

Notes of a Sermon.

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

“Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent” – Acts 13:26.

These words occur in the course of the apostle’s address in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia. Wherever the Jews were scattered within or without the bounds of the Roman Empire, it was their desire to cleave fast to one another, and so, wherever they were sufficiently numerous to have a public place of worship, they had it, and met there on the Sabbath day for the reading of the law. From among the nations there were those that joined themselves to them – laying hold of the skirt of him that was a Jew, saying, “We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.” These were by the Jews distinguished from the other Gentiles as those that feared God, and we find that in this synagogue there were present such proselytes from among the Gentiles, along with those that were Jews by descent. To both classes the apostle addresses himself, and to each class he declares the good news of salvation.

In this address we see that he touched on certain outstanding features of the history of Israel, until he makes mention of David, and, after mentioning him, he says, Of this man’s seed hath God, according to His promise, raised up a Saviour unto Israel, even Jesus. The burden of his message is that the promised salvation has come, has been revealed, that the promise made of old unto the fathers has at length found fulfilment. Jesus, raised up of the seed of David, having John as His forerunner, to herald His approach and to prepare His way, is the Saviour promised. The apostle’s message is that God has unveiled His salvation, and in “this man” forgiveness of sin is proclaimed, such forgiveness as that all that believe in Him are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. With this as the burden of his message, the apostle addresses his hearers, saying, “to you is the word of this salvation sent.”

We may briefly consider: –

- I. The salvation;
- II. The word of salvation;
- III. The obligation under which the word of salvation lays every one to whom it comes.

I. The salvation. However much ungodly sinners may scoff at the idea of salvation, many scout the thought, God’s salvation is the greatest thing under the sun. He who has it has everything he absolutely needs for time and for eternity, however base his portion of what this world esteems good may be. He, who needing it, as a sinner, is without it, have he what he may, is poor. God’s salvation is needed by a curse-stricken world, for the alternatives are either that sinners have it, or that they be lost forever. Seeing this is so, it might well repay us to consider various aspects of this salvation, as we may do by answering some questions about it, such as: –

1. Salvation – from what?
2. Salvation – to what?
3. Salvation – on what terms?
4. Salvation – in whom?

1. The very word “salvation” tells us that there is something to be saved from. The whole word of God makes plain what that something is, for its testimony and man’s condition, character, and prospects are uniform.

(a) Ever since, as a race, we fell away from God, we have, as sinners, been exposed to condemnation. Hand in hand with condemnation go wrath, curse, and death. Because the desert of sin is death, death is its wages. Sin that draws with it death does so because it brings down the curse. The curse takes the form of death, and the curse is brought down because wrath is called forth by sin. Sin exposes thus to wrath. It demands at the hands of God's punitive justice and holy jealousy that wrath should be shown. There is a necessary connection between sin and wrath, for wrath is the displeasure of the Holy one of Israel directed against that which cannot but be abominable in His eyes. There is an impurity, a loathsomeness in sin that calls out this displeasure, and thus these things are bound together, and mankind as sinners are exposed to condemnation, and all that that involves. This, we may say, is the judicial aspect of the salvation as a salvation from something – it is a salvation from wrath.

(b) The same word that makes clear the condemnation to which mankind are exposed, exposes their character. It describes their death in trespasses and in sin. It shows them as alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them by reason of the hardness of their heart. It assures us that they that are in the flesh cannot please God, and that the mind of the flesh is enmity against Him. It shows how darkness has usurped the place of light in man's understanding – how his judgment, perverted, puts sweet for bitter and bitter for sweet. It shows how his affections, instead of being pure and holy, are degraded and grovelling, securing the result that he looks not on things unseen and eternal but on things seen and temporal – the world and the things that are in the world. It shows how his will is rebellious, how his heart is hard, how his whole faculties are polluted, and how, instead of bearing the spiritual image of God, he bears the likeness in his heart and life of him whose child he is – “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.” Surely, when the light of God's word exposes such leprous features as these, we may well say, “Surely man is far sunk. He is lost indeed. He needs to be saved. While he continues to be what he is, he cannot have any happiness worthy of the name, he cannot hold loving intimate conversation with God. He cannot glorify God his Maker, he cannot fulfil the end of his creation. Surely, man with such a character needs salvation.”

(c) Man needs to be saved not only from what he is, but also from what he must be. He is, as far as his prospects are concerned, exposed to all the awfulness of the curse – to all its blighting, devastating power – to misery here and misery hereafter. Body and soul, he has earned hell for himself; and unless he is saved, hell must of necessity be his abode in the ages to come. He is already under condemnation. His character is such that it is vain to expect aught from his hand to avert the doom already impending. Nay, let him but continue till the end, sowing as he has begun, and the result is inevitable. He need not distinguish himself among his fellows as a sinner and rebel beyond his neighbours; it is enough that he continue impenitent; it is enough that he live after the flesh; it is enough that he bring forth no good fruit; it is enough that he go on to the end as he has begun and continued. This is enough to secure that the blackness of darkness should be his portion. Sin calls for wrath. It fits for wrath, and when the vessel of wrath is fitted for destruction, destruction shall have him. He shall have destruction, for it is an unfailing law in the administration of God that man shall reap as he has sowed. He that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, and he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Thus we see that alike as regards the sinner's condition, and character, and prospects, he needs salvation. The message of salvation is no impertinent intrusion on the good order of an ideal world. Let men but look at life, with its woes and sorrows, with its meannesses and hypocrisies, with its sins and crimes, with its curses that come not causeless, and they may well see in what a plight this world of ours is. God in His word lets in light. He hides not the real state of things, and when He speaks, He tells His creatures in plain, unmistakable

language, how utter and absolute their need of salvation is. Friend, God's word tells you what you are, and what you need. You have to face the facts, and they are plainly told you.

2. Salvation – what to? There is no intermediate position between condemnation and acceptance, between wrath and favour, between death and life, between grace and nature, between shame and glory, between hell and heaven. If salvation is a delivering from something, it is also a bringing to something. Let us, then, look at the condition to which it brings. We have spoken of the judicial aspect of salvation as deliverance from wrath, and curse, and death. Is it nothing more than freedom from past condemnation, with a possibility of achieving personal acceptance in some way or other?

(a) Ah! it is more; there is freely bestowed upon the sinner, when his sins are forgiven, a right to the inheritance of glory, as he freely receives freedom for his past. The judicial aspect of salvation has more than the negative side of no condemnation: it has the positive side of free justification. Iniquities are pardoned, and the person is accepted – yes, accepted – and the adoption of sons is given. Salvation is thus deliverance from wrath in order to the attainment of life and blessedness. It does not pause short of this bestowal. Whenever sin is forgiven, then is the title of the inheritance of light and glory freely given.

(b) What, however, about deliverance from man's sinful habit of soul? Is salvation to something *here*? Undoubtedly. There is in God's salvation a new life; there is the knowledge and fear and love of God. The law of God is written in the heart. The heart now delights in the law of God. The dead is now alive, and thus the very saving from death involves the bestowal of something positive. Where once there was but darkness, there is now light; where once there was but ignorance, there is now knowledge; where once there was but hatred, there is now love; where once there was but unbelief, there is now faith; where once there was but impenitence, there is now godly sorrow. If the poets say that the footprints of spring cause flowers to spring up and blossom, the springtime of a new life causes the flowers of heaven to bloom in the once barren wilderness of man's soul. Life has come, and death reigns no longer without a rival. The stronger than the strong man hath come. There is an Isaac in the household as well as an Ishmael, and the elder shall serve the younger, as Esau, Jacob. Grace has come, and grace will conquer: where it hath come, it so far prevails that there is a sowing unto the Spirit. There is a lusting of the Spirit against the flesh: there is a conflict begun and maintained, the issue of which is by no means doubtful, for stronger is He that is in you than he that is in the world. Salvation here carries with it judicially a title to life: actually, the earnest of life: for as many as are in Christ are new creatures. The Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells within them.

(c) Does this salvation then not affect their prospects? Without doubt it does. The earnest is already given, because the title is bestowed, and where the earnest is, there will yet be full possession. The salvation is salvation to heaven. The blessedness of heaven, the purity of heaven, the repose of heaven, the active service of heaven – this is what the salvation is to. Those that go to hell are fitted for the company they shall keep by their forgetfulness of God, their neglect of His honour and service, their heart atheism and worldliness. They are fitted for destruction. Those that go to heaven have below on earth the title freely given, and an inward preparedness for the glory that awaits them. There is no enjoyment of the standing of children but on the part of those that have given unto them the nature of children. There is no omission in the divine plan of procedure. If children of disobedience are appointed to an inheritance as children of God, it is also appointed that they shall, in order to the enjoyment of their appointed inheritance, have inward preparedness given them. They sow unto the Spirit, and as they sow they shall reap. They groan in this tabernacle, being burdened, desiring that mortality may be swallowed up of life, and they shall have their heart's wish. Mortality shall be swallowed up of life, and thus, as regards their prospects, those that share in God's salvation have not only grace below to keep them, but glory before them to allure

them. These are their prospects as sharing in God's salvation. It is a salvation from wrath to favour, from alienation to friendship, from death to life, from hell to heaven. Surely such a salvation is to be sought for by rational, accountable creatures. It should never become a by-word, and any slang use of the word to find salvation shows on the part of them that indulge in it but a mean idea of the glorious truth that God's word brings to us His salvation.

3. On what terms? is the third question that faces us, and calls for an answer, with regard to salvation. On what terms? The wrath that salvation frees from is a righteous wrath. It is richly deserved. It is called forth by man's sin from the holy Lord God, and it is their righteous desert. They have earned it, and they do earn it for themselves. Even so with mankind sinners. They are rebels against God; they have thrown off His yoke; they have thrown down the gauntlet. In life and conversation they bid him defiance. "Who," they seem to say, "is the Lord that we should serve Him? Our tongues are ours: who is Lord over us?" Men esteem themselves their own masters, and they are bent on doing their own pleasure. Is not then the God, who has shut up the angels who kept not their first estate under chains of darkness, just in causing His wrath and curse to descend and rest on our race? He *is* just, and justice can be only on one side at once. What calls for punishment and deserves it must be punished. There can be no escape. When justice finds what calls for its sword, its sword will descend. Though hand join in hand, the guilty shall not escape unpunished. On what terms then can salvation be enjoyed? On what terms can it be bestowed? If there is to be deliverance from wrath, there must be righteousness forthcoming to meet the demands of a broken law. Can this come from the side of fallen man? Ever since sin entered into the world, and death by sin, all mankind have been smitten with a natural impotence that leaves them utterly unable to produce the spiritual obedience and righteousness that the law of their original creation calls for. There is none righteous, no, not one, and as there is not even one that is righteous, the united exertions of the race, should they all put their shoulders to the work, must needs fail to secure the salvation of one sinner. From the side of human nature and its powers no hope need be cherished. Help is vain so far as the fallen race is concerned. Equally vain is it for any of those that are thus involved in ruin to expect that any combination of mere creatures can deliver them. Should all the fallen hosts of hell, with all the apostate race of Adam, co-operate in an endeavour of bold rebellion their endeavours must prove vain. Their rebellion exposes them to the wrath of God. It cannot break His power; it cannot overturn His throne; it cannot loose the bands of His curse, and thus neither by obedience nor disobedience can man prosper or save himself. Neither resistance nor feigned submission can avail. Let the sinner resist and fight, and he but makes clear what he is earning for himself. Let him feign submission and go about to establish his own righteousness and he must fail again. Whence then comes righteousness, the righteousness that will deliver from condemnation? It must come from without; it must come from above, and in coming to the guilty, the undeserving, it must come of grace. It must be freely bestowed if it is to be had at all. This leads us to our fourth question about the gospel salvation.

4. In whom is it to be found? Righteousness meets the claims of the law, and the law presses its claims on persons that are under it. So we may at once say in whomsoever this righteousness is to be found he must have been under the law so that it could press its claims upon him. Again, we may say, when we consider the claims that have to be met, guilt must be borne, punishment endured, death undergone, the cup exhausted, if there is to be in this righteousness the satisfaction that offended justice calls for. Again, we may say, the obedience must be spotless, the suffering voluntary and loving, the perfection nothing less than divine, if there is to be satisfaction and actually secured redemption from everlasting death. Where then is such righteousness to be found? We must, in order to its existence, have a divine person in human nature and divine glory in human satisfaction. God must in very

truth dwell with men on the earth if this problem is to be solved, and the problem we find solved in the person of Christ the Mediator, the Son of God, and the Son of Man, who is “the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.” In His obedience unto death the righteousness has been provided; in Him the righteousness is to be found. That it may be mine, that it may be yours, we must be *in* Him. We must receive Him; we must close in with Him. The grace of faith must be ours, and in its exercise, as needy sinners, we must go forth to his fulness, to draw from it grace for grace. Salvation is free; it is through righteousness; the righteousness is in Christ; and that it may be ours, a union must be effected between us and Him. Where is He to be found? How can faith be exercised? Where can we meet with Him? Shall we look *within* that we may find Christ there? We shall never find Him in the grave of spiritual pollution that is within. Shall we climb up to heaven to find Him? He is there, but can we find Him there? By digging into the earth shall we find Him? Nay, in none of these ways. Faith that unites to Christ is divine in its origin, and it bases its conflict ever on a divine record. “The word is nigh thee.” This brings us to consider –

II. The word of salvation. The increase of faith is not something that is blind and haphazard. It is the exercise of an intelligent agent in the full possession and activity of his intelligence. The man that receives the Saviour of sinners receives Him as a sinner needing salvation. Christ came to save the lost, and those that rejoice in His coming realise themselves to be lost. Whence comes this realisation? It is the fruit of divine testimony bearing record of these things, and brought home by the power of God the Spirit. Divine testimony, I say, for it is on a divine record that a divine faith will rest. Salvation is through faith, and faith is the exercise of a sinner convinced of his need of Christ and of the suitability of Christ to his case. The faith that receives Christ, and the faith that assents to our need of Christ, alike rest on the same word of God, and we see thus how closely the word and salvation stand related to one another.

The word is the word of salvation, because it exposes man’s need and ruin. It is the word of salvation because it reveals God’s remedy. In revealing the remedy, it shows it in its fulness, in its suitability, and in its freeness, and seeing it does this, when a sinner responds to it, and embraces a full, a suitable, and a free Saviour, surely it cannot be said that he takes a leap in the dark. No such thing; nay, he now comes into the light, and takes the course of action that most beseems a rational, accountable agent in his journey to the eternal world. The word, when it testifies of man’s sin and guilt and ruin, does this, not to torment before the time: but in the faithfulness of truest friendship, it exposes the sinner’s lurking refuges of lies, that the hail and flood shall sweep away, so that, while yet there is hope, he may be shut in to the life that the gospel reveals. It is thus a word that wounds in order to heal. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, and faithful indeed is the surgery of heaven when the flesh is opened up that the gnawing cancer of reigning enmity may be laid bare. The law, as written, is written in a dispensation of mercy, and is given as the schoolmaster to bring to Christ. Should it reveal nothing but the need that exists, does it not fulfil a high office in connection with a sinner’s salvation? It testifies of God’s claims, of their breadth and their intensity. It testifies of our accountability and our sin; it testifies of our guilt and our misery; it testifies of our present impotence, and of our impending ruin. That man may flee from the wrath to come, these things are spoken of, and when its message is taken in, the sinner comes to see, from the extent and the nature of God’s claims, and his own wretchedness, something of the salvation that he so absolutely needs.

But the word is the word of salvation especially because it brings before us the divine record of the divine remedy. As written, it is that record; as spoken, preached, declared, it brings the record before the hearer. Christ crucified is the burden of the gospel. Christ as the Lamb, as the Sacrifice, as the Priest, as the Saviour by price and by power, as Prophet and King, is the sum of the salvation. He was promised; He came; and He comes again; and in

this we have the fulness of salvation brought before us. His power to save is adequate to the task of saving the chief of sinners. There is fulness of power and of merit and of mercy with Him. He is held forth as the dwelling-place of all the fulness of God. Fulness of grace for earth, and of glory for heaven are in Him. All, that all the saints need, and shall have, is stored up in Him, and of His fulness they all receive, and grace for grace. The word that brings to us the message of One full of grace and of truth, is surely the word of salvation.

It is also the word of salvation when it testifies to His condescension to individuals; He is not only able to save all that come unto God through Him, but He is also suited to the case of each. Take the case of any individual sinner to whom the word comes, and be he who or what he may, there is in Christ a suitableness to his need. Granted that he is dark, and blind, and ignorant, and wayward, and foolish. As the Prophet of the Church Christ is able to remove his ignorance, and his folly, and his blindness. Take him on the side of stubbornness and stout-hearted rebellion, conscious, painfully conscious of his unconquered aversion to everything spiritual and holy; let him but ask himself, "Is not the power of Christ able to remove, in its sovereign over-ruling, all the stubbornness and the alienation?" "Yes," he will have to answer, "He can subdue these." Thus, in His fulness of power there is a suitableness to each individual case, and to its requirements. Take the sinner again on the side of guilt and death-worthiness. He has broken the law and earned its curse; he cannot meet its claims or satisfy its demands. He has dug out a bottomless hell for himself. But yet there is in the obedience of the Son of God in our nature, obedience that was unto death, and that embraced death, something that is suited to the law's claims, and fitted to clothe the nakedness of that sinner, whoever he may be, that closes in with the Saviour of sinners. There is in His death and in His life, in His two natures united in His person as Mediator, in His suffering and in His triumph, something infinitely suited to the situation we occupy as members of an apostate race, exposed to wrath and ruin. The word opens up this suitableness, and draws our attention to it, so that we may say, "Here is the very Saviour, here is the very salvation, fitted for me."

Is this Saviour, however, available? Is it permissible to apply to Him? Is this question answered? It is, and the word that opens up the way of salvation, not only in its suitableness and its fulness, but also in its freeness, is surely on this account also entitled to be called the word of salvation. The word brings salvation near, for where it is Christ is. It is *His* word, and where it goes He goes. He will never go back on His word. He reveals a free salvation, open to the chief of sinners, and so open that, whosoever believeth, shall be saved, and "whosoever will" may take of the water of life freely. Ruin on the one hand, remedy on the other, are the burden of the word; and when one of these casts light on the other, each has its place in the message of salvation that has to be proclaimed to mankind. The word is then the word of salvation, because it shows these two sides; and further, when a sinner receives it in love and submissiveness, it is the word that is able to save, and does save, his soul. Faith is needed that we may win Christ, and the word is needed that we may have faith, and the word is not the word of man but the word of God. Let us then consider –

III. What obligation the word of salvation lays on every one to whom it comes. The word of salvation is the word of God, and it calls for the place that God's word deserves. The message of salvation is sent from God. It tells of His saving character. It tells of the Saviour He has provided, and it calls those to whom it comes to betake themselves to this Saviour. "To you is the word of this salvation sent." The Apostle Paul was a messenger. He was commissioned to declare the word; he did not run un-sent, nor did he speak of his own initiative. He was sent with the word, and the word was sent with him. The authority that lay behind his mission lay also behind his message. Those that rejected his message denied his mission, and refused to bow to the authority of God. His message was entrusted to him to declare to all that came within the sound of his voice as a teacher, or the sphere of his influence as a Christian. We thus see him addressing his audience indiscriminately. He did

not stumble at the secret purpose of God with respect to his hearers. Whether they should listen or shut their ears, hear or forbear, he announced that to them the word of salvation was sent. We see in the event that some evidenced by receiving his message that they were of the elect of God; others again would have nothing to do with it; and yet to them also the word of salvation was sent. It had a bearing on their case, as well as on the case of their neighbours. It spoke to each class alike and under the same character. They were alike addressed as sinners needing salvation. They each had the message of a salvation, suited to their need, and free to them, declared in their hearing. This message thus conveyed a certain obligation to its hearers. They must face the matter – accept or reject. There is no room for indifference.

When God's word tells a sinner of the evil of his ways, and calls upon him to turn, he is bound to give heed to it. He is bound to receive it, and with it a conviction of his lost estate. It will not suffice for one barely to acknowledge that the Scriptures make plain that all men by nature are ruined. There must be the warmth of personal conviction in the matter as affecting one's own highest interests, if the Scripture declarations on this subject are to be worthily treated. This then is the claim that the word of salvation makes on its hearers. Let them be persuaded of this point, and deeply convinced of its overmastering importance. They are lost, ruined, doomed. But it makes a further claim. It tells them of Christ in His suitableness as Saviour, and it calls for a cordial approval from them of this way of salvation. It calls on them to see and to acknowledge the glory of the Son of God, and the grace of the gospel of God. It calls upon them to consider the suitableness of the gospel for their need, and to examine and see whether, when it is so suited to their very case, it is possible for them to be interested in it.

It presses on their notice not only its suitableness and fulness, but also its freeness. No sinner need perish for want of a Saviour, if he has heard of the gospel. For Christ in the gospel is freely declared to the chief of sinners, freely held forth, freely offered. Thus, on the part of any sinner that hears the good tidings an approach is warranted to the throne of grace, an approach is warranted to the King of grace. The graciousness of the privilege calls for a corresponding return from those to whom it is extended. They are called upon to fall in with this way of life: but the claim assumes also the direct form of command. An obligation is imposed on sinners that can be got rid of only by rebellion, and refusal to give up the arms of rebellion. "God commands all men everywhere to repent." He commands all sinners to bow to the yoke of Christ. It is not a case of take if you please, or leave if you please. No; it is only at the peril of his everlasting damnation that a sinner who hears the gospel will dare to reject it. In rejecting it, there is a deliberate choice made of death rather than life, of curse rather than favour, of hell rather than heaven.

He who has received God's testimony once is called upon to continue to receive it. So saint and sinner alike have the obligation lying upon them to fall in with God's way of saving those that are lost.

[May 1904]

Notes of a Sermon.

By the late REV. CHRISTOPHER MUNRO, Strathy.

Preached at Kilmuir, Skye, in February, 1861.

“Thus said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army” – Ezekiel 37: 9,10.

A leaf is wanting in the MS., but at the point where it starts the preacher evidently represents Ezekiel as addressing the Lord.

“I am sensible of my weakness, and feel the responsibility of the duty so much that I fear I may not be able to do justice, to deliver Thy message as correctly as possible, and that I may be the cause of the work failing, if it be necessary to observe such accuracy in speaking Thy word.” “If afraid of this, Ezekiel (the Lord may be implied as answering), I shall go with thee, and direct thee, teach thee and keep thee right, which surely is not more difficult for Me to do than put life in the dry bones.”

Ezekiel goes and declares and speaks the words put into his mouth, speaks to the bones and declares unto them that it was the Lord’s purpose to restore them to life, and describes the process or the order in which the work was to be accomplished. Supposing two or more unbelievers as rationalists were to hear him, such a colloquy as this might take place between them. “See this man in the garb of a prophet, in yonder glen, down below, as if he were preaching. Let us go and see what he is about, and hear what he says, for, if it be no other benefit, it will while away so much time.” They agree to go. As they approach, they begin to hear his voice, and they say, “Now, let us listen.” “Ah,” says one, “he seems to be speaking to *bones*. Are there any bones here?” “Yes, I see the valley full of bones,” says the other.” He says he has a message from God to the bones. Surely he must be mad. Would the Creator, who is wise, ever think of sending so absurd a message? The thing is impossible. It is so contrary to all reason and to all experience that no sensible man could give heed to what he says. Shall we go up to him and remonstrate with him concerning his foolish procedure? We may; if it serve no other end, we’ll have some amusement, or get materials for turning the man and his doings into ridicule.”

Well, they come near, and accost the prophet, and ask him what he is doing there. “I am prophesying,” he replies. “To whom?” “To the dead bones you see all around.” “Who sent thee to prophesy? Surely you must be a false prophet, or else a man destitute of all common sense, when you spend time speaking to bones.” “I would say so too, but *the Lord* sent me and commanded me to speak to them His word.” “What did He command thee to say?” “That He will put life into them, and make them living men as they were at the beginning.” “Do you think that the all-wise Creator would send a message to bones, or that He will depart out of the ordinary course of nature to quicken men who have been long dead? We never heard of such a thing happening since men began to die, and we cannot believe that it is to take place now.” “I have no doubt (replies the prophet) of having been sent here by the Lord, and of having received this message, and I believe He is able to do what He has promised regarding them.” “But we question the fact of His sending you, and of His promising any such thing. And may you not see yourself that we have good ground for our opinion. It is contrary to reason to expect what you say is about to happen, and, moreover, we see no sign of any life among them, after all your prophesying and your pretensions to a heavenly message.” “All your reasoning and objections (the prophet again answers) do not move me, and if you have nothing more to state, you had better go your ways, and let me proceed with my work.” “There is no use speaking to this man; he is evidently of an unsound mind, a weak, fanatical, superstitious being, and so we better leave him and allow him to proceed in his own ways.”

Ezekiel proceeds with delivering his message, and it is possible he might have seen no effect upon them at first. Supposing he had not, he might have repeated it again and again, yet without any effect, and so begin to doubt himself and say unto the Lord, “I have now again

and again declared Thy message, and see nothing of the result that I was led to expect. I am now beginning to grow weary, and to think it useless to speak any longer.” “Thou art very impatient, Ezekiel; why despair so soon? Did I say *when* your prophesying would take effect? Did I mention a day or an hour?” “No,” replies Ezekiel. “If not, what makes you think of giving up? Dost thou doubt My word, my power, my purpose, my promise?” “No, Lord.” “If not, why despond; why not exercise patience and hope, and why not wait until my time comes?” “True, I have been guilty of impatience, and will now proceed in Thy name and wait.”

Before he gave up prophesying, the Lord’s work began; proofs of His power being at work began to appear. There was a stir among the bones. A noise was heard, a shaking was observed, and a movement was taking place; a bone here and there moving, and taking with great precision its own place in the skeleton. This was a sight worth seeing, wonderful when considered, and surely the prophet would be glad and encouraged, and would with peculiar interest observe what was taking place. He had, however, to continue prophesying, for he was not to desist till the work was done. And as this was so, he did not give way to wonder and curiosity, and run about and take notice how the work was going on, or hurry away to tell others that they might come and see the movement going on among the dry bones, which resulted from his preaching. He knew his work better, and so continued at the post of duty. It is likely the prophecy and the word kept pace with each other.

The first part was, “O, ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.” The effect of hearing was a noise and a shaking, and each bone came to its bone. The bones now show symptoms of hearing. The whole of the message is summed up in one sentence, “Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live.” This was good news to the dead. And it is to be noticed that its message consists of what the Lord was about to do, and not what they, or any other creature, could do. What He does comes of His goodwill, of His sovereign mercy and love. The bones could have no hand in the matter, no share in the work. Neither could Ezekiel; all he could do was to speak the word of the Lord. In putting breath into them there was something more necessary than merely to breathe on them. Therefore, He says, “I will lay sinews upon you, and bring up flesh upon you and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.” This work proceeded in a regular order, as all God’s work does. The hearing came in consequence of the call, “Hear ye the word of the Lord;” the sinews in connection with the promise that He would lay sinews on them; the flesh and the skin in the same manner. Thus the promise was fulfilled, and they were now ready for the last step – for the vital breath. The manner in which this took place is more minutely described, and must be deferred for consideration to some future time, if the Lord grant any.

Let me then, at present, direct your attention to some of the more important lessons taught us in this part of the chapter.

1. We may find here a general notion of that which constitutes the gospel. To express more correctly what I mean, we have the import of the gospel stated in a short compass, namely, a sovereign purpose on the part of God to save a people for Himself from among sinners of mankind, who are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and the manner in which He executes it, together with its results. This purpose includes all that it was necessary to contrive and to execute in order to save sinners consistently with the glory of God. In one word, it contains all that is meant by the covenant of grace – the fixing on the Son to be its head, the work given Him to do, the promises also given Him by the Father as to the fruits of His work, as well as those given Him in reference to the support needed by Him in carrying on His work. The end of all this was to bestow life on them; this was the command given Him by the Father, even to bestow eternal life on His people.

2. We thus learn, seeing sinners are dead, how entirely salvation is from God. Nothing can be more evident than that the dead cannot come to life, except through the exercise of divine power, and as clear is it that the sinner's salvation must come from God, and not from any other quarter.

3. We may also learn what external means the Lord has appointed for applying this salvation – namely, the preaching of the gospel by human instrumentality, by men sent by God Himself, to whom He commits the message of reconciliation and life.

4. We have here an intimation of the view in which God sees man by nature, and according to which they are to be addressed as dead souls, as “dry bones.” “O, ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.” This is similar to the command, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” “Thou art lost – sinful – dead in sins; hear, ye dead, hear, ye dry bones.” It was evident to the prophet that they were dry bones, so that he could not apply any other name to them. Men must be addressed as sinners, not as good, righteous people, or as people who need only advice, persuasion, and entreaty, but as individuals who need divine power to quicken them. Men now, as in former times, may not believe this, but it is the teaching of God's Word throughout. If men are so dead, the preaching of the word by itself cannot quicken sinners more than the words of the prophet could cause life to enter the bones. If it is, however, God's appointed way, it must be employed and persevered in, because He commands it.

5. We have an account here of the effect produced when God sends forth His power. The dry bones come to each other; then come the sinews, flesh and skin, and then life which is accompanied by faith and knowledge of the true God. So is it when He sends forth His power to convert sinners by the preaching of the gospel. There is just a noise and a shaking among them. There is produced conviction of sin, faith in the existence of God and of His being lawgiver, king and judge. The sinner at this stage is led to consider, to lay to heart and realise his relation to God, his duties towards Him, his chief end, and his destiny as an immortal and responsible being, and sees that he has sinned as to all his duties to God, and believes that he is therefore under the wrath and curse of God. He considers himself lost and undone, and is found exercised or occupied with the question, “What must I do to be saved?” He abstains from open sins; he endeavours to conform his conduct to the word of God; he studies and examines the Scriptures; he prays, and he uses all the means of grace. He is no longer a trifler in this matter; he carries about with him a sense of divine and eternal things; he makes progress in knowledge, not only of the law but of the doctrines of the gospel. The understanding is enlightened, the reason is exercised, the conscience asserts its place and performs its office. The necessity of a change of heart and will is not only believed but felt. Thus the man is brought into some shape, and moulded intellectually and externally according to the truth, but there is *no life*. Evangelical hope, repentance and love are not present till the soul is quickened. There may be much stir and noise where there is yet no life. There may be much conviction, brokenness of spirit or hope, much conformity without, much use of means, where there is no union to Jesus, without which there is no life, and consequently no salvation. This life, however, is to be communicated, and where this great change takes place, it is followed by the knowledge of the true God.

This knowledge is spiritual, for God is a spirit. Man lost it, as was observed in the first discourse on this vision. Adam was possessed of it at his creation, but none of his posterity has it in the least degree by nature. The creature's obtaining it is to him like coming to a new state of existence. In Scripture this change is compared to one passing from darkness into light and from death into life. All old things pass away, and all things are made new.

The Bible is to him a new book. Formerly he read it but understood it not; he felt little or no interest in it; he had no delight in it, and was ready to get weary and listless, when he either read it himself or heard another read it. But now it is to him the word of the living God,

the word of the blessed Saviour, the voice of the good Shepherd, of his beloved One, the words of eternal life. He therefore becomes earnest in studying it that he may know it and do it. He sees light here to guide him, and looks in it for all that can be known in this life of divine things, of God's character, will and salvation, for all also that can be known here concerning the world of spirits, concerning the future state of all living. He seeks not to false gods or visions. To the law and to the testimony is now his rule, and all others are laid aside as useless and sinful.

Prayer is a new thing. Formerly he might have been satisfied with going through a form, but now he looks upon this duty or religious exercise in the light of a means whereby intercourse with God is maintained, in which there is access to Him, or to His throne where the soul can make known his wants and find mercy and grace, or the supply of all his need.

The means of grace are likewise new. He uses these that he may grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Sabbath is new. He formerly felt it a burden, and considered it hard to be restrained from vanity and worldly talk and conversation; now he is disposed to call it a delight, the honourable of the Lord: he delights in it as a season which the Lord has sanctified for Himself and commands to be devoted to His service.

He delights in the Lord's house and in the meetings of His people; he is joyful when it is said unto him, "Let us go up into the house of God."

He aims at walking in the ways of all the divine commandments, endeavours to give new obedience thereto.

He is enlightened in the knowledge of Jesus as the Saviour, receives Him and trusts on Him alone for salvation. He needs Him as his mediator, as his prophet priest and king.

He believes in Him in this prophetic office as one whose office is to reveal the Father, to reveal His will and to teach the way of life.

He needs Him in His priestly office as one who made an atonement for sin, for the creature feels that he is a sinner and can have no intercourse with God but through this atoning Mediator.

He needs Him in his kingly office to save him from iniquity, from all evil and from his foes which he finds increasing continually. "O Lord, how are my foes increased? Against me many rise."

The soul sees in Christ an all-sufficient fulness. He hears Christ inviting the like of him to come to Him, and he comes and trusts in Him. The Lord Jesus is infinitely worthy of all this: the sinner believes Him to be so, rejoices because of its truth, and esteems Him altogether lovely.

Here then we see in what state sinners are, and how they can be delivered out of it, and the effects that follow this deliverance, from the consideration of which each here may learn whether he has been delivered or not.

Have you been awakened in any measure to a sense of your sinful and miserable condition? According to this portion of Scripture, have there been any noise and shaking among the dry bones? Have you been led to consider seriously what sin is, and what are your relation and duty towards God? Have you been led to study the Bible as the Word of God, and to conform your life to its precepts and directions? If not, there is as yet no life in you. You are dead, and, if so, how sad to think of your despising God, His truth, and salvation! Some, I fear, never think of Him at all, never think of calling on His name, of bowing before Him for mercy to their souls, for being delivered from death or from sin. How long are you determined not to have anything to do with your Creator, while sitting on a throne of mercy, while inviting you to come and to reason with Him, that your sins may be cleansed away, and that you may live. There is no folly like this. Hearken diligently, then, to His word, till He may render it a life-giving word, and that thus you may be made a partaker of eternal life.

Have you been moved and awakened, and life breathed into you? Then you must know the Lord God in Christ Jesus. This is the result, as you read here of being quickened unto life. And if you know Him, then you trust in Him, you fear Him, and endeavour to obey Him and love Him. You must acknowledge the fact that you are not your own, but His, that you are not at liberty to act as others do, or as the world without God do, but be ready to say, "Whatever others do, I and my house will serve the Lord." If you thus know Him, grow in knowledge and in grace. Follow closely in the footsteps of the flock, in the footsteps of Him who is their chief shepherd and great ensample, and when this Shepherd shall appear, then you shall be acknowledged as His, and obtain the reward, even that crown of glory that fadeth not away. To be crowned by Him with a crown of this description is of infinite blessedness.

Some of low degree in this life are apt to be elated if the high and honourable take any favourable notice of them, and more so if they bestow favours upon them, if they confer honours that are in themselves empty and perishing. But what are all favours and honours and rewards bestowed by men, however high and rich, compared to what Christ shall bestow on them who are His? And what disappointment like theirs who are vainly expecting to enter heaven when they shall be separated from his people and moved away to His left hand, which will at once deprive them of all hopes for ever and ever!

Is He not coming, is not the great day of the Lord fast approaching? Is not the time given for preparing for this greatest of all events rapidly shortening? Is it not near its termination with not a few? O, who can bear it, if unprepared for it? None.

The world seem to be becoming more and more forgetful of this day, and to live as if it were not to take place. Their indifference, however, shall not prevent its approach, for it is ordained by Him whose counsel shall stand, whose word shall not fall to the ground, but abideth for ever and ever. Be not deceived then as to its truths. Slumber not, lest you be found sleeping without oil in your lamps, and so be shut out, and dwell in the blackness of darkness for ever.

[June 1904]

A Sermon.

By the REV. JOHN R. MACKAY, M.A., Inverness.

"And 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 eternal life" – John 3:14,15.

These words were spoken by our Lord in the days of His flesh to Nicodemus. In the previous part of His utterances with Nicodemus, He showed the indispensable necessity of sinners of mankind being born of the Spirit, in order to their prizing the salvation of God. He now, in the words of our text, proceeds to set forth that salvation. In illustration of our need of a Saviour, of God's provision to meet that need, of the way in which perishing sinners become interested in that provision, and of the blessedness of those who become thus interested in it, He makes use of an incident which occurred during the wanderings of Israel

in the wilderness – an incident which we may look upon as furnishing one of the Old Testament types.

It is calculated that the Children of Israel were already thirty-eight years in the wilderness when (Numbers 21:5) “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.” On account of this ingratitude, God was much displeased, and sent fiery serpents among the people, so that much people of Israel died. Thereupon the sin of their ingratitude was in some measure brought home to their conscience, and the people pleaded with Moses that he would pray unto the Lord that He would take the serpents from them. This Moses did, and the Lord, because He will have compassion, according to the multitude of His mercies, commanded that a serpent of brass should be made and erected upon a pole with the assurance that every one who had been bitten, and who would look upon – that is, behold – the serpent of brass, would live. And the result was according to that word of promise, for we are told that “Moses made a serpent of brass and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived.” This incident in the history of Israel is made use of by Christ in order to illustrate the great theme of the salvation of perishing sinners. Let us then meditate for some time on the suitability of this illustration or type for the purpose for which it was used.

I. In both illustration and thing illustrated, or type and antitype, there are presupposed needs which are somewhat similar. The people of Israel had been literally bitten of serpents whose wound was deadly. We, too, have been bitten of serpents; we have all of us been bitten of that old serpent which is the devil and Satan. When the prince of devils first invaded this world it was through a literal serpent as an instrument that he approached our first parents, and hence we may suppose it is that he is called the old serpent. He proved our murderer, in a spiritual sense, and in order to his being a murderer he was and is first a liar. But his lie would not have proved our ruin if we had not believed it and acted upon it. In believing it we drank in iniquity like water, and that water was poisonous; it was deadly. Sin thus entered into the world, and death by sin.

May we not say (using a slightly different metaphor) that God had placed an high wall between the human race and ruin, for He plainly threatened that in the day in which the forbidden fruit was partaken of we should surely die. But that high wall we overleaped to our ruin when we believed the lie of the murderer, and of the father of lies, rather than the solemn truth of Him in whom we live and move and have our being, and who cannot lie. This was and is still Satan’s method for destroying precious souls. He can be a murderer only through being a liar, and it is through our belief of his lie that he can encompass his purposes of death. Do not our consciences tell us that in one form or another we have sought happiness in transgressing, at the instigation of the murderer, the revealed will of God?

Thus then we have been stung, for this deadly poison goes straight to the heart, and as David said to Saul, “Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked.” The greatest examples of wickedness in the world point to the still more fearful natural depravity of the human heart, for it is deceitful above everything and desperately wicked. This is spiritual death, and if mercy prevent not it must result not merely in the separation of the soul from the body, but in the everlasting separation of the soul and body from God. Such is the woeful condition by nature of every individual of the human race; for there is no difference, inasmuch as all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But not all are conscious of this their true state, and while they remain unconscious of it they are not in the least likely to appreciate deliverance from their misery. They that are whole have no need, that is no conscious need, of the physician. Now, it is for a people in such a state as this – a people ready to perish, who have believed and acted many times upon the murderer’s lie, and have thus been stung in a

deadly way, in a way affecting the very life of the soul – that God has been pleased in rich mercy to provide the remedy of which we are about to speak.

II. Proceed we then, in the second place, to meditate upon God's provision to meet the needs of perishing sinners. As regards the type, we are simply told that God, in answer to Moses' prayer, commanded that a serpent of brass should be made and erected upon a pole. It is not necessary for our present purpose to dwell long on this event in history, but it occurs to us to remark that God did not quite answer the people's prayer in the way in which they looked for it. They wished that, as an act of supreme power, the serpents should be removed. God ordered a serpent of brass to be erected on a pole. And may we not say that the Lord's people, who are often anxious of being bitten of serpents in a spiritual sense, would similarly wish that those serpents, together with those corruptions of theirs, that gives Satan such advantage against them, be wholly and forever removed; but God does not in their way answer that prayer. They must "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." It is the antitype or God's provision to meet the needs of sinners, stung with a sting, the natural effects of which are death manifold, is what, above all, we are called upon to contemplate in our meditations upon this portion of the word of God. That provision, in one word, is the Son of Man, made a curse.

This title, "the Son of Man," is one of the names of the Messiah promised to Israel as of old. Yet, although certainly a Messianic title (see Psalm 8:4 and Daniel 7:13), it was very rarely, if ever, in the mouth of the people as one of the names of the great Deliverer. We do not find that it was once used by the apostles during Christ's sojourn on this earth. On the other hand, it was the name by which our Lord most frequently spoke of Himself, and it was in keeping with Christ's manner, who did not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street, that in claiming Messiahship He should not assume the most popular Messianic title, but, on the contrary, the one most obscure, the one least commonly used by the people. It will take eternity to unfold the significance of this title, "the Son of Man," to Him who thus so constantly used it; but we shall not err if we say that there are at least three fundamental truths contained in this title, which we are called upon to consider.

In the first place this title lays emphasis on the truth and reality of His manhood, that He had a true body and a reasonable soul as surely as they had whom He came to save. It may appear strange, yet is it the fact that the first error concerning the person of Christ that troubled the Church was that of those who denied the reality of our Lord's manhood. Symptoms of this evil seem to have manifested themselves ere John died, and hence we may suppose it is that, as in the prologue to his Gospel he establishes the truth of the supreme deity of our Lord, so in the prologue to the 1st Epistle he appeals to the testimony of the senses of the apostles as establishing the reality of Christ's manhood. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard" – the appeal is to their sense of hearing – "which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon" – the appeal is to their sense of sight – "which our hands have handled of the Word of Life" – an appeal to their sense of touch. The senses in this matter were the proper witnesses, and their function in connection with Christianity is not unimportant within their own state. The reality of His manhood then, that in all things He was made like unto His brethren, sin only excepted, and that it is by Him who was man, true man, that life came, are truths taught us by this title, the Son of Man.

But again, for we are seeking to contemplate the object of faith, this title, Son of Man, as used by our Lord, occurs in relations which are fitted to teach us that, while He is truly a man, He is more than a mere man. Let me illustrate this from what we are told took place at the healing of the paralytic who was carried of four and let down through the roof of the house wherein at the time Jesus taught. When Jesus beheld their faith He immediately spoke, not of the healing of the paralysis, but of the forgiveness of the paralytic's sins. This language some who were present regarded as blasphemous. Jesus takes an instructive method of showing

that to forgive sins was a prerogative of the Son of Man even in the days of his flesh, and in showing this proved His own divinity. The error of the fault finders was not at all in saying that none could forgive sin but God only. For to forgive sins is equivalent to justifying, and that certainly is a divine prerogative. What then was the error of those fault finders? It was an error of blindness and unbelief. They did not apprehend that this person calling Himself the Son of Man was very God. But the truth of His divinity our Lord goes about to establish in a very instructive and interesting way. Whether, He asks, is it easier to say thy sins be forgiven thee or to say to the paralytic arise take up thy bed and walk? The obvious answer is that the two are competent only to the Infinite Being. Now the truth of His divinity, and consequently of His right to forgive sins, was one that could not be seen with the natural eye. But that one so disabled with paralysis as that it took four to carry him to the place where Jesus was should at the command of another take up his bed and walk away was something that the natural eye could see, and such a miraculous work was the proper proof to the natural reason of the truth of the claim to divinity of Him who performed it.

And here, by the way, let me observe a difference between the false miracles of Romanism and the true miracles of the gospel. In transubstantiation, for instance, deluded Papists are taught that when the priest blesses the bread, the bread becomes the soul and body and divinity of the Saviour. And yet their senses contradict the truth of this so-called miracle. They must acknowledge that to the sense of sight, of smell, and of touch, the bread appears exactly what it was before consecration. The gospel miracles argue from facts, which the senses may apprehend, to truths above their scope; the Popish miracle of transubstantiation contradicts the testimony of the senses. Now, the senses have their own function in the Christian religion; and for one to act contrary to the simplest truths, which even natural conscience and one's very senses might instruct one in, is an iniquity which God will judge. Our Lord Himself asks the disciples to make use of their senses when He says, "Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bone, as ye see me, have." And similarly, as already referred to, the Apostle John establishes the conscience of those to whom he writes concerning the truth of our Lord's humanity, by appealing to what they heard with their ears, to what they saw with their eyes, and to what the sense of touch also taught them, for their hands handled Him.

Here, then, our Lord demonstrates a truth which, from its very nature, could not fall within the ken of the senses, by a fact which comes naturally within that scope. He says to the paralytic, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk." It was done in His own name; it was an act of omnipotence. Immediately, the paralytic took up his bed and walked. In this way He showed that He was more than a mere man: He showed that He was Omnipotent: He showed that He was God manifest in the flesh; and having showed this, He thereby showed that He did not irreverently invade prerogatives which belonged to God only, when He said, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." It was a prerogative of the Son of Man even in the days of His flesh to forgive sins, for He did not cease to be God when He became man. It is with similar import that the title Son of Man occurs in the verse preceding our text. "No one," He says, "hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man, who is in heaven." The Son of Man, then, is not only Omnipotent; He is Omnipresent. He is God with us, with two distinct natures in one divine Person for ever. This title, then, occurs in such relations and circumstances as to show that the second man is the Lord from heaven, the Lord of glory.

In the third place we are to note that this title "Son of Man" occurs in circumstances that are fitted to teach us that He is the only Mediator between God and man. That Mediatorship involves two states, that of humiliation and that of exaltation, and in relation to both these states this title very frequently occurs. Let me remind you of a few salient passages. "The Son of Man," He says, "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and to give his life a

ransom for many.” The Son of Man, then, is a minister – that is, a servant. He is the servant of Jehovah. That service involves suffering – He gives Himself a ransom. It involves deep poverty – “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.” The Son of Man, as the servant of Jehovah, came to save that which was lost; and, therefore, the Son of Man must be set at nought, must be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, must be condemned and put to death – “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;” for He was thus signifying what manner of death He should die. This service, however, goes not without its reward. The Son of Man, the servant of Jehovah who suffered so many things, who was betrayed, must rise again from the dead on the third day, and must be glorified. The Son of Man was to come in the glory of His Father and all His angels, and then would He give to each according as His work should be – “For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of Man be in his day.” (See Luke 17:24,37.) The Son of Man, who is true God and real man, is the only Mediator between God and man. This, then, dear friends, is He whose name is as ointment poured forth, the righteous love Him. Is the Son of Man precious to you? This is He who is as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Have you fled to Him for shelter? Surely He is attractive.

But this Son of Man, attractive in His Person and office, is attractive as a sacrifice. He is lifted up. He is the antitype of the serpent of brass. In what way? By the manner of His death. He suffered the death of the cross. He was thus made a curse for us: for it is written, “Cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree.” Death by crucifixion was meted out, according to the law of Israel, only for the very worst malefactors. When Christ then was crucified He suffered the penalty of the worst kind of malefactors. Not that He personally deserved it, for personally He was innocent; but *officially*, and in the sight of God, He was guilty, and that because the sins of others were imputed to Him. He on that account suffered the penalty of the worst transgressions. This in no wise makes the Jews innocent of their crime in the matter. One has truly said that “the soul of His sufferings was the sufferings of His soul,” so we may say that the sufferings of His body, whereby He was made a curse, were but the indicator by which we may faintly read what were the infinite sufferings of His soul – the sufferings flowing from the awakened sword of divine justice. Let their sin-sick souls behold the Son of Man made a curse for them!

Now, these great sufferings, we are told, were necessary. He *must* be lifted up. Why must He?

(a) From the necessity of the divine decree. This is a matter alluded to by Peter on the day of Pentecost: “Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” Many in all ages would like to exclude the prerogative of God to determine every event. We have, on the contrary, from our infancy been taught that “the decrees of God are his eternal purpose whereby, according to the counsel of his will, he hath for his own glory foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.” God has a plan embracing everything in heaven, earth, and hell, and we may say that Christ crucified is the heart of hearts in that plan. And if the whole was foreordained even as it shall come to pass, surely that which occupies such a place in the plan as the death of the Son of God was settled from all eternity in the divine purpose. There is a necessity of His being lifted up which arises from the nature of the divine decree.

(b) Again, there is a necessity arising from the nature of divine love. This necessity, which arises from the nature of divine love, is what is brought out in the verse immediately succeeding our text: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son,” etc. This love, which saves perishing sinners, could be shown only in a way consistent with the holiness, the justice, the truth of God. But when this love saves sinners through the

incarnation, the death, and the resurrection of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, sinners are saved in a way which is glorifying to all the divine attributes. Now, it was the good pleasure of His will that the greatness of this love towards the lost should be shown in the sacrifice of the Son of God, that thus grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life. And in view of the unity of purpose which subsists in the Person of the Godhead, it was impossible but that this purpose, which was of the Father, should also be through the Son.

(c) Yet, again, the Son of Man must be lifted up in order that the scriptures should be fulfilled. The scriptures were like cords by which this sacrifice was bound to the altar. Very instructive it is to read the gospels, and especially Matthew, in this connection. We were guilty of contemning the counsel of the Most High, and, in thus slighting His counsel, of destroying ourselves. But He who saves us must be One who, so far from contemning the counsel of the Most High, will honour and glorify it. Thus, His whole wonderful and mysteriously-beautiful life under the law was spent in honouring the divine counsel, in fulfilling the scriptures, in fulfilling the word of God. Was it not in fulfilment of that word that He became incarnate? – “Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and he shall be called the wonderful, the counsellor, the mighty God.” It was not by chance that He was of the tribe of Judah, of the family of David. There was a must needs be in the matter – for

“The Lord in truth to David swear,
He will not turn from it:
I of thy body’s fruit will make
Upon thy throne to sit.”

There, was a necessity of His being born in Bethlehem, for thus it is written by the prophet, “And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah, for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people Israel.” It was not by chance that He went down into Egypt. Cords stronger than bind heaven and earth in their place bound Him to it. It is written, “Out of Egypt have I called My Son. So in like manner might we instance the necessity of His coming to Nazareth, of His speaking so much in parables, of His giving commandment so frequently concerning His miracles that they should be told to no man. It was all in order that the Scripture should be fulfilled. For the things concerning Him had *an end*. And in order that the Scripture should be fulfilled He must be the antitype of the brazen serpent, He must be made a curse, He must be numbered among transgressors; the sword of divine justice must be awakened against Him. Ah! He must be lifted up, in order that the Word of God should be fulfilled. We were wounded through the belief of the lie. Salvation is to be wrought out by One who honours the Word of God in an inexpressibly glorious way. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. And that this was His own view of the necessity of His sufferings is plain from Matthew 26:53, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray the Father and He shall presently give Me twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled;” His body must be broken, but the Scriptures cannot.

In the last place there is a necessity of His being lifted up, of His bearing the penalty, from the nature of divine justice. It was freely that this business of fulfilling the conditions of the covenant of redemption were undertaken by Him from all eternity in the divine counsels. But now we are to regard Him as having undertaken to perfect these conditions; we are to regard Him as having actually put His hand to the plough; we are to regard Him as made under the law, and as one to whom sin is imputed. There is in that case a necessity arising from the nature of divine justice that He suffer the penalty which that sin deserves. And if these things be done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? If sin when borne by the personally blameless Lamb of God cannot from the nature of divine justice go unpunished,

yea cannot go without its adequate punishment, how shall those who bear their own sins, especially how shall such as refuse to submit to this righteousness of God, which is brought near to us in the Gospel, expect anything else than that they should die in their sins, and eternally bear the penalty of their personal sinfulness? This, we repeat, is the antitype of the brazen serpent. This is God's provision under the Gospel for perishing sinners. Now, what is the reason for crying so much about this object of faith? Because naturally we are prone to look for salvation from some other source than the only name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved. And the Holy Spirit may be pleased to make some part of Christ's glory and excellency irresistibly attractive to perishing sinners, to sin-sick souls, for a glimpse by faith of Him is what is essential to our comfort and salvation.

III. We inquire, in the third place, into the suitability of this illustration to show forth the manner in which perishing sinners become interested in this provision made by God. In Israel, according to the flesh, there was not only a brazen serpent provided, but proclamation was made throughout the camp of Israel, which probably would have covered a space of ground not less than three miles square, that whosoever was bitten of the fiery serpents should look to the serpent of brass, with the assurance that when they beheld the serpent of brass they should be healed. To behold – *to get at least a glimpse* – of the serpent was essential. Not unlike to this is God's way in the gospel. He sends forth His heralds to the ends of the world, testifying concerning this glorious provision of the blessed God, not only that the Son of Man came to do the will of Him that sent Him, and that this is the will of Him that sent Him, that of all whom the Father hath given Him, He should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day, but also that this is the will of Him that sent Him, that whosoever should see the Son (should behold Him as they beheld the serpent of brass of old), and believe upon Him (or trust in Him) should have eternal life, and that He will raise him up at the last day. In other words, ambassadors of the gospel are to proclaim that, as the beholding, or catching a glimpse, of the serpent of brass was the condition of getting a benefit from the serpent of brass, so faith in the Son of Man made a curse for us, is not the meritorious, but the instrumental condition of sinners getting a saving benefit of this glorious provision of God in the gospel. How ought we to think of this faith? It is a taste, not a natural taste for natural food, but a spiritual taste for the Bread of God. It is an apprehension through the Spirit of the deep things of God. It is a right, not a natural faculty for seeing natural objects, but spiritual right to behold spiritual objects. "We have seen His glory," said they, "as of the only begotten of the Father." It is a new sense of spiritual hearing. "Incline your ear," saith the Lord by Isaiah, "hear, and come unto me, and your soul shall live, and I will make with you an everlasting Covenant." It is, in one word, "a Spirit-wrought trust in an all sufficient Mediator." The object of it is the Son of Man. It is the Holy Spirit that works this trust in the heart. The instrument by which it is wrought is the gospel, read or heard. But it is the individual perishing sinner that must exercise this trust. This faith, which is of the operation of God, is yet a trust which the gospel imposes as a duty upon every sinner of mankind that hears it. For is not Christ all-sufficient? Is not each sinner's warrant to trust in Him unimpeachable? Is not each sinner's need of being interested in Him so great that he or she might reasonably be expected to agonise to get a glimpse of this glorious object?

IV. In the last place we notice the suitability of the illustration to teach us the blessed results of a hearty trust in the Redeemer. In the case of the type we are told that it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. But in the case of the type whosoever believeth in the Son of Man, who was made a curse for us, shall not perish, but shall have eternal life. The proper-effect of beholding the serpent of brass was but to add a few years to one's natural life, but to behold the Lamb of God infallibly resulted in our being delivered from an endless hell, and in our being put in possession of

endless felicity, yea of eternal life, of an eternal weight of glory. Who can comprehend all the difference between heaven and hell? Who can comprehend the blessedness of being saved from the latter, of being put in possession of the former. But this is the alternative. If we despise and neglect this great salvation our condition will be immeasurably more intolerable than that of those who never heard of this salvation. "For this is the condemnation that light hath come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." If, on the other hand, through the mercy of God we make choice of the good part, then eternity shall not hear the end of our song of praise to Him who rescued us from so great a misery, and who put us in possession of so great glory.

Have you, my friends, realised your need of Christ, the antitype of the brazen serpent? Has the Son of Man, made sin for us, become the all in all to you? Have you seen rich divine power and graciousness in Christ and Him crucified as that you could not but commit to Him the saving of your soul altogether? It is worth thinking of, that in the case of the remedy of the brazen serpent, it was not the effort it cost one to get a view of the brazen serpent that was of consequence; what was of consequence was that the object lifted up upon the pole should become visible to the person wounded. It would doubtless have caused some persons more exertion than others. Similarly what is of consequence in the great matter of the saving of the sinner is that a spiritual view of Christ crucified, the wisdom of God and the power of God, be obtained, so as that one is sweetly yet irresistibly drawn to put one's confidence for time and eternity in Him. And let no one seeking to come to God by this way fear that he will not be welcome. For what is it that renders the name hateful but his want of righteousness? Now Christ crucified will be your righteousness if you, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, but submit to and accept of Him. See that ye despise not so great a salvation. [July 1904]

Sermon

Preached before the Synod in Inverness, 5th July, 1904,

By the REV. ALEX. STEWART, Edinburgh.

“And I say also unto thee That thou art Peter, and upon this Rock will I build my church,
and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” – Matthew 16:18.

When Christ came to the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi He asked His disciples the question, “Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” There is divine wisdom manifested in the way in which he led up to the subject with which He desired to confront them. For it is not principally what other men thought of Him that Christ desired to hear: He wished to hear what His own disciples thought of Him, and He wished to hear it from their own lips. So He led them first of all to speak of the views which they had been hearing expressed round about them. That is the setting in which He wishes *their* confession placed. That is the background over against which He desires it set, the erroneous and conflicting conceptions of the unenlightened mind. These opinions He leads them to set forth, first, that their own testimony may appear all the more decided and unmistakeable by reason of the a contrast.

They told Him what men were saying. And what strikes us first of all regarding the popular view is the lack of unanimity which it displays. Some said one thing, some another. They were not of one mind or of one speech. There is not here the harmony of belief which is the mark of those who drink at a common Fountain of Knowledge, and listen to one instructing voice. And as it was in the past, so it is still. When men are left to their own speculations, there is always disagreement in their views concerning Christ. They are at variance among themselves. Some advocate one theory, some another. So true is it that in this great Mystery of Godliness human reason is no reliable guide. We need a more sure word of prophecy. We need the light of heaven itself, shining in the dark place of our ignorance and our folly.

In refreshing contrast with this discord is the harmony that prevailed among those who were taught of the Father in heaven. One man speaks for them all. When Christ turns to His disciples and says, "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter does not reply, "Well, this is John's view, and this is James's view, and this other is Andrew's view, and my own is different from them all." "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God," said Peter, and he expressed the thought of every heart. And it is the same still. There are many things about which, unhappily, the people of God are not agreed among themselves. There are many things about which they do not yet see eye to eye – forms of church government, modes of worship, and other principles and practices of various kinds. But there is one question regarding which the whole family in heaven and on earth speak with one voice. When they are asked "Whom do ye say that I am," one man answers for them all: Peter has answered for them already. And the answer is. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

But we should not forget that this very diversity of view regarding Christ has a certain value of its own. It is a testimony to the many sidedness of His character. All these opinions indeed come short of the truth, as the gropings of the unaided understanding ever must; yet the fact that Christ produced such different impressions on different minds is an evidence of the manifold aspects of character which He manifested. Some said He was Elijah. The majesty and dignity of His character, His stern denunciation of evil, His vindication of the claims of Jehovah, His unwavering adherence to truth, reminded them most of all of the Prophet of Fire. To others He had all the tenderness and soft pity of a weeping Jeremiah. Others He reminded of some one else of the prophets. In Christ you have all the prophets in one. All the strength and beauty and majesty and meekness, and zeal and tenderness and love, which distinguished one or other of the prophets in outstanding measure are found in Him in perfect degree and in the most harmonious combination. He has the strength of each and the weakness of none.

"But whom say ye that I am?" In putting this question to His disciples Christ had manifestly in view a definite end in connection with His public work. It is not merely that it was sweet and refreshing to Him after the jarring misconceptions of the world to hear the voice of those who had heard and learned of the Father, the voice of the dove in the cleft of the Rock; the question was meant to serve a more distinctive purpose. The time had now come when Christ must plainly tell His followers certain truths which should appear strange and distasteful to them. He must tell them about His sufferings and death. Hitherto His references to the Cross had been veiled and obscure; the disciples were not ripe for a fuller disclosure. It needed a deep and solid foundation of knowledge to bear the weight of that awful truth. The necessary prerequisite was an assured conviction of the glory of His Person. Without that conviction the Cross must have overwhelmed them. But a firm grasp of the truth concerning His Divine glory and His Messiahship should have interpreted the Cross for them, and caused light to shine through the darkness and the shame. So we find that their apprehension of this truth has been gradually increasing in clearness and strength. It was the outcome not so much of His specific teaching on the subject as of His Life and Work among them. What He was and what He did were allowed to convey their own impression and communicate their own teaching. In connection with the first miraculous draught of fishes, for example, and again after the great apostacy when they were asked to contemplate the prospect of following the many who went back and walked with Him no more, we find the disciples plainly confessing their faith, concerning His Person and Office. There was this difference, however, between then and now. All these previous confessions may be said to have been wrung from them in the white heat of excitement. They were uttered in the midst of trying circumstances, when the disciples were deeply moved. What Christ wishes to hear now, and this not least for their own good, is the calm and deliberate expression of their settled convictions.

And when Christ comments on this testimony what He emphasises in it, first of all, still with His disciples' good in view, is its heavenliness. He wishes them to realise that their faith does not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. "Blessed art thou Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." The knowledge at which Peter had arrived had not been attained through his own speculations; it was not merely a shrewd inference of his own judgment; it was not due to the more penetrating keenness of Peter's discernment or the more powerful grasp of Peter's understanding. It came direct from heaven. Why does Christ lay stress on this fact? To assure His disciples, with the sifting experiences of after days before His eye, that this was no delusion that had taken possession of their minds. The conclusions of flesh and blood are always fallible; there is always the element of uncertainty and of misconception and of incompleteness. What we assert with the greatest emphasis to-day we have often to retract to-morrow. But it is not so here. This is the result of the Father's own teaching. There is no room for misconception or uncertainty. This is no dream of the fancy, no creation of a temporary emotion, no distorted fragment of truth that must be modified with a fuller accession of light. It is truth itself, complete, eternal, unchangeable.

Christ proceeds to unfold to His disciples the significance of their testimony. First of all it has a particular significance for Peter himself. "And I say also unto thee that thou art Peter." Simon now gets a new name. That new name had been promised him at his first interview with Christ. When Andrew had brought forward his brother to the Saviour he himself had already found near the banks of the Jordan, Christ had seen in the rough weather-beaten fisherman of Galilee the rock-like apostle of the days to come; and, with Cæsarea Philippi before His mind, had said to him "Thou shalt be called called Peter." The new name is the outward symbol of the new nature. Simon has now manifested that he has received a new nature. The confession he has first made is the evidence of it, He is a new man, and it is fitting that he should have a new name.

But Christ does not stop at Peter in unfolding the significance of this testimony. He proceeds to show its meaning with reference to the whole body of believers. "Upon this Rock will I build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." There are three truths brought before us in these words that call for consideration –

- I. The Rock.
- II. The Church built on the Rock.
- III. The security of the Church because it is built on the Rock.

I. The Rock.

I am not going to waste time in proving that the Rock is not Peter. I need only remind you of the very significant difference of termination between the word translated "Peter" and the word translated "rock," and merely add that if the reference were to Peter the manner of expression used here would be singularly indirect and unnatural. The Rock is Christ, the Person to whom Peter had borne such wonderful testimony. Let us look again at Peter's words "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

Take that expression to begin with, "The Living God." What a wealth of glory we have here. It is deep as the Fountain of the Being of Jehovah. He is Living, not only in contrast with all other gods, the dumb lifeless idols, "which blinded nations fear." He is living in the sense that His life is from Himself. His Being is underived. He is self-existent, independent. The Father hath Life in Himself. The Fountain of His Life has been filled from no other source. It has always been full: it has never been filled.

Now here is the Son of the Living God, and He is living Himself. For His Sonship implies identity of nature and equality of glory with the Father. He is not lower in nature. He is the Brightness of the Father's glory. All the infinite perfections of Supreme Godhead are

His. The Jews clearly recognised that this was involved in Sonship. When Christ asserted that He was the Son they accused Him of blaspheming, because He made Himself “equal with God.” The Son is the Father’s Equal. One thing more may be mentioned as implied in this relation, and that is Communion, deep mysterious unbroken Communion, the fellowship of a mutual love that knows no limit and suffers no change. Nearly always when the Sonship of Christ is mentioned in the Scriptures you find associated with it the thought of Fellowship. The Word not only was God, but was *with* God. The Only-begotten Son is in the Bosom of the Father. This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.

There is something else, too, along with this, we must bear in mind before we can realise how wonderful Peter’s confession really was. We are so accustomed to hear the Divinity of Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed that it has become to us well-nigh a commonplace. We have almost ceased to wonder. It is part of the heritage of theological truth on which we enter from our earliest years. But think how different was the case of Peter. There stood One among the disciples who was in many respects like one of themselves. He had a true body and a reasonable soul. They knew that He had been born in Bethlehem. They knew the circumstances of His birth. They knew Mary who bore Him. They were familiar with His brethren. He was poor and obscure in station. He had handled the carpenter’s tools in Joseph’s workshop. He was subject to weariness and pain; He felt the pangs of hunger and thirst. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Where is His Throne? Where is the resistless army He is to lead on to victory? Where are the splendours and the magnificence of heavenly royalty? He is despised and rejected of men. His claims are denied and ridiculed. And think, too, in connection with that, how often it happens among ourselves that we fail to recognise worth and merit just because it happens to be at our side. Our very closeness to it, strange as it may appear, obscures our vision. Familiarity, as we say, breeds contempt, or if not, at least it blunts our perception. It needs distance and the lapse of time to give us the just sense of proportion, to bring out the true perspective. We neglect and despise our prophets while they are with us, and when they are gone we begin to build their sepulchres.

Now all this about Christ must have been before Peter’s mind; it must have been clearly present to his consciousness; but through that, and beyond that, his faith passed to take hold of this other truth, here is the Son of God. The Son of man is the Son of God. In heaven’s own light flashing in upon his soul Peter saw, beneath the veil of humanity and earthly obscurity, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. Whom do men say that I *the Son of Man*, am? Thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God.

But there is more implied in Peter’s words than a perception of the glory of Christ’s Person. They indicate likewise a knowledge of His Office. Thou art the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One. We have here, not only the Son, but the Servant. This is He who had been promised and prefigured, looked for, longed for, prayed for, throughout the successive generations of the Church of God from the beginning of the world. This is He of whom Moses and the prophets did speak; this is He of whom the sacrifices and the types, the manna, and the smitten Rock, and the brazen serpent, and all the other foreshadowings of the coming Deliverer did testify: This, in a word, is the Saviour, anointed for His official work, a prophet to reveal unto us the Father, a priest to reconcile us unto God by His Blood, a King to win and rule and defend us.

This then is the Rock, the Church’s only Foundation, Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, and at the same time the Son of Man, in the glory of His Person as Emmanuel, and in the completeness of His saving work as the Anointed of the Lord.

II. The Church built upon the Rock.

A great deal might be said regarding the figure that is here employed. The Church is spoken of as a Building. That figure fittingly represents its function in the world. The Church is a house, or dwelling-place, the dwelling-place of the Living God Himself. The Church is a city, the “strong city” of God, which hath salvation “for walls and bulwarks.” The Church is a temple, where believers, as a spiritual priesthood, offer up spiritual sacrifices on God’s own altar, which is Christ. The Church is a fortress where dwell the good soldiers of Jesus Christ, whom He calls to engage in the conflict with Satan and sin and error in the world. There is a wide and interesting field of meditation opened up before us in that direction; but I forbear to enter it now. There are three truths on which I seek to fix your attention in connection with the Church.

(a) Notice, first of all, that word “My” – My church. There you have the quiet dignity of conscious power and assured possession. My Church, although as yet He had only that despised and feeble following, although He was on nearly every hand despised and rejected of men! But at that hour in Cæserea Philippi, the future, in all the glory of its triumphs, rose up before His view. He saw through the centuries the building in its completeness. He saw the design realised in the finished work. He saw the “lively stones,” coming from north, south, east, and west, as numerous and as bright as the stars of the sky or the drops of the summer dew. He saw the walls rise up in stateliness and beauty, until at length the head-stone is brought forth with shoutings; and the Holy City, new Jerusalem, comes down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. His they were by manifold rights. They were His by right of gift. They were a love-gift from the Father to the Son. Love gave them and love received them, though the giving of them meant that God should bruise and put to grief His own Son, and the taking of them meant for that Son Gethsemane and Calvary. They were His by right of creation. By Him all things were made. All things in heaven and on earth were created by Him and for Him. They were His by right of Redemption. Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. He loved them, and redeemed them unto God by His Blood. And they were His finally, by right of conquest. He won them, and brought them to give themselves to Him in glad and willing self surrender.

(b) This leads me to the second point, and that is to consider the meaning of this word Church. The word translated Church means an assembly of people that are called, called out. This is what constitutes the Church. It is made up of those who have been “called out” from the world into union and communion with Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Let us dismiss from our minds every thought about buildings, the material structures made up of wood and stone which we call churches. Let us dismiss, too, for the time being the distinction between different sects and denominations throughout the Christian commonwealth. It is a necessity for the present that there be separate outward organisations; but the question that lies at the root of this matter is not whether a man is an Episcopalian or an Independent or a Baptist or a Presbyterian: if he has been called by the Spirit of God, quickened in soul, then he belongs to the Church of Christ whatever denomination he may be connected with among men. When I say that I do not wish to be understood as minimising in the least degree the importance of a distinctive testimony for the Truth. We need not be much moved by a great deal of the superficial talk that is heard on every hand regarding this subject to-day, the talk about sinking differences, and recognising only what we have in common, and acknowledging the good in every system of belief. These are among the platitudes that are declaimed in the name of Christian charity, with varying degrees of loudness and vehemence, among all kinds of religious circles, from the General Assembly to the popular bazaar. A great deal of that kind of talk, let us say at once, is about the most sickening kind of cant in the world. Wherever men honestly love the Truth of God they will be ready to stand up for every jot and tittle of it: whenever the truth depreciates in value in their eyes they will be ready to sacrifice parts of it for the sake of external unity. Different denominations are an

unfortunate necessity in the present state of the world, and it is the duty of every rational being to seek the communion of that body which adheres most closely to the pattern shown on the mount, which is most closely conformed to the Scriptural model. But while all this is recognised, it must not be forgotten on the other hand that the Church is a spiritual society, an assembly, of souls who have been quickened by the Spirit of God, born from above, and united by faith to the Person of Jesus Christ. Wherever there are those who have been made partakers of this heavenly calling there is a deeper unity among them, underlying all outward differences, than is found among others, who may subscribe the same creed, and hold the same principles, and join in the same worship.

(c) Notice again the blessed assurance contained in the words "I will build." There you have the note of certainty, of fixed resolve, of unflinching purpose. *I will build*; not another. He is the Foundation and He is the Builder. This work also He has reserved for Himself. He does not delegate it to any other. None else could carry it through. But when He says "I will build," there is the pledge and assurance of success. No matter how strong death and sin and Satan may be; no matter how great the enmity and the unwillingness of men; no matter how fierce the opposition the work encounters, and how mighty the difficulties, He shall not fail nor be discouraged till He bring forth judgment unto victory.

III. The security of the Church because it is built on the Rock.

The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The expression "the gates of hell" is sometimes regarded as equivalent merely to the word "hell." On that view the words simply mean that the Church shall never perish. It possesses an undying life. The gates of hell shall never open to receive it. But there is undoubtedly more implied in the words than that. There is plainly the idea of conflict, of an attempt to storm and destroy the Church. In those days cities were usually enclosed within walls, and a great deal of important business was done at the gates. There the elders met to deliberate, there often judgment was decreed, and there councils of war were held. The leaders of the people assembled at the gates, and put their heads together, and brought forth their collective experience and skill. From this fact the expression used here is apparently borrowed. "The gates of hell" is a way of describing the complete resources of Satan, all his strength and malice and subtlety.

Satan is the avowed and inveterate enemy of Christ and His Church. He is waging continual war against the followers of the Lamb, He will leave no stone unturned to pluck them out of their Saviour's hand. Not with flesh and blood has the Church to wrestle, not with confederacies of human strength, however formidable; but with the principalities and powers of hell, with wicked spirits in high places.

Well, the promise given here is that it is the Church of Christ that shall prevail in this conflict and not Satan. How abundantly have the words been fulfilled already. Satan has been attacking the Church throughout the generations, and he has continually been foiled. Sometimes he has come with the storm of persecution, and the blood of the martyrs has flowed in copious streams, but the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the Church. Where one man fell ten men were ready to step into his place; and the ranks closed up again. The bush has been burning, but it has not been consumed. Sometimes he has come with floods of error, and many who promised well may have been led astray; nevertheless the foundation of God has stood sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His. Sometimes he assaults with the blasts of temptation. He tempts the believer to sin, or to doubt, or to despair. He treads his life down to the ground. He causes pain and darkness. He leads him to stumble and fall, yet not all the devices of the Tempter can separate a believing soul from Jesus Christ; not all the strength of hell can dislodge him from the Rock.

Two elements go to make up the security of any building. The first is that it have a solid foundation. No building, we say, is stronger than its foundation. If the foundation is unreliable the structure raised upon it shall not stand. Who can estimate the strength of this

foundation? Who can define the stability of the Rock? Who can measure the might of Christ's right arm, the efficacy of His atoning sacrifice, the power of His risen life? There, to begin with, lies the security of the Church.

But that other element is this, that the structure be well and truly laid on the foundation. However solid the foundation may be, if there is defective Workmanship in the building, it will not stand any great strain. He who is the Foundation of the Church is likewise its Builder. The work of applying Redemption is His own. It is as divine a work as the procuring of it. Christ's own hands lay the stones on the Rock. He unites the souls of His people to Himself by the power of His own Spirit. The work of grace shall never fail.

Though hill amid the seas be cast,
Though waters roaring make
And troubled be; yea though the hills
By swelling seas do shake,

the Church of Christ need not be afraid concerning its eternal security; for it is built on the Rock of Ages by the hand of a divine workman, and therefore the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. [August 1904]

A Sermon

By the REV. GEORGE WHITEFIELD.

Preached in the High Church-yard, Glasgow, on Sabbath, 13th September, 1741.

[This Sermon (entitled "The Method of Grace") is taken from the book on
"The Revivals of the 18th Century," particularly at Cambuslang. – ED.]

"They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying,
Peace, peace, when there is no peace" – Jeremiah 6:14.

As God can send a nation or people no greater blessing than to give them faithful, sincere, and upright ministers, so the greatest curse that God can possibly send upon a people in this world, is to give them over to blind, unregenerate, carnal, lukewarm, and unskilled guides. And yet, in all ages, we find that there have been many wolves in sheep's clothing, many that daubed with untempered mortar, that prophesied smoother things than God did allow. As it was formerly, so it is now; there are many that corrupt the Word of God and deal deceitfully with it.

It was so in a special manner in the prophet Jeremiah's time; and he, faithful to his Lord, faithful to that God who employed him, did not fail from time to time to open his mouth against them, and to bear a noble testimony to the honour of that God in whose name he from time to time spake. If you will read his prophecy, you will find that none spake more against such ministers than Jeremiah, and here especially in the chapter out of which the text is taken, he speaks very severely against them – he charges them with several crimes; particularly, he charges them with covetousness: "For," says he in the 13th verse, "from the least of them even to the greatest of them, every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely." And then, in the words of the text, in a more special manner, he exemplifies how they had dealt falsely, how they had behaved treacherously to poor souls: says he, "They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace."

The prophet, in the name of God, had been denouncing war against the people, he had been telling them that their house should be left desolate, and that the Lord would certainly visit the land with war. "Therefore," says he in the 11th verse, "I am full of the fury of the Lord; I am weary with holding in; I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of young men together; for even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged

with him that is full of days. And their houses shall be turned unto others, with their fields and wives together; for I will stretch out My hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord.” The prophet gives a thundering message, that they might be terrified and have some convictions and inclinations to repent: but it seems that the false prophets, the false priests, went about stifling people’s convictions, and when they were hurt or a little terrified, they were for daubing over the wound, telling them that Jeremiah was but an enthusiastic preacher, that there could be no such thing as war among them; and saying to people, Peace, peace, be still, when the prophet told them there was no peace.

The words, then, refer primarily unto outward things, but I verily believe have also a further reference to the soul, and are to be referred to those false teachers, who, when people were under conviction of sin, when people were beginning to look towards heaven, were for stifling their convictions and telling them they were good enough before. And, indeed, people generally love to have it so; our hearts are exceedingly deceitful, and desperately wicked; none but the eternal God knows how treacherous they are. How many of us cry, Peace, peace, to our souls, when there is no peace! How many are there who are now settled upon their lees, that now think they are Christians, that now flatter themselves that they have an interest in Jesus Christ; whereas if we come to examine their experiences, we shall find that their peace is but a peace of the devil’s making – it is not a peace of God’s giving – it is not a peace that passeth human understanding. It is matter, therefore, of great importance, my dear hearers, to know whether we may speak peace to our hearts. We are all desirous of peace; peace is an unspeakable blessing; how can we live without peace? And, therefore, people from time to time must be taught how far they must go, and what must be wrought in them, before they can speak peace to their hearts. This is what I design at present, that I may deliver my soul, that I may be free from the blood of all those to whom I preach – that I may not fail to declare the whole counsel of God. I shall, from the words of the text, endeavour to show you what you must undergo, and what must be wrought in you before you can speak peace to your hearts.

But before I come directly to this, give me leave to premise a caution or two. And the first is, that I take it for granted you believe religion to be an inward thing: you believe it to be a work in the heart, a work wrought in the soul by the power of the Spirit of God. If you do not believe this, you do not believe your Bibles. If you do not believe this, though you have got your Bibles in your hands, you hate the Lord Jesus Christ in your heart; for religion is everywhere represented in Scripture as the work of God in the heart. “The kingdom of God is within us,” says our Lord; and “He is not a Christian who is one outwardly; but he is a Christian who is one inwardly.” If any of you place religion in outward things, I shall not perhaps please you this morning; you will understand me no more when I speak of the work of God upon a poor sinner’s heart, than if I were talking in an unknown tongue. I would further premise a caution, that I would by no means confine God to one way of acting. I would by no means say, that all persons, before they come to have a settled peace in their hearts, are obliged to undergo the same degrees of conviction. No; God has various ways of bringing His children home; His sacred Spirit bloweth when, and where, and how it listeth. But, however, I will venture to affirm this, that before ever you can speak peace to your heart, whether by shorter or longer continuance of your convictions, whether in a more pungent or in a more gentle way, you must undergo what I shall hereafter lay down in the following discourse.

First, then, before you can speak peace to your hearts, you must be made to see, to feel, made to weep over, made to bewail, your actual transgressions against the law of God. According to the covenant of works, “The soul that sinneth it shall die;” cursed is that man, be he what he may, be he who he may, that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them. We are not only to do some things, but we are to do all things,

and we are to continue so to do; so that the least deviation from the moral law, according to the covenant of works, whether in thought, word, or deed, deserves eternal death at the hand of God. And if one evil thought, one evil word, if one evil action, deserves eternal damnation, how many hells, my friends, do every one of us deserve, whose whole lives have been one continual rebellion against God! Before ever, therefore, you can speak peace to your hearts, you must be brought to see, brought to believe, what a dreadful thing it is to depart from the living God. And now, my dear friends, examine your hearts, for I hope you came hither with a design to have your souls made better. Give me leave to ask you, in the presence of God, whether you know the time, and if you do not know exactly the time, do you know there was a time, when God wrote bitter things against you, when the arrows of the Almighty were within you? Was ever the remembrance of your sins grievous to you? Was the burden of your sins intolerable to your thoughts? Did you ever see that God's wrath might justly fall upon you on account of your actual transgressions against God? Were you ever in all your life sorry for your sins? Could you ever say, My sins are gone over my head as a burden too heavy for me to bear? Did you ever experience any such thing as this? Did ever any such thing as this pass between God and your soul? If not, for Jesus Christ's sake, do not call yourselves Christians; you may speak peace to your hearts, but there is no peace. May the Lord awaken you, may the Lord convert you, may the Lord give you peace, if it be His will, before you go home!

But further: you may be convinced of your actual sins, so as to be made to tremble, and yet you may be strangers to Jesus Christ, you may have no true work of grace upon your hearts. Before ever, therefore, you can speak peace to your hearts, conviction must go deeper; you must not only be convinced of your actual transgressions against the law of God, but likewise of the foundation of all your transgressions. And what is that? I mean original sin, that original corruption each of us brings into the world with us, which renders us liable to God's wrath, and damnation. There are many poor souls that think themselves fine reasoners, yet they pretend to say there is no such thing as original sin; they will charge God with injustice in imputing Adam's sin to us; although we have got the mark of the beast and of the devil upon us, yet they tell us we are not born in sin. Let them look abroad into the world and see the disorders in it, and think, if they can, if this is the paradise in which God did put man. No! everything in the world is out of order. I have often thought, when I was abroad, that if there were no other argument to prove original sin, the rising of wolves and tigers against man, nay, the barking of a dog against us, is a proof of original sin. Tigers and lions durst not rise against us, if it were not for Adam's first sin: for when the creatures rise up against us, it is as much as to say, You have sinned against God, and we take up our Master's quarrel. If we look inwardly, we shall see enough of lusts, and man's temper contrary to the temper of God. There is pride, malice, and revenge, in all our hearts; and this temper cannot come from God; it comes from our first parent, Adam, who, after he fell from God, fell out of God into the devil. However, therefore, some people may deny this, yet when conviction comes, all carnal reasonings are battered down immediately, and the poor soul begins to feel and see the fountain from which all the polluted streams do flow. When the sinner is first awakened, he begins to wonder – How came I to be so wicked? The Spirit of God then strikes in, and shows that he has no good thing in him by nature; then he sees that he is altogether gone out of the way, that he is altogether become abominable, and the poor creature is made to lie down at the foot of the throne of God, and to acknowledge that God would be just to damn him, just to cut him off, though he never had committed one actual sin in his life. Did you ever feel and experience this, any of you – to justify God in your damnation – to own that you are by nature children of wrath, and that God may justly cut you off, though you never actually had offended Him in all your life? If you were ever truly convicted, if your hearts were ever truly cut, if self were truly taken out of you, you would be made to see and feel this. And if you

have never felt the weight of original sin, do not call yourselves Christians. I am verily persuaded original sin is the greatest burden of a true convert; this ever grieves the regenerate soul, the sanctified soul. The indwelling of sin in the heart is the burden of a converted person; it is the burden of a true Christian. He continually cries out, "O! who will deliver me from this body of death," this indwelling corruption in my heart? This is that which disturbs a poor soul most. And, therefore, if you never felt this inward corruption, if you never saw that God might justly curse you for it, indeed, my dear friends, you may speak peace to your hearts, but I fear, nay, I know, there is no true peace.

Further: before you can speak peace to your hearts, you must not only be troubled for the sins of your life, the sin of your nature, but likewise for the sins of your best duties and performances. When a poor soul is somewhat awakened by the terrors of the Lord, then the poor creature, being born under the covenant of works, flies directly to a covenant of works again. And as Adam and Eve hid themselves among the trees of the garden, and sewed fig leaves together to cover their nakedness, so the poor sinner; when awakened, flies to his duties and to his performances, to hide himself from God, and goes to patch up a righteousness of his own. Says he, I will be mighty good now – I will reform – I will do all I can; and then certainly Jesus Christ will have mercy on me. But before you can speak peace to your heart, you must be brought to see that God may damn you for the best prayer you ever put up; you must be brought to see that all your duties – all your righteousness – as the prophet elegantly expresses it – put them all together, are so far from recommending you to God, are so far from being any motive and inducement to God to have mercy on your poor soul, that He will see them to be filthy rags, a menstruous cloth – that God hates them, and cannot away with them, if you bring them to Him in order to recommend you to His favour. My dear friends, what is there in our performances to recommend us unto God? Our persons are in an unjustified state by nature, we deserve to be damned ten thousand times over; and what must our performances be? We can do no good thing by nature: "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." You may do things materially good, but you cannot do a thing formally and rightly good; because nature cannot act above itself. It is impossible that a man who is unconverted can act for the glory of God; he cannot do anything in faith, and "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." After we are renewed, yet we are renewed but in part, indwelling sin continues in us, there is a mixture of corruption in every one of our duties; so that after we are converted, were Jesus Christ only to accept us according to our works, our works would damn us, for we cannot put up a prayer but it is far from that perfection which the moral law requireth. I do not know what you may think, but I can say that I cannot pray, but I sin – I cannot preach to you or any others but I sin – I can do nothing without sin; and, as one expresseth it, my repentance wants to be repented of, and my tears to be washed in the precious blood of my dear Redeemer. Our best duties are as so many splendid sins. Before you can speak peace to your heart, you must not only be sick of your original and actual sin, but you must be made sick of your righteousness, of all your duties and performances. There must be a deep conviction before you can be brought out of your self-righteousness; it is the last idol taken out of our heart. The pride of our heart will not let us submit to the righteousness of Jesus Christ. But if you never felt that you had no righteousness of your own, if you never felt the deficiency of your own righteousness, you cannot come to Jesus Christ. There are a great many now who may say, Well, we believe all this; but there is a great difference betwixt talking and feeling. Did you ever feel the want of a dear Redeemer? Did you ever feel the want of Jesus Christ, upon the account of the deficiency of your own righteousness? And can you now say from your heart, Lord, Thou mayst justly damn me for the best duties that ever I did perform? If you are not thus brought out of self, you may speak peace to yourselves, but yet there is no peace.

But then, before you can speak peace to your souls, there is one particular sin you must be greatly troubled for, and yet I fear there are few of you think what it is; it is the reigning, the damning sin of the Christian world, and yet the Christian world seldom or never think of it. And pray what is that? It is what most of you think you are not guilty of – and that is the sin of unbelief. Before you can speak peace to your heart, you must be troubled for the unbelief of your heart. But, can it be supposed that any of you are unbelievers here in this church-yard, that are born in Scotland, in a reformed country, that go to church every Sabbath? Can any of you that receive the Sacrament once a year – O that it were administered oftener! – can it be supposed that you who had tokens for the Sacrament, that you who keep up family prayer, that any of you do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? I appeal to your own hearts, if you would not think me uncharitable, if I doubted whether any of you believed in Christ; and yet, I fear upon examination, we should find that most of you have not so much faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the devil himself. I am persuaded the devil believes more of the Bible than most of us do. He believes the divinity of Jesus Christ; that is more than many who call themselves Christians do; nay, he believes and trembles, and that is more than thousands amongst us do. My friends, we mistake a historical faith for a true faith, wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God. You fancy you believe, because you believe there is such a book as we call the Bible – because you go to church; all this you may do, and have no true faith in Christ. Merely to believe there was such a person as Christ, merely to believe there is a book called the Bible, will do you no good, more than to believe there was such a man as Caesar or Alexander the Great. The Bible is a sacred depository. What thanks have we to give to God for these lively oracles! But yet we may have these, and not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. My dear friends, there must be a principle wrought in the heart by the Spirit of the living God. Did I ask you how long it is since you believed in Jesus Christ, I suppose most of you would tell me, you believed in Jesus Christ as long as ever you remember – you never did misbelieve. Then, you could not give me a better proof that you never yet believed in Jesus Christ, unless you were sanctified early, as from the womb; for, they that otherwise believe in Christ know there was a time when they did not believe in Jesus Christ. You say you love God with all your heart, soul and strength. If I were to ask you how long it is since you loved God, you would say, As long as you can remember; you never hated God, you know no time when there was enmity in your heart against God. Then, unless you were sanctified very early, you never loved God in your life. My dear friends, I am more particular in this, because it is a most doubtful delusion, whereby so many people are carried away, that they believe already. Therefore, it is remarked of Mr. Marshall, giving account of his experiences, that he had been working for life, and he had ranged all his sins under the Ten Commandments, and then coming to a minister asked him the reason why he could not get peace. The minister looked to his catalogue, Away, says he, I do not find one word of the sin of unbelief in all your catalogue. It is the peculiar work of the Spirit of God to convince us of our unbelief – that we have got no faith. Saith Jesus Christ “I will send the Comforter; and when He is come He will reprove the world” of the sin of unbelief; “of sin,” says Christ, “because they believe not on Me.” Now, my dear friends, did God ever show you that you had no faith? Were you ever made to bewail a hard heart of unbelief? Was it ever the language of your heart, Lord, give me faith; Lord, enable me to lay hold on Thee; Lord, enable me to call Thee *my* Lord and *my* God? Did Jesus Christ ever convince you in this manner? Did He ever convince you of your inability to close with Christ, and make you to cry out to God to give you faith? If not, do not speak peace to your heart. May the Lord awaken you, and give you true, solid peace before you go hence and be no more!

Once more, then: before you can speak peace to your heart, you must not only be convinced of your actual and original sin, the sins of your own righteousness, the sin of unbelief, but you must be enabled to lay hold upon the perfect righteousness, the all-sufficient

righteousness, of the Lord Jesus Christ; you must lay hold by faith on the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and then you shall have peace. "Come," says Jesus, "unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This speaks encouragement to all that are weary and heavy laden; but the promise of rest is made to them only upon their coming and believing, and taking Him to be their God and their all. Before we can ever have peace with God, we must be justified by faith through our Lord Jesus Christ, we must be enabled to apply Christ to our hearts, we must have Christ brought home to our souls, so as His righteousness may be made our righteousness, so as His merits may be imputed to our souls. My dear friends, were you ever married to Jesus Christ? Did Jesus Christ ever give Himself to you? Did you ever close with Christ by a lively faith, so as to feel Christ in your hearts, so as to hear him speaking peace to your souls? Did peace ever flow in upon your hearts like a river? Did you ever feel that peace that Christ spoke to His disciples? I pray God He may come and speak peace to you. These things you must experience. I am now talking of the invisible realities of another world, of inward religion, of the work of God upon a poor sinner's heart. I am now talking of a matter of great importance, my dear hearers; you are all concerned in it, your souls are concerned in it, your eternal salvation is concerned in it. You may be all at peace, but perhaps the devil has lulled you asleep into a carnal lethargy and security, and will endeavour to keep you there, till he get you to hell, and there you will be awakened; but it will be dreadful to be awakened and find yourselves so fearfully mistaken, when the great gulf is fixed, when you will be calling to all eternity for a drop of water to cool your tongue, and shall not obtain it.

Give me leave, then, to address myself to several sorts of persons; and O may God, in His infinite mercy, bless the application! There are some of you perhaps can say, Through grace we can go along with you. Blessed be God, we have been convinced of our actual sins, we have been convinced of original sin, we have been convinced of self-righteousness, we have felt the bitterness of unbelief, and through grace we have closed with Jesus Christ; we can speak to our hearts, because God hath spoken peace to us. Can you say so? Then I will salute you, as the angels did the women the first day of the week, All hail! fear not ye, my dear brethren, you are happy souls; you may lie down and be at peace indeed, for God hath given you peace; you may die content under all the dispensations of providence, for nothing can happen to you now, but what shall be the effect of God's love to your soul; you need not fear what fightings may be without, seeing there is peace within. Have you closed with Christ? Is God your friend? Is Christ your friend? Then, look up with comfort; all is yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Everything shall work together for your good; the very hairs of your head are numbered; he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of God's eye. But then, my dear friends, beware of resting on your first conversion. You that are young believers in Christ, you should be looking out for fresh discoveries of the Lord Jesus Christ every moment; you must not build upon your past experiences, you must not build upon a work within you, but always come out of yourselves to the righteousness of Jesus Christ without you; you must be always coming as poor sinners to draw water out of the wells of salvation: you must be forgetting the things that are behind, and be continually pressing forward to the things that are before. My dear friends, you must keep up a tender, close walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many of us who lose our peace by our untender walk; something or other gets in betwixt Christ and us, and we fall into darkness; something or other steals our hearts from God, and this grieves the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost leaves us to ourselves. Let me, therefore, exhort you that have got peace with God, to take care that you do not lose this peace. It is true, if you are once in Christ, you cannot finally fall from God: "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" but if you cannot fall finally, you may fall foully, and may go with broken bones all your days. Take care of backslidings; for Jesus Christ's sake, do not grieve the Holy Ghost – you may never recover your comfort while you

live. O take care of going a gadding and wandering from God, after you have closed with Jesus Christ. My dear friends, I have paid dear for backsliding. Our hearts are so cursedly wicked, that if you take not care, if you do not keep up a constant watch, your wicked hearts will deceive you, and draw you aside. It will be sad to be under the scourge of a correcting Father; witness the visitations of Job, David, and other saints in Scripture.

Let me, therefore, exhort you that have got peace to keep a close walk with Christ. I am grieved with the loose walk of those that are Christians, that have had discoveries of Jesus Christ; there is so little difference betwixt them and other people that I scarce know which is the true Christian. Christians are afraid to speak for God – they run down with the stream; if they come into worldly company, they will talk of the world as if they were in their element; this you would not do when you had the first discoveries of Christ's love; you could talk then of Christ's love for ever, when the candle of the Lord shined upon your soul. That time has been when you had something to say for your dear Lord; but now you can go into company and hear others speaking about the world bold enough, and you are afraid of being laughed at if you speak for Jesus Christ. A great many people have grown conformists now in the worst sense of the word; they will cry out against the ceremonies of the church, as they may justly do; but then you are mighty fond of ceremonies in your behaviour; you will conform to the world, which is a great deal worse. Many will stay till the devil bring up new fashions. Take care, then, not to be conformed to the world. What have Christians to do with the world? Christians should be singularly good, bold for their Lord, that all who are with you may take notice that you have been with Jesus. I would exhort you to come to a settlement in Jesus Christ, so as to have a continual abiding of God in your heart. We go a-building on our faith of adherence, and lose our comfort; but we should be growing up to a faith of assurance, to know that we are God's, and so walk in the comfort of the Holy Ghost and be edified. Jesus Christ is now much wounded in the house of His friends. Excuse me in being particular, for, my friends, it grieves me more that Jesus Christ should be wounded by his friends than by his enemies. We cannot expect anything else from Deists; but for such as have felt His power, to fall away, for them not to walk agreeably to the vocation wherewith they are called – by these means we bring our Lord's religion into contempt, to be a byword among the heathen. For Christ's sake, if you know Christ keep close by Him; if God have spoken peace, O keep that peace by looking up to Jesus Christ every moment. Such as have got peace with God, if you are under trials fear not, all things shall work for your good; if you are under temptations, fear not, if He has spoken peace to your hearts. All these things shall be for your good.

But what shall I say to you that have got no peace with God? – and these are, perhaps, the most of this congregation; it makes me weep to think of it. Most of you, if you examine your hearts, must confess that God never yet spoke peace to you; you are children of the devil if Christ is not in you, if God has not spoken peace to your heart. Poor soul! what a cursed condition you are in. I would not be in your case for ten thousand thousand worlds. Why? You are just hanging over hell. What peace can you have when God is your enemy, when the wrath of God is abiding upon your poor soul? Awake, then, you that are sleeping in a false peace; awake, ye carnal professors, ye hypocrites that go to church, receive the sacrament, read your Bibles, and never felt the power of God upon your hearts; you that are formal professors, you that are baptized heathens, awake, awake, and do not rest on a false bottom. Blame me not for addressing myself to you; indeed, it is out of love to your souls. I see you are lingering in your Sodom, and wanting to stay there; but I come to you, as the angel came to Lot, to take you by the hand. Come away, my dear brethren – fly, fly, fly for your lives to Jesus Christ, fly to a bleeding God, fly to a throne of grace, and beg of God to break your hearts, beg of God to convince you of your actual sins, beg of God to convince you of your original sin, beg of God to convince you of your self-righteousness – beg of God to give you faith, and to enable you to close with Jesus Christ. O you that are secure, I must be a son of

thunder to you, and O that God may awaken you, though it be with thunder; it is out of love, indeed, that I speak to you.

I know by sad experience what it is to be lulled asleep with a false peace; long was I lulled asleep, long did I think myself a Christian, when I knew nothing of the Lord Jesus Christ. I went perhaps farther than many of you do; I used to fast twice-a-week, I used to pray sometimes nine times a-day, I used to receive the sacrament constantly every Lord's-day, and yet I knew nothing of Jesus Christ in my heart, I knew not that I must be a new creature – I knew nothing of inward religion in my soul. And perhaps many of you may be deceived as I, poor creature, was; and, therefore, it is out of love to you, indeed, that I speak to you. O if you do not take care a form of religion will destroy your soul; you will rest in it, and will not come to Jesus Christ at all; whereas these things are only the means and not the end of religion; Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to all that believe. O, then, awake, you that are settled on your lees; awake you Church professors; awake you that have got a name to live, that are rich and think you want nothing, not considering that you are poor and blind and naked; I counsel you to come and buy of Jesus Christ gold, white raiment, and eye-salve. But I hope there are some that are a little wounded; I hope God does not intend to let me preach in vain; I hope God will reach some of your precious souls and awaken some of you out of your carnal security; I hope there are some who are willing to come to Christ, and beginning to think that they have been building upon a false foundation. Perhaps the devil may strike in and bid you despair of mercy; but fear not, what I have been speaking to you is only out of love to you – is only to awaken you and let you see your danger. If any of you are willing to be reconciled to God, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is willing to be reconciled to you. O, then, though you have no peace as yet, come away to Jesus Christ; He is our Peace, He is our Peacemaker – He has made peace betwixt God and offending man. Would you have peace with God? Away, then, to God through Jesus Christ, who has purchased peace; the Lord Jesus has shed His heart's blood for this. He died for this; He rose again for this; He ascended into the highest heaven, and is now interceding at the right hand of God. Perhaps you think there will be no peace for you. Why so? Because you are sinners? because you have crucified Christ – you have put Him to open shame – you have trampled underfoot the blood of the Son of God? What of all this? Yet there is peace for you. Pray, what did Jesus Christ say to His disciples when He came to them the first day of the week? The first words He said was, "Peace be unto you;" He showed them His hands and His side and said, "Peace be unto you." It is as much as if He had said, "Fear not, My disciples; see My hands and My feet how they have been pierced for your sake; therefore, fear not." How did Christ speak to His disciples? "Go tell my brethren, and tell broken-hearted Peter in particular, that Christ has risen, that he is ascended unto his Father and your Father, to his God and your God." And after Christ rose from the dead he came preaching peace, with an olive branch of peace, like Noah's dove: "My peace I leave with you." Who were they? They were enemies of Christ as well as we, they were deniers of Christ once as well as we. Perhaps some of you have backslidden and lost your peace, and you think you deserve no peace; and no more you do. But, then, God will heal your backslidings, He will love you freely. As for you that are wounded, if you are made willing to come to Christ come away. Perhaps some of you want to dress yourselves in your duties that are but rotten rags. No, you had better come naked as you are, for you must throw aside your rags and come in your blood. Some of you may say, We would come but we have got a hard heart. But you will never get it made soft till ye come to Christ; He will take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh; He will speak peace to your souls; though ye have betrayed Him, yet He will be your peace.

Shall I prevail upon any of you this morning to come to Jesus Christ? There is a great multitude of souls here; how shortly must you all die and go to judgment! Even before night or tomorrow's night some of you may be laid out for this kirk-yard. And how will you do if

you be not at peace with God – if the Lord Jesus Christ has not spoken peace to your heart? If God speak not peace to you here, you will be damned for ever. I must not flatter you, my dear friends; I will deal sincerely with your souls. Some of you may think I carry things too far. But, indeed, when you come to judgment, you will find what I say is true, either to your eternal damnation or comfort. May God influence your hearts to come to Him! I am not willing to go away without persuading you. I cannot be persuaded, but God may make use of me as a mean of persuading some of you to come to the Lord Jesus Christ. O did you but feel the peace which they have that love the Lord Jesus Christ! “Great peace have they,” says the psalmist, “that love thy law: nothing shall offend them.” But there is no peace to the wicked. I know what it is to live a life of sin; I was obliged to sin in order to stifle conviction. And I am sure this is the way many of you take; if you get into company you drive off conviction. But you had better go to the bottom at once; it must be done – your wound must be searched or you must be damned. If it were a matter of indifference I would not speak one word about it. But you will be damned without Christ. He is the way, He is the truth and the life. I cannot think you should go to hell without Christ. How can you dwell with everlasting burnings? How can you abide the thought of living with the devil forever? Is it not better to have some soul-trouble here than to be sent to hell by Jesus Christ hereafter? What is hell but to be absent from Christ? If there were no other hell that would be hell enough. It will be hell to be tormented with the devil for ever. Get acquaintance with God, then, and be at peace.

I beseech you, as a poor, worthless ambassador of Jesus Christ, that you would be reconciled to God. My business this morning, the first day of the week, is to tell you that Christ is willing to be reconciled to you. Will any of you be reconciled to Jesus Christ? Then, He will forgive you all your sins, He will blot out all your transgressions. But if you will go on and rebel against Christ and stab him daily – if you will go on and abuse Jesus Christ, the wrath of God you must expect will fall upon you. God will not be mocked; that which a man soweth, that shall he also reap. And if you will not be at peace with God, God will not be at peace with you. Who can stand before God when He is angry? It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God. When the people came to apprehend Christ they fell to the ground when Jesus said “I am he.” And if they could not bear the sight of Christ when clothed with the rags of mortality, how will they bear the sight of Him when He is on His Father’s throne? Methinks I see the poor wretches dragged out of their graves by the devil; methinks I see them trembling, crying out to the hills and rocks to cover them. But the devil will say, Come, I will take you away; and then they shall stand trembling before the judgment-seat of Christ. They shall appear before Him to see Him once and hear Him pronounce that irrevocable sentence, “Depart from me, ye cursed.” Methinks I hear the poor creatures saying, Lord, if we must be damned, let some angel pronounce the sentence. No, the God of love, Jesus Christ, will pronounce it. Will ye not believe this? Do not think I am talking at random, but agreeably to the Scriptures of truth. If you do not, then show yourselves men, and this morning go away with full resolution, in the strength of God, to cleave to Christ. And may you have no rest in your souls till you rest in Jesus Christ!

I could still go on, for it is sweet to talk of Christ. Do you not long for the time when you shall have new bodies – when they shall be immortal and made like Christ’s body? and then they will talk of Jesus Christ for evermore. But it is time, perhaps, for you to go and prepare for your respective worship, and I would not hinder any of you. My design is to bring poor sinners to Jesus Christ. O that God may bring some of you to Himself! May the Lord Jesus now dismiss you with His blessing, and may the dear Redeemer convince you that are unawakened, and turn the wicked from the evil of their way! And may the love of God, that passeth all understanding, fill your hearts. Grant this, O Father, for Christ’s sake; to whom, with thee and the blessed Spirit, be all honour and glory, now and for evermore. Amen.

[September and October 1904]

Notes of a Sermon.

By the late Rev. DONALD MACDONALD, Shieldaig.

“My Beloved spake and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land” – Song 2:10-12.

There is no temporal relationship so close as that of husband and wife; they are “one flesh.” The husband chooses his wife from among all others; and the wife also makes choice of her husband, looking to his beauty to please, his strength to uphold, and his wealth to sustain. The Church is the mystical spouse of Christ, and she here declares what her Beloved has said to her. Jesus uses tender language, as an affectionate husband to an afflicted wife. He is united to His people in a spiritual marriage which is indissoluble. He chose His people in Himself before the world was, and His people were made willing in time to choose Him, and renounce all other lovers. “We forsook all and followed thee.” They forsook the works of the law, and followed the works of faith with Moses. They forsook the world, Satan, and the works of the flesh. Their minds became absorbed in Christ’s beauty. “We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” That glory was human and divine, created and uncreated. When His divine glory appeared, its effulgence darkened the glory of all created objects, because it was infinite and eternal, surpassing all created glories.

I. When Christ addresses His Church in this verse, she was under *a spiritual winter*.

Christ calls her His “love,” or beloved. He had loved her from all eternity. In the exercise of this love in the bosom of God, He had unspeakable joy, for He looked forward to the time when He would purchase, redeem, and deliver her. “My delights were with the sons of men.” Christ gave proof of His love to His people in His bodily and soul sufferings in the furnace of God’s wrath. That love was hotter than the furnace; along with the satisfaction He rendered to the law, it quenched the fire of the furnace. He set them free from the curse.

Christ here tells her to rise up, and it is clear from this that her soul had been “among the pots,” and was lying low. Her enemies had got the victory over her; sin, awakened by temptation, had pulled her down from her elevated position in fellowship with the Lord. Sin was an old Canaanite, which, after the land of Canaan was reached, was still a thorn in the flesh. It was “the law in the members warring against the law of the mind” (Romans 7:23). Or Satan might be groundlessly accusing and tormenting her as in the case of Job. Or God Himself was permitting her to be cast down through worldly persecution, so that her faith would be glorifying Him in the fires.

The Church had a winter before now, when she was convinced of sin and its guilt, and the wrath of God, as storms, floods, and darkness went over her head, and her hope perished from the Lord. But Christ made Himself known to her as her Saviour, and restored her to His favour. Christ the Sun with His refreshing beams of life and light broke in upon her soul. The

winter disappeared, and the summer of consolation set in upon her soul, and she began to apprehend what God in Christ had done for her and in her. She began to be fruitful in the Lord. It was a time of love, enjoying communion with God, like the sweet moments our first parents had with Him before the Fall.

But the severe winter sets in again upon her soul. God withdraws from the soul when sin gains ascendancy. His blessed face was withdrawn, as the sun when he hides himself. Darkness sets in, and the soul now becomes dark with respect to his hope of safety. And Satan tempts the afflicted soul to believe that it was all delusion, its pretension to godliness. The storm and floods of God's wrath play heavily upon the imagination; the soul is tossed at the mercy of these tempests mixed with the thunders of the threatenings which conscience arouses for sin. The poor soul is like a vessel that has lost her anchor and moorings.

In winter one needs shelter, clothing, and a friend. God's people need friendship in the bosom of God. They need the shelter which Christ, as their tower, has secured for them in the covenant of grace. They are afraid they are not clothed with Christ's righteousness. They need the favour of God renewed to their souls as they once enjoyed it. This sad winter took away everything they had from the Lord. The natural winter leaves nothing of the beauty and fruitfulness that preceded it; everything around looks dull, dark, and dreary. The birds that used to sing are dumb and shivering with cold. It is the same in the spiritual winter of the soul. The joy the soul had with God is gone. Her ability to worship Him is at an end in her estimation. Prayer becomes empty of God. Instead of rejoicing she is mourning.

II. Christ says to her "Rise up." His heart is full of sympathy towards her. He comes through the promise, and anew infuses life and light into her soul. He declares that she is still His beloved. She could not be satisfied in His absence with any other. She loved Him and was looking through faith to Him to make up her wants. Like Job, though He should slay her, yet she would trust in Him. "Rise up," He says, "with me, your God, your Creator and Husband, to take your journey to glory."

"Rise up, my love, my fair one." Christ uses the word "my" twice to encourage her against unbelief, and to assure her she was His. "You are My love that got room in My thoughts and affections from eternity. Many sore thoughts I had about you when bearing you and your sins, when wrestling at Gethesemane and suffering at Calvary. Alas, you often let Me out of your sight and thoughts, which is ungrateful in you – for example, when you slept with the foolish virgins. But I have never let you out of my sight or thoughts; I have carried you all along to glory. I began then to intercede for you, and the floods of the Spirit's supplies that came down to refresh you are the blessings that flowed from My death and intercession, which remind you that your Husband is your Advocate within the veil."

Christ declares that she was His fair one, beautiful as she was shining with His own image, and increasing in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. She was fair in Christ's sight when she appeared to herself to be very ugly. The more sense one has of a filthy heart, and the more one abhors it and pants after a new heart, the more dependent is the soul upon Christ for cleansing in His blood. The less confidence one has in oneself, the more one is beloved and admired of God. The soul has no love for those that brought it into spiritual bondage, no more than the Israelite had to the Egyptians that brought them into natural bondage. The more progress holiness is making in any soul, the more that soul hates sin, and the more vehement is its desire to get rid of it. Christ says, "My fair one, you call yourself black, and you mourn over your blackness. Satan and the world also say you are black. But you are not black in My estimation, considering the time is short until you shall be white all over. You are fair through My blood, My righteousness, and My Sanctification (Song 4:7). You are fair with tears of repentance, you are fair, longing to be perfectly white. I see you very fair. I do not like to be always putting you in remembrance of your blackness, for you are tired remembering it yourself; and it is not worth My while to find fault with your defects,

seeing you shall soon be with Me in heaven, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. It encourages you greatly when I declare you are fair. Faith infers from this declaration that you will soon be white.”

III. “Lo, the winter is past.” It had been the winter of God’s wrath. There never was a winter in nature like it. People are weary of the severity of winter. Oh, how weary is a child of God of the winter of God’s chastisements!

How did the winter of God’s judicial wrath go away at first, when he dealt with the sins of His people? His wrath did not return to Himself. Christ met the severity of it, and it exhausted itself upon Him. Otherwise it would have annihilated the whole elect in a minute. Oh, what glorious news it was to the Church when she heard that His anger was turned away! Although all the saints in heaven and earth should tell the Church that God’s wrath was removed, she could not have peace till God Himself would speak peace to her. The people of God shall have winters and summers all the way to heaven. On the meadows of glory they shall have an eternal summer. Their winters here shall make their happiness in glory more precious to them. Their winters here shall not destroy them, no more than the fire destroyed the three children in the fiery furnace.

But you, that are out of Christ, you have no sense that God is angry with you for your sins that are not pardoned. Your winter is not past. If you go with your sins to God’s bar, you shall endure an eternity of God’s wrath. When millions of years are past in hell, you shall be saying, “Alas, when shall my winter be past?” but Christ shall never say to you, “Arise from eternal torments; your winter is past.”

Christ says to His spouse, “Rise up; the winter that laid you low is past.” She replies, “I am so weak I cannot rise; for strangers have eaten up my strength.” He answers, “My grace is sufficient for thee; roll all your burdens on Me and My finished work; My strength is made perfect in weakness. I shall be life and light unto thee. Rise; you cannot do without Me, and I cannot do without you. The honour of My name is in danger, if I will not implement My promises relative to you. Arise from sorrows, doubts, and fears to partake of the full blessings that you can realise at the throne of grace. Come to the means of grace, to prayer, to reading, to hearing the Word preached. Come with an enlightened mind to dive into the mysteries of My death and resurrection, that you may see what I have done for you: that I have purchased and redeemed you from the curse of the law, from sin and its various evils; that I have overcome all your enemies that would have delighted to destroy you eternally. Come to Mount Pisgah to see a view of the land of Canaan above. When you shall come, I shall put you in the Spirit, and you shall see more clearly, and there shall be less dimness upon your eyes, yet it shall be through a glass darkly. A view of the glory of Immanuel, and the sweet odour of honey off the land, and its riches shall be a strength to you going down to the chambers of death.” Faith is the telescope which shows the rich fruit of the land to the souls of God’s people. Their hope revives as a man whose bands are broken and dances with joy, the heart, thoughts, and affections joining in the dance. “Come, ‘the flowers appear on the earth;’ they are breaking forth upon the ground.” The promises are coming with power and conveying all needed comforts. As apples are pretty and sweet, so are God’s promises.

“Come with Me through a frowning Providence. I shall be with thee, as I was with Job and David. Come with Me through pain and sickness. I shall bless you and make everything work for your good at last. Come with Me from Lebanon, which is sometimes termed a pleasant and glorious place, at other times a barren wilderness, abounding with wild beasts. ‘Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon; look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions’ dens; from the mountains of the leopards.’ Come with Me, because where you are is barren and dangerous, exposed to privations and ill-treatment from tyrants and persecutors as savage and bloody as wild beasts. Come with Me to Mount Zion to consider your glorious and exalted position, as also the

heavenly society to which you belong (Hebrews 12:22-24). Come with Me to death and then to glory, to perfect your happiness and to drink eternally out of the wells of living waters, and where My presence shall put you in possession of an eternal summer.”

[October 1904]

A Sermon

By the REV. CHRISTMAS EVANS, the Great Welsh Preacher.

[This Sermon is taken from the volume on Christmas Evans by the Rev. Paxton Hood, who gives an interesting account of this remarkable man and other wonderful preachers in Wales during days gone by. Mr. Evans died in 1838, in the seventy-third year of his age and fifty-fourth of his ministry. – ED.]

“Until the time of reformation” – Hebrews 9:10.

The ceremonies pertaining to the service of God, under Sinaitic dispensation, were entirely typical in their character; mere figures of Christ, the “High-priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands;” who, “not by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, has entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” Sustaining such a relation to other ages and events, they were necessarily imperfect, consisting “only in meats, and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances,” not intended for perpetual observance, but imposed upon the Jewish people merely “until the time of reformation,” when the shadow should give place to the substance, and a Greater than Moses should “make all things new.” Let us notice the time of reformation, and the reformation itself.

I. Time may be divided into three parts: –

the Golden Age before the fall,
the Iron Age after the fall, and
the Messiah’s Age of Jubilee.

In the Golden Age the heavens and the earth were created; the Garden of Eden was planted; man was made in the image of God, and placed in the garden to dress and keep it; matrimony was instituted; and God, resting from His labour, sanctified the seventh day as a day of holy rest to man.

The Iron Age was introduced by the temptation of a foreigner, who obtruded himself into Paradise, and persuaded its happy denizens to cast off the golden yoke of obedience and love to God. Man, desiring independence, became a rebel against heaven; a miserable captive of sin and Satan, obnoxious to the Divine displeasure, and exposed to eternal death. The law was violated; the image of God was lost, and the enemy came in like a flood. All communication between the island of Time and the continent of Immortality was cut off, and the unhappy exiles saw no hope of crossing the ocean that intervened.

The Messiah’s Age may be divided into three parts: –

the time of Preparation,
the time of Actual War, and
the time of Victory and Triumph.

The Preparation began with the dawning of the day in Eden, when the Messiah came in the ship of the Promise, and landed on the island of Time, and notified its inhabitants of His gracious intention to visit them again, and assume their nature, and live and die among them; to break their covenant allegiance to the prince of the iron yoke; and deliver to them the charter, signed and sealed with His own blood, for the redemption and renovation of their island, and the restoration of its suspended intercourse with the land of Eternal Life. The motto inscribed upon the banners of this age was: “He shall bruise thy heel, and Thou shalt bruise his head.” Here Jehovah thundered forth His hatred of sin from the thick darkness, and wrote His curse in fire upon the face of heaven; while rivers of sacrificial blood proclaimed the miserable state of man, and his need of a costlier atonement than mere humanity could

offer. Here, also, the Spirit of Messiah fell upon the prophets, leading them to search diligently for the way of deliverance, and enabling them to “testify beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”

Then came the season of Actual War. “Messiah the Prince” was born in Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling bands, and laid in a manger, – the Great Deliverer, “made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” With His almighty hand He laid hold on the works of the devil, unlocked the iron furnace, and broke the brazen bands asunder. He opened His mouth and the deaf heard, the blind saw, the dumb spoke, the lame walked, and the lepers were cleansed. In the house of Jairus, in the street of Nain, and in the burial-ground of Bethany His word was mightier than death; and the damsel on her bed, the young man on his bier, and Lazarus in his tomb, rising to second life, were but the earnest of His future triumph. The diseases of sin He healed, the iron chains of guilt He shattered, and all the horrid caves of human corruption and misery were opened by the Heavenly Warrior. He took our yoke and bore it away upon His own shoulder, and cast it, broken, into the bottomless pit. He felt in His hands and feet the nails, and in His side the spear. The iron entered into His soul, but the corrosive power of His blood destroyed it, and shall ultimately eat away all the iron in the kingdom of death. Behold Him hanging on Calvary, nailing upon His cross three bills, the handwriting of the law which was against us, the oath of our allegiance to the prince of darkness, and the charter of the “everlasting covenant;” fulfilling the first, breaking the second, and sealing the third with His blood!

Now begins the scene of Victory and Triumph. On the morning of the third day, the Conqueror is seen “coming from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah.” He has “trodden the winepress alone.” By the might of His single arm He has routed the hosts of hell, and spoiled the dominions of death. The iron castle of the foe is demolished, and the Hero returns from the war, “glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength.” He enters the gates of the everlasting city amid the rejoicing of angels and the shouts of His redeemed. And still He rides forth in the chariot of His grace, “conquering, and to conquer.” A two-edged sword issues from His mouth, and in His train follow the victorious armies of heaven. Lo! before Him fall the altars of idols and the temples of devils; and the slaves of sin are becoming the servants and sons of the living God; and the proud sceptic beholds, wonders, believes, and adores; and the blasphemer begins to pray; and the persecutor is melted into penitence and love; and the wolf comes and lays him down gently by the side of the lamb. And Messiah shall never quit the field till He has completed the conquest, and swallowed up death in victory. In His “vesture dipped in blood” He shall pursue the armies of Gog and Magog on the field of Armageddon, and break the iron teeth of the beast of power, and cast down Babylon as a millstone into the sea, and bind the old serpent in the lake of fire and brimstone, and raise up to life immortal the tenants of the grave. Then shall the New Jerusalem, the metropolis of Messiah’s golden empire, descend from heaven, adorned with all the jewellery of creation, guarded at every gate by angelic sentinels, and enlightened by the glory of God and of the Lamb; and the faithful shall dwell within its walls, and sin, and sorrow, and death shall be shut out for ever!

Then shall Time be swallowed up in Eternity. The righteous shall inherit life everlasting, and the ungodly shall find their portion in the second death. Time is the age of the visible world; eternity is the age of the invisible God. All things in time are changeful; all things in eternity are immutable. If you pass from time to eternity, without faith in Christ, without love in God, an enemy to prayer, an enemy to holiness, “unpurged and unforgiven,” so you must ever remain. Now is the season of that blessed change, for which myriads shall sing everlasting anthems of praise. “To-day, if ye will

hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” To-day the office is open; if you have any business with the Governor, make no delay. Now He has time to talk with the woman of Samaria by the well, and the penitent thief upon the cross. Now He is ready to forgive your sins, and renew your souls, and make you meet to become the partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Now He waits to wash the filthy, and feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and raise the humble, and quicken the spiritually dead, and enrich the poor and wretched, and reconcile enemies by His blood. He came to unloose your bands and open to you the gates of Eden; condemned for your acquittal, and slain for the recovery of your forfeited immortality. The design of all the travelling from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven, is the salvation of that which was lost, the restoration of intercourse, and amity between the Maker and the worm. This is the chief of the ways of God to man, ancient in its origin, wise in its contrivance, dear in its accomplishment, powerful in its application, gracious in its influence, and everlasting in its results. Christ is riding in His chariot of salvation through the land of destruction and death, clothed in the majesty of mercy, and offering eternal life to all who will believe. O captives of evil! now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation; now is the year of jubilee; now is the age of deliverance; now is “the time of reformation.”

II. All the prophets speak of something within the veil, to be manifested in due time; the advent of a Divine agent in a future age, to accomplish a glorious “reformation.” They represent him as a prince, a hero, a high priest, a branch growing out of dry ground, a child toying with the asp and the lion, and leading the wolf and the lamb together. The bill of the reformation had been repeatedly read by the prophets, and its passage required the descent of the Lord from heaven. None but Himself could effect the change of the dispensation. None but Himself had the authority and the power to remove the first and establish the second. He whose voice once shook the earth speaks again, and heaven is shaken. He whose footsteps once kindled Sinai into flame descends again, and Calvary is red with blood. The God of the ancient covenant introduces anew, which is to abide for ever. The Lord of the temple alone could change the furniture and the service from the original pattern shown to Moses on the Mount; and six days before the rending of the veil, significant of abrogation of the old ceremonial, Moses came down upon a mountain in Palestine to deliver up the pattern to Him of whom he had received it on Sinai, that He might nail it to the cross on Calvary; for the “gifts and sacrifices” belonging to the legal dispensation “could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats, and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.”

This reformation signifieth “the removal of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain;” the abrogation of “carnal ordinances,” which were local, and temporal in their nature, to make room for a spiritual worship of universal and perpetual adaptation. Henceforth the blood of bulls and goats is superseded by the great reconciling sacrifice of the Lamb of God, and outward forms and ceremonies give place to the inward operations of a renovating and purifying Spirit.

To the Jewish Church the covenant of Sinai was a sort of starry heaven. The Shekinah was its sun; the holy festivals its moon; and prophets, priests, and kings its stars. But Messiah, when He came, shook them all from their spheres, and filled the firmament Himself. He is our “Bright and Morning Star;” the “Sun of Righteousness” rising upon us “with healing in His wings.”

The old covenant was an accuser and a judge, but offered no pardon to the guilty. It revealed the corruption of the natural heart, but provided no renovating and sanctifying grace. It was a natural institution for special benefit of the seed of Abraham. It was a small vessel, trading only with the land of Canaan. It secured to a few the temporal blessings of the promised possession, but never delivered a single soul from eternal death, never bore a single

soul over to the heavenly inheritance. But the new covenant is a covenant of grace and mercy, proffering forgiveness and a clean heart, not on the ground of any carnal relationship but solely through faith in Jesus Christ. Christianity is a personal concern between each man and his God, and none but the penitent believer has any right to its spiritual privileges. It is adapted to Gentiles as well as Jews, “even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Already has it rescued myriads from the bondage of sin, and conveyed them over to the land of immortality; and its voyages of grace shall continue to the end of time, “bringing many sons to glory.”

“Old things are passed away, and all things are become new.” The circumcision of the flesh, made with hands, has given place to the circumcision of the heart by the Holy Ghost. The Shekinah has departed from Mount Zion, but its glory is illuminating the world. The Sword of Joshua is returned to its scabbard: and “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” issues from the mouth of Messiah, and subdues the people under Him. The glorious High-priesthood of Christ has superseded sacerdotal office among men. Aaron was removed from the altar by death before his work was finished; but our High-priest still wears His sacrificial vestments, and death hath established Him before the mercy-seat, “a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.” The earthquake which shook Mount Calvary, and rent the veil of the temple, demolished “the middle wall of partition” between Jews and Gentiles. The incense which Jesus offered fills the temple, and the land of Judea cannot confine its fragrance. The fountain which burst forth in Jerusalem has sent out its living streams into every land; and the heat of summer cannot dry them up, nor the frosts of winter congeal them.

In short, all the vessels of the sanctuary are taken away by the Lord of the temple. The “twelve oxen,” bearing the “molten sea,” have given place to “the twelve Apostles of the Lamb,” proclaiming “the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” The sprinkled mercy-seat, with its over-shadowing and intensely-gazing cherubim, has given place to “the throne of grace, stained with the blood of a costlier sacrifice, into which the angels desire to look. The priest, the altar, the burnt-offering, the table of shew-bread, and the golden candlestick have given place to the better things of the new dispensation introduced by the Son of God, of which they were only the figures and the types. Behold, the glory has gone up from the temple, and rests upon Jesus on Mount Tabor; and Moses and Elias are there, with Peter, and James, and John; and the representatives of the old covenant are communing with the Apostles of the new, and the transfigured Christ is the medium of the communication; and a voice of majestic music, issuing from “the excellent glory,” proclaims, “This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him.”

“God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake unto our fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.” Behold Him nailed to the cross, and hear Him cry, “It is finished!” The voice which shook Sinai is shaking Calvary. Heaven and hell are in conflict, and earth trembles at the shock of battle. The Prince of Life expires, and the sun puts on his robes of mourning. Gabriel! descend from heaven and explain to us the wondrous emblem! As set the sun at noon on Golgotha, making preternatural night throughout the land of Palestine, so shall the empire of sin and death be darkened, and their light shall be quenched at meridian. As the Sun of Righteousness, rising from the night of the grave on the third morning, brings life and immortality to light, so shall “the day-spring from on high” yet dawn upon our gloomy vale, and “the power of His resurrection” shall reanimate the dust of every cemetery!

He that sitteth upon the throne hath spoken, “Behold, I make all things new.” The reformation includes not only the abrogation of the old, but also the introduction of the new. It gives us a new Mediator, a new covenant of grace, a new way of salvation, a new heart of flesh, a new heaven and a new earth. It has established a new union, by a new medium,

between God and man. "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." "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Here was a new thing under the sun; the "Son of Man" bearing the "express image" of the living God; bearing it untarnished through the world; through the temptations and sorrows of such a wilderness as humanity never trod before; through the unknown agony of Olivet, and the supernatural gloom of Golgotha, and the dark dominion of the king of terrors, to the Heaven of heavens, where He sits, the adorable representative of two worlds, the union of God and man! Thence He sends forth the Holy Spirit, to collect "the travail of His soul," and lead them into all truth, and bring them to Zion with songs of everlasting joy. See them, the redeemed of the Lord, flocking as returning doves upon the wing, "to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to an innumerable company of angels; and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Oh, join the joyful multitude! the year of jubilee is come. The veil is rent asunder. The way into the holiest is laid open. The blood of Jesus is on the mercy-seat. The Lamb newly slain is in the midst of the throne. Go ye, with boldness, into His gracious presence. Lo, the King is your brother, and for you has He stained His robe with blood! The robe alone can clothe your naked souls, and shield them in the day of burning. Awake! awake! put on the Lord Jesus Christ! The covenant of Sinai cannot save you from wrath. Descent from Abraham cannot entitle you to the kingdom of heaven. "Ye must be born again," "born not of the flesh, nor of the will of men, but of God." You must have a new heart, and become a new creation in Jesus Christ. This is the promise of the Father.

"This is the dear redeeming grace,
For every sinner free."

Many reformations have expired with the reformers. But our Great Reformer "ever liveth" to carry on His reformation, till His enemies become His footstool, and death and hell are cast into the lake of fire. He will finish the building of His church. When He laid "the chief corner-stone" on Calvary, the shock jarred the earth, and awoke the dead, and shook the nether world with terror; but when He shall bring forth the top stone with shoutings of "Grace!" the dominion of Death and Hades shall perish, and the last captive shall escape, and the song of the bursting sepulchre shall be sweeter than the chorus of the morning stars! Even now there are new things in heaven; the Lamb from the slaughter, alive "in the midst of the throne;" worshipped by innumerable seraphim and cherubim, and adored by the redeemed from earth; His name the wonder of angels, the terror of devils, and the hope of man; His praise the "new song," which shall constitute the employment of eternity!

[November 1904]