deliverance*, with the honour and glory of the law, if there be such a thing. "Honour the law, and save me if that be possible; deliver me from this slavery and bondage of corruption."

And here you will observe I speak more plainly, because it can hurt no truly convinced sinner. The danger that might have been apprehended is this, that the man may rest in the first step, may say, "This is peculiar to those whom God purposes to save, so I may rest in it" But that is contrary to the nature of the conviction. No man in this state can rest short of deliverance, and obtaining deliverance, that which will show it to be the product of true conviction of sin and misery is, that he says "Amen" to the law. The holy, just, and good law, the law to which I assent, the law to which I consent, the law in which I delight, it condemned me. It slew me. No, sin taking occasion by it, slew me. The Spirit of God, enlightening the convinced sinner, shows him that the precept of the law being holy, just, and good, the sanction of the law is holy, just, and good too. Ah! yes – peradventure the sanction may crush him. But, in the work of the Spirit of God applying the law, it is contrary to the nature of the work that the man should grumble at it, for he sees the law is holy, just, and good in precept and in sanction, and so he says, "Amen, Amen."

But let us look. "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." Let us look at Jesus, "Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant." We have seen Adam made in the image of God, holy, just, and good, and placed, himself being holy, just and good, under a holy, just, and good law. But a greater than Adam is here. True, in a certain respect, we may say, and I say it with reverence, that Christ was no better than the law. His being holy, harmless, and undefiled was no more than the law required. His doing all the Father's will was no more than the law required. But there are two circumstances which bring an immense honour to the law in Christ, which it could never have had in Adam. For, first, Jesus is not only the perfect exhibition of the law as holy man, but the incarnate Son of God; and secondly, His obedience is the obedience of One who, to do honour to the law, stooped under its authority, being no original subject of the law. The one circumstance is the divine nature of Him who obeyed it, and the other is His being as God no original subject. He, being God, voluntarily came down, and *there* is one of the grounds of the true and proper meritoriousness of Christ's obedience – that it was an obedience performed by One who was not an original subject of the law. "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." Christ, the eternal, co-essential Son of God, was made under the law, being, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, He, whose authority is the source of law to the creature, whose moral perfections are the fundamental ground of that law. Who is He who obeys? Being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Man thought to rise above law. God, the lawgiver, comes down and honours the law by coming under it. Christ is at once the eternal Lawgiver and the Subject of the law, and the perfect exhibition of it. And so this obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ is presented to us under various aspects. His obedience unto death is that by which we are redeemed; constitutes that righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto and upon all that believe, and is that one obedience by which the many are justified. It is our pattern also. That which constitutes our justifying righteousness is at the same time the pattern we are called to reflect, that to which God has predestinated His people to be conformed, and to which they themselves are, in the use of the appointed means, through faith in the Saviour, to conform themselves. "We all, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

And here let me remark that it is a sad mistake in us to slump Christ's obedience, as we often do. It makes up the righteousness of Christ; yes, but in that righteousness there are many circumstances. He was holy, harmless, undefiled. He did always the things that pleased the Father; but He did this and He did that. He went into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, and He came out and preached the gospel. He cast out devils, and healed all manner of sickness and disease among the people. We should particularise. And neither should we slump, as we often do, justification and sanctification. If we look at justifying righteousness in its particulars, what does it constitute to us? It constitutes the rule for our imitation. True, the obedience of this person was one which in no sense could be rendered but by the performer of it, that righteousness by which we are justified. And yet, while no person enters into that, the healing of the sick, and the going about continually doing good are not all the respects in which there is something imitable in Christ. For, it is said, Christ also suffered for sins, leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps, that we should follow them even in that; and again "He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Consider, then, this beauty of the law as in Christ, as in Him who stooped down to come under it, whose condescendency, that He hath stooped under it, renders His obedience of infinite efficacy, because divine. Contemplate the law in Christ, the Law-giver, the Law-fulfiller, and the Law-exhibitor.

Well then, *there* is a righteousness for a sinner, and a pattern for a sinner. Yes; but I need something more, and so Christ is the head of influences – Christ baptizes with the Holy Ghost. There is provision made not only for the remission of sin, the breach of the law, but Christ is the mediator of the new covenant in which this promise is made: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." We have seen the law in the beauty of all God's moral perfections, in the beauty of man as coming from the hand of God, in the deep conviction by the Spirit of God of what God is, and law is, and he, the sinner, is not; and now we see it in the revelation by the same Spirit of Christ, as the Lord our righteousness, the Lord our Exemplar, and as *Jesus who baptizes with the Holy Ghost*. God, who justifies the ungodly, says, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." Then may the Psalmist say, "This holy, just, and good law, I shall get it within me; it will be in my heart too; the great God Himself will come, and with His own finger write it there." When thou art brought to the Mediator, and art down in the dust with closed mouth, what will God do with thee? He will write on thee; He will make thee a fair epistle. Surely He will write something good. Yes; His holy, just, and good law; His own image, in which He made man; His own higher image, in His Son; His law, which has been honoured by the obedience of His own Son: that law He will write it in thine heart, and put it in thine inward parts. And, "the end of the commandment is love," and "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart to love the Lord thy God." He shall not depart from thee, and He will put His fear into thine heart that thou shall not depart from Him.

How lovely then, in all these aspects, is the law! Does the Psalmist wrong in loving it? Does he love it too much, when he goes to God, and, not perhaps thinking so much of his love to the law, as just under the divine influence of that love pouring it out, says, "O how love I Thy law?"

Being in the new covenant, and through the mediator of the new covenant, it is the law as stooped to by Christ, as obeyed by Christ, as glorified by Christ; and it is the law as given us as a rule of life, but an authoritative rule, in the pierced, bleeding hands of the great Law-fulfiller. Now, instead of "Cursed is every one," it is "Christ hath redeemed us"; instead of "The man that doeth these things shall live in them," it is "The just Lord will not do iniquity," and "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent."

It is of this law that he here saith, “Oh, love I Thy law!” It is, strictly speaking, the preceptive part of the law, of the commandment that he loves, because of the loveliness of it; and strictly and properly it is the law, as the Jew understood it, in the setting of the whole revelation which God has made of Himself, especially made of Himself in His Son. Therefore, it is the law under which the believer is “not without law to God, but under the law to Christ.” That we may love the law, let us meditate on the law.

I have spoken in generals, but, as already hinted, error is apt to lurk in generals. One great error is to slump Christ’s obedience, not considering the details of it. Another is to slump the law. “It is just *love*; the Ten Commandments.” Yes; but the first Commandment is holy, just and good, and the second is holy, and just and good, and the third, and the fourth, and the fifth, and so on. And all the details which we have to trace out in the whole Bible are holy and just and good, as well as the summary of the ten gathered and the great two. God designed that they should be shortened for our memories. He has summed up all the Commandments; for He knows that we need concentration, that we love ourselves in generals. He has summed them up first in the ten, and then the ten in the great two; *that* to help our concentration and give us a centre. But mistakes lurk in the generals; let us spread them out. And in every one of the Commandments, there is its peculiar beauty; its beauty in itself, and in its relation to the whole complete law of God, and a peculiar beauty in its relation to the variety of circumstances in which God has placed man. Every one of the Commandments has not only its general principle, but its details, so wonderful and various. So the believer is called into a broad way: “I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad.” There will be plenty of duty to do in this law, which is very broad. In bringing me into it, the Lord hath brought me into a large place, where there are a great many laws fitted for all my powers and faculties and circumstances. That is a beauty of the law, that it is so very broad. Well, let us ever, for we ever need it, fall back as sinners on the Law-fulfiller; but then, falling back as sinners on the Law-fulfiller, let us as saints – for every sinner that comes to Him is a saint – let us as saints, or at least as sinners believing in Christ for the Holy Ghost, contemplate this law. I am guilty; I have broken it, but, blessed be God, He hath fulfilled it; yes, and hath left me an example that I should follow His steps, and hath given me the exceeding great and precious promise that God will write it in my heart and put it in my inward parts, this command and the other command. And so, putting the precept of the law in its proper setting, both as regards the creature relation and the new creature relation which the law bears to us, while making our meditation on the law, let our hearts burn with love. But let it not rest in sentiment; let it burn, and let it go out to the end of the commandment. Now “the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.” “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.”

I might add, Is not the language of the late solemn occasion when there was the highest contemplation of and feeding on Him, whose body was broken, and whose blood was shed, not only for the salvation of sinners, but for the glorifying of this holy law, as necessary to that end – is not its language to us, “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me?”

Note by Dr. Duncan on Romans, Chapter VII.

It would appear that Dr. Duncan before the above sermon read the Seventh Chapter of the Romans, and made some remarks on the chapter. He said that in verses 15 and 16 and 18 to 21, the expression “I would” should be “I will.” It is not “would-ing,” but “will-ing.” Our readers will best understand the point by looking up the passage.

The 23rd verse is: “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.” On this verse Dr. Duncan made the following remarks: –

“A battle, and in that battle, even a captivity. Now you know in warfare, when a prisoner of war is taken, he is not a deserter. If we were at war with another country, as some years ago – God grant it may be long ere it happens again – we were at war with France, and, if a British soldier were taken prisoner, and carried to a French prison, he would not grow a Frenchman. If it were proposed to him, he would say, ‘No; I will never cease to be a Briton, to fight for my Queen and country; and my heart is still with my country, my heart is still in the battlefield, and, if I can get off, my place still is the battlefield.’ Mark the difference, then, that there is between a prisoner of war, and a deserter and traitor.”

[January 1920]

A Sermon.

By the REV. JAMES S. SINCLAIR, John Knox’s, Glasgow.

(Taken down by a Hearer.)

The Children of Israel and the Brazen Serpent – Numbers 21: 4-9.

We have in this particular passage the record of one of the many remarkable incidents which took place during the journey of the children of Israel through the wilderness. The Lord had brought them out of the land of Egypt with a high hand and outstretched arm; He had given them a song of praise to Himself and of triumph over their enemies on the other side of the Red Sea; and although they had had since then bitter trials to encounter, and oft murmured against Him, He had never failed them in the hour of their extremity, but heard

and saved them when they cried unto Him. He had brought waters out of the rock, and sent manna and quails from heaven to eat. One would have supposed that, by their varied experiences of their own folly and of God's gracious and unmerited help from time to time, they would have learnt better things; but it was not so. Here they manifest the same evil spirit still; they break out in bitter complaints against God and against Moses. We must, and do, condemn their ways in this, but we have reason also to smite on our own breasts, as individuals and a generation, and acknowledge similar guilt.

In considering this portion of God's Word, in dependence on the Spirit of truth, let us observe: –

- I. – The rebellion of the children of Israel, as here manifested;
- II. – The chastisement or punishment which the Lord sent upon them for this rebellion;
- III. – The confession that they made unto Moses and unto the Lord when they were thus chastised and punished; and
- IV. – The Lord's gracious remedy for their healing and deliverance.

We see in the passage, the rebellion, the chastisement, the confession, and the deliverance of the children of Israel, and as we go along we shall make application of these points to national and individual cases and circumstances at the present time.

I. – First, then, let us observe for a little the rebellion which the children of Israel here manifested. We are told that “the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.” There is not the slightest doubt but the way was a way of tribulation – a very trying and painful way – along which they were led, and, as we are informed, they became “discouraged” on this account. Now, this is not what one might call an innocent discouragement. It was a discouragement which proceeded from unbelief – from distrust of the Lord, of His promises, and of His power to save. The way along which they had been led had been a trying one from the beginning, but the Most High had shown Himself able to help them in their greatest need and in their direst distress, and although the way still continued difficult and painful, they ought not to have been discouraged; they ought rather to have exercised greater confidence in God, and made more earnest application to Him to give them the help that they needed. This was, then, an unbelieving, an unholy, discouragement. And there is still such a thing in the world, my friends. People may be discouraged for the simple reason that they sinfully yield to unbelief, and do not put their trust in God. They do not give Him the glory that is due His name as a God of grace and of salvation in the time of need.

Now, we can see from the effects of this discouragement the truth of what I have said concerning it. “The people spake against God and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.” Such was the fearful spirit of rebellion which this discouragement produced, that they actually gave expression to thoughts of open opposition against the Most High and against His servant, Moses. They openly expressed their doubts as to the advisability of their having been taken up at all from the land of Egypt, and they blasphemously insinuated that the Lord had taken them up, not with a beneficent purpose – not with a view to do them good – but with a view to compass their destruction in the wilderness. And then they went on to say what was not strictly true: “For there is no bread, neither is there any water.” It was certainly a truth that the wilderness, of itself, did not produce any bread or any water such as was necessary for their sustenance, but then the Lord, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, had given them, before this particular time, bread and water in the time of their distress. They had no right to say that there was neither bread nor water provided for them in the wilderness. And, then, they contradict themselves in this respect, for they admit in the next sentence that there

was bread, but they speak of it in disparaging terms: they call it “light bread.” “Our soul loatheth this light bread.” The Lord had provided bread for them in the wilderness, but they did not like it; they regarded it as too tasteless. It was not the kind of bread that they got in the land of Egypt; they wanted something more pleasing and gratifying to their fleshly appetite than the all-wise God had provided for them.

Now, my friends, we see in the children of Israel here an illustration of things that are true concerning the human race in general, and, in a marked degree, at particular times in its history. We see an illustration of the discontentment that characterises the children of men in general with both *the temporal and the spiritual provision* that God makes for their need. Look, for example, even at our first parents in the Garden of Eden, and their first sin. God had provided trees in that garden that were sufficient for their bodily sustenance and nourishment. They had everything in that respect that they could justly desire, or that they really needed, and yet we find that, under the subtle suggestion of the tempter, they are not satisfied with what the Most High allowed them in His good providence. There was one tree which was forbidden, and yet they would have this forbidden tree in order that they might add to the already ample provision that God had made for their requirements. You may see there the spirit of discontent coming in with the very first sin into the world, and you can see the same thing exemplified time and again in the history of the human race. We may say it was exemplified in a very extraordinary way prior to the recent, terrible war that plunged Europe into such bloodshed and destruction. The German people were not satisfied with the good things that God had already given them in His providence; they wanted to get more of this world’s goods, wider dominions, greater possessions. They were by no means the poorest or most ill-off of the nations; they were in the very front rank of civilised nations in the matter of possessions and general comforts, yet the spirit of discontent was there, and they were determined to get more of this world’s possessions, although they should plunge the whole earth into the direst misery. We cannot say either that our own nation has been free of this spirit of discontent, and that we have had no ambition for great possessions, and we cannot say but that at the present time the spirit of discontent with temporal things has broken out to an alarming extent. I take nothing to do with technical questions or grievances between man and man, between master and servant, but it is as plain as can possibly be that, apart from anything where questions of justice come in, there is a spirit of discontentment with the ordinary conditions of life that is not from above but from beneath, and is just the very same spirit that we find here in the wilderness. Oh, my friends, if any human being would get as much of this world’s goods as he could possibly have or enjoy, he would not be satisfied. The whole earth will not fill the immortal soul, and yet poor sinners think they will be satisfied and happy if they get more and more of it.

But I have to notice that here we may observe a suggestion also of our *discontentment as fallen sinners with the Lord’s spiritual provision* for our spiritual necessities. God, in His infinite mercy and love, sent His Word, His Gospel into Germany and other nations, our own included, at the time of the blessed and glorious Reformation. It was a season of the republication of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ from Mount Sion, and the word of truth went forth among the German peoples and among other nations of the Continent of Europe. Consider even the effects of the translation and the circulation of the Holy Bible in the language of the German people, one of the wonderful works that were performed by that outstanding servant of Christ, Martin Luther, and consider also the dissemination of divine truth, not only in that country, but in other countries, and in our own; and what is the spirit that has been shown for many years past in relation to this divine provision? How have the nations regarded the word of truth and the pure Gospel of salvation? They have esteemed it “light bread,” and whether they have uttered the words that are here found or not, they have exhibited the spirit that lies behind this utterance, “Our soul loatheth

this light bread.” We have abundant proof for many years past that the soul of the German people, its leaders in Church and in State, has loathed the Word of God and the true Gospel of salvation. They have been foremost in circulating the dangerous doctrines of what is known as the “higher criticism,” which should be called the “lower criticism,” as it issues from the bottomless pit. They have been foremost in tearing to pieces the Word of the living God, and in casting doubts upon the truth as to the Person and work of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Infidelity in many forms has been propagated by German leaders in religious thought, and it is to be feared that the people have swallowed down their pernicious theories, if we may judge by their recent conduct. I remember reading in the lectures of the Rev. Joseph Cook, who was in Boston, United States, but who is now dead, an important reference to the German people and their religion. In this special lecture he was setting forth the greatness of the German nation, and indicating that it had a very great future in every respect – he was not detracting in the very least from the German people and their attainments – and yet he was compelled to admit that, when he was there as a student – about fifty years ago, I should say – such a thing as a prayer meeting was hardly known among the larger Churches in Germany. If there was any real evangelical life, he stated that it was among the people who met for prayer and for reading of God’s Word in private houses. If you belonged, of course, to the State Church, and were baptised, you were a Christian. That was all that was necessary to make you a Christian. Thus he showed that things were at a very low ebb spiritually at that distant time. The soul of Germany loathed the Word of God as “light bread.” And, my friends, can we put the same charge away from our own doors? No, far from it. We have been too good scholars in the schools of German theology, and this has been the spirit that has been abroad for the past forty or fifty years, a disposition to loathe the pure truth of God concerning sin and salvation. If we did not say it was “light” teaching and theology, we said it was too heavy and dull for our spirits.

Ah! my friends, this is a spirit that is in every unregenerate child of Adam. The Word of God and the truths of the Gospel are not things which are naturally palatable to us as fallen creatures, and we have great need to be warned against giving place to such a spirit as is here expressed: “Our soul loatheth this light bread.” Perhaps there may be more of this among us than we are aware of. Young people, for example, are ready to get tired of the plain, simple doctrines of God’s Word concerning sin and salvation. “Oh, we have heard these things over and over again; they are stale, tasteless to us; we would prefer to get something new and fresh – something that would be more interesting and agreeable to our own minds.” And many who stand up in pulpits in our time and generation have cast off the doctrines of God’s Word as “light bread” – old, antiquated fare – and they are doing their very utmost to please the natural, the fleshly, mind of their hearers. Well, that is a dangerous policy, a policy that will bring forth dreadful fruit. These new doctrines may be sweet to the carnal mouth, but they will be bitter in the belly; they may be sweet in the mouth of time, but they will be bitter in the belly of eternity. Oh! stick you to the bread of God’s Word and pure Gospel truth, and you will find it will be sufficient to sustain your immortal soul when you come to die – when you come to the swellings of Jordan – when you come to appear in the immediate presence of God, the judge of all.

II. – Now I must notice, in the second place, the chastisement or punishment which the Lord sent upon the children of Israel for their rebellion. “He sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.”

The Lord Jehovah was gracious and merciful, but He was also just and righteous, and He could not, and did not, look with complacency upon such an unbelieving and bold spirit of rebellion and opposition; and so He sent serpents – poisonous beasts – among the people, that bit and wounded them, and many of the children of Israel died. Why did He send serpents rather than other creatures? Well, it occurs to me that He sent these serpents to remind and

teach them that the spirit of rebellion they were showing towards God and towards His servant, Moses, came from the old serpent, the devil, who was a liar and murderer from the beginning, who poisoned our first parents, and who sought to drag down the whole race to eternal perdition. "He sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died." And although we should not say all, we are afraid many died eternally, as a consequence of the bites of these dreadful serpents.

Now, we may find a parallel to this in subsequent times. There are certain plagues, certain scourges, which may be compared to serpents, which the Most High sends upon the nations on account of their sins. There are, for example, the serpent of war, the serpent of pestilence, and the serpent of famine; and, oh, my friends, these serpents have been, in dimensions, like unto leviathan in our age and generation. God sent forth the fiery serpent of war and bloodshed upon the continent of Europe. This was His judgment on account of sin, and I believe personally that He sent this fiery serpent just on account of our rejection of His Holy Word, our disesteem of His glorious Gospel. There is no sin under the sun more awful than the rejection of the Word of God and the contempt of the Gospel of Christ. God appears in all the glory of His wonderful perfections in the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, and in that redemption which He purchased by His obedience and by His death upon the cross. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." This is the grand theme or message that is enshrined in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and when men – high or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned – begin to loathe this Word and its contents as "light bread," when they begin to spue it out of their mouths, as Germany and our own nation and other nations have been doing, they may expect that God will punish them, and that He will show that He is not to be trifled with. Oh! my friends, it is a very solemn thought to think that this sin was at the root of the terrible War that has been so recently waged. I do not say but that the righteous suffered as well as the wicked, yet at the same time it is to be deeply feared that this War was, in a pre-eminent sense, sent upon the nations for their contempt of the Word of God and their rejection of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. And did He not send, also, the serpent of pestilence? It is said, in fact, that the pestilence slew as many as the War, although its ravages were more silent, and not so easily observed. And we have not been free from the serpent of famine also. These were dreadful serpents which God sent among the nations, and it is hard to say if their work is completed yet. But there are other serpents besides these.

I could suppose the fiery serpents were some larger and others smaller, some that could be plainly seen in the camp, others creeping in more secretly among the tents – among the families – biting young and old at unexpected moments. So we may see at the present time what fearful things are permitted in our communities in God's judgment. What are the fearful strife and enmity, what is the frivolity, what is the immorality, what is the disrespect for the laws of marriage as instituted by God, what is the disturbance in family relationships, what is the drunkenness, and what are the murders and suicides? What are all these things that have broken out, and become so manifest since the War? These are just fiery serpents sent in God's judgment upon us, and many people are dying even literally of their deadly bites.

Oh, my friends, we may come closer still and take a view of our own minds and hearts. What is a guilty conscience but a fiery serpent? What is the inward enmity to the truth but a fiery serpent? What is disregard of God's law, and what are contempt of the Sabbath and disobedience to parents but fiery serpents? And if careless sinners continue under the influence of these evils to the end, they shall spend their eternity with serpents, with the devil and his angels. Oh! what a mercy when a poor sinner is delivered from these fiery serpents that he finds in his own breast. That is the mercy that is worth speaking about, for which the Lord Jehovah is to be praised both in time and in eternity. Ah, see to it, my friends – and you especially who are still without Christ – that you are not allowing some fiery serpent of secret

opposition to the Gospel, of secret enmity to the law, of secret distaste of God's Word, to suck your life blood, to your eternal misery. We need not go to Germany: we can find fiery serpents within ourselves, and they are a blessed people who have been brought with these to Him who is mighty to save, to Him who has provided an effectual remedy from all the poisonous bites of the old serpent, the devil.

III. – Now, I pass on, in the third place, to observe the confession of the people and their appeal. “Therefore the people came to Moses and said, We have sinned: for we have spoken against the Lord and against thee: pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.” The children of Israel were no doubt a stubborn and rebellious people, a people ready to grumble and murmur against the dealings of the Most High, but they were not altogether left to utter blindness and hardness of heart; and how do we prove this? We just prove it by the circumstance that, when they found these fiery serpents coming upon them as a most destructive plague from Jehovah, they awoke to recognise their sin and their guilt, and they came with a plain, frank confession of their sin unto Moses, “We have sinned: for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee.” And, my friends, in some circumstances, we might not have thought a great deal about this as anything more than what might be expected or looked for. Were they not under the hand of God? Were they not plagued with these fearful beasts, and was not death spreading in the camp everywhere? No wonder, we might readily say, though they should come with such a confession as this. But, after what we have seen in recent times among ourselves and elsewhere, we have a different view of the matter. Although God's hand has been so heavy upon us as a nation, and upon other nations, where is the confession, where is the acknowledgment of sin, where is the humbling of ourselves in the presence of the Most High? Where is the acknowledgment that we have gone astray from His Word and His Gospel? Not a word, and, therefore, I have to say we are in a more terrible case than even the children of Israel here, stubborn and rebellious as they were. When they were smitten by the hand of God, they acknowledged their iniquity and made confession of it unreservedly unto Moses, the servant of God, and we see in this that the Lord had not left them entirely. He was still dealing with their consciences. And I say again, Are we not in a terrible case as a people? Although death has been everywhere in the camp, there is little or no repentance and turning to God. People are as hard and insensate as ever; in fact, in the case of many, worse than ever. Many have gone into the War, and have come out of it worse than when they went in, and that shows that the rod of the Most High did not produce any proper effect on their minds and consciences. No doubt it is teaching us this, that affliction, no matter how terrible and how sweeping, will not of itself bring poor sinners to repentance. Oh, no. “Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.” The Rev. Archibald Cook said that, although an unrenewed sinner were dipped in hell every morning, he would be the same sinner at night, unless he came under the converting power of the Holy Ghost. We as a nation have been dipped in hell in this terrible War. Are we any better at night? No; but worse in many cases. Ah! affliction has only a stupefying, hardening influence unless it is blessed by the teaching of God's Spirit. And so, although the Spirit's work is not expressly mentioned in our text, yet we can observe its presence, we can see the effects of it. It is a great thing when a poor sinner is brought to this point, when he is brought to make a full and open confession of his sin. “Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned.” “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Well, we are told also that they asked Moses to pray to the Lord that He would take away these fiery serpents. Moses we too often think of as the embodiment and representative of the Law, as distinguished from the Gospel. Moses and the Law are sometimes spoken of as if they were identical, but Moses, although no doubt the representative of the Law, was also a

type of Christ. Moses was a mediator between God and the children of Israel – a mediator certainly on a lower scale and sense than the Lord Jesus. He was only a type and figure of Christ, but still he stood, in an important sense, as mediator between God and Israel, and the people went to Moses and asked him to pray for them; and although Moses was justly grieved and indignant with the people on account of their sin, he was, at the same time, a man full of mercy and compassion, and he did not refuse. He did not say, as he might have said, “You deserve it all, and more; you have exhibited this spirit of rebellion on so many occasions, that I refuse to plead with the Most High for you again.” No; he did not thus speak. He was here a wonderful type of Christ. He immediately prayed, and asked the Lord that He would take away the serpents, and his prayer was answered. God manifested His grace as well as His righteousness. Moses, pleading for the people here, is a lesson for us in relation to Christ. Have you discovered your sin? Have you been brought, as a poor sinner, to lie condemned in the presence of God? Ah, well, put your case into the hands of the glorious Intercessor and Advocate within the vail, the New Testament Moses. “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” This was not a very good case – the case of these rebellious Israelites, a people that had sinned against light and privileges. In like manner, though your case be one of the blackest and worst cases under the sun, come with it to the glorious Mediator of the new covenant, the New Testament Moses, and He will not cast you out. He says, “Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” He was ready to take up the case of Zaccheus and of Mary Magdalene. He was ready to take up the case of Saul of Tarsus, who had been full of hatred and bitter opposition to the Gospel. He delights in receiving bad cases – cases of sinners of a desperate type and degree. “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” Oh, then, come as you are to the feet of the New Testament Moses, and we can say there will be hope in Israel concerning you. What is wrong with this generation is just this – that we are not sinful enough in our own esteem; we are not needy enough. We are so good, and self-righteous, and self-confident, that we hardly need a mediator at all; and Christ, as Mediator, is cast out of the theology of the present age. Our fancied goodness will be our eternal damnation, unless the Lord will strip us of it.

IV. – I proceed, now, in the last place, to notice the remedy. We are told that the Lord said unto Moses, “Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.”

The Lord here directed Moses to a method which He had devised for the healing of the people. He directed Moses to make a serpent of brass similar in appearance to the fiery serpents that were destroying the people, and He told Moses to put this serpent of brass upon a pole, so that the whole camp of Israel might see it, and He gave a definite promise that, if any bitten Israelite should look upon this serpent of brass exalted upon the pole, immediately he would be healed. And we are informed that Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He made a serpent of brass, and erected it upon the pole, and it came to pass that, if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. The remedy was effectual for the case. Ah! this wonderful Jehovah, who was terrible in His holiness and righteousness to punish sin, was also marvellous in His grace and wisdom to heal poor sinners from their sin and from its dire consequences. According to God’s appointment, this serpent of brass was to be sufficient to heal the bitten Israelites.

We can clearly perceive that there was no virtue in the serpent of brass itself, and that a piece of dead matter, such as it was, could not, according to its own nature, heal the children of Israel from the bites of these fiery serpents. It was, however, the Lord’s appointed means, and He shows here that He can make means which appear to be the most ineffectual under the sun effectual for accomplishing His greatest and most beneficent purposes. Still, we have

to understand that there was much instruction in this mode of deliverance by the serpent of brass. It was not a thing without meaning. What did it teach? Well, for one thing, by this method the source of the misery that came upon them, even the old serpent, the devil, was kept before the minds of the children of Israel; and, in the second place, they were shown that He who had power to send the fiery serpents had also power to take away the sting of these serpents, and make them utterly unable to do any harm. Thus the children of Israel were taught by this wonderful method the marvellous wisdom, the matchless goodness, and the almighty power of Jehovah in destroying these serpents through symbolic means that appeared to reason and sense utterly ineffectual to accomplish the end. But, my friends, we have an inspired interpretation of this divine method. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself makes a spiritual application to His own person and work of what is here brought before us, when He says to Nicodemus, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The brazen serpent was lifted up upon a pole in the wilderness, and the Lord Jesus Christ was lifted up upon the cross as the Redeemer of the spiritual Israel, as the Redeemer of His people. And what do you see when you behold Him lifted upon the cross? Well, you may see, in the first place, Satan, who tempted our first parents to sin, and has been tempting the human race ever since to continue in sin, who has the power of death, that is, the devil. And you may, secondly, see sin itself. The children of Israel could read in the serpent of brass their sin; it was a reminder of the sin that brought on the fiery serpents. So we see sin in the cross of Christ. He was lifted up as the sin-bearer and the sin-offering. The sins of His people were reckoned to His account. The Lord laid upon Him the sins of a multitude that no man can number. The Son of God – Jesus Christ – must suffer and die, if sin is to be removed. And, still further, we see the Lord's gracious provision by atonement for the taking away of sin.

Ah, my friends, this is the divine remedy which the men of this world do not understand or receive. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him." God, in His wondrous wisdom and matchless love, reckons sin to the account of Christ, makes Him a sin-bearer, lays upon Him the curse that was due to the sins of His people, causes Him to enter into conflict with Satan, and thus, by His substitutionary work in the room of the guilty, He takes away the curse, makes an end of sin, destroys the power of the old serpent, and saves sinners from going down into the pit. Christ, then, lifted up upon the cross, is the divine instrument of victory. He triumphed over sin, Satan, and hell; having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly in His cross. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

But as He was lifted up on the cross, so He must be lifted up on the Gospel pole. He must be lifted up in the sight of the whole camp of Israel; He must be lifted up in sight of the Church; and He must be lifted up in sight of the whole world. The boundaries of the visible kingdom of God were then co-extensive only with the nation of Israel, but Christ's kingdom is now co-extensive with the whole world. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Jesus Christ, then, as the sinners' surety and as the sinners' substitute, delivering souls from sin, from the old serpent, and from the curse, is the great central theme of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. And, my friends, these "higher critics," to whom I have been already alluding, are enemies of the cross of Christ. It is because they are enemies to the doctrines of substitution and atoning sacrifice that they have adopted and formulated their views about the Scriptures of the Old Testament. They regard the ancient sacrifices of the ceremonial law as mere natural things – the natural product of the human mind and of heathenish views as to the way in which we are to approach God – and they maintain that Christ, when He came, made an end of all that, and of every thought of forgiveness through a

propitiatory sacrifice by blood, and that it is simply by His example of self-sacrifice we are to be saved. There is no atoning sacrifice in their delusive creed; but ours is different. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, we hold up Christ, and Him crucified, upon the Gospel pole. That is what Paul and his fellow-workers did. They held forth Jesus Christ and Him crucified as the wisdom and power of God unto salvation; and that is what must still be done by every true messenger of the cross of Christ. Every sinner is called upon to look to this atoning Redeemer – to look and live. “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.” We do not hold the Arminian doctrines of universal love and universal atonement, or of natural ability to repent and believe the Gospel, but certainly we do hold and preach, on the authority of God’s Word, alongside the doctrine of election, the offer of Christ unto every creature under heaven.

Very likely in the camp of Israel there were many poor persons who were near their last breath, and who were brought out, in their utter helplessness, to the door of their tents in order to get a sight of the serpent exalted on the pole, and, if they got one glimpse of this serpent, immediately the poison was purged, immediately they lived. Ah! the crucified but risen Redeemer is the grand remedy. And very likely not a few in the recent War, when they were at their very last breath, got a glimpse of the exalted Jesus, and the poison of the old serpent in their souls was destroyed, and they lived for eternity. That is our hope, at any rate, concerning not a few who have passed away. Not into the “great unknown,” as they say nowadays. Oh! no; the future world is assuredly known. There is a heaven and a hell beyond death. There is a heaven where “the spirits of just men made perfect” are; where God – Father, Son, and Holy Ghost – reveals Himself in infinite glory and sweetness beyond what human language can express. “There remaineth a rest to the people of God” in the immediate presence of the three-one God. And there is a hell, where unbelieving and impenitent sinners go, the outer darkness, the lake of everlasting fire. Oh, my friends, the only way by which we can escape the dreadful consequences of sin, the power of Satan and the worm that dieth not, is by fleeing unto Jesus, by looking away from every other remedy, every other saviour, and casting ourselves unreservedly upon this Divine Saviour, who is able to save unto the uttermost. No sinner who draws near to the Father by the Son, Jesus Christ, the uplifted Saviour, will be disappointed. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Ah, my friends, look and live; look to this Christ. We are looking too much to ourselves, and to something we can do ourselves, instead of looking away entirely from ourselves unto Jesus. Although we know the truth in the letter of it, yet this cursed spirit reigns in us by nature. Nothing but illumination and power from heaven can deliver us from its grasp. Ah, where are you going to spend eternity, you who are without Christ? It is an awful thing to die without Christ, to go into eternity without union to the beloved of the Father. Oh, my friends, do not procrastinate now, or it may mean a terrible “never.” As poor sinners, look unto Jesus and be saved, or despise the day of mercy, and be lost for ever. May the Lord save us from such a terrible doom, and may He bring us by His blessed Spirit, in our poverty and misery, our blindness and wretchedness, the slaves of sin and the devil, to look unreservedly to Christ, the glorious overcomer of sin and hell, and be saved for ever and ever! Let us endeavour to strain our blind eyes towards this glorious Light of the world. Oh, my friends, one ray coming forth with power from “the Sun of Righteousness” is sufficient to remove the scales and let the light of life and healing and salvation into our perishing souls.

May the Lord bless to us His Word!

[February 1920]

A Lecture.

By the REV. NEIL CAMERON, Glasgow.

Delivered on New Year's Day, 1920, in St. Jude's Hall, Glasgow.

“Then Samuel took a stone, and set it up between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us” – 1 Samuel 7:12.

Two things should be carefully taken notice of in all the inspired history of the children of Israel:

(1) How they prospered spiritually and nationally while they adhered to the Lord and the order of worship set up amongst them by His authority, and

(2) How they suffered from wars externally and revolutions internally when they set up idolatry and departed from the worship of the living and true God.

In the fourth chapter of this book we read of two battles fought with the Philistines. The Israelites lost four thousand men to the first of these. Then they sent for the Ark of the Covenant to Shiloh. When it came into the camp the Israelites cheered so lustily that the noise was heard, and the cause of it understood, in the camp of the Philistines. In the second battle the Israelites lost thirty thousand men, “and the ark of the Lord was taken” by the Philistines. The two priests who came with the Ark, Hophin and Phinehas, were slain. The Lord, by the mouth of Samuel, when he was only eight years of age, told godly Eli that, on account of the evil conduct of his sons, and the fact that he did not restrain them, notwithstanding he knew it, these two young men would be punished by the Lord,

and that the whole family of Eli would be destroyed. All this was accomplished on the house of Eli, and it should teach men, to the end of time, of their need of being faithful in the things of God committed to their charge. In our own affairs we should be as liberal as we can, but in the great affairs of God, and the eternal salvation of men, we must deal impartially.

There seems to have been twenty years between the battles recorded in the fourth chapter and this battle recorded in our context. It seems also that the people had by this time, under the faithful preaching of Samuel, come to repentance, for we read “and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord,” and that they “did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only.” Samuel called them together to Mizpeh, and the Philistines, hearing that they were gathered there, came to fight against them. Samuel offered a sacrifice and prayed to the Lord. The Lord “thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.” After the battle was over, Samuel “took a stone and set it between Mizpeh and Shen,” to commemorate the event.

The words which I desire to draw your attention to at this time, as the Lord may help me, are, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”

We will consider,

- I. some of the proofs we have that the Lord has helped us hitherto; and
- II. that we should not forget this in the future.

I. – Let us consider some of the proofs we have that the Lord has helped us hitherto.

1. A large number of you were not born into the world when the Free Church of Scotland began to depart from her own well-defined Creed and Constitution. She changed her form of worship by introducing hymns and instrumental music. By doing so, she took a long step back towards the form of idolatrous worship which existed in Scotland prior to the Reformation, which backsliding caused grief and alarm in the minds of all who loved God’s truth and the purity of His worship. The innovators did not stop there, neither would they pay any attention to the remonstrances of the faithful men, such as Dr. Begg and Dr. Kennedy, who saw and declared the evil that would follow. But they went on to unite with the U.P. Church. If this union had taken place then (the movement for it began in 1863 and ended in 1873), it would have meant that the Free Church had ceased to hold the Scriptural doctrine of the headship of Christ over the nations for the benefit of His body, the Church, and that she had ceased to hold also that Christ died for the elect only, and not for all men. These two doctrines stand in the forefront of the Word of God, and were set forth in the plainest terms in the Confession of Faith. It was also true that every office-bearer in the Free Church had of his own freewill vowed to hold by them to the end of his days. This deplorable laxity of conscience on the part of a large majority of ministers and elders made the hearts of the righteous sad. These union negotiations came to an end in one form in 1873; but an Act was passed, called the “Eligibility Act,” which placed all the ministers of the U.P. Church, as regards their being amenable to be called by Free Church congregations, on a par with F.C. ministers. Dr. Kennedy wrote a very able Article, which appeared in the “Watchword” in 1872, exposing the hypocrisy of this Act, and the baneful effects of it on the Free Church. Instead of calling a halt, they began a crusade for the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of Scotland. Large, and very numerous signed petitions were sent to the Assembly against these proposed changes, but without any real effect, for Dr. Rainy and his party were bent on ruin. Thus, they endeavoured to get over the two main obstacles to union with the U.P.’s. Bad as these things were, the next step was worse. The Bible itself was attacked, and its infallibility and inerrancy scoffed at. Efforts were put forth, at the beginning

of this sacrilege, to bring these infidels to an account, and to have them dealt with, but without avail. These infidels were placed in the Divinity Chairs of her colleges, so as to make sure that the future ministry within her pale would be all Higher Critics, if it would be possible to make them so. Of this I had a most painful experience in the New College, Edinburgh. But they did not stop there. Discussions were started in the Presbytery of Edinburgh about some of the fundamental doctrines of the Confession of Faith. These discussions led, as they were meant to do, to the appointment of a Committee, to whom powers were delegated by the Assembly, for giving in a report to the next Assembly as to the relation of the Church to certain doctrines in the Confession of Faith. This report was brought before the Assembly of 1891. After it was read and discussed *pro* and *con*, it was moved and seconded that it be sent down as an overture under the Barrier Act to the Presbyteries of the Church. This motion was carried by an overwhelming majority. Almost all the Presbyteries approved of it by a majority. At the Assembly of 1892 it was passed as a Declaratory Act. We were present at that Assembly, and we can never forget the scene of exultation on the part of the victors. They had now carried their point. The Confession of Faith was no longer their confession of faith, and all the changes they had made were now to be bound on the neck of the Free Church. The Constitutional Party entered a protest against this Act. When we were leaving the Assembly Hall, one of the ministers of the Church, who is now in the present Free Church, told us that there was to be a meeting that evening, and that they purposed to separate at once from the Rainy majority. We asked him, "Where was the meeting to be held, and at what hour?" He told us, so we attended that meeting. It was moved that Dr. W. Balfour should take the chair. This was agreed to. He rose and said: – "Fathers and brethren, – The time has now come when we must separate from the majority in this Church, and declare ourselves the 'Free Church of Scotland;' for, if we will not do this, and if we will continue to oppose this Act, we shall be kicked out of the Church, one by one." One of the ministers present got up at once, and, in a weeping tone of voice, warned them of the danger of taking such a step, and reminded them of the trials endured by many congregations in the North before they got churches and manses erected after the Disruption in 1843. He told them also that the property was a part of the Constitution of the Church, and, should they separate, that the people would not follow them, and that Dr. Rainy would send men who would fill their pulpits. One of the leaders of the Constitutional Party got up, and said: "I never thought or dreamt of a disruption." The tone of the meeting was immediately changed, and they declared that they would fight within. There were three students present, who were, at the request of a minister and the chairman, asked to speak. One did speak, then another was asked to speak. He rose, and said to them "that he believed that the Lord's people in the Free Church were that day on their knees in secret praying that the Lord would give them grace and strength to enable them to fulfil their vows to God and men, and that they were bound by their voluntary oath to do so; but, if they would not do their duty, they were to understand that he, at least, would not follow them one step." The one of them who said that he never thought or dreamt of a disruption got up, and said, "that a committee should be appointed to hold a meeting on the following Monday, and that they should put their decision off till then." That meeting was held, but nothing was done. We often heard from the lips of this minister that the passing of the Declaratory Act meant – "Bible or no Bible; atonement or no atonement; Confession of Faith or no Confession of Faith." We heartily concurred with him in that statement. But the time for making strong speeches had now come to an end, and that of showing by deeds the sincerity of the hearts of men had come.

Dr. Rainy had spies, both in the north and south, who had learned in private that there would be no separation should this Act be passed, and he and his followers thought that they had gained a complete victory. This was the secret of their

cheering and shouting when the Act was passed. But the Lord had men in the Free Church who meant to follow up their words by deeds. So, when the Assembly of 1893 refused, by an overwhelming majority, to repeal that Act, the Rev. Donald Macfarlane came forward, and read and tabled a protest against the drastic changes enacted, and declared that he, and such as would follow him, would adhere to the original Constitution of the Free Church of Scotland, and that he did now and then separate himself from the so-called Free Church, claiming all his own rights, and that of them who might follow him, to all that belonged to them as loyal Free Churchmen. Dr. Rainy confessed afterwards that this was the greatest surprise he got in his lifetime. The Rev. Donald Macdonald, Shieldaig, joined Rev. D. Macfarlane about the middle of June. The two ministers and a few elders constituted a Presbytery at Portree on the 14th day of August, which they denominated, "THE PRESBYTERY OF THE FREE CHURCH OF 1843." They, at that Presbytery, adopted a Deed of Separation, in which the main causes for separation were set forth. The Free Church of Scotland was now delivered out of the hands of infidels and carnal office-bearers, who knew not what they were doing, and set up again in her purity of doctrine and worship. Great was the joy of the godly men and women who mourned on account of the wounds given to Christ in the house of His friends. The Rainy Philistines were discomfited by the Lord, and, notwithstanding that, as regards numbers and worldly power, the revived Free Church could not now lay claim to either, yet she had God's Word, the whole Creed of the Church of the Reformation in Scotland, and the seal of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of the Lord's people. We could then say from the bottom of our hearts, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." I remember words which the late Mr. Archibald Crawford, Tighnabruaich, uttered when we met him after the separation. He said, "You are now like the children of Israel after they were delivered from the Egyptians at the Red Sea; but wait you until the Lord will begin to pump up what is in your own bowels, and that will be more painful to you than all you have suffered in the past." Alas! how true I have found the godly man's prediction!

2. At the Assembly of 1894 a motion was passed to the effect that a civil action should be raised in the Court of Session to deprive us of all the property which we then possessed. To the great shame of the former Constitutional Party, this motion was moved by one of them. The action was raised, and they took from us every manse, church, and meeting-house in our possession, so that in many places our people had to worship God under the canopy of the heavens. We took with joy the spoiling of our goods, and we felt like Mephibosheth, when his servant by fraud took from him his inheritance; all he said was, "Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my Lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house." We found that suffering for and with Christ was true happiness. This reminds me of a saying of the late Joseph MacKay at the time of the Disruption in 1843: "There are," he said, "two kinds of Christians in the world, and as I have no better illustration I will compare them to the dog and the cat. The cat is not so attached to the people with whom he lives as he is to the house, and should the people leave the house, the cat will be quite as content to live with the strangers who will come to dwell in it. But the dog cares for his master more than for the house, and if his master should have to sleep at night under a rock, the dog will be quite content with him there." The application of the above similitude was self-evident at the Disruption of 1843. Those who then loved wages and property more than Christ and His cause and people remained in the slavery to which the Church of Scotland had been brought by the tyranny of the Patronage Act, and by the injustice of the Court of Session; but those who then loved

Christ and His cause and people, left all for His honour and glory. The so-called Constitutional Party acted in the same way as the *Moderates* did in 1843 – they stuck to their wages, churches and manses, notwithstanding that the cause of the separation in 1843 was not to be compared to 1893. At the former, the Confession of Faith and the Church's relation to the Word of God remained intact; at the latter, the relation of the Church to both had been changed, so much so, that I heard the statement already quoted, that the passing of the Declaratory Act meant “Bible or no Bible; Confession of Faith or no Confession of Faith; atonement or no atonement,” applauded by these same men. But the testing time had now come, and the thoughts of many hearts were revealed.

Not a word was now said in public against these extraordinary changes. The Rainy party, but especially the so-called Constitutional Party, did their level best to stigmatise us as schismatics, who were guilty of breaking up the Church of Christ. But none of these things moved us, for we had the warrant of God's Word for the step we had taken, and also the approval of our own conscience. The warmth and spiritual joy felt by us in the means of salvation, and the unity and love which then existed between brothers and sisters in Christ, as also the seals set upon the Word preached in the conversion of sinners to God, made us absolutely sure that the Lord approved of the step we had taken. We were fully convinced that we had continued long enough in Church fellowship with men who, like wild beasts, tore God's Word to pieces, superseded the Westminster Confession of Faith by the accumulation of old heresies contained in the Declaratory Act, and had become perjured men to the bargain. Men might call them “the Church of Christ,” and charge us with schism for separating from them; but we knew that men would not be the judges at last but God, and therefore we appealed to Him. Notwithstanding all they did, and the fact that we had troubles from within, we continued to prosper. This continued during seven years. We could say at the end of that period: “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”

3. In the year 1900 the union between the so-called Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church was consummated. Twenty-five ministers refused to follow the Rainy party into the united body. They declared themselves and all who would adhere to them, “The Free Church of Scotland.” A movement was set on foot in our Church at once to join this party. We pleaded for delay, till we could form a proper judgment of the position these men would adopt. It was quite manifest to anyone who wished to see that they had still all the innovations which were brought into that Church, and that it would be our duty to wait till we could see what they intended to do. Still there was a determined effort made by some in our Church to join them as soon as possible, but their efforts were thwarted. We had not to wait long in order to form an opinion of what the future of this new movement would be.

(1) They declared that they had always adhered to the Confession of Faith as adopted in 1846 by the Free Church. Had they declared that they adhered to the property and their salaries in 1893, and let the Confession of Faith go, their declaration would be nearer the truth. Further, if it were possible for them to have remained in the Declaratory Act Church during these seven years, why had we left that body? It was a desperate effort on their part at self-justification. To confess that they acted wrongfully would expose them before the public, especially their own followers, as being guilty of unfaithfulness to their ordination vows, and of accusing us of being schismatics for having separated from them. They did their utmost to prove the above view of their conduct by leaflets sent to some of our congregations, and by word of mouth to others.

(2) They appointed as their first Professor a man who had written and published, before they appointed him, a book in which the inspiration of the Bible was seriously impinged. When several of the lower Courts petitioned their General Assembly, craving that the book should be examined, and, if need be, that the author should be dealt with in

accordance with the procedure of the Church, the members of Assembly praised the book and the man who wrote it as being learned and sound in the faith. This decision caused that doubts were raised in our minds as regards the soundness of the Free Church Assembly concerning the infallibility and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures. Nothing has been done since by them to remove these doubts.

(3) They continued to hold social gatherings, at which things were done which were a scandal to any Church. One of these was held at Oban, another in the vicinity of Glasgow, of which our worthy Editor took notice in the F.P. Magazine in 1907. These things caused us a great amount of mental pain. We cannot see what connection such meetings can have with the cause of Christ, or of what benefit poor, perishing sinners can obtain in them. The Free Church at her beginning would not have tolerated such works of darkness in her halls and churches.

(4) They took no effective steps to rescind the Declaratory Act. It is understood that their legal advisers held that to rescind it might weaken their case which they raised in the Civil Courts in order to gain the property and funds of the Church. So property and funds were still holding the first place in the minds of the men who led the Free Church.

(5) When they gained the case in the House of Lords, they opened the door of admission to the ministry of the Church to men out of all denominations. This they did in order to enable them to keep as much of the property and funds as they could when the Commission appointed by Parliament to divide the same was to give them only as much of it as they would be able to administer. These men seem to us to have lost their heads in acting so contrarily to the careful regard shown in better days by the Free Church as to who should be admitted into her ministry. Every step taken by them made the barriers between themselves and us more formidable. They were warned of this fact on several occasions, but they would not listen to remonstrances. Every word spoken or written was construed as maliciousness on our part.

In face of all the above, and much more, a motion was brought forward at our Synod in November of 1905, to the effect that a Committee should be appointed to confer with the Free Church, so that a union would be consummated between us and them. The Synod decided that, while they would be prepared to consider a motion for union with any Church holding the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith and the infallibility of the Holy Scriptures, both in her profession and practice, they could not consider a motion for union with the Free Church on account of the fact that, notwithstanding she made ample profession as regards her orthodoxy, she came very far short in her practice. Four ministers and two or three elders, and a very small number of our people, left our communion and joined her. We could repeat the words of our text again with emphasis: "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." The effect of this exodus was never felt in the least as detrimental to the F.P. Church, and that notwithstanding those who left us did their very utmost to disseminate, by word and pen, that they only had carried out the principles of the Confession of Faith and their ordination vows. But all this went to prove where these men felt the shoe pinching them.

4. In the year 1916 a motion was passed at the meeting of Commission of Assembly of the Free Church, appointing a Committee to confer with a prospective Committee of our Church about union. Much confidence as to the success of this movement on their part was expressed by the mover and seconder of that motion. For some time we were quite in the dark as regards the grounds of this confidence expressed at the Commission. After some correspondence we understood that these men had some ground for the statements they made. At the meeting of our Synod in 1917 a statement of obstacles which barred the way was passed and sent to the Free Church. There was unanimity in the Synod that it would be futile to appoint a Committee until these obstacles were removed. This statement was drawn up and passed after serious and prayerful consideration on our part. The reply sent by the Free

Church was made up of evasions and offers of compromise. That action on their part left us no alternative but to end any further correspondence about the proposed union. For what was the usefulness of continuing correspondence with men who thought that we would be blindfolded by fair words instead of a practical effort to remove these obstacles? The whole fault lay with them. We would ask any intelligent Free Church man or woman: "What would he or she do if they were in our place? Would such join us until obstacles were removed which were clearly inconsistent with God's Word and the principles and practice of the Free Church at her beginning?" I believe firmly that they would refuse to do so, and they would be fully justified in their refusal.

But the four ministers who moved, at the Synod in 1918, that a Committee should be appointed to confer with the Committee of the Free Church for union, held a different opinion. They went so far in justifying the reply sent by the Free Church, that it became very evident that the change was not in that Church but in their own minds. We could see no change for the better in the Free Church, since these men used stronger language in denouncing her conduct than we ever did. This caused us to think that their own speeches and writings in the past would make a splendid refutation of their speeches and writings in the present. Three of these ministers went over to the Free Church in November of 1918. (*The other left recently.*) Two of these ministers we highly regarded as men who truly preached the Gospel, and whom we loved in the close bond of brotherhood in Christ Jesus, and we hope – notwithstanding all that they have manifested towards us in connection with their change of mind, and otherwise – that we will continue to love the dead and the living.

We certainly thought that they would do much harm to our poor Church should they go over to the Free Church; but be it said to the glory of the Lord and the faithfulness of our people, we know not of a dozen that followed them. That was not because they did not do their very utmost to take our people away, but because our people knew and saw what it would mean to them should they leave the F.P. Church. Instead of causing any real loss to us, we have to say, that the F.P. Church has not been since 1900 so bound together in one spirit and one mind in defence of our position as a Church, as she has been since this last controversy began. Whom are we bound to thank for this? Surely the Lord's goodness to us is made manifest in it. So that we may repeat again the words of our text: "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

5. I desire to direct the attention of each one here to the fact stated above, that we took up in 1893 the position held by the Free Church in 1843, so that we are the only true representatives of the Free Church. We had to change our name, for identification's sake, by adding "Presbyterian," but that made no change on our position. The party now called the Free Church acted contrary to the "Evangelical Party" in 1843, who left the privileges of State connection, such as property and salaries, so as to have Christ ruling in His own house. We have already shown how the 1893 leaders of the Free Church stuck like a limpet to a rock to earthly things, and also how the leaders that now are showed the same spirit in 1900. So that these men have no claim to the name – "The Church of Scotland, Free," no more than the Moderates had to it after 1843. To leave the F.P. Church in order to be united to the Free Church, means, in my opinion, that men are leaving the only Free Church in Scotland to join a "heterogeneous conglomerate body" of ministers gathered out of every denomination by the present Free Church, not for truth or conscience sake, but to enable them to get worldly substance. They have the name – Free Church – and their followers are deceived by that name, and, consequently, they follow them. We are quite certain that they would not follow ministers taken from all denominations (Roman Catholics excepted) had these not been placed under the designation, "Free Church." But, however strange this conduct on the part of their followers may appear, the fact cannot be denied. It is actually a new body gathered

together and claiming to be the Free Church. We always felt pained at the heart for the people of the Free Church; but we abhor the tactics of her ministers.

The following instances give our reasons:

(1) It can be proved that they were writing private letters to some of the ministers of our Church, offering them congregations in the Free Church if they would join them.

(2) They kept a Professor's chair vacant in their Divinity Hall, Edinburgh, since 1900, and they openly avowed that this was done on purpose to get one of our ministers over to fill it. In the last instance, they have been successful in capturing their man, but, in doing so, they are guilty before God and the people of this country of breaking the Tenth Commandment – "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, . . . *nor his man-servant.*"

(3) They declare that there is no difference between our Church and theirs, but by the same breath they beg for the money of others to pay for a church building bought for the very purpose of dividing a congregation of our Church. If they believe in their own words, they must confess that this is schism in the scriptural sense of that sin. These low and unchristian actions demean these men in the eyes of even worldly men. We regret sincerely, that we are forced by the words and actions of these men, to lay bare the truth for our own self-preservation as a body.

I desire to observe before closing this subject, that in 1894 we were stripped of any Church property our followers possessed up till then. Since then, we have built churches, manses, and halls, in such numbers as cause us amazement, seeing that the remaining debt is below £2,000 over the whole Church, and that our people cannot say that this has made them poorer than their neighbours. The goodness of the Lord towards us financially is to be admired. So that we may again, on this account, repeat the words of our text: "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

II. – That we should not forget this in the future.

1. We have endeavoured to show that, while we have learned by very painful experiences, how little man can be trusted, we have proved that the Lord may be trusted in every circumstance that can arise. This is a lesson which took years to learn, and we should not forget it in future. We know some of the things that are past; what the future may have in store for us is unknown to us. Let us place all our hope and confidence in the Lord alone. "Trust in the Lord at all times; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

2. We have endeavoured to show that, as far as we can understand God's word and providence, the Lord helped us hitherto because we, in much weakness and infirmities, have adhered to His Word, the Confession of Faith, and purity in worship and practice as a Church. Let us not forget that this has been the cause of our overcoming such as rose up against us again and again, as sure as it was in the case of the Old Testament Church, who prospered while they held, even outwardly, to God's instituted means of grace and to His Word. We are, as a Church, founded solidly on the foundation laid in Scotland at the Reformation. That foundation was solidly laid upon God's infallible and eternal truth, and while our Church will continue to hold it without surrendering or compromising in the least degree, any part thereof, no power in hell or upon earth shall prevail against her. But as soon as she will depart from that firm attitude, she is gone.

[March 1920]

A Sermon.

By the REV. ALEXANDER MACKAY, Oban.

(Taken down by a Hearer.)

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace” – John 1:14-16.

In considering these words, as the Lord may be pleased to enable me, I shall direct your attention, first, to the person spoken of here; in the second place, to the apprehension which the disciples here declare that they had of this person. “We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;” and, in the third place, to what we are to understand, when it is further declared that “of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” These are the three things to which I would like to direct your attention: –

- I. – The Person;
- II. – The apprehension of faith; and
- III. – The exercise of faith in drawing out of this Person’s fulness.

I. – Now, who is this Person? Well, the person is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will notice in this chapter the name under which John speaks of Him. He speaks of Him as the Word, and this name of the Saviour is a name that belonged to Him as the Creator. John is here careful to point Him out as the Creator, when he declares that “without him was not any thing made that was made.” But this name, Word, belongs to Him also as the Revealer of the Father. Just as it is by speech we reveal our thoughts to one another, so it is by the revelation of Jesus Christ that the eternal God has revealed His inmost thoughts to the children of men. Therefore, Jesus says, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,” and as it is written here, “No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

But when John speaks of Him as equal with the Father and as the Creator, he goes on further and speaks of Him as “the light of the world.” In this connection he is careful to point out that, although there had not risen a greater than John the Baptist among men,

John was not that Light, but was only a witness of that Light. And he is careful also to point out that He is above angels. “Without him was not anything made that was made,” whether the persons of men or of angels, or the material universe in general. Then, as the Jews were liable to think much about Moses, John, or the Holy Ghost, is careful to bring Moses with the two tables of the holy law to the feet of Jesus Christ, for he says here, “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

Without enlarging further upon this matter, it is very clear from the opening verses of the chapter that the person to whom our attention is directed is none other than the eternal God, the second person of the Trinity. True, it was not the Father that assumed our nature; it was not the Holy Ghost that became incarnate; it was the second person of the Trinity that became incarnate. God is one as to His nature, but He is not one as to personalities. There are three distinct persons in the Godhead – Father, Son and Holy Ghost – and these three are one God with respect to their nature. This is then the person that is distinguished from the other persons of the Trinity. He was with God, and He *is* God.

The next thing to which our attention is directed here with regard to this person is that He became incarnate. “The Word was made flesh.” God performed many and wonderful miracles before the children of men in this world, but the miracle of the incarnation is the miracle of miracles, as the Apostle Paul, in writing to Timothy says, “And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God manifest in the flesh.” That the eternal Son of God should unite Himself with our nature, was the greatest wonder that ever appeared before any of the creatures that God ever created. This is the thing into which angels desire to look – that He who was from everlasting, the Ancient of Days, should become a “child born and a son given,” that He should tabernacle among us. That truly was the masterpiece – speaking after the manner of men – of the wisdom, love, mercy, and justice of the eternal God. But the question arises: Why did He become incarnate?

Well, I shall mention three reasons why He became incarnate, and the first is this: He could not, as the servant of the Father, undertake the work of redeeming the lost without assuming the nature that sinned. You and I trampled upon God’s law; we broke His law times without number; and if we have no consciousness of that, it is because we are dead in trespasses and sins. If there would be any life in us, if we would be awakened by the Holy Spirit, and if the love of Christ would be implanted in our souls, we would be conscious always of this terrible reality – that we sinned against God and that we trampled on His holy law. And the Lord Jesus had to assume our nature, had to become one with us, and in becoming one with us He did not cease to be what He was, although He became what He was not, as that complete and beautiful little book which we put into the hands of our children – the Shorter Catechism – says about the Redeemer: “He has two distinct natures and one person for ever.” The Lord Jesus did not cease to be divine when He became incarnate. The glory of His divine nature was veiled under the humanity that He assumed. He laid aside, we might say, the glory that adequately showed forth the brightness of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. “He took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” And all this He did in order that sinners, such as we are, should escape the wrath that will overtake the lost from among men and angels. For if the Bible is clear on any point from beginning to end, it is clear on this – that men and angels will be overtaken by a wrath which will eternally be “the wrath to come.” Jesus, the Word of God, who was with God from everlasting, assumed flesh, and that in order that the nature that sinned should give obedience to God’s law. He was made under the law to redeem those who were under the law, and He redeemed them, in the first place, by His obedience to that law. It was here that God’s people found a rock upon which they could stand – even the obedience of the God-man. This

obedience is of such a nature that, although all mankind had continued to be obedient to God, their obedience would only be creature obedience. But the obedience of Jesus, being the obedience of a divine person, magnified the law and made it honourable. God loves His holy law, and He loves those who love His law, but He cannot but be angry with those who are rebels against such a law.

The second reason why He became incarnate was that He had to die. You and I, friend, owe not only obedience to God's law, but the curse of the law rests upon us as disobedient rebels, and, therefore, justice demands that we should die. The Lamb of God had not only to obey the law, but He had to die: as it is written, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Have the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus become your hope, your refuge in view of eternity? Although you were the blackest sinner out of hell, yet if Christ would become your hope, you would require no more. Law and justice are well satisfied with the obedience and death of Jesus, and this was declared when He rose from the dead. When He died, the grave claimed Him as a hostage, but the grave could not keep the Lord Jesus, for an angel came down and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it. Who sent the angel down? It was law and justice. Now the grave is open, and will be for ever for everyone who is united to Him. The grave will never close its mouth upon such. It will only be, as one put it, like a "robing-room" for the people of God. We are apt to think of the grave as a terrible, gloomy dungeon. We close it upon those who were near and dear to us, but, if they were united to Christ, it is only the place where the weary traveller lays aside, so to speak, the soiled robe of the body until the blast of the last trumpet. Then they shall come forth clothed in robes of glory and beauty in which they will shine for ever and ever.

The third reason why He became incarnate was that He might come very near to us, so as to sympathise with us. We think of God as being very far away from us, but He has come near to us in His Son, who has bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. It is written that He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh – not in the likeness of flesh. If you consider Jesus as brought before us in the Gospels, you will see how near He came to poor sinners. With whom does He mingle? Is it with the great and the rich? Sometimes He goes with such, for He is the Saviour of all classes of men, but you find Him almost always among the poor, the maimed, the halt, the outcasts and dregs of humanity. He was, and is, the Friend of publicans and sinners. He receiveth such.

II. – The apprehension of faith, "We have seen his glory," etc. What does John mean here? Does he mean the glory of the miracles of Jesus, such, for instance, as the feeding of the five thousand, the raising of the dead, the stilling of the winds and the waves? He means this, no doubt; but, others saw these things, and yet rejected Him. Many saw all these miracles, yet they did not see His glory as that glory is spoken of here. Does this mean the glory that they saw on the Mount of Transfiguration? John was one of the privileged three who were with Him on the Mount, when His raiment became white as snow, when the glory of His divine nature began to manifest itself through His humanity. Well, that may be included, but it is not what is particularly meant here. There are some here present who saw His glory in the sense in which John declares "We have seen his glory." It is not at all seeing miracles, for although you would see Lazarus coming out of the grave with the grave clothes about him, and the friends loosing him and letting him go, the man who had been just a few minutes before then seeing corruption in the grave, you would not see the glory of the Redeemer in the sense in which John speaks of it here, unless an operation was performed on your understanding and heart, and that by the Holy Ghost. What then do you need? Oh, you need this; that you would get a new heart and a right spirit, the teaching of the Holy Ghost in your minds, and that through the Word of God being made spirit and life to your souls.

Now, when sinners are enabled to behold the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, they see, first, the glory of His divinity. And you are here present who saw this glory – that He is a

divine person; and you also saw the glory of His humanity – that the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, who was so rich, became poor, that sinners, through His poverty, might become rich. You see, the Christ that faith lays hold of is not a Christ that is God only, and He is not a Christ that is man only, but He is God and man. And I believe, friends, that this was the Christ the faith of Abel embraced, and that the faith of Job laid hold of, as he says, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” That was the Christ that faith has had in all ages – the Christ who is God on the one hand and man on the other. And as I said already, you are here who have seen that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the co-equal of the Father, became one with yourselves. He took your place, He took your position, to satisfy justice on behalf of the lost, to magnify the law in the room of sinners. The world was offended in Him. Why? Because they did not see His glory – the glory that was associated with the “Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.” What a glory John saw in Him as He went about healing all manner of diseases, when he saw the eternal fountain of sympathy that was in the Lamb of God going out by way of exercising itself upon all manner of sinners! “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” It was in His lowliness they apprehended Him as being the only-begotten of the Father, and the nature of this apprehension is just faith beholding, in Jesus of Nazareth, the friend of publicans and sinners, the Lamb of God, the co-equal with the Father, and at the same time, the Son of Man – the just suffering in room of the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

III. – Let us consider, now, the exercise of faith in drawing out of the fulness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the *first* thing I want to direct your attention to under this head is that, in apprehending His fulness, they apprehend that everyone that ever received out of Him must have received out of Him as empty sinners in themselves. Mark the word, “receive.” “Of his fulness have all we received.” That is the prerogative or the work of faith, even to receive; and “without faith it is impossible to please God.” What is the most difficult thing – speaking after the manner of men – that the Holy Ghost finds to do in making a place for Jesus Christ in the heart of man? It is this: to empty the sinner, to deprive him of what he clings to by nature in the way of every hope in himself. You cannot believe God as long as you have one rag of your own righteousness to which you are trusting and looking. And those who received out of His fulness, first became empty – so empty that they had not so much as one prayer, so much as one good deed, one good thought, or one good desire. “Oh, we are not so poor as that.” No; unfortunately. Oh, if you were all as poor as this, how easy it would be to preach Christ to you. That is where the difficulty comes in – that men are rich in their own estimation. They have this, and they have that, to recommend them to God. Well, not one with a farthing of man’s own goodness in his pocket ever received out of the fulness that is in Jesus Christ.

And the *second* thing that is true about them is this, they see that salvation is a matter of *receiving* out of the fulness that is treasured up in Christ. Did that ever become to you a heaven upon earth? Did ever your heart leap within you for joy when you discovered this great reality, this great truth, that salvation consists in this, an empty sinner receiving out of what is in Jesus Christ, receiving His righteousness, receiving His merits, receiving His goodness, receiving His love – receiving His blood to cleanse you, His Spirit to enlighten you, and His love to heal your broken heart and to raise you up to have your affections set on the things that are above? Well, then, all who beheld His glory discovered, first, that they were empty, and that emptiness was really what qualified for the Saviour. They had not a good thought, or word, or deed, or desire, or anything else, but were ruined, lost and undone; and then they discovered that salvation was a matter of receiving out of the fulness of Jesus Christ, and grace for grace.

What is the meaning of these words, “grace for grace?” They appear to me to mean grace upon grace, grace always from beginning to end, not only a little at the outside of your career, and then work your own passage to heaven. Ah! that is not how Jesus Christ deals with His people; that is not how they have found Him; but they have found that, after the grace which they receive at the beginning is spent, they have to come back to His fulness to receive more grace. That is the Gospel that we preach, friends, that we understand and that we hope in, and, if we did not hope in it, we would have given up long ago. “And of his fulness,” that is, we may say, the riches of His obedience, the riches of His suffering, the riches of the treasures that are in Him, “have all we received, and grace for grace.” As the Apostle Paul puts it, “That as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord;” the grace that reigns through righteousness, that is to say, through the obedience and death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, you who have seen His glory, is not this what you have come to find out, that you are always empty: that you came empty at the beginning, and that you received grace? You found out that receiving was the God-glorifying way, and you found out afterwards that you were emptiness again, and, coming to His fulness again, you received grace again; always empty, receiving as a beggar always. This is the life of faith upon the Son of God. Oh, then, will you not come to this person, this great God and Saviour, for grace? Will you not come to Him empty, ruined and undone? Will you not put your empty mouth to the fountain that hath been opened? Will you not drink your fill of the grace that reigns through righteousness unto eternal life? “Why will ye die?” says God to the children of men. Why will you perish, when there is a Saviour, and this Saviour is free to you, and offered to you. He is inviting you, digging about you by His word and providence, to see if you will come to Him and bear fruit? And what is it to bear fruit? Just to exercise faith upon Him, for “without faith it is impossible to please God.” And when you begin to exercise faith, you begin to live, and not till then.

May He bless His Word.

[April 1920]