Synopsis of the Books of the Bible

Exodus

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)

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Introduction

Deliverance, redemption and establishment of Israel as God's people

In the Book of Exodus we have, as the general and characteristic subject, the deliverance and redemption of the people of God, and their establishment as a people before Him, whether under the law, or under the government of God in longsuffering — of a God who, having so brought them to Himself, provided for His unfaithful people; not indeed entrance into His own presence, but a way of approaching Him, at least at a distance, although they had failed. But the veil was unrent: God did not come out to them, nor could they go in to God. And this is of all possible importance, and characteristic of the difference of Christianity. God did come amongst sinful men in love in Christ, and man is gone in to God, in righteousness, and withal the veil is rent from top to bottom. The law required from man what man ought to be as a child of Adam; life was put as the consequence of keeping it, and there was a curse for him if it was not kept. God's relationship with the people had at first been in grace; but this did not continue, and the people never entered thereinto with intelligence, nor understood this grace like persons who stood in need of it as sinners. Let us examine the course of these divine instructions.

Chapters 1 and 2

Israel's persecutions and the providential superintendence of God

First, we have the historical circumstances which relate to the captivity of Israel — the persecutions which this people had to endure, and the providential superintendence of God answering the faith of the parents of the infant Moses, and thus accomplishing the counsels of His grace, which not only preserved the child's life, but placed him in an elevated position in the court of Pharaoh. The things that are done on the earth He doeth them Himself. He prepares all beforehand when nothing is as yet apparent to man.

The response of Providence to faith neither its guide nor its power for work

But, although providence responds to faith, and acts in order to accomplish God's purposes, and control the walk of His children, it is not the guide of faith, although it is made so sometimes by believers who are wanting in clearness of light. Moses's faith is seen in his giving up, when grown to age, all the advantages of the position in which God had set him by His providence. Providence may, and often does, give that which forms, in many respects, the servants of God for their work, as vessels; but cannot be their power in the work. These two things must not be confounded. It gives that, the giving up of which is a testimony of the reality of faith and of the power of God which operates in the soul. It is given that it may be given up. This is part of the preparation. This faith acted through affections which attached him to God, and consequently to the people of God in their distress, and manifested itself, not in the helps or reliefs which his position could well have enabled him to give to them, but in inducing him to identify himself with that people because it was God's people. Faith attaches itself to God, and appreciates, and would have part in the bond that exists between God and His people; and thus it thinks

not of patronising from above, as if the world had authority over the people of God, or was able to be a blessing to them. It feels (because it is faith) that God loves His people; that His people are precious to Him — His own on the earth; and faith sets itself thus, through very affection, in the position where His people find themselves. This is what Christ did. Faith does but follow Him in His career of love, however great the distance at which it walks.

Moses' faith shown in identification with God and His people

How many reasons might have induced Moses to remain in the position where he was; and this even under the pretext of being able to do more for the people; but this would have been leaning on the power of Pharaoh, instead of recognising the bond between the people and God: it might have resulted in a relief which the world would have granted, but not in a deliverance by God, accomplished in His love and in His power. Moses would have been spared much affliction, but lost his true glory; Pharaoh flattered, and his authority over the people of God recognised; and Israel would have remained in captivity, leaning on Pharaoh, instead of recognising God in the precious and even glorious relationship of His people with Him. God would not have been glorified. Yet all human reasoning, and all reasoning connected with providential ways, would have induced Moses to remain in his position: faith made him give it up. All would really have been spoiled.

Moses set aside for a time, that his service might be more entirely subject to God

Moses, then, identifies himself with the people of God. A certain natural activity, and the unconscious habits of a strength which was not purely from on high, accompanied him, perhaps; however, it is the first devotedness which is pointed out by the Holy Ghost* as the good and acceptable fruit of faith. But it ought to have been more entirely subject to God, and to have had its starting-point in Him alone, and in obedience to His expressed will. We have, in this case, an example of the way in which the Lord often acts. The earnest energy of faithfulness is allowed to be manifested, but the instrument is put aside for a moment, in order that the service may depend directly and entirely upon God. There was something analogous to this even in Jesus, save that there was not in Him either false reckoning, or error, or external providences in consequence to deliver Him from them. In Him the perfection of the energy of life within, acted always in the knowledge of who His Father was, and at the same time submitted to His will in the circumstances in which He had morally placed Him. But the Lord appeared as Son with the doctors in the temple, and then was subject to Joseph and Mary till the time and way appointed of God, only alike perfect in both. Moses, fearful even amid faithfulness, and dreading the power which lent him, unconsciously perhaps, a certain habit of energy (for one is afraid of that from which one draws one's strength), and repulsed by the unbelief of those towards whom his love and his faithfulness carried him, for "they understood [him] not," fled to the desert; a type, as to the fact itself, of the Lord Jesus, rejected by the people whom He loved. {* Hebrews 11:24-26. This is often the case with God's children, faithful in their principles and desires, they have not done with self and its energies; indeed this is always the case till self is utterly judged and known and, so to speak, replaced by Christ, and doing simply God's will. But the world is always stronger than the Christian's energy in

the flesh.}

Differences between Joseph and Moses as types

There is a difference between this type and that of Joseph. Joseph takes the position (as put to death) of Jesus raised to the right hand of the supreme throne over the Gentiles, in the end receiving his brethren from whom he had been separated. His children are to him a testimony of his blessing at that time. He calls them Manasseh ("because God," says he, "has made me forget all my labours, and all the house of my father"), and Ephraim ("because God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction"). Moses presents to us Christ separated from His brethren;* and although Zipporah might be considered as a type of the church (as well as Joseph's wife), as the bride of the rejected Deliverer during his separation from Israel, yet, as to what regards his heart, his feelings (which are expressed in the names that he gives to his children), they are governed by the thought of being separated from the people of Israel: his fraternal affections are there — his thoughts are there — his rest and his country are there. He is a stranger everywhere else. Moses is the type of Jesus as the deliverer of Israel. He calls his son Gershom, that is to say, a "stranger there;" "for," says he, "I have sojourned in a strange land." Jethro presents to us the Gentiles among whom Christ and His glory were driven when He was rejected by the Jews. {* As a figure he came to his own and they rejected him; see lower down. Stephen notices this morally (Acts 7); and so Christ is separated from His brethren in the world till He returns in power.}

Chapter 3

God sees His people, gives faith, displays His power, and sends Moses as a prince and a deliverer

But at last God looks upon His people, and not only gives the faith that identifies itself with His people, but displays the power which delivers them. That Moses, who was rejected as a prince and a judge, must now appear in the midst of Israel and of the world as a prince and a deliverer.

Stephen made use of these two examples, in order to convict the consciences of the Sanhedrim of their similar and still greater sin in the case of Christ.

God — who to appearance had left Moses in the power of his enemies, without recognising his faith — manifests Himself now to him when alone, in order to send him to deliver Israel and to judge the world.

The hope of the flesh destroyed and its strength humbled

Considered as a practical history, this sending away of Moses into the wilderness, and his long sojourn there, is full of instruction. God shews Himself to us as destroying the hope of the flesh, and humbling its strength. He makes of the adopted son of the house of the king, a shepherd, under the protection of a stranger; and this during forty years, before he can undertake God's work, in order that the work might be a work of obedience, and the strength that of God; and Moses' hope and the affection of his heart

were left in abeyance all this time. No human issue was apparent.

God's manifestation of Himself in His name

But God was now about to manifest Himself under the name of Jehovah. He had put Himself in relation with the fathers under the name of God Almighty. That was what they wanted, and this was His glory in their pilgrimage. Now He takes a name in relationship with His people, which implies constant relationship with them; and in which, being established with Him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, He accomplishes in faithfulness what He has begun in grace and promise, all the while shewing what He is in patience and in holiness in His government in the midst of His people. For us He calls Himself Father, and acts towards us according to the power of that blessed name to our souls.* {*Compare Matthew 5 and John 17. His millennial name is Most High. See the interesting connection of three of these names in Psalm 91. That of Father is not found in the psalms: the Son has revealed it. The other three connect themselves with the earth and the government of the world., Father puts us in the place of sons with God, in the same relationship with God in which Christ Himself is, and, when the time comes, to be like Him and to be heirs of God. [2] Note in Hebrews 11 it is not the divine gift of Christ for us, but the coming in faith by Him to God.

The grace of God shown: Moses sent to Pharaoh

But Jehovah is not the first name He takes in His communications with the people through the mediation of Moses. He first presents Himself as interested in them for their fathers' sakes, whose God He was. He tells them their cry had come up to Him; He had seen their affliction, and was come down to deliver them. Touching expression of the grace of God! Upon this He sends Moses to Pharaoh, to lead them up out of Egypt.

Moses raises difficulties in unbelief: God's gracious answers

But, alas! obedience, when there is only that, and when carnal energy does not mix itself with it, is but a poor thing for the human heart. The fleshly energy with which Moses had slain the Egyptian was now gone; and when God calls upon Moses to go into Egypt for the deliverance of His people, Moses raises difficulties. God gives thereupon a sign, in token that He will be with him, but a sign which was to be fulfilled after the obedience of Moses, and was to strengthen him and to rejoice him when he had already obeyed.

God's names revealing Himself and His relationship with the earth

Moses still makes difficulties, to which God answers in grace, until they cease to be weakness, and become rather the working of self in unbelief. For thither self-indulgence in weakness tends. In the mission which God thus confided to Moses, He declares His name "I Am." At the same time, while declaring that He is that He is, He takes for ever, as His name upon the earth, the name of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob: an important principle, as regards God's ways. "I Am" is His own

essential name, if He reveals Himself; but as regards His government of, and relationship with, the earth, His name, that by which He is to be remembered to all generations, is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. This gave Israel, now visited and taken up of God under this name, a very peculiar place.

Abraham and his seed; election, inheritance and foreknowledge

In Abraham first God had called any out, first to him given any promises. He first had been publicly called apart from the world, so that God called Himself his God. He never calls Himself God of Abel or of Noah, though in a general sense He is the God, of course, of every saint. Faith itself is first here pointed out as the way of righteousness. In Eden, God, in judging the serpent, had announced the final victory of the promised Seed; in Abel, He had shewn what acceptable sacrifice from a sinner was — not the fruits of his labour under judgment, but the blood God's grace had given to him, which answered his need; and this established a righteousness in which he who came to God through the offered sacrifice stood, and of which he had himself the witness, and which was measured by his gift, that is by Christ Himself;* in Enoch, clear and absolute victory over death, and removal from earth, God taking him; in Noah, deliverance through judgments, when the world was judged. Then a new world began, and a ceasing, through the sweet savour of sacrifice, to curse the earth, and a covenant for its preservation from any future destruction by water. But in Abraham we have, after the judgment of Babel, one called out from the world now worshipping other gods, brought into separate and immediate connection with God, and promises given to him; a person called to be the object and depositary of God's promises. This gave him a very peculiar place. God was his God. He had a separate place from all the world with Him, as heir of the promises. He is the root of all the heirs of them. Christ Himself comes as seed of Abraham, who is the father also of the faithful as to the earth. Israel is the promised nation under this title. As regards election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. In this name, consequently, as His eternal memorial, God would now deliver them. At the same time, God foretells that Pharaoh will not let the people go; but takes clearly the ground of His authority and of His right over His people, and of authoritative demand upon Pharaoh that he should recognise them. Upon his refusal to do so, he would be judged by the power of God. {*Note in Hebrews 11 it is not the divine gift of Christ for us, but the coming in faith by Him to God.}

Chapter 4

Signs given: Moses' refusal and God's wrath and mercy accomplishing His purposes

Moses still raises difficulties, and God gives him again signs, remarkable signs. The two first seem to me in their character — types, the first, of sin and of its healing; the second, of power, which, having become Satanic, is taken back, and becomes the rod of God; and then presents that which refreshes, coming from God, as having become judgment and death. But we must note here the difference of what was then given to Moses and what occurred in Egypt. Here in the two personal signs there is first

restoration (the leprosy is healed), and then power from which Moses fled becomes the rod of God in his hand The water becoming blood is simple judgment. In Egypt the first is not found, he acted for God there, but there was a much larger development of the two last signs. The persona healing, that is, and removal of sin there was nothing of. But power completely destroys all manifestation of Satanic power and the worshipped source of wealth for the flesh and the world became death and judgment to it. But Moses refuses still and the wrath of God is kindled against him; yet He acts in mercy, in a way, however, humbling to Moses, with whom h now joins Aaron his brother whom He had already prepared for that, and who had come out of Egypt to meet him; for the folly of His children, while it is to their shame and to their loss accomplishes the purposes of God.

Circumcision necessary for the co-workers with a God of holiness

Whatever may be the power of Him that delivers, it is necessary that circumcision should be found in him who is interested in, and who is used as an instrument of the deliverance; for the Saviour — God is a God of holiness; it is in holiness and in judging sin, that He delivers: and acting in holiness He does not suffer sin in those who are co-workers for Him with whom He is in contact; for He comes out of His place in judgment. For us the question is of being dead to sin, the true circumcision; our Moses is a bloody husband to her who has to do with him. God cannot use the flesh in the fight against Satan. He cannot suffer it Himself, for He is in His place in judgment. Satan also would have power over it, and of right; God therefore puts it to death Himself, and this is done for us on the cross, where He who knew no sin was made sin for us (compare Rom. 8:3). And He wills that this should be accomplished in us also. This is true of those who compose the assembly; but they can reckon themselves dead. We bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.* It will be true in one way more evidently, in judgment at the last day, when the Lord pleads with all flesh, and identifies Himself with those who have not taken part spiritually in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, the Christian's place. God will purge Jerusalem by the spirit of burning. {* In Colossians 3 we find God's judgment of him in whom Christ (compare Rom. 8:10); in Romans 6 faith reckons it so: in 2 Corinthians 4 it is practically realised. And God proves the faith, but to confirm the soul in it. See 2 Corinthians 1 and 4.}

Chapters 5 to 13

The power of evil; Satan's resistance permitted

At the news of the goodness of God, the people adore Him; but the struggle against the power of evil is another matter. Satan will not let the people go, and God permits this resistance, for the exercise of faith, and for the discipline of His people, and for the brilliant display of His power where Satan had reigned. We have to learn, and perhaps painfully, that we are in the flesh and under Satan's power; and that we have no power to effect our own deliverance, even with the help of God. It is the redemption of God in Christ's death and resurrection, realised in the power of the Spirit given when He had accomplished that redemption and had sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, that delivers; for forgiveness, and escape from judgment, is not deliverance. One refers to sins and God's righteously passing over them, the other to sin and its power.

Oppression heavier; the hand of God shown

Before the deliverance, when the hopes of the people are now awakened, the oppression becomes heavier than ever, and the people would have preferred being left quiet in their slavery. But the rights and counsels of God are in question. The people must be thoroughly detached from these Gentiles, who, to this end, are now become their torment under God's hand. Moses works signs. The magicians imitate them by the power of Satan, in order to harden Pharaoh's heart. But when the question is of creating life, they are forced to recognise the hand of God.

God as judge and deliverer

At last God executes His judgment, taking the firstborn as representatives of all the people. We have thus two parts in the deliverance of the people; in one, God appears as Judge, but satisfied through the blood that is before Him; in the other, He manifests Himself as Deliverer. Up to this last, the people are still in Egypt. In the first, the expiatory blood of redemption bars the way to Him as Judge, and it secures the people infallibly; but God does not enter within — its value is to secure them from judgment.* {* Note here the expression, "When I see the blood, I will pass over." It is not said, when you see it, but when I see it. The soul of an awakened person often rests, not on its own righteousness, but on the way in which it sees the blood. Now, precious as it is to have the heart deeply impressed with it, this is not the ground of peace. Peace is founded on God's seeing it. He cannot fail to estimate it at its full and perfect value as putting away sin. It is He that abhors and has been offended by sin; He sees the value of the blood as putting it away. It may be said,. But must I not have faith in its value? This is faith in its value, seeing that God looks at it as putting away sin; your value for it looks at it as a question of the measure of your feelings. Faith looks at God's thoughts.} God's two judgments — of the firstborn and at the Red Sea — God's justice and truth satisfied The people, their loins girded, having eaten in haste, with the bitter herbs of repentance, begin their journey; but they do so in Egypt: yet now God can be, and He is, with them. Here it is well to distinguish these two judgments, that of the firstborn, and that of the Red Sea. As matters of chastisement, the one was the firstfruits of the other, and ought to have deterred Pharaoh from his rash pursuit. But the blood, which kept the people from God's judgment, meant something far deeper and far more serious than even the Red Sea, though judgment was executed there too.* What happened at the Red Sea was, it is true, the manifestation of the illustrious power of God, who destroyed with the breath of His mouth the enemy who stood in rebellion against Him — final and destructive judgment in its character, no doubt, and which effected the deliverance of His people by His power. But the blood signified the moral judgment of God, and the full and entire satisfaction of all that was in His being. God, such as He was, in His justice, His holiness, and His truth, could not touch those who were sheltered by that blood.** Was there sin? His love towards His people had found the means of satisfying the requirements of His justice; and at the sight of that blood, which answered everything that was perfect in His being, He passed over it consistently with His justice and even His truth. Nevertheless God, even in passing over, is seen as Judge; hence, so long as the soul is on this ground, its peace is uncertain though the ground of it be sure — its way in Egypt, being all the while truly converted — because God has still the character of Judge to it, and the power of the enemy is still there. {* As a figure this may be looked at as final judgment

according to the estimate of sin in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus; for the people were brought to God, and the evil enemies come under death and judgment which, as accomplished in Christ, save us. But as the secret of God's dealings experimentally known in our souls, it has another sense; it begins the desert journey, though that has its full character only from Sinai. The path in the wilderness forming no part of the counsels, but only of the ways of God; it may as to redemption be dropped but then Jordan and the Red Sea coalesce. The Red Sea is Christ's death and resurrection for us; Jordan our death and resurrection with Him, but here we have got into what is experimental. ** There is further a difference between the passover and the great day of atonement. Here the blood met the eye of God passing through the land in judgment. On the great day of atonement it purified His habitation from our defilements, and, we can say, opened up the way to God's throne and presence; gave us boldness to enter into the holiest by a new and living way. In the passover was added, as it had the character of first deliverance and forgiveness, the bitter herbs of judgment of sin in ourselves, and feeding on the slain Lamb, with loins girded and shoes on our feet, to leave the place of sin and judgment from which as the consequence of sin we had been fully sheltered.}

Chapter 14

God acts in power at the Red Sea

At the Red Sea God acts in power according to the purposes of His love; consequently the enemy, who was closely pursuing His people, is destroyed without resource. This is what will happen to the people at the last day, already in reality — to the eye of God — sheltered through the blood.

The Red Sea as a type

As a moral type, the Red Sea is evidently the death and resurrection of Jesus, so far as the real effecting of the work goes in its own efficacy, as deliverance by redemption, and of His people as seen in Him; God acting in it, to bring them, through death, out of sin and the flesh, giving absolute deliverance from them by* death, into which Christ had gone, and consequently from all the power of the enemy. As to our standing and acceptance we are brought to God: our actual place is thus in the world, become the wilderness on our way to glory. We are made partakers of it already through faith. Sheltered from the judgment of God by the blood, we are delivered, by His power which acts for us, from the power of Satan, the prince of this world. The blood keeping us from the judgment of God was the beginning. The power which has made us alive in Christ, who has gone down into death for us, has made us free from the whole power of Satan who followed us, and, as to conscience, from all his attacks and accusations. We have done with the flesh as our standing, and Satan's power, and, brought to God, are in the world with Him. The world, who will follow that way,** is swallowed up in it. {* Jordan adds our death with Christ, and, as to our state subjectively, our resurrection with Him — analogous to the forty days He passed on earth. To this the teaching of Colossians answers. Hence heaven is in hope. Romans 3:20 to 5:11 gives Christ's death for sins, and resurrection for our justification; thence to the end of chapter 8, death to sin. Sin in the flesh is not forgiven, but condemned (Rom. 8:3); but we as having died are not in the flesh at all, we are alive unto God through, or rather in, Jesus Christ. This takes us no farther than

the wilderness, though passing through it as alive to God in Christ. In Romans we are not risen with Christ. That involves, as a consequence, our being identified with Him where He is; and so, by the Holy Ghost when we are sealed, union. In Colossians we are risen with Him, but not in heavenly places. Colossians treats of life, with a hope laid up for us in heavenly places; not at all of the Holy Ghost. In Ephesians 2 we are risen with Him and sitting in heavenly places in Him, and then begins the conflict with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, and testimony according to what is heavenly; so far this is Jordan and Canaan, and here the sealing and gift of the Holy Ghost is fully spoken of, and our relationship with the Father and with Christ, as sons, and as body and bride. Only Ephesians begins with our being dead in sins, so that it is a new creation; it is not death to sin. The blood-shedding, however, in one respect, has a more glorious character. God is glorified in it, though by crossing Jordan we are experimentally placed higher. That too is the fruit of the blood-shedding, in which there is not only the bearing of sins to meet our responsibility, but a glorifying of God, so as to bring us withal into God's glory with Him, which is beyond all questions of responsibility. ** This is a solemn warning; for the worldlings, who call themselves Christians, do take the ground of judgment to come, and the need of righteousness, but not according to God. The Christian goes through it in Christ, knowing himself otherwise lost and hopeless; the worldling in his own strength, and is swallowed up. Israel saw the Red Sea in its strength, and thought escape was hopeless: so an awakened conscience, death and judgment. But Christ has died and borne judgment for us, and we are secured and delivered by what we dreaded in itself. The worldling, seeing this, adopts the truth in his own strength, as if there were no danger, and is lost in his false confidence.}

The Red Sea the end of events, but the beginning of the Christian path

Considered as the historical type of God's ways towards Israel, the Red Sea terminates the sequel of events; and so for us. We are brought to God. Thus the forgiven thief could go straight to Paradise. As a moral type, it is the beginning of the christian path, properly so called; that is to say, the accomplishment of the redemption* by which the soul begins its christian course, but is viewed as in the world, and the world become the wilderness of its pilgrimage; we are not in the flesh. {* In itself, it is Christ's death and resurrection. But that is not only meeting the holiness of God's nature, which is the blood-shedding, but entering into the whole power of evil that was against us and making it null. Hence, though it be not our realising death and resurrection so as to be in heavenly places, we are owned as having died in Him, and He our life, so that we have left our old standing altogether. In Colossians, we are risen with Him; in Ephesians, also sitting in Him in heavenly places. Colossians is the risen man still on earth, the subjective state, what refers to heaven but is not there, as Christ Himself for forty days — Jordan crossed, but not Canaan taken possession of.}

Chapter 15

The Song of Triumph of deliverance effected and of hope of entering the Sanctuary

Hereupon we enter the desert. They sing (Ex. 15) the song of triumph. God has led them by His power to His holy habitation. But they are on this journey, not in Canaan. He will lead them into the place which He has made, which His hands have established. Their enemies shall be unable to oppose themselves to this. So with us. There is a third thing which is found in this beautiful song — the desire to build a tabernacle for Jehovah. This is one of the great privileges which are the result of redemption. God did not dwell with Adam innocent, nor with Abraham, vessel of promise and root of the enjoyment of it. But when redemption was accomplished, on the one hand, God was fully revealed; and, on the other, man perfectly redeemed. Then God naturally, so to speak, comes to dwell with men as amongst them (Ex. 29:46). Here it is an external deliverance; for us an eternal; but the principle, a blessed and important one, is clearly brought out. And note this desire is not our dwelling with God, though the thoughts are linked one with another, but His dwelling with us; and the heart's desire is that He should do so down here. It will never really be effectually so, till verse 17 be accomplished; but the desire is good, like David's, and we are now builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. There are the three things: we are brought to God's holy habitation; there is the desire to prepare Him one; and, then, that which He has prepared. The tabernacle belonged to the wilderness; what they sing is the deliverance effected already by the power of God, and the hope of entering into the sanctuary which the hands of Jehovah have made.* {* It is practically important to see that the wilderness is no part of God's purpose; of His ways, a most important part. They were brought to God by redemption — Christ's death and resurrection — but not in Canaan. The thief went straight to Paradise with Christ. He has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. See Exodus 3, 6 and 15, where there is no question of the wilderness; see on the other hand, Deuteronomy 8, where it is reviewed when through it. For the difference of our spiritual judgment of ourselves, and God's judgment of us, see Deuteronomy 9 and Numbers 23:21.}

Still on the way to glory, consciousness of deliverance accompanied by joy

The deliverance, then, of the people is accompanied by a full and entire joy, which, having the consciousness of this complete deliverance by the power of God, grasps the whole extent of His intentions towards them, and knows how to apply this same power to the destruction of all the power of the enemy.* They sing the deliverance of God, note, before a step has been taken in the desert. The soul, in connection with Egypt (that is in the flesh on the ground of a child of Adam), not only is responsible, but its position with God, dependent on its acting up to this responsibility, is still uncertain and in fear. The desert may be never so bitter and trying; but we are free and with God there (brought to His holy habitation), through the redemption and deliverance of God. But the redeemed one is looked at still as on the way to glory, not yet in possession of the promised dwelling-place of God. We are come to God's habitation, to God Himself, but the prepared place is future. Edom and Moab will be still as a stone, but the people have yet to pass over. This difference is important to notice. However, the redeemed soul is looked at in both ways; as in Christ, where as to acceptance all is settled — "as he is so are we in this world" giving boldness for the day of judgment (1 John 4:17); and as in the wilderness, where faith is put to the test. For the wilderness is what the world is for the new man. {* The wilderness formed no part of the counsel of God as we have seen, and the song does not refer to it, to its sorrows or its joys, nor the provision for it. That, as far as revealed here, belongs to the book of Numbers.}

Redemption accomplished, God dwells among His people, entailing holiness

Remark here too some other important elements of the position of the people. First, it is a people. This till then there had never been: just men by grace, believers, called ones, there had been; now, though according to the flesh, these are a people of God on the earth. This was based on redemption wrought by God. Further, God, as we have seen, dwells amongst His people on earth when redemption is accomplished. That is the distinct fruit of redemption (see Ex. 14 - page 61); He had not dwelt with innocent Adam; He had not with called Abraham; He does with redeemed Israel (Ex. 29:46). But thirdly, this dwelling of God, His presence, brings in the definite claim of holiness. Holiness becomes His house for ever. We do not find holiness mentioned in Genesis, if it be not sanctifying the sabbath day. The moment redemption is accomplished, He is glorious in holiness, and there is a holy habitation. All these are important principles.

Chapters 16 and 17

The difficulties of the way

But now the difficulties of the way arrive. They travel three days without water — a sad effect, in appearance, of such a deliverance; and then the water is bitter when they find it. If death has delivered them from the power of the enemy, it must become known in its application to themselves; bitter to the soul, it is true, but, through grace, refreshment and life, for "in all these things is the life of the spirit." It is death and the application of the cross to the flesh practically, after the deliverance; but the wood — Christ's part on the cross, I doubt not — makes it sweet, and refreshment too. Thereupon we have the twelve wells and seventy palm-trees* — types, it seems to me, of those living springs and of that shelter which have been provided, through instruments chosen of God, for the consolation of His people. {* The Lord adopted this number in His two closing missions of the disciples to Israel.}

The manna and the water from the smitten rock

Here we have the principle of the people's responsibility and their obedience, put as a condition of their well-being under God's government. Still, however, the part of the history from the Red Sea to Sinai is always grace. The Sabbath — rest of the people — is established in connection with Christ, the true bread of life, who gives it. Then comes the Spirit — living waters which come out of the rock; but with the presence of the Holy Ghost comes conflict, and not rest. Yet Christ, typified here by Joshua, of whom mention is now made for the first time, places Himself spiritually at the head of His people. True rest is by Christ, the bread come down from heaven, and this comes first, before conflict, though man could not really enjoy it by that bread alone, that is Christ incarnate, without death and redemption coming in. Unless we eat the flesh and drink the blood, there is no life to taste and enjoy the bread. But, as yet, the people are characterised by redemption, and their exercises and blessings are under grace. The question of direct access to God is not yet brought before us. The rock indeed is smitten — as it must be to have the living water at all; but this is the figure of what is historical, the event of Christ's death, not the figure of access to God within the veil. It is all the earthly part of God's ways, even in

grace.

Victory dependent on God's blessing from on high

However sure of victory they may be in fighting the Lord's battles, the entire dependence of the people, at every moment, on the divine blessing, is presented to us in this, that if Moses (who with the rod of God represents to us His authority on high) keeps not his hands lifted up, the people are beaten by their enemies. Nevertheless, Aaron the high priest, and Hur (purity?) maintain the blessing, and Israel prevails. The cause was a hidden one. Sincerity, valiant efforts, the fact that the battle was God's battle, were, though right, of no avail — all depended upon God's blessing from on high. One would have thought, indeed, that if God made war, and unfurled the banner, it would soon be over; but no! from generation to generation He would make war upon Amalek. For, if it was the war of God, it was in the midst of His people.

Chapter 18

Divine government follows the reign of grace

Up to this all was grace, though there were dependence and conflict. The murmurs of the people had only served to shew the riches of the grace of God, who displayed His sovereignty in giving them all they could desire; which appears so much the more striking, because afterwards the same desires, under the law, brought very bitter chastisements. At length, after this reign of grace, follows the order of divine government, what will be realised in the millennium (chap. 18), where the king in Jeshurun judges in righteousness, establishes order and government, the Gentiles eat and offer sacrifices with Israel, and acknowledge that the God of the Jews is exalted above all gods. All this was the acting of God's grace and power.

The future deliverance of Israel

During the days of the deliverance of Israel Moses's wife had been sent away, as the church during the tribulation, and as the church will appear in the joy of Israel's deliverance, so now Zipporah appears again upon the scene, and we have not only Gershom, "a pilgrim in a foreign land," but a second son, Eliezer; "for," Moses said, "the God of my fathers was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh." The application of this to the future deliverance of Israel is too evident to require any lengthened explanation.

Chapters 19 to 23

The law and its character of fear, with blessing conditional on obedience

But having thus terminated the course of grace, the scene changes entirely. They do not keep the feast on the mountain, whither God, as He had promised, had led them — had "brought them, bearing them, as on eagles' wings, to himself." He proposes a condition to them: If they obeyed His voice, they should be His people. The people — instead of knowing themselves, and saying, "We dare not, though bound to obey, place ourselves under such a condition, and risk our blessing, yea, make sure of losing it" — undertake to do all that the Lord had spoken. The blessing now took the form of dependence, like Adam's, on the faithfulness of man as well as of God. Still farther was it from being, as ours, based on a fulfilled and accomplished redemption; it was not even based on an unconditional promise, as in the case of Abraham.* The people, however, are not permitted to approach God, who hid Himself in the darkness. In fact they undertook obedience far from God, in a state in which they could not approach Him in that majesty to which obedience was due. Nevertheless God gave all possible solemnity to the communication of His law, and sees it good that the people should fear before Him; but what can fear do towards giving power at a distance from Him? The feeling may, perhaps, be proper; but it is not proper to undertake to obey in such a state. Terror, and the condition of obedience when the people are far from God — such is the character of the law, a rule sent out to man, taken in its largest character, when man cannot approach God, but a barrier is set up, and the question of righteousness as the way of life raised and claimed from man when man is a sinner. {* It is important for us to see that our standing before God does not rest on promise, but on accomplished redemption. All that concerned that and the basis of our assurance of faith is accomplished promise. Glory is in hope.}

Man's work and order in worship equally prohibited

Moses, when God had spoken to the people, and the people dared no more to hearken, drew near to the thick darkness, and received the instructions of God for the people — moral and general instructions — relating to their possession of the land, in case they should enter upon it according to the covenant of the law. Two things are pointed out as to worship — the work of man, and his order, in which his nakedness will certainly be made manifest; and they are equally and together prohibited by God.

Christ's devotedness, love, and service "for ever"

We have (as we may observe by the way) a beautiful type (Ex. 21) of the devotedness of Christ to the church and to His Father, and His love to us. Having served already faithfully His full service as man, during His lifetime, He would remain a servant even in death for the sake of the Father, the church, and His people. He made Himself a servant for ever. (Compare John 13 for the present time, and Luke 12 even for glory).

Chapters 24 and 25

The conditional covenant confirmed by blood, relationship with God follows

This covenant, made on condition of the obedience of the people, was confirmed by blood* (Ex. 24.) The blood being shed, death having thus come in as God's judgment, the elders go up to enter into

relationship with God. They see His glory, and continue their human and terrestrial life; they eat and drink. {* Death was the penal sanction, as it was also, because such, the delivering power in grace.}

The tabernacle — the patterns of heavenly things

But Moses is called near to God, to see the patterns of things more excellent, of heavenly things — of things which make provision indeed for the faults and the failures of God's people, but reveal to them the perfection and varied glories of Him whom they approach as His people. Only they still carry the stamp of the dispensation to which they belong, as is true of everything which is not founded on, and characterised by, association with a glorified Christ, the fruit of eternal redemption, the eternal expression of the counsels of God. That however in which the figures do not answer to the antitypes, as we know them, is not in the things themselves, but in the liberty of access, and the way that has been opened, and we admitted to them, things connected withal with far higher privileges.* The form of realisation was dependent on the actual state of things. Priesthood there was, but many priests because they were mortal; we, but one, because He dies not. The veil, behind which God was and which barred the way to God, is for us rent, and the way into the holiest open, so that the holy and the most holy place are for us in spirit thrown together. Still the general figure remains, and it does not appear that there will be a rent veil in the millennium, though all the blessing depends on Christ's death. Our place is peculiar; associated with Christ as sons with the Father, and as members of His body; also heavenly in our hope and calling, as belonging to the new creation. {* Hence in Hebrews you never have the Father and our relationship with Him, nor with Christ, and in what is found there is more contrast than comparison.}

Two aspects of the tabernacle: the glories of Christ, and the means of relationship of God with His people

The glories in every way of Christ the Mediator are presented in the tabernacle; not precisely, as yet, the unity of His people, considered as His body, but in every manner in which the ways and the perfections of God are manifested through Him, whether in the full extent of the creation, in His people, or in His Person. The scene of the manifestation of the glory of God, His house, His domain, in which He displays His being (in so far as it can be seen); the ways of His grace and His glory; and His relationship through Christ with us — poor and feeble creatures, but who draw nigh unto Him — are unfolded to us in it, but still with a veil over His presence, and with God, not the Father.* The question is, How is man with God — can he approach? not love coming out to seek, and reception by the Father. God is on the throne justly requiring righteousness and holiness according to His own nature, not in sovereign love seeking men when in a state contrary to it. This, and the relationship of sons, make the whole basis different as to the relationship with God. But the moral ground of its possibility is found in these types, with the contrast already mentioned. {* We see the glory unveiled in the face of Jesus Christ and approach boldly, because the glory in His face is the proof of redemption and the perfect putting away of our sins, for He who bore them has them not on Him in the glory.}

Thus the tabernacle had two aspects — the glory which was His own, and the means of the relationship of God with His people. This is true even of the Lord Jesus. I can view His cross in its absolute perfectness, according to the thoughts and the heart of God; I can also find there that which answers all my wants and failures.

Apparent descriptive order of details arising from the linking together of things connected with the two aspects

It would lead me too far to enter into the details of the construction of the tabernacle and its utensils, but I will make some general remarks. There is a certain appearance of disorder in the description, in that it is interrupted by the description of the vesture, and of the order of consecration, of Aaron. Thus the altar of burnt offering comes before the priest's vesture and consecration, the laver after. But this arises from what I have just said. There are things which are the manifestation of God, the place of meeting with Him and what belongs to it, others which refer to the presentation of man to God, and his service in these places; these things are linked together, for there are some manifestations of God which are the points and means of the approach of man, as the cross; for there indeed man in the height of his sin, and God in infinite love and laying the ground of righteousness, and righteousness for us, meet. It is the central point in all moral history, where every issue of good and evil was settled for eternity; and while it is the point at which man draws nigh, there is something there besides the act of drawing near, or even of serving God.* {* We are apt to consider the cross simply in respect of our sins. In coming to God it is the only right, the only possible way. But when, at peace with God, we weigh what it is, we shall find every moral question brought to an issue there; man in absolute wickedness, that is, rejecting God in goodness with scorn and hatred; Satan's full and universal power over him; Man in perfectness in Christ — absolute obedience and absolute love to the Father; God in righteousness against sin in the highest way ("it became Him"), and infinite love to the sinner; all is brought out on the cross in Christ, and all to our blessing, and so that we should be in glory with Him, and like Him, as the fruit of the travail of His soul — a blessed portion.}

God's manifestation of Himself; the priesthood; man's way of drawing near

The description of the tabernacle presents to us, first, the things in which God manifests Himself, as the object, however, of the spiritual knowledge of human intelligence (by faith of course); and then the priesthood, and that which man does or uses in drawing near to Him who thus reveals Himself.

The place of approach to God

First, then, there are the things which are found in the holy of holies, and the holy place: the ark of the covenant, the table of the shewbread, and the candlestick with seven branches. This is what God had established for the manifestation of Himself within the house where His glory dwelt, where those who enter into His presence could have communion with Him. In result none could enter into the most holy place, for the high priest only went in to place the blood on the mercy-seat, and not for communion then, and with a cloud of incense that he might not die* (see Heb. 9). But it was in itself the place of

approach to God. Then we have the arrangement and structure of the tabernacle which enclosed all these things, and which was divided into two parts; and then the altar of burnt-offerings, and the court where it stood, to the end of verse 19, chapter 27. We will consider these things first. It is there the first part ends. {* This was the result of the failure of the priesthood, in the person of Nadab and Abihu, which, as everything placed under man's responsibility (and all, save of course actual redemption, has been so) was immediate. So in the case of Adam, Noah, the law, here the priesthood, Solomon son of David, Nebuchadnezzar, and so, as Paul testifies, the church.}

The priesthood

In that which follows there is what regards the action of man therein — of the priests; and God orders certain things to be brought in for that. This it is which consequently introduces the priesthood, which acted in it, and which alone could, in fact, so act. Hence the description of the priesthood interrupts the description of the various parts and furniture of the tabernacle; what follows it refers to its exercise.

The ark, the judicial throne of God

The ark of the covenant was the throne where God manifested Himself, if any could go in in righteousness,* and as the seat of His sovereignty over every living man — the God of the whole earth. It was also, however, the throne of relationship with His people. The law — the testimony of what He required of men — was to be placed there. Over it was the mercy-seat, which covered it in, which formed the throne, or rather the basis of the throne, as the cherubim (formed of the same piece), which were its supporters, did its sides. In itself it seems to me a marvellous connection of the human and divine righteousness in the Lord Jesus. The law was hid in it, and, in divine government of man on earth, this formed the perfect rule; it was the measure of responsibility of man as a child of Adam, in its abstract foundations, which the Lord adduces — the perfection of creature relationship with God; and we know that the law was in Christ's heart. He was perfect in human obedience and love to His Father. He lived perfectly up to the responsibility of man according to God in His inner man.** But He also glorified God — all that God is in love, divine righteousness, truth, majesty. All God is was glorified by the Son of man, and not only the Son of man goes righteously into the glory of God, but God is fully revealed as the place of access for us in that character: righteousness is proved by His going to His Father. The shittim-wood and the tables of the law are there, but all is clothed with the gold — God's own righteousness is there too. It is with this communion is,*** only as yet the veil hid it within. The character as yet was a judicial throne. At that time man (save Moses owned in grace) could not go in, and God did not come out. Now He has come out in grace, clothing Himself in humiliation that He in perfect grace may be with us; and man is gone into the glory according to the title of an accomplished redemption. {* But not, I think, separate from holiness, for it was in the holiest, and could not be if God was there as His dwelling, and not taking merely duty as the measure of what was accepted. But, while God Himself was to be approached who is holy, it was a throne, and judicial, and so righteous in character. Holiness is the character of a nature delighting in purity, and which repels evil. Righteousness Judges it with authority. It was not merely man's responsibility, but what God was. ** The first is the essence of creature perfection, adding the place of Son. The second, the actual

responsibility of man's place measured by that place. *** Only now, as already noticed, there is another relationship entered into with the Father. This is relationship, not nature, though of course that nature is necessarily involved in it. Hence, but only after His resurrection, Christ says, I go to my Father and your Father, my God and your God. There is that with God according to the character here spoken of, but there is that with the Father in the relationship and liberty in which Christ Himself is, and into which we are adopted. This difference of nature and relationship is strikingly brought out in John's writings — grace, and what the divine nature makes necessary. See John 4 as to worshippers, and 1 John 1. The Father could not be revealed but by the Son. But also the veil was rent in the cross, and we are before God in divine righteousness according to what He is as such. In the full character of this as to both, we are in Him. Elsewhere I have touched on the difference of the sense of relationship with God as sons, and the knowledge of the Father as such, personally revealed in the Son. The first is Paul's ground, and he seldom goes beyond it; the latter, John's. The epistle to the Hebrews gives direct access to God in the holiest, but the Father is not found in it.}

The cherubim, executors of the will of God's judicial power

The cherubim, throughout the Old Testament, wherever they act, are connected with the judicial power of God, or are the executors of the will of that power; and in the Apocalypse they are generally connected with providential judgments, and belong to the throne, but the seraphic character is connected with them there, so that the throne judges, not merely in present governmental judgment, but finally according to God's.

The necessity for the blood on the mercy-seat

Here, then, God manifested Himself as the Supreme God in His moral being, armed with power to enforce respect to His laws, and to keep account of all that was done. This character of God in Himself also is why the blood — witness of all that had been done for those who were thus responsible, and satisfying all the moral nature of Him who sat there — was put upon the mercy-seat; but every year, a witness that the work which did that was yet undone.* Nor was it exactly there that God was directly in connection with His people; but thence came forth the communications which were to be made to them: "And there will I meet with thee," said God to Moses, "and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all the things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel." Moses, who receives the thoughts of God for the people, was there to have his intercourse with Jehovah, and that without the veil.**

The manifestation of God in judgment and in government

It was, then, the most intimate and most immediate manifestation of God, and that which came nearest to His very nature, which does not thus manifest itself. But it was a manifestation of Himself in judgment and in government,* it was not as yet in man, neither according to man, but within the veil. In Christ we find Him thus, and then it is in perfect grace and divine righteousness, proved by man's place, and the latter only when the veil has been rent; till then Christ remained alone, for grace was rejected as

well as law broken. {* This is true; but, in its typical (or perhaps I should say spiritual) application, not in the letter, but in the spirit, there was another important element of truth in it. It was the place where God was approached not where He dealt with man's responsibility as man. This was at the brazen altar, the place of sacrifice, the first thing met, when man had to come as a sinner, when consequently what man ought to be was in question, what he ought to be for God surely, still what man ought to be as man. In coming to the mercy-seat in the holiest of all, what God is was in question. Man has to be meet for God's own presence, then, in the holiest. And in truth the rest was only testing man. He was not innocent in Paradise, and as a sinner could not come to God, according to what God is, being a sinner. It is only through the rent veil in a heavenly Paradise he can have to say to Him; though on the ground of the work then accomplished He will have an earthly people also, in whose heart the law will be written.}

The table of showbread and the golden candlestick Outside the veil was the table with its twelve loaves and the golden candlestick. Twelve is administrative perfection in man — seven, spiritual completeness, whether in good or evil The two are found outside the veil, inside which was the most immediate manifestation of God, the Supreme, but who hid Himself, as it were, yet, in darkness. Here was light and nourishment: God in power manifested in man; administrative power revealed amongst men, and, in historical fact, in connection with the twelve tribes. But faith recognises both in Christ, and the light of the Holy Ghost makes us know it, if priests, to enter into the holy place, before it is actually revealed in power, while all is otherwise darkness, and God is giving the light of the Holy Ghost.* {* Therefore it is that, in another sense, we have twelve apostles attached to the Lord in the flesh, and seven churches for Him who has the seven Spirits of God.}

The twelve tribes were, for the time being, that which answered externally to this manifestation. It is found in the new Jerusalem. The primary idea was the manifestation of God in the holy place in man, and by the Spirit.

Chapter 26

Two meanings in the tabernacle and its form

Next we have the tabernacle itself, which was one, though separated into two parts. There were (as the word teaches us) two meanings in the tabernacle and in its form. In general it was where God dwelt and revealed Himself, hence, the heavens, God's tabernacle; and the Person of Christ, God's dwelling.* The heavenly places themselves, says the apostle, had to be purified with better sacrifices (Heb. 9:23). So Christ has passed through the heavens, as Aaron up to the mercy-seat (Heb. 4:14). Again, it is used in the same sense as a figure of the created universe (Heb. 3:3-4), where it is also used as a whole as a figure of the saints, as the house over which Christ is as Son. The veil was, we know on the same divine authority, the flesh of Christ, which concealed God in His holiness of judgment — in His perfectness as sovereign justice itself, but manifested Him in perfect grace to those to whom His presence revealed itself. {* We may add, as Christians, "whose house are we." The body is never the subject in Hebrews: we are pilgrims walking by faith. Nor is the Father.}

The tent, the veil and the cherubim

The tabernacle* itself was formed of the same things as the veil; figurative, I doubt not, of the essential purity of Christ as a man, and of all the divine graces embroidered, as it were, thereon. To this was also added cherubim, the figure, as we have seen, of judicial power,** conferred, as we know, on Christ as man: God "will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained:" and again, "The Father judgeth no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son … and has given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." {* If we examine the details more closely, it will be found that in the tent and veil there was no gold, but there were cherubim; in the ephod gold, but no cherubim; in the hangings before the holy place neither Within, in both holy place and holy of holies, all was gold. So Christ as man (and the veil we know was His flesh) had the judicial authority and will have it as man, not only in government, but in final divine judgment; but He was man, and walked as man; within all was divine The priesthood in its Aaronic character could not have the cherubim that is judicial authority in heaven, but His presence there is identified with divine righteousness. As He appeared outside down here all was perfect grace, but in outward appearance He took neither. ** When fully depicted, the cherubim shewed the powers of creation and God's attributes as displayed in the throne, in the four heads of the earthly creation: man, cattle, wild beasts, and birds; intelligence, stability, power, and rapidity of judgment. Man had made gods and idols of them; they formed the throne on which God sat.}

The outer coverings

It seems to me that the other coverings point to Him also: that of the goat-skins to His positive purity, or rather to that severity of separation from the evil that was around Him, which gave Him the character of prophet — severity, not in His ways towards poor sinners, but in separation from sinners, the uncompromisingness as to Himself, which kept Him apart, and gave Him His moral authority, that moral cloth of hair which distinguished the prophet; that of the ram-skins dyed red points to His perfect devotedness to God,* His consecration to God (may God enable us to imitate Him!); and that of the badger-skin to the vigilant holiness, both of walk and in external relationship, which preserved Him, and perfectly so, from the evil that surrounded Him. "By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." "He that is begotten of God keeps himself, and that wicked one touches him not." Besides what may be called His Person, these things correspond to the new nature in us, the new man, and of Him, so far as born of the Holy Ghost at His incarnation — His birth in the flesh in which He was the perfect expression of it; but I speak of the thing itself in practice, or what is produced by the Spirit in us, and by the word. {* This is drawn from the occasions on which the ram was used in the sacrifices.

Chapter 27

The court where sinful men draw near

In the court God meets the world (I do not speak of the world itself through which we walk:* this was the desert); but it is where those coming up out of the world draw near to God, where His people (not as priests or as saints, but as sinful men) draw near to Him. But in coming out of the world, it is an enclosure of God's, who is known only to those who enter therein. There the altar of burnt-offerings was first found; God manifested in justice as to sin, but in grace to the sinner, in His relationship with men, in the midst of them, such as they were. True, it was the judgment of sin, for without this God could not be in relationship with men; but yet it was Christ in the perfection of the Spirit of God who offered Himself a sacrifice, according to that justice, for sin, to put sinners in relationship with God. He has been lifted up from the earth. Upon earth the question was as to the possibility of men's relationship with Him who is holy and living: that could not be. On the cross He is lifted up from the earth, rejected by the world; nevertheless He does not enter into heaven. Upon the cross Christ has been raised from this world — has left it; but He still remains presented to it, the object of faith as a full satisfaction to the justice of God, as well as the witness of His love, of the love withal of Him who has glorified all that God is in this act. He is the object still, I say, to the eyes of the world, though no longer on it, if, through grace, one goes there and separates from this world, while God in justice (for where has this been glorified as in the cross of Jesus?) can receive according to His glory, and even be glorified there, by the most wretched of sinners. As regards the approaching sinner, it was for his guilt and positive sins. In itself the sacrifice went much further, a sweet savour to God, glorifying Him. {* This would be the grace of Christianity, the seeking and saving what is lost. The figures of the tabernacle have to say to our coming to God, not to His coming to us. This is proper to Christianity. Hebrews takes up the figures we are speaking of, only with the changes introduced by Christianity even in these.}

The altar of burnt-offerings

It is here then that the altar of burnt-offerings is found, the brazen altar: God manifested in righteous judgment of sin (meeting however the sinner in love by the sacrifice of Christ) not in His being (spiritual and sovereign object of the adoration of saints), but in His relation with sinners according to His righteousness, measured* by what their sins were in His sight but where withal sinners present themselves to Him by that work in which, by the mighty operation of the Holy Ghost Christ has offered Himself without spot unto Him, has satisfied all the demands of His righteousness, and more, has glorified Him in all that He is, and has become that sweet-smelling savour** (of sacrifice) in which, in coming out of the world, we draw near to God, and to God in relation with those, sinners in themselves and owning it, who draw near to Him, but find their sins gone through the cross on their way; and, besides that, come in this savour of His sacrifice who made Himself a whole burnt-offering. It was not the sacrifice for sin burnt outside the camp: there no one approached. Christ was made sin by God, and all passed between God and Him; but here we draw near unto God. {* Here we must remark that while final judgment refers to, and is measured by, out responsibility, forgiveness cannot be separated from our entrance into the presence of God (though in experience there may be progress as to this), because it is by a work of Christ in which the veil was rent and God fully revealed. This the great day of atonement shewed, for there the blood was brought in to God, and yet it was for sins, but sins as defiling God's presence, as well as their being all carried away. But at the brazen altar there was both the love that gave and the value of the sacrifice, so that divine favour and complacency were brought

in; "therefore doth my Father love me." Here sin-offerings and burnt offerings were offered, but they both referred to acceptance, negatively and positively, not simply to the holiness of God as the blood on the day of atonement. We have redemption by His blood, the forgiveness of sins, but according to the riches of His grace. ** It is interesting to know that the word burn is not at all the same in Hebrew for the sacrifice for sin, and for the burnt-offering: in the case of the latter, it is the same as for the burning of incense. I add here a word upon the sacrifices. In the sacrifice for sin burned outside the camp, God came out of His place to punish, to take vengeance for sin. Christ has put Himself in our place, has borne our sins, and died to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. In the sacrifice for sin His blood was shed, our sins washed away. But this blood, infinitely precious, has been carried by the high priest inside the holiest, and put upon the mercy-seat; and thus the sure foundation of all our relationship with God has been laid; since, as to him that comes, sin exists no longer in the sight of God. But it is not only that God has fully reached sin in judgment in the death of Christ, but the work which Christ has accomplished has been perfectly agreeable to God. "I have glorified thee on the earth." God was glorified in Him; and God owed it, in justice to Christ, to glorify Him with His own self. The very being of God, in righteousness and in love, had been fully glorified (publicly before the universe) though the eye of faith alone is open to see it, and hence it was the part of this very righteousness to place Christ in a position that corresponded to the work. The love of the Father towards Him surely did not turn from this. Thus it was not only that the holiness which takes vengeance on sin, had already dealt with that sin in the death of Jesus, and had nothing more to do as to the putting of it away, but (for him who knows that in his Adam-nature there is no resource, and still less in the law) there is, by grace, through the faith of Jesus, the righteousness of God Himself, a justifying righteousness — not merely the putting away of sins, but the positive value of all that Christ has done as glorifying God in this. We are accepted in the Beloved. God must raise Christ in consideration of that which He had done, and place Him at His right hand; and we are cleared from our sins according to the perfectness of God, between whom and Christ alone this work was accomplished, and, He being entered in as man in virtue of that work, since He has carried His blood there, we also — objects of that work — are in virtue of it accepted as He is. Thus then the sinner, believing in God, draws near to the brazen altar where the sacrifice is offered (the way being open to him by the blood), and (now we can add, the veil being rent) draws near unto God manifested in holiness, but according to the sweet-smelling savour of the sacrifice of Christ, an expression inapplicable to the sacrifice for sin burnt outside the camp (there He was made sin), according to all the sweet-smelling savour of the devotedness and obedience of Christ upon the cross, that is to say, unto death. Notice that, besides this, the priests draw near as priests, and even into the holy place. But of this more hereafter.}

The priests' service essential, that the light should always shine

All the manifestations of God thus arranged, we come now to the services that were rendered to Him in the courts, and in the places where He manifested Himself (Ex. 27:20). The priests were to take care that the light of the candlestick should be always shining outside the veil which hid the testimony inside, and during the night; it was the light of the grace and of the power of God by the Spirit that manifested God spiritually. It was not Himself upon the throne, where His sovereign being was keeping the treasure of His righteousness: that treasure Christ alone, in His Person and in His nature, could be

Himself; nor was it righteousness in His relationship with sinful man outside the holy place, of which man's duty was the measure, and for which the law of God gave the rule; but it was a light, through which He manifested Himself in the power of His grace, but which applied itself to His relationship with man viewed as holy or set apart for service to Him, all the while that it was the manifestation of God. Essentially it was the Holy Ghost. This we see in the Apocalypse; but it might rest upon Christ as man, and that without measure; or it might act as from Him, and by His grace in others, either as the Spirit of prophecy, exclusively so before He came, or in some other way more abundant and complete, as was the case after His resurrection and glorifying, when the Holy Ghost Himself came down. But whatever these manifestations in men may have been in action, the thing itself was there before God, to manifest Him in the energy of the Spirit Himself; but the priesthood was essential here for us,* in order to maintain this relation between the energy of the Holy Ghost and the service of men in whom He manifested Himself, in order that the light might shine (Ex. 27:20-21). We find, therefore, immediately afterwards, the ordinance for the establishment of the priesthood. {* For the full manifestation of it, in His personal and free manifestation down here, the glorifying of man (Christ) according to divine righteousness was needed, but this would take us out of our present subject. I must again recall that we have only the shadow, not the very image of the things. What is in the text refers to man under God's government down here as vessel of the Spirit. The priesthood supposes man in weakness here, and Christ, another Person for us on high.}

Chapter 28

The high priest's garments

The garments were composed of everything that is connected with the Person of Christ in this character of priesthood; the breastplate, the ephod, the robe, the broidered coat, the curious girdle, and the mitre. The ephod was, par excellence, the priestly garment; made of the same things as the veil, only that there was no gold in the latter, and there were cherubims (but all enclosed inside the veil was gold, for God's government and judgment were in Christ as Son of man): in the ephod, gold but no cherubim,* because the priest must have divine righteousness, but was not in the place of rule and government (compare Num. 4). It signified also the essential purity and the graces of Christ. The girdle was the sign of service. The girdle was of the same materials as the ephod to which it belonged. Arrayed in these robes of glory and beauty, the high priest bore the names of the people of God in the fulness of their order before God; upon his shoulders, the weight of their government, and upon the breastplate on his heart — breastplate which was inseparable from the ephod, that is, from his priesthood and appearing before God. He also bare, according to the perfections of God's presence, their judgment before Him. He maintained them in judgment before God according to these things. They therefore looked for answers through the Urim and Thummim that were in the breastplate; for the wisdom of our conduct is to be according to this position before God. Upon the hem of the robe of the ephod** there was the desirable fruit, and the testimony of the Holy Ghost, which depended on the priesthood. I think that Christ, in entering heaven, made Himself heard through the Holy Ghost in His people — hem of His garment (compare Psalm 133); and He will make Himself heard through His gifts when He comes out also. Meanwhile He bears within also the iniquity of the holy things in holiness before the eternal God. (This

holiness is upon His very forehead.) Not only His people, but their imperfect services are presented according to the divine holiness in Him. {* See Ex. 26, note; page 73. ** This was all of blue under the ephod; I suppose what was essentially heavenly, not the display of purity and graces in man.}

The priests' clothing

The sons of Aaron were also clothed. Their natural nakedness was not to appear, but the glory and the honour with which God clothed them. The girdle of service also distinguished them.

The ephod, its girdle and the robe of blue

The dress of the high priest demands a little further explanation. That which characterised him in service was the ephod, to which was inseparably attached the breastplate in which the Urim and Thummim were placed. With the ephod, therefore, the description begins. It was that in which, as thus clothed, he was to appear before God. It was made as the veil, with the addition of gold, for the veil was Christ's flesh, the actings of which could not be separated from what was divine; but in the exercise of priesthood He appeared before God within the veil, that is, figuratively, in heaven itself; and there what met, and had the nature and integral essence of (along with the heavenly grace and purity) divine righteousness, had its place and its part as found in Him: as it is written, looking at Him in a somewhat different aspect, but alike as to this,* "an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The groundwork of the priesthood, then, was absolute personal purity in man, in its highest sense as a nature flowing intelligently from God, and in the priesthood glorified,** every form of grace interwoven with it, and divine righteousness. It was service, and the priest was girded for it, but service before God. The loins were girt, but the garments otherwise down to the feet. This was especially the case with the robe all of blue. {* The priesthood in Hebrews is not for sins, save once in chapter 2 to make propitiation, because they are all put away, and we have no more conscience of them; it is for grace to help that we may not sin.

The shoulder-pieces

But to pursue the ephod itself. The high priest represented all the people before God, and presented them to Him, and this in a double way. First, he bore them on his shoulders — carried the whole weight and burden of them on himself. Their names were all graven upon the two onyx stones which united the parts of the ephod; there was no wearing the ephod — that is, exercising the priesthood — without carrying the names of the tribes of Israel on his shoulders. So Christ carries ever His people.

The breastplate

Next, the breastplate was attached inseparably to the ephod, never to be detached. There also he carried the names of his people before the Lord, and could not, as thus dressed in the high priestly robes, be there without them. As it is expressed, he bore them on his heart before Jehovah continually. They shall be upon Aaron's heart when he goeth in before Jehovah. Thus are we borne ever before God by Christ.

He presents us, as that which He has on His heart, to God He cannot be before Him without doing so; and whatever claim the desire and wish of Christ's heart has to draw out the favour of God, it operates in drawing out that favour on us. The light and favour of the sanctuary — God as dwelling there — cannot shine out on Him without shining on us, and that as an object presented by Him for it.

The Urim and Thummim

This was not, however, all. The Urim and Thummim were there — light and perfection. The high priest bore the judgment of the children of Israel in their present ways and as to their present relationship* upon his heart before Jehovah, and this according to the light and perfection of God. This we need, to get blessing. Stood we before God, such as we are, we must draw down judgment, or lose the effect of this light and perfection of God, remaining without. But, Christ bearing our judgment according to these, our presentation to God is according to the perfection of God Himself — our judgment borne; but then our position, guidance, light, and spiritual intelligence are according to this same divine light and perfection. For the high priest inquired and had answers from God according to the Urim and Thummim. This is a blessed privilege.* {* The great day of atonement met the guilt. ** We must remember that all this is not children with a Father, but man drawing near to God, only with Christ there for us. We are seen on earth (not in heavenly places), and He appearing in the presence of God for us, securing our place according to God (only for us the veil is rent, a very great difference); yet we are here on earth with a heavenly calling. Compare Hebrews. There note, the priesthood, as now exercised on high, is not for committed sins, but for grace to help in time of need that we may not sin. The sins are borne and put away once and for ever as the basis of priesthood. See chapters 9, 10 and 8:1, and 1:3. Advocacy with the Father applies when we have to restore communion. Compare John 13 and Numbers 19.}

The priestly presentation of the high priest

Introduced into the presence of God according to divine righteousness in the perfection of Christ, our spiritual light, and privileges, and walk, are according to this perfection. The presentation in divine righteousness gives us light, according to the perfection of Him into whose presence we are brought. Hence we are said (1 John 1) to walk in the light as He, God, is in the light — a solemn thought for the conscience, however joyful a one for the heart, telling us what our conversation ought to be in holiness.* Christ bearing our judgment takes away all imputative character from sin, and turns the light which would have condemned it and us, into a purifying enlightening character, according to that very perfection which looks on us. This breastplate was fastened to the onyx stones of the shoulders above, and to the ephod above the girdle below. It was the perpetual position of the people, inseparable from the exercise of the high priesthood as thus going before the Lord. What was divine and heavenly secured it — the chains of gold above, and the rings of gold with lace of blue to the ephod above the girdle beneath. Exercised in humanity, the priesthood, and the connection of the people with it, rests on an immutable, a divine, and heavenly basis. Such was the priestly presentation of the high priest. Beneath this official robe he had a personal one all of blue. {* Dispensationally all was dark; God not revealed, the veil not rent; but I speak in the text of what was figured in the high priest's dress.}

The bells and pomegranates — the testimony and fruits of the Spirit

The character of Christ too, as such, is perfectly and entirely heavenly. The sanctuary was the place of its exercise. So the heavenly Priest must Himself be a heavenly Man; and it is to this character of Christ, as here in the high priest, that the fruits and testimony of the Spirit are attached — the bells and the pomegranates. It is from Christ in His heavenly character that they flow; they are attached to the hem of His garment here below. His sound was heard when He went in and when He came out; and so it has been and will be. When Christ went in, the gifts of the Spirit were manifested in the sound of the testimony; and they will be when He comes out again. The fruits of the Spirit, we know, were also in the saints.* {* The colours were blue, purple, and scarlet; heavenly, royal, and earthly glory. These, while belonging to Christ personally, were hidden when He went in, will be displayed when He comes out. We ought to display them characteristically, but as connected with a rejected Christ down here, bringing in the cross as the way to the crown.}

Worship and servuce in holiness

But not only were there fruits and gifts. Worship and service — the presenting of offerings to God — was part of the path of the people of God. Alas! they also were defiled. It formed thus also part of the priest's office to bear the iniquity of their holy things. Thus the worship of God's people was acceptable, in spite of their infirmity, and holiness was ever before Jehovah in the offerings of His house — borne on the forehead of the high priest as His people were on the one hand presented to Him, and on the other directed by Him, according to His own perfections through the high priest.* {* Our relationship with God is more immediate, the veil being rent. Still our High Priest is there for us, only set down on the right hand of God. The name of Father does not come in here.}

The coat of fine linen

The coat of fine linen was that which was more proper to himself and personal, what was within — personal purity, but embroidered, adorned with every grace. Such was, and indeed is, Christ.

Where the garments of glory and beauty and those of fine linen were used

The application of this to Christ is evident. Only we must remember the remark of the apostle; that is, of the Spirit of God, that these were the shadow of good things to come, not the very image of the things. Our High Priest, though He ever liveth to make intercession for us, is set down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. In spirit all this is ours; He presents us, receives grace and direction for us through the Spirit, and bears the iniquity of our holy things. All our service is accepted, as our persons, in Him. In the literal fact the high priest never used the garments of glory and beauty to go within the veil. He was to use them for going into the sanctuary;* but this was forbidden after Nadab and Abihu's death, save on the great day of atonement, and then he went in in other garments, namely, the linen ones So death and entrance thereon were needed for us in Christ's fulfilment of the type. And, as regards the Jews, He is gone in in this last way, all this time being His absence in the sanctuary and

they must wait, till He come forth, for the knowledge of the acceptance of the presentation of His work: we know it by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; He came out when the. Lord went in, so that we anticipate in spirit the glory He is in. This constitutes essentially the Christian's place. In His glorious high priest's garments, it would have been the intercourse of an accepted people through the high priest. Hence we have it in spirit, though this be not the whole truth as regards our position.** {* Their use is referred to going into the holy place before Jehovah when expressly spoken of, except the golden plate on the mitre or turban (chap. 28:29-30, 35); and for the golden plate, see verse 38. This characteristic use was forbidden: see Leviticus 16. ** We must always remember that we have only the shadow of good things to come. The great principles of the heavenly scenes are depicted, but not the change by the rending of the veil through which we enter ourselves boldly into the holiest, Christ being in glory at the right hand of God, and that through an eternal redemption. Also, as noticed already, the Son not being come, the Father's name and relationship does not come in.}

Chapter 29

Exodus: chapter 29

Sanctification and anointing

For their consecration they were all washed. Aaron and his sons together always represent the church, not as gathered in a body (a thing hidden in the Old Testament), but in varied positions sustained individually before God. There is only one sanctification for all — divine life. Christ is the spring and the expression of it. We are made partakers of it, but it is one.* Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. But Aaron is first anointed separately without sacrifice, without blood. But his sons are then brought and with him are sprinkled with blood upon the ear, the thumb of the right hand, the great toe of the right foot;** obedience, action, and walk, being measured and guarded, both through the price, and according to the perfection of the blood of Christ. And then they were sprinkled with blood and with the oil of consecration, that is to say, set apart by the blood and by the unction of the Holy Ghost. The washing is the Spirit's work in the sanctifying power of the word; the anointing, His personal presence and energy in intelligence and power — God working in us. {* Aaron is always united to his sons in such types, for Christ cannot be separated from His own or they would become nought. But he had been anointed personally without blood, a thing that has been verified in Christ's history. He was anointed while on earth; His disciples after His death. He received the Spirit for the church in a new way (Acts 2:33), when He was risen from among the dead in the power of the blood of the eternal covenant: for it is according to the efficacy of that blood in behalf of His people, that He has been raised as their Head. In Christ's anointing on earth the Holy Ghost was witness to Christ's own personal righteousness and sonship; in ours He is the witness of our being clean through His blood, the righteousness of God in Him, and sons by adoption. ** Aaron is first simply anointed with the anointing oil poured upon his head (Ex. 29:7). Then the sons are brought, and the ram of consecration brought, and some of its blood put upon Aaron's ear, and then on the tip of the ear of his sons, their right thumb and the great toe of the right foot. It might be supposed that it was only on Aaron's ear, but

comparing with Leviticus 8:23 it would seem that "their," in verse 20 here, includes Aaron. The great principle is our association with the blessed Lord; but He was obedient unto death, and no act or walk needed to be purified. The great principle for us is, that nothing should pass into the thought, no act be done, nothing occur in our walk which is not according to the perfection of consecration in Christ's sacrifice: we have its value upon us as to imputation, but here it is consecration, for both are in His blood.}

Cleansed by the blood and sealed by the Spirit And it is important to remark here that the seal of the Holy Ghost follows on the sprinkling with the blood, not on the washing with the water. That was needed. We must be born again, but it is not that cleansing which, by itself, puts us in a state God can seal: the blood of Christ does. We are thereby perfectly cleansed as white as snow, and the Spirit comes as the witness of God's estimate of the value of that blood-shedding. Hence, too, all were sprinkled with Aaron The blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost have set us in association with Christ, where He is according to the acceptableness of that perfect sacrifice (it was the ram of consecration), and the presence, liberty, and power of the Holy Ghost.

All the sacrifices offered for the priests

All the sacrifices were offered. That for sin, the burnt-offering of a sweet-smelling savour, the ram of consecration (which had the character of a peace-offering), accompanied by the meat-offering. These sacrifices have been explained elsewhere, and I only recall their import: Christ made sin for us, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree; first need of the soul, the sin-offering; Christ obedient unto death, devoting Himself to the glory of His Father — but according to God's nature, and the existence of sin, and that in us — and to us as belonging to the Father, the burnt-offering; the communion of God, of the Saviour, of the worshipper, and of the whole church, the peace-offering; and Christ devoted in holiness of life upon the earth, but proved even to death, the meat-offering.

Aaron's sons associated with their head

It is to be observed that, when Aaron and his sons were sprinkled and anointed, the sons were anointed with him, and their garments also, and not he with them. Everything is connected with the Head. Aaron and his sons ate the things with which the atonement had been made. Such is our portion in Christ, the food of God whereby we dwell in Christ and Christ in us.

The dwelling of God sanctified by His glory

Then, connected with this priesthood, comes the perpetual sweet-smelling savour of the burnt-offering, in which the people present themselves before God — sweet-smelling savour which is found there, as it were in the midst of the people, according to the efficacy of which they stand in His presence round about. There God met the people. With the mediator He met above the ark without veil, and gave him commandment for the people according to His own perfection. Here He puts Himself on a level with the people, though speaking with the mediator. The dwelling of God in the midst of the people is sanctified by His glory. The tabernacle, the altar, the priests, are sanctified, and He dwells in the midst

of the people surrounding Him. For this purpose had He brought them out of Egypt (ver. 46): a blessed picture of how, in a far higher and better way, God dwells in the midst of us.* He never dwelt with man, we may moreover remark, till redemption was accomplished: not with Adam innocent, nor with Abraham, or others; but, so soon as redemption is accomplished, He says, "They shall know that I am Jehovah their God, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them" (Ex. 29:46). {* He dwells in us both individually and collectively by the Holy Ghost, Christ being gone up on high as man; so that the body of the sealed saint is a temple, and we are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. The last runs out now to all Christendom.}

Chapters 30 and 31

Provision for the communion and service of a redeemed people

Having thus established the priesthood, and the relationship of the people with God who dwelt in the midst of them, the intercession of Christ in grace (all that was in Him ascending as a sweet savour to Jehovah), is presented (Ex. 30:1-10); and His service in making the manifestation of God in the Spirit shine forth (ver 7). The people were identified with this service through redemption (vers. 11-16). They could neither be there, nor serve;* but they were all represented as redeemed. We then have the laver between the brazen altar and the tabernacle — purification** for communion with God, and for service to Him therein: the hands and feet (for us only the feet, as our walk alone is concerned), every time they took part in it. {* The places were seen; but not our entrance into them, with all the rent veil brings with it. ** It was the washing of water by the word, the purification of the worshipper (first, of the heart) to constitute him one by being born again of the word. But this was not the laver. The priests had their bodies washed first to be such, but it is not said this was in the laver. There they washed their hands and their feet, when they had come into priestly service by the sacrifices, being already washed as to their bodies. That is, they were priests already when they washed their hands and feet in the laver; their bodies had been washed, and the consecrating sacrifices offered; and then in respect of practice, according to the purity of divine life by the Spirit, there was the washing through the word, and especially if they had failed (compare John 13). For communion requires not only acceptance but purification. Without this the presence of God acts on the conscience, not in giving communion, but in shewing the defilement. Christ, even as a man, was pure by nature, and He kept Himself by the words of God's lips. With us, this purity is received from Him; and we must also use the word to purify ourselves. The idea and measure of the purity are the same for Christ and for us: "he that says he abides in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" — "to purify himself, even as he is pure." For the ordinary relationship of the people, looked at as worshippers, it was the red heifer (Num. 19); its ashes, which typified this purification on failure, were put into running water; that is, the Holy Spirit applied, by the word, to the heart and conscience, the sufferings of Christ for sin to purify man; sufferings which could have all their moral and purifying power, since the ashes of separation shewed forth that sin had been consumed in the sacrifice of Christ Himself for sin, as to imputation, by the fire of the judgment of God. The blood of the heifer had been sprinkled seven times before the door of the tabernacle — the place where, we have just seen, God met the people; but to worship and serve there must be the actual purification according to the standard of Christ: at least as far as realised, so that the

conscience be not bad. This being in His presence, and the judgment of failure, is the means of progress also. Note, the rules as to the red heifer, shew that however it came (for there were cases viewed merely humanly which were inevitable, but, they shew that however it came), God could not have impurity in His presence.}

The oil and incense

Finally, we have the oil and the incense, the fragrant oil, which were for priests only: the nature of man, as man, or his natural condition in the flesh could not partake of it. The incense typifies the precious perfume of the graces of Christ, the savour of divine graces manifested, and a sweet odour in the world in man. He alone answers to it, though we may seek of and from Him to walk in them.

The sabbath associated with the tabernacle: God's people partakers of God's rest

The institution and obligation of the sabbath was associated with the tabernacle of the congregation, as a sign, as it had been with every form of relationship between God and His people: for to be made partakers of God's rest is what distinguishes His people.

In fine, God gave Moses the two tables of the law.

Chapter 32

The people completely abandon Jehovah

Whilst God was thus preparing the precious things connected with His relationship with His people,* the people, only thinking of what they saw in the human instrument of their deliverance, completely abandon Jehovah: a sad and early, but sure fruit of having undertaken obedience to the law as a condition, in order to the enjoyment of the promises. Aaron falls with them. {* The tabernacle had a double character. It was the manifestation of the heavenly things, and a provision for a sinful people to be brought near again to God there. It is interesting to consider the tabernacle under another aspect; for, as a pattern of heavenly things, it is of the highest interest. First, it signifies the heavens themselves; for Christ is not entered into the tabernacle, but into heaven itself. In a certain sense, even the universe is the house of God; but, moreover, the unity of the church as a heavenly building is presented by it: we are His house, the tabernacle of God in Spirit. These two meanings are closely connected in the beginning of Hebrews 3 — Christ, God, has built all things, and we are His house. He fills all in all, but He dwells in the church; it is a concentric circle, although quite different in its nature. Compare the prayer in Ephesians 1, which also connects these two things under the headship of Christ, and still more distinctly in Ephesians 3; Ephesians 1 being headship, not dwelling, though the relationship be the same. Compare Ephesians 4:4-6, though there it is in the form of Spirit, Lord, and God, that is, not simply dwelling in. What most fully answers is the prayer of Ephesians 3, where, note, "height," &c., is not of the love, but of the whole scene of God's glory, we being at the centre to look out into it all, because Christ, who is the centre, dwells in us. In another point of view, the person and the fulness of Christ Himself are there; for God was in Him, and thus the rending of the veil is applied by the apostle

to the flesh of Christ, or, if you please, the veil itself; "through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." It is evident that the dwelling place of God is the central idea of these things, just as a man lives in his house, in his property, &c.} Moses as Mediator pleads God's glory and unconditional promises Such being the state of the people, God tells Moses to go down; and now everything begins to be put on another footing. God, in His counsels of grace, has not only seen the people when they were in affliction, but in their ways. They were a stiff-necked people. He tells Moses to let Him alone, and that He would destroy them, and make of Moses a great nation. Moses takes the place of mediator, and, true to his love for the people as God's people, and to the glory of God in them, with a self-denial which cared only for this glory, sacrificing every thought of self, intercedes in that magnificent pleading which appeals to what that glory necessitates, and to the unconditional promises made to the fathers.* And Jehovah repented. The character of Moses shines in all its beauty here, and is remarkable amongst those which the Holy Ghost has taken pleasure in delineating, according to the precious grace of God, who loves to describe the exploits of His people, and the fruit they have borne, though He Himself is the source of them. {* This is a universal principle, where the full restoration of Israel is in question. Solomon, Nehemiah, and Daniel only go back to Moses; an important remark as to the fulfilment of God's ways toward Israel.}

The golden calf: the covenant of the law broken, Moses breaks the tables of the covenant

But it was all over with the covenant of the law; the first and fundamental link — that of having no other gods — was broken on the part of the people. The tables of the covenant never even came into the camp on the simple ground of law. The people had made a complete separation between themselves and God. Moses, who had not asked God what was to be done with the law, comes down. His exercised ear, quick to discern how matters stood with the people, hears their light and profane joy. Soon after he sees the golden calf, which had even preceded the tabernacle of God in the camp, and he breaks the tables at the foot of the mount; and, zealous on high for the people towards God because of His glory, he is below on earth zealous for God towards the people because of that same glory. For faith does more than see that God is glorious (every reasonable person would own that); it connects the glory of God and His people, and hence counts on God to bless them in every state of things, as in the interest of His glory, and insists on holiness in them, at all cost, in conformity with that glory, that it may not be blasphemed in those who are identified with it.

Levi's consecration to Jehovah: individual responsibility to God under the law

Levi, responding to Moses's call, says to his brethren, the children of his mother, "I have not known you;" and consecrates himself to Jehovah. Moses now, full of zeal though not according to knowledge, but which was permitted of God for our instruction, proposes to the people his going up, and "peradventure" he shall make an atonement for this sin. And he asks God to blot him out of His book rather than that the people should not be forgiven. God refuses him; and, while sparing them through his mediation, and placing them under the government of His patience and long-suffering, puts each

one of them under responsibility to Himself — that is, under the law, declaring that the soul that sinned He would blot out of His book.

Contrast between the mediation of Moses and the work of our Saviour

Thus the mediation of Moses was available for forgiveness, as regards government, and to put them under a government, the principles of which we shall see by-and-by; but it was useless as regards any atonement which would protect them from the final effect of their sin (its effect as regarded their eternal relationship with God), and withdraw them from under the judgment of the law.* God spares them and commands Moses to lead the people to the place of which He had spoken, and His angel should go before him. {* Hence it is that this revelation of God, though the character proclaimed be so abundant in goodness, is called by the apostle (2 Cor. 3) the ministration of death and condemnation. For if the people were still under the law, the more gracious God was, the more guilty they were.}

What a contrast do we here remark, in passing, with the work of our precious Saviour! He comes down from above — from His dwelling-place in the glory of the Father — to do His will, and did it perfectly; and (instead of destroying the tables, the signs of this covenant, the requirements of which man was unable to meet), He Himself bears the penalty of its infringement, bearing its curse; and, having accomplished the atonement before returning above, instead of going up with a cheerless "peradventure" in His mouth, which the holiness of God instantly nullified, He ascends, with the sign of the accomplishment of the atonement, and of the confirmation of the new covenant, with His precious blood, the value of which was anything but doubtful to that God before whom He presented it. Alas! the church has but too faithfully reflected the conduct of Israel during the absence of the true Moses, and attributed to providence what she had fashioned with her own hands, because she would see something.

Chapters 33 and 34

A new mediation

We have now to examine a little what was taking place among the people, and on Moses's part, the faithful and zealous witness, as a servant of God in His house; for we shall find a new mediation going on peacefully, if one may so speak, and holily, weighing by faith, these relationships where the mercy and the justice of God meet in their application to His government. It is not the indignation of holy wrath, which had indeed its place at the sight of the evil, while it knew not what to do — for how put the law of God beside the golden calf? Jehovah says that He will send an angel, and that He will not go in the midst of the people, seeing it is stiff-necked, lest He should destroy them by the way. But I will state succinctly the facts connected with this new intercession, which are of touching interest.

The holy grace of God

God had first said that He would come up in a moment in the midst of them to destroy them. This present excision of the people in judgment, Moses's intercession had averted, and Jehovah calls upon

Israel now to put off their ornaments, that He might know what to do unto them. Holy grace of God! who, if He sees the insolence of sin before His eyes, must strike, but wills that the people should at least strip themselves of that, and that He may have time (to speak the language of men) to reflect as to what He should do with the sin of a people now humbled for having forsaken Him.

However, God does not forsake the people. Moses enters holily, and by the just judgment of conscience, into the mind of God by the Spirit; and, before the tabernacle of the congregation was pitched, he entirely leaves the camp, and makes a place for God outside the camp, afar off from the camp, which had put a false god in His place, and changed their glory into the similitude of an ox which eats grass. He calls it the tabernacle of the congregation — the meeting-place between God and those who sought Him. This name is in itself important, because it is no longer simply God in the midst of a recognised assembly, which was one of the characters we have already observed connected with the tabernacle.* Moses being outside the camp, God now declares that He will not go up in the midst of them, lest He should destroy them by the way, as He had threatened. Moses begins his intercession, having taken an individual position, the only one now of faithfulness to God; but his connection with the people being so much the stronger by his being nearer to God, more separated unto Him. This is the effect of faithful separation when it is for God's glory, and one is brought near to God in it. {* He anticipates by faith, jealous of God's glory, the tabernacle which was to be set up according to the thoughts and commandments of God, which he had seen in communion with Jehovah. That was indeed the principal thing; but it was without the camp, and a sort of disorder in the eyes of men, and was without the ornaments and the forms commanded of God in the tabernacle, and there was not one express word of God for it to be done. Nevertheless, the presence of God was there, and the main thing for faith was there; that is, a tent where God was seen, and where He might be sought, even in a manner in which faith was more manifest than when the tabernacle was regularly set up. Then the pillar came down as a blessed testimony to the faith of Moses.}

It must be remarked here, that God had taken the people at their word. They had said, acting according to their faith, or rather to their want of faith, "This Moses that brought us up out of Egypt." God says, "Thy people, which thou broughtest out of Egypt, have corrupted themselves." Hence God says to Moses, "Thou," addressing Himself to the mediator. Moses says to God, "Thy people." This earnest power of faith does not, though separating from evil, loose God from this blessed claim (Ex. 32:1, 7, 12-34). Afterwards, however, the people having stripped themselves of their ornaments, and Moses being in the position of mediator, God says (Ex. 33:1), "Thou and the people which thou hast brought up."* Everything now hangs upon the mediator. {* And Moses really represents Christ here, not Christ outside the camp.}

Moses having taken his place outside the camp, God reveals Himself to him as He never had done before. The people see God standing at the door of the tabernacle which Moses had pitched; and they worship, every man at his tent door. Jehovah speaks unto Moses face to face, as a man speaks unto his friend. We shall see that it is to these communications that God alludes when He speaks of the glory of Moses (Num. 12:8), and not to those on Mount Sinai. Moses, as mediator in the way of testimony, goes into the camp; but Joshua, the spiritual chief of the people (Christ in Spirit), does not depart out of the tabernacle* Moses now recognises what God had told him, that he has to bring up the people; he is

there as the mediator on whom everything depends. But he dares not entertain the thought of going up alone, of going up without knowing who would be with him. God has fully acknowledged him in grace, and he desires to know who will go before him. He therefore asks, since he has found grace (for so God had told him), that he may know His way, the way of God; not only to have a way for him (Moses) to get to Canaan, but "thy way;" thus will he know God, and in His path and conduct, will find grace in His sight. God replies that His presence shall go, and He will give rest to Moses: the two things he perfectly needed as crossing the wilderness. Moses then brings in the people, and says, "Carry us not up hence," and that "we have found grace, I and thy people." This also is granted of Jehovah; and now he desires for himself to see the glory of Jehovah; but that face which is to go and lead Moses and the people, God cannot shew unto Moses. He will hide him while He passes by, and Moses shall see His back parts. We cannot meet God on His way as independent of Him. After He has passed by, one sees all the beauty of His ways. Who could have been beforehand in proposing such a thing as the cross? After God of Himself has done it, then all the perfectness of God in it overflows the heart. {* This is the place we have in spirit, but it is sometimes hard to connect the two.}

God then lays down two principles: His sovereignty, which allows Him to act in goodness towards the wicked — into this He retreats that any may be saved — for in justice He would have cut off the whole people: and the conditions of His government under which He was putting the people, His character such as it is manifested in His ways towards them. Hid whilst He passes by, Moses bows down at the voice of God, who proclaims His name and reveals what He is as JEHOVAH. These words give the principles contained in the character of God Himself in connection with the Jewish people — principles which form the basis of His government. It is not at all the name of His relationship with the sinner for his justification, but with Israel for His government. Mercy, holiness, and patience, mark His ways with them; but He does not clear the guilty. Moses, ever bearing the people of God on his heart, beseeches God, according to the favour in which he stands as mediator, that the Lord Himself, thus revealed, may go up in their midst; and this, because they were a stiff-necked people. How should he bring such a people safe through without Him?

The relationship between Moses personally and God was fully established, so that he could present the people such as they were, because of his (Moses's own) position; and, consequently, make of the difficulty and sin of the people a reason for the presence of God, according to the character He had revealed. It is the proper effect of mediation; but it is exceedingly beautiful to see, grace having thus come in, the reason God had given for the destruction of the people, or at the very least for His absence, becoming the motive for His presence.* It, no doubt, supposed forgiveness as well. This Moses asks for, and adds, in the consciousness of the blessing of the name and being of God, "Take us for thine inheritance." In answer to this prayer, God establishes a new covenant with the people. The basis of it is complete separation from the nations which God was going to drive out from before the people. It supposes the entrance of the people into Canaan in virtue of the mediation of Moses, and the presence of God with the people consequent upon his intercession. He is commanded to maintain their relationship with Him in the solemn feasts under the blessing and safeguard of God. {* We know this ourselves; my sinfulness in itself would be the reason for God's giving me up. But now I am in grace, I can plead it with God as a reason, blessed be His name, for His going with me; never should I overcome and get safe across the wilderness, if He was not with me. Surely the flesh is there. But it is

wondrous grace. Nothing shews more clearly the difference between justifying forgiveness, and governmental mercy, than this part of Israel's history. God forgives, but does not clear the guilty — atonement was not made: no doubt, even in possibility of government all was based on it.}

It is well to have the order of facts clear here as to Moses's position. He broke the tables; the Levites at his summons slay their friends and relations; and then he pitches the tabernacle far off from the camp. There the cloud comes down (Ex. 33:9). There the basis of all was laid, first in absolute sovereign grace, and then in the character of Moses's personal relationship. This was at the door of the tabernacle outside the camp. Then chapter 34 he goes up again, and there, he being in this relationship, quite a new governmental covenant is made, founded on God's character mediatorially, and the law put into the ark. They were put back in principle under law; real atonement could not be made, of course, by Moses (Ex. 34:10-17). But Israel was never directly and properly under the covenant of the law, but mediatorially under chapter 34:5-10; though the commandments were, of course, before them as their rule. But this new covenant of chapter 34 was what they were under as to the law; and hence they, as under the law, were apostate and left of God before they got it; and Moses and the cloud of God's presence outside the camp. People sought the Lord and went there. Utter separation from all mixture with the idolatrous people, and consecration, characterises the new covenant of chapter 34. In chapter 23 they were told to destroy their altars and serve Jehovah who would cut these nations off But the covenant is not so characterised. It is of moment to see that God retreats into His own sovereign grace to spare them. But this was at the door of the tabernacle and with Moses alone; the covenant of gracious government was based on it. That was on the mount. The people were only on that ground. There was no real basis of relationship; the law, which would have been one, broken, and no atonement made, nor could be. Moses had a special revelation of grace. But this seems to have been personal and unrecorded.

I have rather enlarged upon these conversations of Moses with the people, because (and it is very important to remark it) Israel never entered the land under the Sinai covenant, that is, under simple law (for all this passed under Mount Sinai); it had been immediately broken. It is under the mediation of Moses that they were able to find again the way of entering it. However, they are placed again under the law, but the government of patience and grace is added to it. In Deuteronomy 10:1, we see there is no longer question of introducing the law openly into the camp where God had been dishonoured. It was to be put into the ark, according to the predetermined plans of God,* arranged to enable the people, miserable as they were, to draw near unto Him, though only outside unto the brazen altar. Moses abides there with Jehovah. There was enough in the contemplation of what God was, as He had revealed Himself, to occupy him. He had not now to be occupied with the instructions** God was giving him on the details of the tabernacle, but with God according to the revelation He had made of Himself; he neither ate nor drank; he was in a state above nature, where the flesh could not intermeddle, in some sort apart from humanity.*** The Lord writes His law anew on the tables which Moses had prepared. But the effect of this communion with God was manifest; the skin of his face shone when he came down. However, here it was a glory as it were external and legal, not like that of Jehovah Himself in the Person of Jesus. Thus Israel could not behold it. We are in quite a different position: for us, there is no longer a veil; and we behold with open (that is unveiled) face the glory of the Lord. For the glory now is not applied to make good the law in the conscience; for the glory in the face of Moses did this, only the people consequently could not bear it,**** nor consequently understand the figures of grace: the law

(as rule of human righteousness) being broken and gone as ground of relationship with God, and laid up in the ark, they turned the figures of grace into law, as men do. The glory we see is the proof of the putting away of sins and divine righteousness, for it is seen in Him who bore our sins and is that righteousness for us. We are rather in the position of Moses when he entered into the most holy place. {* Thus Christ was in reserve, though at the same time fore-ordained, even from eternity. He was only manifested as the true propitiation when the law had been presented, and man had failed under it. Its only existence now is, as giving great recognised principles of the righteousness required from man (in its highest elements we may add from the creature) but hidden and buried in Him who gives His character to the throne of God. But it was necessary to break or hide those tables (terrible to man) of the perfect but inflexible law of God. God will write them on the heart of once disobedient Israel in the latter day. ** The little that was said to Moses in the covenant was prohibitory of all association with the nations strangers to Jehovah, and the establishment of links with Him, consecration to Him in everything as redeemed, absence of leaven, and I think the prohibition of what was devilishly against nature. What was of nature as of God, was not to be violated There was redemption, as the key to all connected with the judgment of evil, but also the firstfruits of nature were to be consecrated to God, and the relationship of nature not violated. *** Here, however, is seen the excellency of the Lord Jesus, who in all things must have the pre-eminence Moses, naturally far off, is separated from his natural state, in order to draw near unto God. Christ was naturally near there, and more than near; He separates Himself from nature to meet the adversary on the behalf of man. **** It had the character of claim on them coming with the law from above, and thus they could not see the prefigurement of Christ, when it came out either (see 2 Cor. 3). The whole position is of all importance. On the ground of law, that is, man's responsibility, all being gone, God retreated into His own sovereignty (Moses pleading as to Israel God's unconditional promises), and Israel were placed under the governmental name and dealings of God as they are to this day, only having since rejected Christ and promise and grace.}

Chapters 35 to 40

The portion of the people under the Mediator

Besides the separation of Israel from the inhabitants of the land wherein they were to dwell, which is found in chapter 34, there is in chapter 35 another part of the instructions of Moses which he gave when he came down. It is not now the certainty of entering, and the conduct suited to those who have found grace, abstaining from all that might tend to bring sin back when they were enjoying the privileges of grace; Moses speaks to them of the portion of the people under the influence of that communication which the mediator, as head of grace, had established. The sabbath* is appointed; and, moreover, His people (grace thus manifested) are encouraged to shew their goodwill and their liberality in everything that concerned the service of God. Consequently we find the manifestation of the spirit of wisdom and of gift in service; God calling specially by name those He designed more particularly for the work. This was done liberally: they brought more than was sufficient; and every wise-hearted man worked, each the things for which he was gifted; and Moses blessed them. {* The sabbath is always found whenever there is any principle whatever of relationship established between the people and God; it is the result proposed in every relation between God and His people, that they enter into His rest. It is to be noted

that, while the people are distinctly put under law, the principle of the second tables was law after present forgiveness and mercy. This is exactly the ground Christians want to be upon now — to bring in law after grace and mercy. But this it is Paul calls the ministration of death and condemnation. For, the first time he went up, his face did not shine; and it is to that the apostle refers in 2 Corinthians 3.}

The tabernacle being set up and anointed, God takes possession of it by His glory

Thus was the tabernacle set up, and everything put into its place, according to the commandment of God. Thereupon (which we might have remarked before), the whole is anointed with oil. Christ was thus consecrated, anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power; and, moreover, Christ having made peace by His blood, having all things to reconcile (being the One who first descended, and afterwards ascended, to fill all things with His presence, according to the power of redemption in righteousness and love divine), the unction of the Holy Ghost must carry the efficacy of this power in redemption everywhere. Therefore had the tabernacle been sprinkled with blood. It is the power of the presence of the Holy Ghost which is spoken of, not being born again. God takes possession of the tabernacle by His glory, and the cloud of His presence and of His protection becomes the guide of the people (now forgiven), happy, and so greatly blessed, in being under the government and guidance of God, and at the same time His habitation and His inheritance. But all still depended on human obedience, the people's obedience, nor was atonement, though revealed in figure, accomplished in fact.