

The Way

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1 “The Way”	1
Chapter 2 Fools	2
Chapter 3 The Life Choice	5
Chapter 4 What Grace Teaches	7
Chapter 5 The Sober Life	9
Chapter 6 The Righteous Life	11
Chapter 7 The Godly Life	13
Chapter 8 The Fear of God	15
Chapter 9 On Being Pilgrims	17
Chapter 10 Who is a Christian?	20
Chapter 11 The Christian Hope	24
Chapter 12 The Intermediate State	27
Chapter 13 Conclusion	30
Appendix Note 1 The Church	34
Appendix Note 2 1 Thess 4:1-18	37

Chapter 1 “The Way”

THE scene is laid in the court of a Roman procurator. The occasion is a public trial. The prosecutors are the religious leaders of the Jews. The accused is a man of their own race and creed. Once a true and zealous "son of the Church" - an honoured and trusted disciple of their strictest and most distinguished school - he has lapsed from orthodoxy and joined "the sect of the Nazarenes." Worse than this he is a ringleader of that apostasy, and has gone to such extremes of heresy as to teach that there is salvation for others than the elect people of God. "Away with such a fellow from the earth" had been their cry, "it is not fit that he should live." If only they were free he would receive short shrift at their hands; but he is under the protection of Roman law, and so they have to suffer the indignity of being compelled to bring him before a court of their Roman masters. But on what charge can he be arraigned? The figment that the Nazarene founded a new religion has not yet been invented. Else their task would be an easy one; for the Empire is intolerant of new religions. And a mere lapse from doctrinal orthodoxy within a religion authorised by the state, no Roman magistrate will deal with. So they have instructed one Tertullus, a professional pleader, to represent them. And Tertullus, skilfully masking the real ground of the accusation, charges the prisoner with being a disturber of the peace, a public pest, and a man tainted with sedition. Thus it was that his co-religionists described the great Apostle of the Gentiles. Destined to do more to move the world than all the "Caesars" of history, he stood there, an ugly little Jew, not only friendless and hated, but despised. Oriental cruelty had a mode of execution more horrible even than crucifixion. Impaled upon a stake planted in the ground, the victim was left to a lingering death, in the public view. And such is the figure which, in the Epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle uses to describe the utter wreck of his physical being. He was "given a stake for the flesh." And thus impaled,

as it were, he was "made a spectacle unto the world, o both to angels and to men." His face was battered and scarred, and his muscular frame wrenched and torn, by the stoning at Lystra, when, with arms nerved by religious hate, his cruel enemies had pounded him to death. Till then he had ranked as an orator; but now he articulates with difficulty, and his speech is deemed contemptible. And he had his own "Gethsemane," when thrice he put up the prayer that the Almighty power which God had permitted him to administer in healing others might be used to bring himself relief. But the answer came, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." And so he had learned to glory in his infirmities. His hideous scars were "the brand marks of the Lord Jesus," whose slave he rejoiced to be. Sufferings for Christ's sake refine and humble a man, but they never humiliate or crush him. So with courage undaunted, and with all the dignity which becomes a servant of God, he confronted both his persecutors and his judge. And after traversing explicitly the charges of sedition and disorder, he rolled back upon his accusers their charge of heresy. We can picture to ourselves his look and gesture as, pointing to those recreant Jews, he exclaimed, "This I confess unto thee, that according to 'The Way' (which they call a sect) so worship I our fathers' God, believing all things that are according to the law, and that are written in the prophets." "The Way." The expression indicates, as Lange tells us, "a certain mode of life and conduct"; or as Canon Cook, with greater fulness, gives it, "a definite and progressive direction of the inner and outer life of man." On the Apostle's lips it means the true Faith, and a right life. And its occurrences in the Acts of the Apostles give proof not only that it was in common use, but that it was a phrase of the disciples' own choosing. What first led the Apostle to "separate the disciples" was that, after his three months' ministry in the synagogue at Ephesus, certain of the Jews "spake evil of the Way." At Ephesus it was too, that, later on, the pagan idolaters "made no small stir about the Way." Nor was the word unknown to Paul in his unconverted days. The High Priest's commission given him in view of his Damascus journey, was that "if he found any of the Way, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem." And referring to this, when now seized and charged by the Jerusalem Jews, he reminded them that he had "persecuted the Way unto the death." The last occurrence of the word is where we read that Felix, "having more perfect knowledge of the Way," refused to condemn the Apostle on the charges so cunningly devised against him. At a recent sale of a bankrupt nobleman's effects, it was mentioned that a beautiful little crystal goblet, which fetched four thousand guineas, had been lying for years unnoticed with articles of common glass, for common use. And so it is with this word "The Way." It has fallen out of notice, and lies neglected and forgotten. And yet it is not only beautiful but useful, for it has no synonym in our English tongue.

Chapter 2 Fools

GOD has no pleasure in fools, the Book of Ecclesiastes tells us - that wonderful treatise upon the philosophy of life. "Be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools." "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few." "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for He hath no pleasure in fools." Fools are of different types; and, as a reference to the Hebrew will tell us, it is "the fat fool" that is here intended. Not that he is always fat; and if any one assumes that men are fools because they are fat he will soon find out his mistake. But the fat fool is the "type." We all know him. And we are disposed to like him; for he is generally an amiable sort of creature, with no malice, and not a little good nature. If his good resolutions were realised, he would be counted a saint; and if he carried out his projects he might pass for a genius. But he has neither strength of will nor force of character for achievements of any kind. This is one of many passages of Scripture intended to

Anderson – “The Way”

warn us against trifling with God. It tells us that it is better not to make vows than to make them and then leave them unpaid. It reminds us, moreover, that the God of revelation is the God of nature. For nature is stern and unpitying with fools. And the revelation of Grace in the Gospel is not, as some suppose, an effort on God's part to make amends for what they deem His laches and mistakes in bygone ages. Neither is it a setting aside of the great principles of His government. On the contrary, it is a provision for bringing fallen men to blessing and peace by bringing them into harmony with those eternal principles. God has no pleasure in fools. And Grace has failed of its due effect upon the heart and life if a man does not cease to be a fool when he becomes, in the true sense of the word, a Christian. "But," some one will exclaim, "are we not told to become fools for Christ's sake?" Yes, and people are apt to make this an excuse for playing the fool, which is not at all what it means. A Christian may seem to his fellowmen to be a fool. But it is one thing to be a fool, and quite another thing to seem to be a fool. A man once built a great ship far inland. He must have been reckoned the greatest fool of his day; but as events proved, he was the only wise man. For "things not seen as yet" were realities to Noah. Everybody saw them afterwards when it was too late. I remember the case of a young man who married a moneyless girl and then sailed for Australia, taking with him his bride and what little money he could scrape together; it was only about £600. When the two families heard that he had used his capital in buying some land in an out-of-the-way place, they said he ought to be shut up in a lunatic asylum. But there was gold in that piece of land, and when, some years later, I met him in London, he was very rich; and the relatives had given up talking about lunatic asylums. The Christian is a follower of Him who likened Himself to a man that parts with all that he has in order to buy a field, because he knows there is treasure hidden in it. The Christian acts in the present with a view to the future. For he knows that while the things which are seen are temporal, the things which are not seen are eternal. But the "fat fool" is not the worst type of fool. Though his "thoughts" never come to anything, he means well. But the fool who is pilloried in the fourteenth and fifty-third Psalms has thoughts that are positively evil, and they govern his conduct. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." In his heart, mark; for the Bible never contemplates folly so gross as to say it openly. The only atheists are the apostates; for there is no darkness so dense as that which covers us when some strong clear light is quenched. "I had rather believe all the fables in the Legend and the Talmud than that this universal frame is without a mind." These were Bacon's words. "The understanding revolts at such a conclusion," is Darwin's repudiation of the suggestion that "blind chance" could account for "that grand sequence of events" of which biology treats. Herbert Spencer proclaimed this sort of academic atheism; but, here in England at least, notwithstanding the efforts of a clique of second-rank scientists, Spencerism is as dead as its author. As any intelligent thinker can see, his objections to the hypothesis of creation apply with far greater force to his figment of abiogenesis. The word used for "fool" in these Psalms of David has no kinship with Solomon's fool in the passage above quoted from Ecclesiastes. I wonder whether, when David here wrote the word nabal, his thoughts glanced back to his wife Abigail's first husband, the man of whom she said, "Nabal is his name, and folly is with him"; the man who was "very great" and very rich, but who was "churlish and evil in his doings," and who repelled David's courteous appeals with insult. Proud of his wealth and greatness, he despised David. That same night, we read, "he held a feast in his house like the feast of a king." "But it came to pass about ten days after that he died." In one of his parables our Divine Lord pictures for us a fool of the Nabal type. 'Such an one is "he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." God has a place in the creed of his lips, but the creed of his heart is atheistic; and the creed of his heart finds expression in his acts. So, forgetting the Giver of all his heaped-up blessings, he lays himself out for a life of ease and sensual enjoyment. "But," the parable proceeds, "God said unto him, Thou fool: this night thy soul shall be

required of thee." For such a man, to live is self, and to die is loss. The sixteenth chapter of Luke brings before us fools of both types. It is one of the perverted chapters of the Bible. The popularly accepted version of it may be summarised as follows: A certain rich man had a steward who was accused of robbing him. So he gave him notice of dismissal. The steward then set himself to rob him more flagrantly than ever; and, *mirabile dictu*, his master commended him for his cleverness. Never, surely, did rustic preacher propound anything sillier to a company of yokels! And in answer to the ridicule which it naturally excited, the Teacher then propounded another parable, with the moral, "Woe to the rich; blessed are the poor "-thus seeking to cover mere nonsense by pestilent error. Indeed, if error and nonsense were solid, enough has been said and written upon the sixteenth chapter of Luke to sink the biggest ship that ever put to sea! In these parables we have a series of exquisite pictures drawn by the hand of the Master to illustrate the great life-choice. In the prodigal of the preceding chapter we have the case of one who "wasted" his "portion of goods" in the pursuit of selfish and sinful pleasure, but who afterwards repented and was restored. In the steward we have the case of one who wasted his master's "goods" by unthrift and neglect, but who repented and was forgiven. And in the rich man of the closing parable of the series, we have one who lived for this world and died impenitent. This "steward" was a typical "fat fool." He was "unrighteous" in the sense that he was not a true steward; unrighteous in the sense in which the money is called "unrighteous mammon." Not because it was what men call bad money, but because the best of good money is not "the true riches." He was a listless, easy-going man who let things slide, leaving debts uncollected, and allowing accounts to run on. He was thus wasting his master's property. It was a case of habitual carelessness, not of definite acts of dishonesty. His dishonesty was of the passive kind. And what earned for him his employer's praise was not his dishonesty at all, but his action when brought to book, and dishonesty of any kind was no longer possible. Instead of making enemies of his master's debtors by suddenly forcing payment of long-standing accounts, he set himself to make them his friends - to place them under obligation to him - by giving them receipts in full for payment in part, making good the balance from his own money. And this, as he said, in order that, when he was put out of the stewardship, they might receive him into their houses. This is the whole point of the parable. Its lessons are explained by the Lord Himself: "Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it shall fail ye may be received into the everlasting tabernacles." It is not meant to teach us that roguery is commendable. The moral is akin to that of the parable of the treasure hid in a field, namely, the wisdom of incurring a seeming loss in order to secure a real gain; of using the present in view of the future; of living in a world which is "passing away," though apparently so real, under the power of that other world which, though unseen, is abiding and eternal. It is the enforcement, in a higher sphere, of that which is a common-place with "the children of this world." For no man ever achieves success who has not learned to make "today" subordinate to "tomorrow" who is not ready to yield some immediate advantage in order to secure a prospective gain. It is the philosophy of the man who foregoes pleasure for the sake of business, or who parts with his money in order to secure a provision for old age. The opposite extreme is a case like that of Esau, "who, for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright "- bartered his future to secure enjoyment in the passing hour. And the Esaus are many in every age - men and women who give way to some strong passion, or even, it may be, to some passing whim, at the cost of their whole life prospects. If the popular reading of the parable were right, the words which follow would be quite unmeaning. Rogues are often shrewd and careful in dealing with their ill-gotten gains; but many a man who may be trusted absolutely with what belongs to others is thriftless and careless with his own. And so the Lord adds, "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who shall give you that which is your own?" Spiritual gifts are our own: the mammon is entrusted to us as stewards. How false, then,

is the notion that the life of the Christian is divided into watertight compartments, the religious being shut off from the secular! The Christian is as really God's servant in the one sphere as in the other. And this leads to the final lesson. The Christian is to use the world; but if he is betrayed into using it excessively, it becomes his master. And though mammon be a good servant, it is an evil master. Moreover, "No servant can serve two masters. . . . Ye cannot serve God and mammon." But with the money-loving Pharisee this *via media* is the ideal life. "Making the best of both worlds," it is called. But this God will not tolerate. We must choose between them, and the next parable is given to guide our choice.

Chapter 3 The Life Choice

"There was a certain rich man which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: "And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores." THIS second parable was the Lord's reply to those who scoffed at His words, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." The steward of the first parable is a "fat fool" who mends his ways; this rich man is a "Nabal" who dies in his folly. In answer to the ridicule of those who claimed to serve both worlds, the Lord here brings before us the case of two men who made choice between them. The rich man, moreover, "fully received his good things"; nothing failed him of all that he had bargained for. And Lazarus was left destitute and desolate, with no provision but the refuse from the rich man's table, no bed but the roadway by the rich man's gate, no comforters but the dogs that licked his sores; for he was not only a beggar, but loathsomely diseased. It is "a study in black and white," with no colour-shading in it, and therefore with no exact counterpart in real life. For wealth will not buy health, or peace of mind either. And without a good digestion and "a mind at leisure from itself, no amount of gold will enable any one to enjoy life - to "make merry sumptuously every day." And so it has come to pass that princes have died broken-hearted, and millionaires have killed themselves. And in the case of Lazarus the "black and white" is still more pronounced. "I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread," is an experience that some of us who have seen much of life in many phases of it will endorse. Nor can we forget the Lord's own promise to those who seek His kingdom first in their life on earth. But here mammon's man is presented to us in the brightest possible light, and God's man in the darkest possible shadow; and in view of their life-story we are bidden to make choice whom we will serve. But to guide our choice the veil is lifted which shuts out the unseen world. "It came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died and was buried." And now he is "tormented" and Lazarus is "comforted." This is not the award of the day of judgment; it is but the natural sequel to their life choice. There is an awful solemnity about the answer given to the rich man's appeal—" Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus evil things." The word used expresses the receipt in full, "the exhaustion of every claim." "Woe to the rich, but blessed are the poor," is the meaning which certain eminent theologians find in the story. But this only proves their ignorance of Christ and His teaching. There is neither merit in being poor nor woe in being rich. The poor man who chooses mammon may miss the "good things" he has bargained for, and die a pauper at the last. But his poverty will avail nothing to atone for the sin of his life choice; and his sin can have but one ending. And as for "them that are rich in this world," if they but learn "not to be high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy," they will in very truth "lay hold on the life which is life indeed," "laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come." But did not our Lord tell the

Anderson – “The Way”

young man who had "great possessions" to strip himself of everything and to come and follow Him? Yes, and another who "besought Him" for leave to do this very thing, was bidden to return to his own house and there to show how great things God had done for him. And there was a Lazarus whom He loved, who was not a beggar, but a wealthy man; and instead of telling him to sell his house, the Lord became his guest there. He knows each heart and each life, and deals with each in infinite wisdom. To leave houses or lands for His sake, and the Gospel's, is to gain a hundredfold in blessing even in this life. But the man who pulls down his barns in order to make a fetich of poverty is as great a fool, and may be as profane, as he who builds them up again and makes a fetich of wealth. No generous mind will sympathise with pulpit diatribes against the godless rich. Poor creatures! their tenure of their "good things" is very brief and most uncertain: why should they not enjoy them while they may? As well might we grudge his special comforts to the condemned criminal awaiting execution. And, after all, the rich man's case has much to be said for it. Draw the curtains of time so close around him as to shut out the light of eternity, and his lot is an enviable one. It is a fine thing to be well clothed, and to "make merry sumptuously every day." But, you say, his wealth is God's, and he is misusing it. Yes, it is God's, but it is not yours; and it is no business of yours how he spends it. He is a better citizen than the man who hides his sovereigns in a cupboard or under the floor. In spite of his selfishness the sumptuous rich man, in scattering his money, does good to somebody. But if the miser and his piled up gold were flung into the sea the community would be none the poorer. The godless rich man is indeed contemptible, but not quite so contemptible as the godless poor. Look at him there as he passes in his splendid carriage, or as he sits at his luxurious table, and answer the question honestly, Has he not something to show for his evil bargain? But what can be said for the diseased and hungry beggar lying at his gate? or, to take the present day pattern, see that miserable wretch cadging about the streets for a crust or a glass of beer, and picking up cigar ends from the gutter! The one has gained this world, at all events; and so long as he lives in this world he can hold up his head. The other has no less definitely chosen this world; but what a bargain he has made! In view of eternity, it is a question, which of them is most to be pitied; but there can be no question which of them is most to be despised. The godless pauper - the man who chooses this world and is tricked out of his bargain - is the most utterly pitiful creature upon earth. At a gospel meeting in a village schoolhouse, years ago, I noticed a leather-faced old man who was listening with eyes and ears. He came back next morning to hear an address on prophetic truth, of which he took notes on a torn piece of packing paper, with the stump of a carpenter's pencil. He told me he was a travelling knife-grinder, and that, straying into the meeting by chance the evening before, he had received Christ. A month afterwards a letter from him reached me, which, on being deciphered, testified that it was "grand to be a knife-grinder," for the children and villagers liked to watch him at his work, and he was able to tell them about Christ. I heard no more of him till the following winter, when a friend found him in a workhouse. "It was grand to be in a workhouse," he said, for he had such chances of "telling the others about Christ." And my last news of him was that he was dying in the infirmary; but full of joy, because the man in the next bed had been brought to Christ by his talking to him. Such is the blessedness of "God's poor," "rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom." What a contrast! "A certain rich man," mark; he is a mere millionaire, and his name is of no account. But "a certain beggar, named Lazarus." God knows His own, and their names are "written in heaven." But why Lazarus? His whole life-story is in that name, "God, my help." He is a 46th Psalm man. Dives is not in suffering because he has been rich; nor Lazarus comforted because he has been poor. Their condition is the natural sequel to their own deliberate life-choice. The rich man has already received - received to the full - everything he bargained for; but Lazarus has received nothing - nothing at least but "evil things." As we have seen, there never was either a Dives or a Lazarus in real life. For the world never

does satisfy; and God never does desert His own. "None that trust in Him shall be desolate"; but Lazarus was "desolate." And now the one is in suffering and the other is comforted. This is not, I repeat, the award of the great Day. The one has yet to face the judgment, and to receive due punishment for all his sins; and the other still awaits the glory and the crown of faithfulness. And though the Lord's description of their life on earth is marked by the sort of hyperbole inseparable from a picture in black and white, there is no element of the kind in his words about the under world. In this present world Lazarus receives nothing but evil things, and in that world nothing but what "the God of all comfort" never fails to bestow, even here and now, upon those who trust in Him. And what awful solemnity there is in the very tenderness and pathos of the answer to the rich man's appeal: "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime fully receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things: but now here he is comforted, and thou art sorrowing." The equity of it all is perfect. It is as though the Lord put the challenge to us, "Take mammon's balance-sheet at its ideal best, and God's at its lowest and worst; and, even on that false estimate, work out the sum, and then make choice whom you will serve."

Chapter 4 What Grace Teaches

THE Reformation rescued the great truth of "justification by faith"; "justification *by* grace" was the characteristic truth of the revival of the nineteenth century. "For by grace are ye saved, through faith," the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians; "and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Salvation is a gift - God's gift, bestowed on the principle of grace, received on the principle of faith. By the mission and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the kindness of God and His love towards man were "manifested." And more than this, the revelation of Divine wrath against sin, and of Divine righteousness in forgiving sin, made it possible for God to assume a new attitude toward the world. "For the grace of God has been manifested, salvation-bringing to all men." Grace is the fundamental truth of Christianity as distinguished from Judaism. And it is impossible to exaggerate this truth. It may be expressed in words that are unworthy or unwise; it may be so divorced from all thoughts of the holiness and majesty of God as to become in a sense untrue; but overstated it cannot be. The Divine sacrifice of Calvary surpasses the power of words to tell it, and no language can do justice to the freeness with which blessings flow to the believing sinner in virtue of the death of Christ. Peace has been made by that death; and God now stoops, even from the throne of His glory, to proclaim the peace which has thus been accomplished. Heaven is thrown open to the lost of earth. There is none too vile to enter there. "Without money and without price," without condition or reserve, the gift of life eternal is bestowed. "The man that doeth the righteousness which is of the law shall live thereby." But in contrast with this, sinners saved by grace can testify that "Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us." But the question arises, and it is time to press it earnestly and solemnly, how far a sober, righteous, and godly life characterises those who claim to have been thus blessed. The same grace which brings salvation trains us to this end. For grace is not merely, as so many seem to think, a negation of something else - a setting aside of law - but a positive and active principle to mould and govern the Christian life. In writing to Titus, himself a teacher, the Apostle states the doctrine in a few terse and weighty words; in his epistles to Ephesus and Colosse, he unfolds it in its bearing on the duties and relationships of common life. And the difference between law and grace is not in the commandments given, but in the principle on which they are promulgated and enforced. The life and death of Christ have raised the standard of our relationships with God, and therefore of our obedience to Him. Under the law self-love was the measure of man's love to man, for no higher love was known to him; but now "We perceive THE LOVE because He laid down His life for

us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Such is the precept grace enjoins. Law has a penalty for every transgression; grace has no penalties. Law links a blessing with the commandment, but it is as the reward for obedience; with grace the blessing is freely given, and is itself the motive to obedience. We need to distinguish between "law" as a principle of obedience, and "the law" as a penal code. In this second aspect of it "the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient." The real people of God were never under it. But until Christ came they were under law as "a schoolmaster." Although they were sons they were treated as children. But the school of grace is for grown-up sons. The training is on a different principle. For the essential difference, I again repeat, is not in the precepts enjoined, though these do differ, but in the principle on which they are enforced. And this leads me to emphasise the much needed truth that sin is not become less heinous because grace is reigning. Nor is the moral distance less immense which separates the sinner from God. This distance indeed is all the greater, just because of the intimacy of the relationship in which the believer stands to Him. If these words should cause surprise to any, no better proof can be afforded of the widespread need there is to enforce the truth they teach. With many it is to be feared that a one-sided apprehension of grace has tended to levity in their dealings with God. The New Testament is read as though it were given to supersede the Old, and the grace and love of God are used to set aside the truth of His holiness and majesty. I have spoken of separation between the sinner and God. Can sin then avail to separate the believer from Him? The question claims a twofold answer. The union that is bought with the blood which cleanses from all sin, and depends only on the life that is ours in Christ, nothing can disturb. And life, moreover, is the only ground of fellowship with God. But fellowship is possible only in "the light" as the sphere of its enjoyment; and if any one claims it, while walking in darkness, he lies. In a real sense, therefore, sin does separate from God. Not that walking in the light implies a sinless course, nor yet that walking in darkness necessarily implies acts of moral evil. The claim to have attained a sinless walk is proof of darkness, and "the light" is the true sphere in which the believer mourns his sin, and judges it in presence of the blood which was shed to atone for it. But what we need to remember is that the bonds by which God has bound us to Himself only serve to intensify the heinousness of sin, and therefore to widen the moral distance which separates us from Him when sin marks our course. Wantonly to strike another is an outrage; but if that other be a benefactor, the wrong is far more grievous; and if not only a benefactor but a parent, the act is infamous. The relationship does not lessen - it immensely aggravates - the sin. The lasting wonder of redemption is that sinners can approach a holy God; not persons who have been sinners, but those who are such. But the danger is lest this should become divorced from the remembrance of the provision by which alone it is made possible, and that thus we should come to have light thoughts of God, and to forget His holiness and majesty. We have "boldness" to approach; but boldness is far removed from levity. And let us mark the ground on which this confidence is based. It depends on the perfectness of our redemption, the power of the blood to sanctify us, the fitness of the "new and living Way" provided, and, above all, the presence of a Priest, and such a Priest, over the house of God. But even this is not all, and the words which follow are precisely those which most need to be enforced: "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." The reference here to the ritual of the great sin-offering of the nineteenth chapter of Numbers is unmistakable. It is with a heart judged in the presence of the Cross, and a life practically purged from evil (for such was the typical meaning of the bath which followed the sprinkling of the water of purification), that we are bidden to "draw near." So it has been in every age. The tenth chapter of Hebrews is in this respect but the New Testament version of the twenty-fourth Psalm: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart " - the purged heart representing, as

in Hebrews, the attitude of the soul to God; the clean hands, the actions of the outward life. God demands a moral fitness in those who approach Him. "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me" is not the obsolete precept of a bygone dispensation, but an eternal principle based upon the character of God. How important, then, that we should search His Word to learn the spirit which becomes us as we seek His presence. But let no humble believer be offended by this; nor should the exhortation sadden the hearts of any who are contrite: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." [CHAPTER FIVE](#)

Chapter 5 The Sober Life

THE Bible, on its human side, is an Eastern book, abounding in imagery and figure; and when we are told that grace teaches us, the language, of course, is figurative. Whether we live under law or under grace, God is the teacher. But the passage emphasises the truth that it is on the principle of grace that He trains us, not of law. And these two principles are wholly incompatible. Both are good and right, but they are inconsistent. The essential characteristic of law is the assertion of rights; the essential characteristic of grace is the giving up of rights. "He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us." This is the great manifestation of grace - the self-sacrifice of the Son of God. And it is on this principle that He deals with us as now redeemed. It is a thorough paradox to a carnal man; but the philosophy of the heart runs deeper than that of the head. An illustration may be useful to mark the contrast between the two principles. "Thou shalt not steal" was the command that pealed forth from Sinai; and a curse followed upon transgression. "Let him that stole steal no more" is the kindred command of grace. And now mark the sequel: "But rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Law forbids our taking what is another's; grace goes further, and enjoins our giving up what is our own. And so, through all the practical teaching of the Epistle to the Ephesians, the warnings, even against sins of the grossest kind, are based upon blessings freely given, or upon Divine relationships freely formed. "The grace of God trains us." In three other passages of the New Testament this same word is used of God's dealings with His people, and in these it is rightly rendered chasten. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten," is the Lord's word to Laodicea. And in the solemn warning against unworthily partaking of the Lord's Supper, the Apostle writes: "We are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." Law would condemn; grace chastens. And the other passage - Hebrews xii. - marks the distinction still more clearly. The fifth verse takes up the very words of the warning to Laodicea: "Despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him." And mark the ground on which the chastening comes. It is not based upon sin committed, but upon the relationship in which the sinner stands to God. "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." "What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" But the difference does not end here. Punishment, strictly so called, has relation to the past; chastening to the future. Punishment is imposed because of sin committed; chastening is inflicted with a view to the good of him who is the subject of it. He chastens us "for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness." The spirit of legality that is indigenious to our hearts has no more common or subtle phase than that of regarding chastisement as necessarily a punishment for sin. And the teaching of the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, the Divine antidote for this error, is but little understood. Indeed, our beliefs in this respect are but the old doctrine of Eliphaz the Termanite: "Who ever perished being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?" That one who lay crushed and desolate beneath so terrible a storm of seemingly

unpitying judgments could be "a perfect and upright man that feared God and eschewed evil," was a phenomenon entirely beyond the theology of the Temanite; and so he and his companions only forced Job back upon the assertion of his own integrity, and drove him still further from the God who was seeking thus to make him "partaker of His holiness." And in the end the "comforters" of Job had to seek the prayers of Job to save them from the wrath their words had kindled. Grace teaches us. The Christian course is a discipline. And the result is a sober, righteous, and godly life on earth, with heart and eye fixed upon a blessed hope above it and beyond it. "Soberly, righteously, and godly": these words represent the threefold aspect of life - to a man's own spirit, to his neighbour, and to God. And it is certain that these qualities are not characteristic of the age we live in. Sobriety - where is it to be found in this age of display, and hurry, and greed? Just as a nation's commerce may be estimated by its coinage, so its thoughts may be judged by its language; and this word "sober" has so long been run in a special and narrow groove that now it almost refuses to expand to the thought that is here intended. And if the word be wanting, we may be sure the quality it expresses has grown rare. Elsewhere in this epistle this same word is rendered, in our version, "sober," "temperate," and "discreet"; and it embraces all this, and more. Etymologically, it means possessed of a sound mind; and this idea always clings to it. It implies a habit of mind opposed to extremes, and most of all to levity. He who has been trained in the school of grace is marked by soundness of judgment in all things. Sobriety should characterise the Christian, not only in his conduct and circumstances, but in his language and his thoughts. And we must not suppose that spiritual life is unaffected by the world without. Practical Christianity is always leavened by the prevailing influences of the time. Because of the national vices of the Cretans, the flock among whom Titus ministered needed sharp rebuke. They were a mendacious, carnal, avaricious race; hence the weighty precepts of the Epistle. This word "soberly," and its kindred adjectives and verbs and nouns, are used but sixteen times in the New Testament, and six of these are found in this brief letter. And though it may be disputed whether the special Cretan vices mark our own society today, no one will question that insobriety is specially characteristic of this much-lauded age of ours. Nor is this true only of "the City." The baneful influences which surround us, the haste and rivalry which mark our commercial life, have invaded social, and even family life. What is said of the wicked seems true of all together now - they are "like the troubled sea when it cannot rest." Life is becoming a scramble. And Christian life is leavened by the evil influence. Many an earnest worker might take up the sad lament, "They made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept." And such may need the discipline of the Father's house. But this must never be allowed to obscure the truth of the believer's security in Christ. "Him that cometh unto Me," the Lord declares, "I will in no wise cast out." These words are generally read as a "Gospel message." But such is not their purpose. It is not that He never refuses to receive a repentant sinner, but that He never expels a sinner whom He has thus received. Most true it is that He never shuts the door against any one who comes to Him. But what He tells us here is that no one whom He once has welcomed shall ever be put outside the door again. Even if the words themselves were not so clear, the context would make this plain. For He goes on to say, it is the Father's will that not one of those who come to Him shall be lost. And He adds, "I will raise him up at the last day." But this only serves to bring into greater prominence the need of chastening. And "the chastening of the Lord" may explain what sometimes seems capricious and even harsh in His dealings with His people. For are we not perplexed and distressed at times, when the most earnest, and seemingly the most useful, Christians are laid aside or called away? As seen by us, "the world to come" stands apart from "this present world." But it is not so with God. And if our view included both worlds, Divine dealings which now seem strange or harsh would appear as proofs of His wisdom and His love. *(Footnote - Hebrews x. 26 - 29, is misused to check "boldness," whereas its purpose, as expressed in*

verse 35 (cf verse 19), is "Cast not away therefore your boldness." As Alford writes, "It is the sin of apostasy from Christ back to the state which preceded the reception of Christ, viz. Judaism. This is the ground sin of all other sins. . . . It is not of an act, or any number of acts, of sin, that the writer is speaking, which might be repented of and blotted out; but of a state of sin in which a man is found when that day shall come." And Heb. vi. 4-8 is to be explained in the same way, as the rest of that chapter so clearly proves.) What an example of this we find in the case of one who is perhaps the grandest figure on the stage of Old Testament story. Turning away from the treasures of Egypt, and all the power and pomp of the throne of the Pharaohs, Moses threw in his lot with the despised and suffering people of God. A stiff-necked and rebellious people they were; but he bore with them, interceding for them when they sinned, and guiding and training them day by day, during all their wilderness wanderings, until they reached the land of promise. And yet for one hasty act of unfaithfulness, into which he was betrayed when provoked beyond endurance, he was refused the prize of his whole life's work. What relentlessness and severity was this! But "judge nothing before the time." The vision of "the holy mount" reveals to us that Moses was singled out for extraordinary privilege and blessedness and glory. And thus we see "the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."

Chapter 6 The Righteous Life

IT is a common error to read the Old Testament as though the blessings promised to the righteous were now the birthright of the justified. True it is that in the present economy prominence is given to what is spiritual - to the heart as distinguished from the outward life, whereas the converse of this was necessarily characteristic of a dispensation of law. But this only serves to prove more clearly that "the righteous" of the Psalms are those who are practically upright. Grace has not changed the character of God, nor yet the principles of His moral government. "Trust in the Lord, and do good," is not an obsolete precept, inconsistent with grace; it is precisely what grace teaches. We seem in danger of supposing that "believers" have access to God in spiritual things, and a right to expect blessing in temporal things, without regard to the character of their life. Grace brings life eternal to the drunkard or the thief; but the one does not celebrate the event by a carouse, nor does the other steal the watch of the evangelist who has ministered the Gospel to him. And why not? Their natural instincts would prompt them to it. Yes, but the same grace which brings them life, teaches them. And eternal life is not like a railway-ticket, or a trinket, that a man may lose if he have a bad pocket, or fall in with bad company. If they have been saved, they have repented and have been born again. It is not that the one has reckoned up the bottles he has drunk, and the other the pockets he has emptied, and that they have mourned and wept at the retrospect. The repentance of the Gospel is far deeper than repentance for sins, which is the lowest type of repentance. Nor is it a change of conduct merely, but a change of mind. It is not that a man's acts are different, but that he himself is different. The drunkard may sit before his empty bottles, and cry, in bitterness of soul, "Forgive my sins," and yet turn to his drink again before the week is over. The very prayer, moreover, often contains the implied assertion that a man could do better if he tried; and that he will do better if only the past be forgiven. But grace goes deeper far than this. Law bids a man look back upon his life, and plead, "Forgive my sins"; but grace teaches him to look within, and to cry, with a heart laid bare before a holy and righteous God, "Be merciful to ME the sinner." A holy God can have fellowship with such a man; and a righteous God can crown him with blessings. But grace does not suspend the action of the principles on which God governs the world; and the sinner, though thus blessed and saved, may suffer, all his days on earth, the consequences of his sins. It would betray

strange ignorance, alike of doctrine and of fact, to quote David's words, "I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread," and to argue that there can be no Christians in the workhouse, and no children of Christians on the streets. Not that adversity is proof of sin. It may, as in the case of Job, be proof of special dealing from God, to lead to special blessing. Indeed the thirty-seventh Psalm, above quoted, is pervaded by this thought. But the great public principle of God's dealings with men is that the upright prosper. Rogues may sometimes become millionaires, but it is proverbial that ill-gotten wealth is fleeting. And, moreover, even in this life, a man's balance at the banker's is not the only, nor even the truest, test of prosperity. The rule is that integrity reaps its reward. If a Christian grocer be less righteous in his dealings than his atheist rival next door, God will not turn men's hearts to buy his tea. On the contrary, the man will probably lose his customers and become bankrupt; and his rival will probably prosper. And the result will only prove that the God whom the atheist denies is a righteous God. But it will be urged, "It is not God who does this; it is merely the ordinary course of things." Here is atheism with a vengeance! "The ordinary course of things" means just the ordinary course of God's moral government of the world, and that is that righteousness prospers. It is not always so, as we have seen; but it is the rule. If a man walks over a precipice, God does not interfere, either to save or to destroy him. But the catastrophe which follows is the result of natural laws which God has ordained. The laws of Nature are so seldom suspended that when the phenomenon occurs we describe it as a miracle. The laws of Providence, on the other hand, have many a disturbance, many an exception. But yet both have been ordained by the same God. And these principles of God's moral government display his character. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" If Christian men of business descend to the common tricks of trade, will God accept them as his servants? Or will their prayers avail? "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much": not a justified man merely, but a righteous man. The servants of Crete were exhorted to "adorn the doctrine of God." And how could such adorn it? Why, by obedience to their masters, and diligence in their work, and, as the Catechism says, by keeping their hands from picking and stealing, and their tongues from evil speaking - "not gainsaying, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity." That their heathen masters, marking their conduct - watching them through the keyhole, perhaps, when alone in the room, with the cupboard open - might find that their lives were not governed by outward restraints, but by a secret principle of good within, and thus learn to praise the doctrine which could produce such results. They thus adorned the doctrine. It was not that the servant was valued because of his profession, but that his creed was valued because of his practice. And praise will not be earned as cheaply in Christian England as it was in heathen Crete. The standard of public morality is higher; and keeping clear of the policeman will not avail to adorn the Gospel. It is not that the clerk does not forge cheques, but that he shows high Christian principle in husbanding the time his employer pays him for. It is not that the shopman does not rob the till, but that no reward or prospect of advancement will induce him to call bad good, or to trick a customer. It is not that the Christian groom does not steal the oats, but that his master's horses are the best cared for in the parish. It is not that the Christian working-man does not scamp his work, but that he risks persecution and loss by insisting, in violation of trade-union rules, on working, not as a men-pleaser, but "with good will as to the Lord." In a word, one and all, their righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees; for it is only by "showing all good fidelity" in things in which others fail, that the child of grace can be distinguished. This is not truth for one class only; it is truth for all. It is the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." And how many a humble and dreary lot would be ennobled and gladdened if life were thus lived out to God, and even menial acts were done as to the Lord! The righteous living

which grace enjoins is far more than the absence of dishonesty. "Owe no man anything" is a precept which cannot be fulfilled by a cheque-book or a purse of sovereigns. Grace is as ready to observe the rights of others, as to relinquish its own. It has nothing in common with socialism. But in our day the baneful principles of the Commune, which are leavening society, are perverting even the doctrine of Christ. The Lord of glory calls us "Brethren," "Friends"; the heart that grace has taught responds, "Master," "Lord." And so also in all the relationships of common life. Grace exacts homage from none, but is eager to render it wherever it is due. The peer will claim the peasant as his brother; the peasant will reciprocate by paying all the deference which rank demands, especially when joined with worth and godliness. The same grace which teaches a man to pay money to whom money is due, teaches him, too, to "render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." Righteous living implies a careful observance of every relationship, and a careful discharge of every obligation. And if Christians do not take heed to these things, when the present wave of blessing begins to ebb, and the world, cold-hearted but clear-headed, comes to take stock of the results, a reaction will set in against the loud profession of the day, and the worthy Name by which we are called will be blasphemed. This is not in keeping with the spirit of the age. But it pertains to "the things which befit wholesome teaching:" teaching which is little known in days when even the sublime precepts of the Sermon on the Mount are perverted to pander to a mawkishly unwholesome socialism, by which even true-hearted Christians are betrayed into conduct that is utterly un-Christian. *(A friend of mine who began his business life in the office of Lord - , asked me once whether I thought he was justified as a Christian in raising his hat when he met his lordship. I answered, of course, that to be a Christian was higher than to be a gentleman, and that he was not even a gentleman if he omitted to do it.)*

Chapter 7 The Godly Life

THE Christian is redeemed not merely from the penalties due to sin, but from the entire position to which those penalties attach. He is not in the position of a reprieved criminal; he has been "justified" - "justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," for he is made one with Him in His death. And death severs every relationship, puts an end to every obligation. But in maintaining without reserve or compromise that the Christian has been delivered from every responsibility as a child of nature, it behoves us to give equal prominence to the truth that he has new responsibilities as a child of grace, connected with the new position into which grace has brought him, and with the new relationships pertaining to that position. He has been redeemed from law, but not that he may be lawless. He has been redeemed from duty, but not that he may be irresponsible. He has also been redeemed from that which made duty and law oppressive and fatal to him. He has not been redeemed from the penalties of doing his own will in order that self-will may have full scope; he has been redeemed from self-pleasing as well as from its consequences. "Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity" - that is, from all lawlessness, from all self-will. Iniquity in its activities is the opposite of righteousness: essentially and in its fruits it is opposed to holiness. And holiness rightly understood is devotedness, or separation, to God. The holy man is not one who shaves his face, puts on a cowl, and shuts himself up in a monastery, but one who "yields his members servants to righteousness." In appearance he is just like other people. If he be a barrister, he will be seen in court in a black gown and a horse-hair wig; if he be a footman, he may have powdered hair and an embroidered livery. But in either case, if he be a holy man, his life is directed Godwards. It is not that the one is thinking about texts of Scripture when his duty to his client demands that he should be absorbed in Acts

of Parliament, nor that the other is out preaching when he ought to be polishing the silver plate; but that both are men who may be trusted to do their duty to the best of their ability, for they are living before God, and not before men. Such are God's people. Not as a matter of profession, nor even as to title and privilege merely; but because they are "redeemed from all iniquity," from all self-pleasing, and thus "purified unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "Yes," some one will here exclaim, "we are to be 'a peculiar people,' and this is quite opposed to what you have been saying." An illustrated copy of "The Pilgrim's Progress" was my favourite book in early childhood, and I was much impressed by the fact that the worldly people wore tall silk hats, while Christian and his friends had "wide-awakes." And one of the truest men I ever knew - a sensible and successful man of business - asked me once very earnestly whether I thought it was wrong for a Christian to wear evening dress! My answer was to call his attention to the Apostle's words, "Whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, take account of these things." Where right and wrong are in question the Christian will not yield one iota to please anybody; but in matters of indifference he will be ready to please everybody. No matter how humble his station in life, the Christian ought to be gracious; for grace teaches people to be gracious, and any one who is thoroughly gracious has the essential characteristics which are intended by the term "a gentleman." The "peculiar people" heresy has many phases and innumerable votaries. It often promotes conduct which is quite unbecoming a Christian, while it leads its dupes to think that in thus offending they are pleasing God. The expression is taken from the Greek version of Exodus xix. 5 :1 "All the earth is mine," God declared to Israel, "but ye shall be to me a peculiar people above all nations." And our English word, when rightly understood, is full of meaning, and none fitter or worthier could be chosen. As Webster's Dictionary tells us, "peculiar is from the Roman peculium, which was a thing emphatically and distinctively one's own, and hence was dear." A single word sometimes contains a sermon. And what a sermon we have here! To be "a peculiar people" is not to be a queer people. Still less is it to be a people noted for ungraciousness or rudeness. It is to be "emphatically and distinctively" God's own people, and therefore to be very specially dear to Him. And surely God's own people must be the best people in the world for any place or any purpose. Were Christians what they ought to be, the history of Daniel would, in a humble way, be re-enacted in the lives of thousands. If the captive Hebrew was promoted to the highest office at Babylon, it was because he proved his fitness for the position by sterling worth, and a life spent in the fear of God. And the result was that Daniel's God became known from one end of that mighty empire to the other. If Christians were known to be men of unswerving integrity, irreproachable in character and unblameable in life, their services would be at a premium in the world. It was not always so. In many a time of bitter persecution the people of God were taught "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." But the age in which we live seems rather to be like the halcyon Pentecostal days when the disciples "had favour with all the people." Exceptions there are, no doubt, for some know what it means to suffer for Christ's sake, and others for righteousness' sake. But if all who name the name of Christ "departed from iniquity," men would "glorify their Father in heaven." And it is to this end that we have been redeemed. And such are the present responsibilities of our standing in grace - responsibilities which are definite and real, and in respect of which account has to be rendered. In the recoil from the mediaeval error that this life is a state of probation of which the issue awaits the award of "the day of wrath," we are in danger of forgetting that the earthly life of the redeemed is indeed a probation, of which the result shall be declared at the judgment-seat of Christ. Blinded by the errors from which they had been so recently delivered, our translators perverted the Apostle's words. The Revisers have rescued them for us thus: "Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto Him. For we must all be made manifest before the

judgment-seat of Christ, that each may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." "What?" some one will exclaim, "Surely the good will be remembered and rewarded, but the bad thrust out of sight and hushed up for ever." The words are explicit, "whether good or bad." How worthy it is of human nature that we should wish to have the good recalled and the bad forgotten! But, thank God! that worthy and blessed Name shall be vindicated from all the wrong that has been heaped upon it here, while all true service and godly living shall be rewarded to the full, to the praise of Him to whom the power belongs. For the anthem then shall be, as His people cast the crowns that He Himself has given at His feet, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive the glory and the honour."

Chapter 8 The Fear of God

"THERE is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink." Such was the sad judgment upon life pronounced by one of the greatest of mankind. Philosopher and poet, philanthropist and statesman, and the kingliest king who ever wore a diadem, Solomon reasoned out the problem of life, and here was the conclusion he arrived at: "There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink!" But is there nothing better than this for a creature who is to live through death into an eternity beyond? Eternity! Here is the factor which changes the entire equation. And this affords the clue to the argument of the Book of Ecclesiastes - that wonderful treatise on the philosophy of life; so little read, so little understood. If the grave is to be the end of us, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." The wise man will turn from the works of his hands and the projects of his brain, for "under the sun all is vanity and vexation of spirit." But let the veil be raised which shuts in life within this narrow span; let man realise that he has a destiny and a hope beyond the world through which he is passing here, and that "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil"; and, as "the conclusion of the whole matter," all that is worth living for in life will be summed up in one word: "Fear God and keep His commandments." "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in His commandments. Let no-one turn away from this, as though it savoured of legality unworthy of our liberty in Christ. Many people seem to think that love has supplanted both obedience and the fear of the Lord. "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me," was the word of Christ. Not "the ten commandments" merely. It is not Sinai He is speaking of, but all that God has revealed to us. Indeed, the error I am dealing with is but a natural recoil from the perverse folly which insists on claiming for "the ten commandments" a place in the Christian dispensation which they never possessed, and which, in the very nature of things, they never could possess, in any dispensation. "Every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God" is for our life, and the "commandments" of the 112th Psalm and the 14th chapter of John include all the "words" that God has given us. "If a man love Me he will keep My words," the Lord repeated, and "he that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings." Love turns the "words" - the "sayings" - of the Lord into commandments, and is eager to prove itself by keeping them. But, it will be said, though love be consistent with commandments, surely it leaves no room for fear. And is not this the teaching of the Scripture which says: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment; he that feareth is not made perfect in love?" The error here involved is one of many which depend on putting too narrow a meaning upon words. This word fear covers the entire range of emotions, from the dread with which the lost will flee from an offended God, to the reverence with which a true wife regards a husband worthy of her affection. The fear which springs from misgivings as to our relationships with God, or as to our fitness to approach Him, has no place in the heart which

knows the love that has been revealed in Christ. But fear, rightly understood, is the essential characteristic of godliness in every age - holy fear which springs from a due appreciation alike of the mercies, and of the majesty, of God. It is not His greatness only that evokes it, but His grace. "There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared," was the utterance of a heart that revelled in the deepest, closest fellowship with God. So also when David recounts the greatness and perfectness of his salvation, he adds, "Many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." Indeed, the Psalms, abounding as they do with the highest and truest experience of hearts brought nigh to God, are full of the fear of the Lord. It is the homage faith delights to render; and in dark and apostate days it is thus that faith should declare itself. Profession was as loud in the time of Malachi as it is to-day: "They wearied the Lord with their words." And His sad demand to Israel might well be repeated now, "Where is Mine honour?" "Where is My fear?" "They fear not Me, saith the Lord of hosts." But in contrast with all this, "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name." For "the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him." And then, before the prophet's voice became silent in Israel, there came forth the promise that was to cheer the true-hearted amid the ever-deepening gloom: "Unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings." For centuries that word still lived in believing hearts, and when its near fulfillment was proclaimed to Mary it awoke the echo, "His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation." "From generation to generation"; yes, and on to an eternity to come, when saints redeemed from earth shall stand upon the sea of glass, and, with the harps of God, shall sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, "Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name?" "Walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost" is the Divine record of the bright and happy days which followed the first persecution of the Church. "Perfecting holiness in the fear of God" is the Apostle Paul's description of the true effort and spirit of the Christian life. And when the Apostle Peter sums up in four brief precepts the whole of righteous and godly living, "Fear God" covers all that needs to be said to guide us as to the Godward aspect of our life. Nor can we forget the solemn exhortation: "We, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire." And is there not special need in the days we live in for "wholesome words" like these? Blatant profession, rather than godly living, is characteristic of the age. In other days, Christians were known as "God-fearing men," now, they are "believers," or "believers in Jesus," for thus the communism of the times delights to speak of "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." The lives of many give proof that the truth of the Lordship of Christ has almost died out from their hearts. The confession of His name ought to be the answer, rendered "with meekness and fear," to those who, taking notice of the life of the Christian, demand a reason for the hope that is in him. The testimony of the lips ought to be the articulate expression of the testimony of the life. As Cyprian phrased it, the Christian should be all of a piece. But the fear of God is not the characteristic of the age. Hence the prevailing wildness of religious thought and religious practice. How many Christians there are who are coquetting with Ritualism, and the lies by which Priestcraft would decoy us back to mediaeval darkness! They leave God out of account, and seem to have no thought of the judgment-seat of Christ. Fear, we are told, belongs to a bygone dispensation, and is inconsistent with our position in Christ as sons. But what of the exhortation, "If ye call on the Father, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear"? In presence of the evils and dangers that beset them, the Philippians were enjoined to work out their deliverance "with fear and trembling." (*Phil. ii. 12. The use of the word "salvation" here is vetoed by the doctrines of grace. In Acts xxvii. 34, it was the deliverance of the crew from shipwreck that was promoted by their taking food; and in Phil. 1. 19, it was the deliverance*

of Paul as a prisoner that was promoted by the preaching of others. So here it was their deliverance from the perils that surrounded them that had to be "worked out." "Work out your own deliverance" must mean in contrast with some one else working it out for you. The Apostle could no longer shepherd them while he was in prison; and he thus appeals to them to act on the preceding exhortations of the Epistle.) And if this spirit is right in regard to everyday life, it ought surely to mark our bearing and conduct in the things of God. Such was the spirit of the Apostle Paul, who knew and loved and served the Master as few besides have ever done. It was the spirit of the Master Himself. He was "the only-begotten Son, in the bosom of the Father," and yet when He prayed in Gethsemane "He fell on His face." And, more wonderful still, the Scripture tells us, "He was heard for His godly fear" – the very word of the exhortation to us, "Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with godly fear and awe; for our God is a consuming fire." "He fell on His face." The Christian who has never lain prostrate before God in prayer has but a poor sort of spiritual experience. The Christian who knows no other attitude must be a stranger to "the spirit of adoption." Some of us have learned to pray as Nehemiah prayed. While discharging the duties of his high office at the Persian Court, he lifted his heart to God without a gesture or even a look to indicate that he was praying. The Christian may pray as he passes along a busy street or sits at a dinner-table or in a railway carriage. The liberty of worship includes all this. And even in prayer of the most formal kind God will bear with bodily weakness. For He is ever ready to "pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God." But grace will teach us not to presume on this. When we see people lolling in their seats during public prayer, the question arises whether their attitude bespeaks the freedom of worshippers whose hearts are "stablished with grace," or an indifference begotten of failure to appreciate what is due to God. The ceremonial which surrounds a king is very real; but how utterly trivial it is in comparison with the solemnities essential to access into the Divine presence. Yet in the infinite grace of God these dread solemnities, instead of being a fatal bar become an encouragement to our "drawing near." But what human nature makes an excuse for levity, grace will use to teach a deeper reverence. The Lord Jesus "fell on His face and prayed, saying, O, My Father." And it is "after this manner" that He bids us pray, "Our Father who art in heaven" – the same Father to whom He prayed. And yet there is a difference. Witness His words to His disciples: "I ascend," He said, not to our God and Father, but "unto My Father and your Father, My God and your God." "Our Father." That sinful men should be allowed to address God thus in prayer is altogether amazing. The pagan devotee, as he lies in the dust before his idol, is not more spiritually blind and dead than is a professing Christian who has no sense of adoring wonder at the grace betokened by such access and such a thought. And yet there is a still higher thought and a still worthier access, and the Apostle rose to it when he penned the words, "I bow my knees unto THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."

Chapter 9 On Being Pilgrims

THE rich man in the parable "made merry sumptuously every day." His counterpart in real life pretends to this; but unless he be sunk so low as to have no thought beyond the present, his merrymaking is always marred by some "writing on the wall." Words, like coins, become defaced by being put to base uses; and this fine old word "merry" is now scarcely recognisable. "Be merry in God," Sir Thomas More wrote to his household when trouble came on them. And the degradation of the word has almost robbed us of the exhortation, so precious to the Christian, "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works." Christians should eat and drink

to the glory of God. But some take their food as if it were physic; others, as though their enjoyment of God's gifts were a godless pleasure. The disciples of Pentecostal days, we are told, "did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." But the "vile body" heresy leads us to mistake asceticism for sanctity. Using the word "merry" in its good old sense, the Christian should have "a merry heart." And "he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast." Festival keeping, based on redemption, is the Divine description of the Christian life, as it was the great characteristic of the sacred calendar of the Divine religion of Judaism. In the beginning of the year was the Feast which immediately followed the Passover, and borrowed its name. And so we read, "Our Passover has been sacrificed, even Christ; therefore let us keep festival." Gladness should mark the life of the redeemed. David's words in one of the darkest hours of his troubled life, when he was a fugitive in Absalom's rebellion, ought to be the experience of the Christian - *"Thou hast put gladness into my heart More than they have when their corn and wine are increased In peace will I both lay me down and sleep For Thou, Lord, alone maketh me dwell in safety"* "But," some spiritual dyspeptic will demand, "does not the Bible enjoin upon Christians to become pilgrims?" The answer is an emphatic NO. That is what human religion teaches; for the effort of religion is always to become something we are not, whereas the true aim of the Christian life is to realise what, by God's grace, we are. The Christian is a pilgrim, and it behoves him to live as a pilgrim. But who and what is a pilgrim? Here is the answer the Dictionary gives: "(1) One who slowly and heavily treads his way; (2) Especially one who travels to a distance from his own country to visit a holy place." But we must not read dictionary meanings into Biblical words. The *Parepidemos* of the New Testament is one who is living away from his own country or people. Our relatives in India, for example, are pilgrims. No matter how prolonged their exile, they never forget that England is their home. It is a fact in their lives, not a theory for one day in the week when the English mail arrives. There may be nothing of the conventional pilgrim about them; but in this true sense they are pilgrims. And how fitly this describes those who are born from above, and whose citizenship is in heaven! Abraham left the home of his family, not to become a pilgrim, but because his faith-vision was filled by "the city which hath foundations," and the "better country," and his coming out was a confession that he was a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth. The First Epistle of Peter is addressed to "the elect who are pilgrims of the Dispersion." And to such the appeal is addressed, "I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts." And here we have exhausted the passages in which the word occurs. But though it is used but three times in the New Testament, the truth which it connotes abounds. And, strange to say, it is precisely in the sphere to which the truth is specially applicable that the votaries of the religious-pilgrim cult are false to it. As Abraham was looking for the city which hath foundations, so the Christian is "come to the Church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven." It is this indeed that makes him a pilgrim. But when the Jewish religionist had built a city for himself, he forgot the city "whose builder and maker is God." And the Christian religionist has as definitely given up his pilgrimhood by substituting the Church of professing Christians registered on earth for "the Church of the firstborn ones enrolled in heaven." That Christ founded a new religion is a figment of theology. Using "religion" in its popular sense as a synonym for piety, the suggestion is obviously absurd. And in the classical and Scriptural acceptance of the word, the statement is absolutely false. He came, not as the founder of a new religion, but as the realisation and fulfilment of the only true religion the world has ever known. For though the temple of Jerusalem was God's house in a wholly peculiar sense, it was a type and shadow of heavenly and eternal realities; and it is with these realities that the Christian has to do. No building upon earth to-day can hold the place which that temple held. "For Christianity has no special sanctuaries." Our "places of worship" are but "synagogues." That Christ founded a visible Church is true in a sense, but not in the sense in which the

term is usually understood. Christ was "a minister of the Circumcision for the truth of God"; but when "the Circumcision" finally rejected Him, His Apostles, under Divine guidance, "separated the disciples"; and thus the earthly Church of this dispensation was constituted. A treatise on the Church would be quite outside the scope of these pages; but not a warning against certain errors by which Christians are betrayed into an un-Christian position. People talk of "the Church" as they talk of "Science," as though it were an abstraction. But in the Greek language a Church must be a company of people. And according to the Divine ideal, the Church on earth is "the blessed company of all faithful people," or, in other words, of the people of God. And God's people seek to fulfil God's will, which is the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. When therefore the Church itself is made an oracle or an object of veneration, it takes the place of Christ and becomes anti-Christian. "The company of all faithful people," mark. For another popular error, quite as ignorant and mischievous, is the supposition that "the Church" is a special class within the company of the faithful "For communicating instruction and for preserving public order, for conducting religious worship and for dispensing social charities, it became necessary to appoint special officers. But the priestly functions and privileges of the Christian people are never regarded as transferred or even delegated to these officers. They are called stewards or messengers of God, servants or ministers of the Church, and the like; but the sacerdotal title is never once conferred upon them. The only priests under the Gospel, designated as such in the New Testament, are the saints, the members of the Christian brotherhood. As individuals, all Christians are priests alike. Our forefathers seceded from the Church of Rome, not because there was error in that Church—for all Churches are leavened with error—but because its errors were deemed so vital as to clash with loyalty to Christ. According to the Reformers, "the visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance." Finding therefore that in the historic Church of Western Christendom the sacraments had become "dangerous deceits," and the pure Word of God was not preached, they left it and organised the National Church as "a congregation of faithful men." They recognised that a Church may apostatise, and that "faithful men" should separate themselves from an apostasy. That "the Church" is a mystical entity, the continuity of which is unaffected by its actual condition, is one of the most evil and silly of the superstitions of what calls itself "the Christian religion." A generation ago, when the principles of the Reformation were still paramount, we used to hear that our various churches were the scaffolding for building the true Church. In building operations a scaffolding is needed; but if a man made a fetich of his scaffolding, and lavished words of veneration upon it, he might well be commended to the care of his friends! In a passage of striking solemnity and force, Dean Alford shows how definitely and how soon "the Christian Church" followed the course of Israel's apostasy, and how certainly it is now drifting to its predicted doom. And in the same spirit another Anglican theologian writes: "While the Apostle wrote, the actual state and the visible tendencies of things showed too plainly what Church history would be." And again, "I know not how any man, in closing the Epistles, could expect to find the subsequent history of the Church essentially different from what it is." The later Epistles "breathe the language of a time in which the tendencies of that history had distinctly shown themselves; and in this respect these writings form a prelude and a passage to the Apocalypse." But even in its pristine unity and purity the Church on earth never held the place claimed for it in its apostasy. The care of "the oracles of God" was the highest privilege of the Jewish Church and no greater dignity can be claimed for "the Christian Church" than to be "a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ." For in the Scriptures of the New Testament God spoke to the Church, not the Church to the world. They were the fulfilment of the Lord's promise that He would send the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth - truth which they were unable to receive during the ministry of His

humiliation. But in these days of unbounded intellectual conceit combined with pitiable superstition and credulity, this promise is wrested into a place for- setting the Church above the Scriptures. And the rationalistic crusade now so popular dismisses the plainest teaching, not only of the inspired Apostles, but of the Lord Himself, as merely "current Jewish notions." Devout men whose hearts still feel the power of lost truth, shrink back from the goal to which this evil system inevitably leads. But in the next generation, when "the assured results of modern criticism" have fructified in minds uninfluenced by the Divine Spirit, and unclouded by the superstitions of religion, the Deity of Christ and the Divine authority of Holy Scripture will be jettisoned by "all people of culture." And then the way will be prepared for the realisation of what now seems but a foolish dream - the reunion of Christendom. For faith will then have given place to "opinions"; and no one but a boor would wish to force mere opinions upon others. Herod and Pontius Pilate became friends through agreeing to give up Christ to His enemies, and on this ground alone will the Church ever be reunited. And then, abandoning the distinctive truths of the Divine revelation - including, of course, "the degrading dogmas" of man's guilt and ruin, and the atonement of Calvary - and teaching the universal Fatherhood of God and the pure and beautiful ethics of "Jesus," the Church will win the homage and command the admiration of the world. And then shall be heard "another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues." (*Footnote - "Who cares anything for any church save as an instrument of Christian good?" (Chalmers).*) Meanwhile the Christian may use his particular Church as an instrument of Christian good. But let it not be forgotten that all our churches form part of that professing Church which, as a whole, is stained with the blood of the martyrs - that Church whose awful doom is so plainly foretold in Scripture. In its apostasy it is no longer "the household of God," but a part of the world that crucified His Son. In no sphere does the Christian need to be so specially reminded that he is a "pilgrim," and that he is to "use the world as not using it to the full." This is no new experience with the people of God. When during His earthly ministry the Lord Jesus warned His disciples against the world, His fears were not lest they should take to the theatre, or their wives to "balls and parties," but lest they should be ensnared by the religion which surrounded them. They were associated with it, for in its origin it was the Divine religion; but it had rejected Him, and therefore, though in it, they were in a real sense not to be of it. Their attitude toward it was to be that of pilgrims. And in keeping with this is the exhortation to us in this present dispensation, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him with out the camp." This figurative language is derived from Israel's history. After the apostasy of the golden calf, "Moses took the tabernacle and pitched it without the camp." And "every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle." He had his place in the camp, but he dissociated himself from the historic continuity of evil. He no longer looked to Israel for blessing, but only to the God of Israel. He did not cease to be an Israelite, but, like the patriarchs, he declared himself a pilgrim. And in this sense it is that the Christian is enjoined to go forth unto Christ, without the camp.

Chapter 10 Who is a Christian?

WHAT does it mean to be "a Christian"? In Christendom we are all Christians, for the Christian religion prevails. But as every one who has even an elementary knowledge of history is aware, "the Christian religion" has been a bitter opponent, and relentless persecutor, of Christianity. We distinguish, therefore, between a real Christian and a person who merely professes the Christian religion. Scripture declares that "he is not a Jew that is one outwardly." And if this principle obtained in the case of a religion in which such importance attached to externals, how much more applicable it must be to

Christianity. But there are other distinctions which, though not so obvious, are of great practical moment. When we say that a man is not a gentleman, we usually mean, not to impugn his social status, but to aver that his character and conduct are unworthy of it. And when we assert that a barrister is no lawyer, or that a military officer is no soldier, we do not question that the one was duly "called," or that the other holds his Majesty's commission. What we mean is that the barrister is unversed in law, and the officer is ignorant of the art of war. And in a precisely similar sense, if a man is devoid of Christian truth, or if his conduct is un-Christian, we may challenge his right to be called a Christian, without claiming in the least to decide whether he has life in Christ, or is a mere professor. In the Epistle to the Colossians the Apostle Paul puts the Christian position in a single sentence: "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord" - or to give the words more accurately, "As ye received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." With the Jew the divinity of the Christ could never be in doubt. In his case, therefore, the burden of the Gospel testimony was "that Jesus was the Christ." But the Gentile, to whom Jesus Christ "was a mere name which meant no more than Pontius Pilate, nor half so much as Julius Caesar, it was necessary to unfold the meaning of the Christ, and to enforce the truth that He was Lord. Hence the Apostle's words to the Corinthians: "We preach Christ Jesus as Lord." To the Jew the emphasis was on the Christ; to the Gentile on "the Lord." An attempt to limit the use of the word "Christian" would be mere pedantry. But yet in its highest sense the title belongs only to those who are of "The Way," or in other words, to those who combine Christian doctrine with Christian life or who, in the language of the Apostle have received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, and are walking in Him. There is much to be learned from Greek tenses. The word is, "As ye received the Christ," pointing back to a definite event or crisis in the life. And the Apostle adds, "so walk in Him": a present tense this, implying not an act, but a course of living. "Walk about" is the literal rendering, signifying the whole tenor of the life. But how can we walk about in a person? Though the phrase is quite un-English, its significance in Greek is clear and simple. It means that the whole life is to be characterised by all that is implied in receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. As some one has sung "*From various cares my soul retires; Though deep and boundless its desires, I've now to please but ONE.*" Heaping metaphors together, the Apostle proceeds, "Rooted and being continually builded up in Him." "Rooted" is in the perfect tense, signifying a past event, continuous in its effect. A baby's idea of gardening is to plant a thing one week, and to pull it up the next, to see if it is growing. And the Christian experience of some people is very like a baby's gardening. But those who have really received the Lord Jesus Christ are rooted in Him once for all. And what is needed now is to be continually builded up in Him, and continually established in the faith. "Even as ye were taught," the Apostle adds, again reverting to the aorist tense, and thus pointing back to the time when they received the Lord Jesus Christ. For in receiving Him they received the truth. And so he goes on to warn them lest any man should make spoil of them "through his philosophy and empty deceit." For a heretic is always a cheat. He defrauds his dupes into bartering the gold of Divine truth for the tinsel that is his stock-in-trade. And then follow the words, "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily; and in Him ye are made full." One sentence has been omitted: "Abounding in thanksgiving." If the walls of the city of God are salvation, her gates are praise; and to abound in thanksgiving is to have "an abundant entrance" there. Such, then, is the meaning of being A CHRISTIAN. But while in apostolic times the converts "received Christ Jesus the Lord," nowadays people "take Jesus." In this respect Ritualism, Rationalism, and Revivalism are at one - the three R's by which Christianity is travestied. Ritual is often useful: too rational we cannot be in the religious sphere; and every true Christian delights in Revival. But the "ists" and "isms" are only evil. Unlike the Ritualist, the old High Churchman was noted for devotion to the Lord and reverence for His name. And his errors were mainly due to a "Council of Trent" conception of the

Church. With most Evangelicals that figment is but a vague theory; while with him it was not only Divine truth, but truth of principal importance. But errors and excesses springing from a false conception of the Church are not quite on the same level as the trivialities and superstitions of mere religion. If the Kingdom of God is not in meat and drink, it is certainly not in incense and millinery. If "taking Jesus" constituted a Christian, the present-day Rationalist would have an indisputable claim to the title. For Rationalism is no longer a cloak for loose living. The teaching of "Jesus," as recorded in the Gospels, is its code of ethics, and the life there portrayed is its practical ideal. Dr. Harnack's "What is Christianity?" is an exquisite presentation of the system. Of course a fallacy pervades it. For if the Gospels are relegated to the category of merely human writings, "Jesus" is as obviously the creation of the Evangelists as, according to the same school, Moses is the creation of the priests of the later days of the monarchy. Here is an inexorable dilemma. If the Fourth Gospel is authentic, Rationalism collapses like a house of cards. And if not authentic, then the fact confronts us that this writer's "discourses" (as Dr. Harnack calls them) have throughout the whole Christian era exercised a wider and profounder influence upon the hearts and minds of men than the sayings of "Jesus" Himself. But let that pass. Dr. Harnack's treatise is written to remind us "that a man of the name of Jesus Christ" once lived and taught upon earth. A man of the name of Judas Iscariot betrayed him, and a man of the name of Pontius Pilate gave him up to be crucified. And that was the end of him. And yet in a sense he lives; for the resurrection is a beautiful "idea," and all such ideas contain elements of truth. Not only so, for (under the influence of Spiritualism, no doubt) the coarse infidelity of the past has given place to Rationalism, and Rationalism is not quite irrational, nor altogether devoid of sentiment; and therefore the very miracles may now receive "a more intelligent and benevolent judgment" than of old. Nor is this all; even the doctrine of the Atonement may be accepted, for it "belongs to a class of ideas" that "respond to a religious need." This is the sort of thing that now passes for Christianity in some of our most popular pulpits. Its exponents pose as persons of superior intelligence and of mental independence. As a matter of fact, their "religion" is borrowed from Germany, and the only element of "independence" they display is their amazing folly in still clinging to belief in the Deity of Christ. Which only proves that a Divine truth revealed to faith may be degraded to the level of a religious superstition. These teachers give proof that "taking Jesus" is not a synonym for "receiving Christ." "But," some one will demand, "do not these men live beautiful and useful lives, and is not such a life better than the possession of an orthodox creed?" The question is legitimate and interesting, but it is quite irrelevant here. For unless the words are to be dismissed as meaningless, "receiving the Christ" implies the acknowledgment of Him as the One "of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write." As He said to His disciples after His resurrection, "These are My words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, how that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the Psalms, concerning Me." "The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings" is the title-page of the Jewish Bible. And as the Psalter comes first in the third division of the Canon, "the Psalms" stands colloquially for the whole. It is as though He said, "Which are written in all the Scriptures." This indeed is precisely the expression used in a preceding verse: "He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." To receive "the Christ" meant therefore receiving Him "in the full and glorious sense in which that term was prophetically known." If men to whom the names of David and Abraham in the opening sentence of the New Testament represent merely a brigand chief and a lunar myth - men who have got rid of "Moses," and who explain away all the Messianic prophecies and Psalms, are to be called Christians because they accord Him the highest human homage, accept His teaching in so far as it commends itself to them, and lead pure and devout lives, then infidels of the type of Renan and John Stuart Mill are Christians. And indeed, having regard to the present standard of faith and clerical

morality, there is no reason why such men should not become Ministers of Christian Churches and Professors of Christian Universities. *The Satan myth of the Christian religion is the obscene monster of the cult of ancient Babylon. But the Satan of Scripture is that marvellous spiritual being who "fashions himself into an angel of light," and whose ministers "fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. xi. 14, 15, Revised Version). Ignorance of this deludes people into assuming that a man of "spiritual" power, who is "a minister of righteousness," must be a minister of Christ. The time may be near when "Christian" pulpits will be occupied by demon-possessed men. For another popular error is that of supposing that evil spirits must be unclean spirits.* "Revivalism" may be described as the parodying by natural methods, and in the natural sphere, the results which, in a true revival, the Spirit of God produces in the hearts and lives of men. To attain this end it hucksters Divine realities, bringing everything down to a human level. The subject is embarrassing. For I fear lest my words should be misread as though they were aimed at men who abundantly approve themselves as true ministers of Christ. Some such, unfortunately, incur the unmerited reproach of belonging to a camp which is abhorrent to them. They err grievously, for example, in copying the Rationalists and Revivalists in the manner in which they speak of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this respect the habitual language of their lips belies the reverence of their hearts. For not only do they name Him in a way that seems to savour of undue freedom, but they foster this habit in others who, unlike themselves, are devoid of the worshipping spirit of the true disciple. It is not strange that Rationalists should habitually call Him "Jesus" or "Jesus Christ," but that those who believe in His Deity should do so gives proof how thoroughly the leaven of the apostasy has spread. Examples of, and precedents for, this evil practice abound. Having regard to the spirit of our newest "Bible Dictionaries" and "Encyclopaedias," and many other theological works, we are not surprised to find that it is of the dead Buddha, and not of the living Lord, that the writers speak. And in their references to our Divine Lord, even the authors of books of a wholly different class generally convey the impression of being under the influence of a great personality, rather than of being conscious of a Divine presence. They turn our thoughts back to the ministry and the Passion, but not up to "the Living One," who was dead and is alive for ever more. In the case of most religious books, indeed, Mary's lament might be written across the page, "They have taken away my Lord." And too often it happens that true ministers of the Gospel so speak of Him as to leave this sense of injury and sadness in the hearts of many of their hearers. "Ye call Me 'Master,' and 'Lord,' and ye say well," ought surely to be enough for His people. And the significance of the words is indicated by the fact that the Gospels do not record a single instance in which a disciple ever spoke of Him in any other way. Yes, there is a solitary exception. The Emmaus disciples "had trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." But from that bright dream they had suffered a rude awakening. For the chief priests and their rulers had crucified Him, and He was no longer their Lord and Master, but only "Jesus of Nazareth." As "Jesus of Nazareth" He was known to the world; and if one of the Jews had been sent to fetch the beast to carry him in His entry into Jerusalem, or to bespeak the guest chamber for the paschal supper, he would have said that "Jesus" required it. But His disciples declared themselves in the very mention of His Name. With them it was, "The Master saith;" "The Lord hath need of it." Let me not be misunderstood. In the narrative of the Gospels He is spoken of by His personal name, because God is the narrator. But when the narrative introduces words spoken by the disciples as men, whether addressed to Him, or to others about Him, a title of reverence is used. The use of the Lord's name in the later Scriptures is a study of very great interest and of principal importance. But it is too large a subject for discussion here. Suffice it to urge that the Lord's express words, and the example set us by His disciples under His teaching, should be our guide in this respect. For even the most elevated and solemn of mere human utterances are separated by an immeasurable

distance from the inspired Scriptures. (*See the author's "The Honour of His Name"*) (*In our Christian literature the only guide known in using the names and titles of the Lord Jesus is euphony, and the writer's reverence (or irreverence) of spirit, whereas in their use in Scripture there is an unexplored mine of deep and important teaching. Unexplored, I say, for theology ignores the subject altogether. For example, there is definite significance in the fact that the title of Lord is used only three times of Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and not even once in the Epistle of John. But Christians notice this only, if at all, as a plea for their omitting the title in naming Him. My reference to this subject in these pages is only by way of appeal to those who err thoughtlessly and by a habit acquired by reading theological and "Christian" literature. I am not confounding them with the Rationalists, to whom He is "a man of the name of Jesus Christ," nor yet with that class of men who thus offend through native vulgarity and slovenliness of mind; who call Him "Jesus" because it costs less time and breath than "the Lord Jesus," or because they have never learned to render honour to whom honour is due.*)

Chapter 11 The Christian Hope

NATURAL life gravitates to the grave: death is its legitimate catastrophe. And yet death is none the less an outrage. "Death thy friend" is mere poetic sentiment. It is not a friend but an enemy. "The last enemy," Scripture calls it; and this the human heart, so seldom in accord with Scripture, emphatically endorses. One of the greatest of philosophers has said that it is as natural to die as to be born. Yes, as natural for the fallen creature who lies under the Eden sentence upon sin. But man's natural instincts rebel against the Divine decree that has made the grave the goal of life. And the higher and truer instincts of our spiritual being respond to the promise which raises us above the sentence. The life which is from heaven turns upward to the God who gave it. The Christian has been "begotten to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." And the fulfilment of that hope awaits the coming of the Lord. But here "the Christian religion" parts company with Christianity. For while Christendom believes that He has come, it refuses to believe that He is coming. Or if a "Second Advent" be acknowledged at all, it is dismissed as a mere dogma, too vague and too remote to have any influence upon heart or life. The doctrine of His first coming is connected with public facts of history, but that of His return rests upon the bare word of God. Therefore it is that the one is accepted while the other is refused. Therefore it is also that the hope affords a test whether belief in His first coming is genuine faith in God. For human superstition may fasten on Divine truth, and bring it down to its own level; and the basis of "the Christian religion" (as contrasted with vital Christianity) is Divine truth which has been thus appropriated. Scepticism about the promise of the Lord's return is utterly unintelligent. Indeed, the absence of such a promise would go far to discredit belief in His resurrection and ascension. If it be true that He who died on Calvary was raised from the dead, and sojourned with His disciples on earth for forty days before He ascended to Heaven, the wonder is, not that He is coming back again, but that His coming is so long delayed. The promise of His first coming was so utterly incredible that it may well have staggered faith. But now that He has been upon earth and gone back to heaven, His coming again seems but a natural sequence to His ascension. So much so indeed, that if we were left to reason out the matter, we should expect Him to come, not once, but again and again. And this is precisely what Scripture tells us to look for. Common sense vetoes the suggestion that His coming as Avenger and Judge is the event described as "that blessed hope." "We are looking for the Saviour." Then again, an intelligent child can understand that the angels' words to the bewildered disciples on the Mount of the Ascension do not relate to the same coming as the Apostle's words to the sorrowing Thessalonians. It is admitted that the early Christians expected the Lord to

come during their own lifetime, and that belief was clearly based on Apostolic teaching. And this being so, it is certain there can be nothing to bar His coming in these days of ours. It is idle to plead that certain events foretold in prophecy may intervene. To maintain that they must intervene is to betray ignorance of the elementary principles of prophetic interpretation. For "the times and seasons" belong to the chronology of prophecy, and have to do with earth and the fortunes of the earthly people.

(Footnote - The prophetic period relates to Israel's national existence as God's people, and is therefore interrupted during this dispensation of the Church, when Israel is "Lo-ammi" (Hos. i. 9). The prophetic period of Dan. ix. 24 - 27 is seventy weeks (of years), dating from the "going forth of the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem," which afterwards occurred in Nehemiah's time, i.e. B.C. 445. This period is divided into three parts of 7, 62, and 1 = 70. The first reached to the time when the prophetic voice became silent in Judah, i.e. the date of the Book of Malachi. The next period of sixty-two weeks, or 434 years, closed with "the cutting off of Messiah" (verse 26). And the seventieth week, which is all that remains of the prophetic period, will not begin to run its course until Israel's national position is restored, which event will be held to date from the signing of a covenant or treaty between them and the Prince of verse 27, who, we know from other Scriptures, is the last great Emperor of Christendom. The course of unfulfilled prophecy is tided back till Israel is restored; and not one line of Scripture intervenes to bar the realisation of the Church's hope. The scheme of prophecy, with special reference to the seventy weeks, is dealt with in the author's books, "The Coming Prince," and "Daniel in the Critics' Den.") But the error which the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians was designed to correct, is now the creed of Christendom; the coming of the Lord as Saviour is confounded with "the day of the Lord" - the day of wrath - when He will be manifested as Avenger and Judge. The words of 1 Thessalonians v. 9 are definite and striking: "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." For "salvation" read deliverance, and the meaning stands out still more plainly, it is ours to look forward, not to the day of wrath, but to obtaining deliverance from that awful day by the fulfilment of the promise of the preceding chapter. To appreciate the full significance of that promise we must take note of the circumstances in which the Epistle was written. While the Apostle was still at Athens he received such grave tidings from Thessalonica that he deemed it necessary to send Timotheus back there at once. And what led to the writing of the Epistle was the report which Timothy brought him after he had moved to Corinth. What can have been the trouble which produced effects so momentous? His stay in Athens was admittedly brief. That, in such a small community as the Thessalonian Church, any deaths should have occurred during the interval was somewhat remarkable. And that a few deaths in the ordinary course of nature would have so shattered their faith as to imperil the results of the Apostle's labours among them, is quite incredible. How then can the mystery be explained? We learn from the Epistle that a storm of persecution had passed over them. And the deaths they mourned were evidently connected with it. The inference therefore is obvious that some of their number had been martyred. They had been told that the Lord had "all power in heaven and upon earth," and would never forsake His people. But He had left them a prey to their enemies. Either the doctrine was false, or else their lost ones had fallen under Divine displeasure, and were thus doubly lost to them. So the Apostle begins by reminding them of the warnings he had given them - warnings which, doubtless, had been as unheeded as warnings always are in bright days of gladness and hope. And then he goes on to give them a special message of comfort. Let us here appeal to some pagan pundit who will translate the Greek for us without any doctrinal bias. He will tell us that the Apostle deplored the ignorance which led the Thessalonians to grieve with a hopeless grief over "the sleeping ones." "For," he proceeds, "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which were put to sleep through Jesus will God bring with Him." Which means that it was by His

agency they were put to sleep, or, in other words, that He was the cause of their being put to death. For so our pundit will explain this plain and simple phrase. A new light will now illumine the whole passage. For this was precisely what must have perplexed and distressed the Thessalonian Church. It was faithfulness to the Lord that had brought all the trouble upon them. They had been true to Him, but He had failed them. The mystery of a silent heaven which weighs so heavily even upon us, to whom the whole story of the Church's sorrows is an open page, may well have staggered faith in those early days. And mark the infinite grace and exquisite tenderness with which the Lord deals with the troubles and trials, and even with the doubts and murmurs, of His people. It is as though He said to them, "I admit all you say; I accept the responsibility for their having been put to death. But was not I Myself put to death? And so surely as I was raised from the dead, they, too, shall be raised. God will bring them back to you with Me when I return. There will be no interval of separation; nor will you, the living who remain till I come, have any advantage over them." Could this have been written if His return had been fixed as a far distant event in the Divine chronology? Could it have been written if a Divine decree had interposed the Great Tribulation of Old and New Testament prophecy before His coming? The accepted theory that the Apostle blundered is a disgrace to theology. Such a blunder would discredit the whole Apostolic writings. But what we have here is not merely the belief of an inspired Apostle, though such a belief ought not to be lightly dismissed. "We are saying this to you in the word of the Lord," he declares. And this "schoolboy translation" may suggest what the Greek original explicitly conveys; that he was communicating a definite message which the Lord had entrusted to him for His sorrowing people. And the words were clearly meant to awake in them the hope of His near return. How, then, can the lapse of centuries be accounted for? The forty years' sojourn of Israel in the wilderness may suggest the answer. Theirs was a true hope who fled from Egypt, with their faces toward the promised land which lay but a few days' march across the desert; and yet two men alone of all that host ever planted foot upon the soil of Palestine. And why? Because they let slip the hope, and in heart turned back to Egypt. And can any one read the later Epistles, and the Revelation, and fail to mark how closely the Christian Church followed in the footsteps of the Jewish people? Can we wonder, then, that "the same example of unbelief" should reap the same results? Apostasy on earth, and long-suffering in heaven, afford the true solution of the mystery of long centuries of desert wandering and trial for a Church which, in its pristine purity and life, was called to wait for, and expect with joyful confidence, its absent Lord's return. The Thessalonians "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven." And so absolutely is this attitude of soul the proof and test of faithfulness, that the crown of faithfulness is declared to be for "them that love His appearing." "The grace of God has appeared, teaching us that we should live looking for that blessed hope;" and if Christians are not looking for it, it is because grace has not had its due influence upon their hearts. It is a hope to strengthen amid trials, to cheer in sorrow, to solemnise in days of prosperity and ease, and to keep us through the even tenor of an uneventful life. "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings," was Peter's word to the saints in view of a "fiery trial" coming, "that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." "Therefore comfort one another with these words," expressed the purpose with which Paul unfolded the doctrine to the Thessalonians, And it needs no flight of fancy to picture the "beloved disciple" taking leave of some happy home circle where peace and contentment reigned, with the words, "And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." But the hope has another aspect; and it is one which claims prominence here, not only as being the most practical, but also the least noticed, application of the truth of His appearing. With most of us heaven is such a fools' paradise that it has no influence upon our life on

earth. Hearts may be filled with longings for the rest and glory it will bring; but there is nothing in it for the conscience. For death is to wipe out for ever all memories of earth, and the white robes and harps of gold and ever-swelling hymn are to banish every thought of our sojourn here, just as a midnight dream is lost when the sleeper awakes to the sunlight of a new day. What a fools' paradise, to be sure! For he to whom yesterday is a blank is but a fool, and in entering such a heaven we should pass from a higher to a lower elevation, intellectually and morally. Strange thoughts they have of heaven who think that Martha and Mary could forget the scene around their brother's grave, or the Magdalene the sins by which she proved and gauged the depths of grace; that Paul will ever cease to testify that once he was a blasphemer, or Peter to recall his denial of his Lord. As though the saints of God who here have learned to love and trust Him by the remembrance of the many sins forgiven, and of the waywardness and wanderings through which His grace has kept them, shall, the moment their eyes behold Him, be swept into a stream that is to swamp their individuality for ever, and, in destroying their memories of earth, to destroy the special emphasis with which on earth they praised Him. McCheyne's well-known hymn suggests a truer, healthier thought : -

*"When this passing world is done, When has sunk yon glaring sun,
When I stand with Christ in glory,
Looking o'er life's finished story, Then, Lord, shall I fully know -
Not till then - how much I owe."*

As the traveller ascends some mountain side, each turning in the path shuts out from view the way behind him; but when the summit has been reached he sees his track mapped out from first to last, and can in thought retrace his journey even to the far-off village he set out from. And such shall be the change from earth to heaven. In the ceaseless vicissitudes and toils of life the narrow present too often fills our thoughts, and the past slips from us as each "to-day" falls back among the forgotten "yesterdays"; but when the great to-morrow comes we shall remember all the way which the Lord our God has led us, and at every reminiscence of it we shall bless the Lord our God.

Chapter 12 The Intermediate State

DEATH is an outrage, and all healthy life reaches out toward what lies beyond it. By the resurrection of Christ the Christian has been "begotten to a living hope." For not only has Christ triumphed over death, but He has given the victory to us. By His own resurrection He has become the firstfruits of all them that sleep. Not that the resurrection itself is the Christian's hope. The hope is that which the resurrection is to bring, but which will be realised apart from death and resurrection by those who shall be living upon earth at the coming of the Lord. But what of the intermediate state? Life on earth, though full of mystery, lies open to us; and "we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." "Yes," some one will plead, "all this we know; but what we want to know is what lies between? We have seen the passing of loved ones. We have heard their last words. We have watched them as their last look of recognition ended in the dull vacant stare of death. But what is 'death'? They are fallen asleep in Christ, we read, but what does this mean? Is it the Nirvana of the Buddhist in a Christian dress? Have these lost ones practically ceased to exist? Is all the interval between death and resurrection but a blank? What is their condition now?" If we are prepared to accept what the Bible teaches, and to refuse all besides, we shall find that many popular beliefs upon the subject must be dismissed as sentiment; and, on the other hand, that the real perplexities and griefs which distress so many sorrowing Christians are largely due to ignorance or neglect of Scripture. For to begin with, the dead can have no share in the activities of "the higher service above"; and "harps" and "crowns" and manifested glory must, for them, await the resurrection. But when we are told that their

"sleep" can only mean a state of absolute unconsciousness, the question arises whether this may not be the merest theory, a theory, moreover, which may be challenged even on the basis of human philosophy. But "what saith the Scripture?" In the vision of "the fifth seal," we find "the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God," crying for judgment on those who had shed their blood. This, no doubt, is but a vision. But the visions of the Revelation are given to instruct and not to mislead us, and this vision clearly teaches that the disembodied dead are alive to the events of their sojourn here. Nor need we appeal to the facts of spiritualism - facts which its many frauds do not destroy - to prove that spirit may have intercourse with spirit, apart altogether from the body. Indeed, if we had not agreed to appeal only to the Scriptures, it might be argued that in regard to such intercourse the body may be a hindrance and not a help. When the Apostle Paul records that he was "caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words," he says expressly, "Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell." It is absolutely certain therefore that he believed in "the possibility of consciousness and receptivity in a disembodied state." His words may be connected with his martyrdom at Lystra. Stoning as practised by the Jews was a terrible death. And after the stoning his murderers dragged him out of the city. And though both the Jews and the disciples believed him to be dead, there may have been nothing extraordinary in the fact of his recovery. But what the narrative records is altogether extraordinary. We are told, not that he was carried into the town, and slowly nursed back to life, but that "as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city"; and the very next day he travelled to Derbe. That his recovery was miraculous is clear, and he may well have remained in doubt whether he had not actually passed the gates of death, and been called back to life to fulfil his ministry. But the fact remains that he never knew whether it was as a living man or as a disembodied spirit that he received that amazing revelation of which he speaks. Let us read this in the light of what he has already said in the fifth chapter. He there enumerates three several conditions of existence - the "burdened" state of life in the body, the "naked" state in which death leaves us, and the "clothed-upon" state which is our proper destiny. The "groan" of the "burdened" state is not a morbid craving for death, but a longing for the realisation of that for which God "hath wrought us," and of which the gift of the Spirit is an earnest. But to be "at home in the body" is to be "absent from the Lord," and to be "absent from the body" is to be "at home with the Lord." And to be at home with the Lord is better than to be "burdened" here. For this, therefore, he expresses a preference. But as the second verse teaches, it is the "earnest desire" - the longing of the spiritual Christian - "to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven"; that is, with the glorified body that awaits us. The "beliefs" of such an one as the Apostle Paul no one may lightly dismiss; but here we are not dealing merely with his beliefs, but with his teaching by Divine inspiration. And this much is clear and certain, that at death the redeemed sinner passes into the presence of the Lord, not in some vague Pantheistic sense, but in a sense which implies the conscious enjoyment of His presence. This is confirmed again by the Apostle's words to the Philippians: "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." There is immense significance here in the change of tense, a change which may be medicated by the somewhat un-English rendering "To live is Christ; to have died is gain." To hold that death is gain is the cowardly and evil creed of suicides. Such a thought is foreign, not only to Christian teaching, but to the character of Paul. Can any one imagine that such a man would have deemed it "gain" to escape, even from a Roman prison, by a plunge into "a sea of stagnant idleness"! Far different was his thought as he balanced the benefits of "departing," or of "abiding in the flesh." "To depart" was "to be with Christ"; and this, he declared, was "far better." Such words would savour of the merest sentiment if "the intermediate state" were not one of conscious enjoyment of the Lord's presence. Lastly, we have the teaching of the Lord Himself. And His teaching is clear and conclusive. From the parable of the rich

man and Lazarus we learn that, immediately after death, the lost are in suffering, and the redeemed are "comforted." But, we are told, the parable is based upon Rabbinical beliefs. Its framework may possibly be thus explained, but this affords no warrant or excuse for rejecting or evading the truth that it was given specially to teach. Nor will it avail to plead that the "flame," and "Abraham's bosom," are figurative expressions. Figures must be either true or false, and the test of truth is whether they represent realities. One who lives for this world passes at death to a state of suffering; and one who has chosen God is "comforted." There is no question here of the award of the Day of Judgment. In the one case as in the other the after death condition is the sequel of the great life-choice. The parable was the Lord's answer to the ridicule which the Pharisees cast upon His solemn words, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon": can we tolerate the thought that He was merely scoring a point against them by appealing to their own superstitions and false beliefs?' The question at issue resolves itself into this, whether God is really the God of the departed, or whether, for the time, they have practically ceased to be. And here again the Lord's teaching is definite and full. "God is not the God of the dead but of the living," He declared; and in proof of it He cited the words spoken to Moses at the bush, "I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." The force of this is lost if we take it as merely an assertion that God was the Patriarchs' God when they lived on earth, and that He will be again their God at the resurrection. The Lord's use of these words was to teach that, in the sense in which the Sadducees understood death, the Patriarchs were not dead but living. "For," He adds, "He is 'lot a God of dead men, but of living men ; for all live unto him." But where are they? some one perhaps will querulously demand. To faith the question is already answered by the assurance that they are "with Christ." When the Lord comes, we are told, God will bring them "with Him." For He died for us "that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with Him." "Thou shalt be with Me in paradise" was His promise to the dying thief. But does the "where" refer to locality in space? "Thou fool" is the answer given to the question "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" And no better answer can be given here. Heaven is popularly supposed to be somewhere beyond the stars. But the Lord went up to heaven in a cloud. And when the martyr Stephen's eyes were opened, he "looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." At the Lord's call Lazarus came from the tomb as instantly as if the living man had been imprisoned there. And Jairus' daughter "rose up immediately," just as though He had awakened her from sleep. If we refuse to believe that the spirits with whom spiritualists traffic are the departed dead, it is not because there is anything essentially impossible in their being close at hand, but because Scripture does not warrant the belief that they are permitted to appear to us, and the facts of spiritualistic seances point to the conclusion that demons personate them. And it is the appeal to Scripture which leads us to reject the Nirvana theory that the dead are sunk in an unconscious sleep. We should long to believe that such is the condition of the impenitent; and as for the redeemed, there is nothing in the thought to distress the most sensitive mind or the most loving heart. Here then is the answer which Holy Scripture gives to the fears and longings of those who mourn the loss of loved ones gone from earth. They are "with Christ, which is far better"; they are "comforted" by Him who is "the God of all comfort"; and though dead to earth, they are "living unto Him."

"Thou wilt not sever us, O Lord our God, In Thy blest mansions. On earth's dreary sod Our hearts are torn with partings. One by one The loved and cherish'd leave us. Every stone The cold, damp cemetery holds, is faced With lines that find their parallels deep traced Within our souls. Thus works Thy chisel, Lord, In strokes severe. Yet be Thy name adored For all Thy dealings! In Thy purpose deep A blessing lies, unscann'd by us who weep • Amid these shadows. Night will soon be past - The cloudy night of

time that ends at last. In heaven's bright morning. Yet a little while, And we shall greet that blissful morning's smile With hallelujahs. Then Thy love's deep thought Shall be unfolded. All Thy blood has bought Shall come with Thee; and each we loved and knew, And mourn'd for here, shall rise upon our view In brighter, lovelier form - akin to Thine - Thy work, Lord Jesus ! - perfect, pure, divine ! - Thus re-united, through eternal days Our joy shall be Thyself - _our theme Thy praise!"

Chapter 13 Conclusion

"DON'T be a fool." Such a phrase may seem strangely uncouth, and utterly unworthy, as a refrain to the note struck in one of the earliest pages of this book. And yet it is but a colloquial rendering of an Apostolic precept addressed to the Ephesian Church. "Be not unwise," our translators give it; but "fools" is their rendering of the same word elsewhere: "Be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." The use made of the passage in Ecclesiastes, above referred to, about paying vows, illustrates the need of this Apostolic exhortation. For no man of generous mind would be guilty of the mingled cruelty and meanness which, in this matter, "the Catholic Church" attributes to God. The enforcement of life vows, moreover, is not only abhorrent to the spirit of Christianity, but opposed even to the letter of the Mosaic law. If the Apostle's words be construed precisely as he wrote them they will read thus: "Take heed then how ye walk strictly, not as unwise but as wise, buying up for yourselves the opportunity, because the days are evil: on this account be not fools, but understand what the will of the Lord is." There are different types of folly in the Christian life. The man who walks carefully is as really a fool as the man who walks carelessly, if with all his care he is ignorant of the Divine will. And it is this kind of folly that often does the most harm. For while the "inconsistent" Christian, who openly leaves the path, is regarded as an outsider, the earnest religionist who is wanting in intelligence misrepresents God and misleads men. In no sphere, indeed, is the exhortation which heads this chapter more needed. For in all that pertains to religion, men seem ready to take leave not only of the Bible, but of their brains. And yet a book might be written on the appeals which Scripture makes to that uncommon quality called common sense. In addressing the Athenians, for example, the Apostle Paul appealed to it in proof that "God who made the world and all things that are therein" does not live in a house of stone or brick, "neither is served with men's hands as though He needed anything." And in the Epistle to the Corinthians he appeals to it when enjoining that even true spiritual impulses, and the exercise of genuine spiritual gifts, are to be made subordinate to the practical purpose of edifying others. "Let all things be done unto edifying," and "Let all things be done decently and in order" What are these maxims but an appeal to the ordinary intelligence of spiritual men? And the great principle enunciated in the fifteenth chapter, that the natural takes precedence of the spiritual, has a wide and general application. Natural relationships, for example, have priority over spiritual relationships. Husband, father, master; wife, child, servant; these are not merged in the higher and closer bond of oneness in Christ, - but on the contrary, unless where loyalty to the Lord is involved, they take precedence of it. Man's ruin by the fall does not destroy the fact that he is God's creature. The word "natural," therefore, has a double meaning. It may stand for what is right and good, as well as for what is evil. But Christians forget this; and as the result they often become unreal through wishing to become spiritual. A "sanctimonious" tone of speech, for example, and a phraseology that savours of cant, are studiously acquired by many as being more in keeping with truth and holiness than plain words spoken in a natural voice. In this matter, as in many another that might be specified, the Christian cannot be too "natural." But while ordinary intelligence might save us from many of the follies of what passes as "religion," there are errors of another kind, more subtle and more evil, in respect of which we are

entirely dependent on "the word of the Lord" to teach us "the will of the Lord." Hence the importance of making Holy Scripture the test and touchstone in everything, whether of conduct or of creed. A great Englishman of our own generation said a very great thing when he declared, in effect, that our care should always be to fall into line with the Divine purpose. And if a man of the world can grasp this principle, it ought surely to be the Christian's most earnest aim to "understand what the will of the Lord is." But Christians generally seem strangely ignorant even of God's supreme purpose in redemption, and therefore wholly blind to the significance and solemnity of the times we live in. The materialism which, a generation ago, accepted a plausible theory of the origin of living matter as an adequate solution of all the mysteries of life, has given way under the proofs which Spiritualism affords of the existence of beings to whose origin evolution can supply no clue. And movements like Spiritualism and Christian Science, which in our own time have made more converts than Christianity, ought surely to have a voice for the spiritual Christian. But while even men of science have come to recognise the existence of a spirit world, the attitude of most Christians toward that world is one of scepticism or indifference. In a vague way, indeed, they believe in a devil - the bogey of the religion of Christendom - but of the Satan of Scripture they know absolutely nothing. "Ye are of your father the Devil," was the Lord's scathing reply to the Jews when, in rejecting His teaching, they fell back upon that figment of apostates, the fatherhood of God: "Ye are of your father the Devil, and the desires of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has not stood in the truth because truth is not in him. When he speaketh the lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it." "A murderer from the beginning." The beginning of what? Not of his own existence; for he was created in perfectness and beauty. Nor of the existence of man; for, before the Eden fall, he had already dragged down others in his ruin. His being a murderer connects itself immediately with the truth which he refused, and the lie of which he is the father. These words of our Divine Lord give us a glimpse into a past eternity, when, to the heavenly intelligences, the great mystery of God was first made known - the purpose of the ages, that a Firstborn was to be revealed, and that "in all things He might have the pre-eminence." The greatest of those heavenly beings, whom we now know as Satan, claimed that place, and, rebelling against the Divine counsels, he set himself from that hour to thwart them. Therefore it was that he compassed the ruin of our race. But it is in the temptation of Christ that he and his lie are fully manifested. He claimed to meet the Lord on more than equal terms. Not one Christian in a thousand realises the significance of the narrative. Having "led Him up," and given Him that mysterious vision of the kingdoms of the world, the Devil said unto Him, "To thee will I give all this power and the glory of them; for it hath been delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me it shall be thine." This was not the raving of profanity or madness. It was the bold assertion of a disputed right. Satan claims to be the Firstborn, the rightful heir of creation, the true Messiah; and as such he claims the homage of mankind. Men dream of a Devil with horns and hoofs, an obscene monster who tempts the depraved to acts of atrocity or shame; but the Satan of Holy Writ "fashions himself into an angel of light," and "his ministers fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness." Do angels of light and ministers of righteousness corrupt men's morals, or incite them to commit acts of vice or crime? peril to the Christian by tending to draw him away from Christ. For there is nothing more plainly revealed in Scripture than that "the latter days" are to be marked by a development of evil of unparalleled subtlety - an apostasy of such a kind that, but for Divine grace, it would "deceive the very Elect." If people would use their brains they would see that "the Elect" could only be deceived by evil in the guise of good; not by an apostasy characterised by transparent error or open violence. Thus it was with the mother of our race. For Eve was "thoroughly deceived " by the Devil's craftiness in persuading her that wrong was right. The mythical devil of Christendom is an

extraordinary creature who, though omnipresent - for he is always at the side of every man and woman and child of all the fifteen hundred millions of mankind - devotes his powers to making children naughty and grown-up people vicious. But the Satan with whom we have to do is "the old Serpent" of Eden, and "the Power of Darkness" of the betrayal and crucifixion of the Son of God; that awful being of whom Holy Scripture speaks as "the prince of this world" and "the god of this world," who controls the religion of the world. He appears in the very dawn of Revelation; and in its closing pages he fills a still larger place. For while he has seemed to be the victor in many a skirmish, the voice of Divine prophecy is full and clear that the great battle is yet to come, when he will enter the lists in a final effort to thwart the supreme purpose of God in creation and redemption. And what is that purpose? "The salvation of sinners" is the reply which a certain type of orthodoxy will offer. "The elevation of the race" will be the testimony of the most modern and popular school of theology; for with that school man is the spoiled child of the universe, and all heaven is dancing attendance on him! But the answer which every spiritual Christian will give to the question is, "the exaltation of Christ." Man is but "a pawn upon the board." Our confidence and peace depend upon the fact that our salvation is linked with that great purpose. "Kept by the power of God" is inscribed upon the life record of every sinner who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. He knows his own worthlessness and weakness, but he knows also that "HE is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." Just as a drop of water from the shallowest pool upon the shore is the ocean in miniature, so the spiritual life-struggle of the humblest of the redeemed is a miniature of the great spiritual conflict of the ages. This it is that gives such solemnity, and lends such dignity, to the life of each one of us; for the true aim of the Christian life is to be ever in harmony with the Divine purpose of exalting Christ. And now we can appreciate the Apostle's words in their application to the times in which we live. The days are evil: "on this account be not unwise." No Christian need hesitate to own that both materially and morally "the world is getting better." But he will not confound the moral with the spiritual sphere, nor fail to see that, with increasing prosperity and intelligence, there is a marked decline, even in outward reverence for God. But all this is beside the question. For what concerns us is not the state of the world as such, but the condition of the professing Church. Students of prophecy used to be perplexed by the seeming incompatibility of predictions of a revival of the historic apostasy, side by side with a new departure from the faith, marked by spiritual power and a high moral standard, and yet by a turning away from Christ and Scripture - "a form of godliness but denying the power thereof." But here in England today this enigma is being solved before our eyes. The National Church is lapsing back to the errors and superstitions of pre-Reformation times And the only powerful check upon this "Catholic revival" is essentially rationalistic. As for the "Free Churches," a feeble evangelicalism, bent on compromise, is with most of them the only hindrance to the supremacy of the new apostasy. For the increasing clericalism which characterises them is due to the fact that in giving up what is Divine, men are apt to cling more closely to the human element in religion. From the standpoint of our national interests, Rome is our greatest danger; for the influence of the Church as a political power has been always evil. But the Christian may be pardoned if he hesitates between an apostasy which embodies, even in the most corrupt form, the vital truths of Christianity, and an apostasy which rejects the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, and discredits the Scriptures which speak of Him. Such a statement may seem startling. But let us cast aside prejudice, and test it by characteristic manifestoes of the two systems - the Decrees of the Council of Trent, and Hastings' "Dictionary of the Bible." In the one we shall find, beneath a mass of superstition and error, a - clear acknowledgment of the deity of Christ, and of the truth and Divine authority of Holy Scripture. The prevailing tendency of the other may be judged by the following typical extract from the "Dictionary." It is from the article on "Satan," and therefore strictly germane to

the subject of this present chapter. *"From the preceding exposition of the biblical conceptions respecting Satan we clearly see that early Christianity shared in the prevailing Jewish beliefs in demons and Satan. . . . "Our argument by no means implies that Jesus shared in all the current conceptions respecting demons. The problem - is a complex one. We have to give due place to two considerations : (1) that Christ's sayings and deeds are necessarily coloured by the representative human media through which they are conveyed to us; (2) that the demonology of Christ's belief is scarcely visible in the Fourth Gospel, though His belief in a personal Satan is clearly apparent. There can, however, be no scientific Christology which does not recognise that Christ's humanity was so genuine and complete that He shared in the cosmic presuppositions of His time. Now demonology was a necessary part of the intellectual apparatus of that period."* This extract is thoroughly characteristic of the book from which it is quoted, and of the school by which the book is accredited. The Buddha of this system was the dupe of "the current Jewish notions" of an ignorant age. I Therefore it was that (to quote Dr. Harnack) He believed in "stories of demons" and such like "absurdities"; therefore it was that He accepted and accredited the Hebrew Scriptures, and especially the Pentateuch, now known by "all people of culture" to be a priestly forgery; and the Books of Jonah and of Daniel, now rejected as an allegory and a romance! (Footnote - Here is another specimen. As above quoted (p. 147), the Apostle Paul records a revelation accorded him about demons, prefaced by the words, "the Spirit ~aith expreeriy." "St. Paul shared the conceptions of his contemporaries respecting demons," is the answer of Hastings' "Dictionary" as to this (article "Demons"). Men who write thus deserve to be branded as - ; ~vell, they are not entitled to the least respect or consideration.) And not only was His teaching destitute of any Divine sanction, but the writings which record it are unreliable. Neither the doctrine nor the records, therefore, afford any sure basis for faith. Is it not clear as light that the critic and the Christian have neither the same Bible, nor yet the same Christ? The Kenosis theory by which these men seek to justify their repudiation of the teaching of our Divine Lord is entirely inadequate and irrelevant. For what has to be accounted for is not that in the ministry of His humiliation He was ignorant and deceived, though this might well offend the reverent and perplex the thoughtful; but what claims explanation is, that with extreme solemnity He demanded acceptance of His false teaching as Divine truth; that after His resurrection He endorsed it with the utmost definiteness, and sent out His Apostles to promulgate it; that the Holy Spirit, given to lead His disciples into all truth, confirmed them in the error; and that for eighteen centuries His people were left thus deluded and deceived, till a set of foreign rationalists exposed the fraud. All this must be accounted for before we can accept "the assured results of modern criticism." Still more irrelevant is it to plead that the English exponents of the so-called Higher Criticism are men of earnest piety and devotion to truth. For what concerns us is the character, not of the men, but of the system. "He that hateth his brother is a murderer," is one of many statements which seem to savour of exaggeration if we forget the underlying principle, that an influence is to be judged by its legitimate tendencies; a road, by where it leads. We must not judge of the Higher Criticism, therefore, by the men who now father it in England, for they were trained in a different school, and still feel the power of the truths which they undermine. But what about those who shall come after them? Already there are quasi-Christian pulpits occupied by "ministers of righteousness" whose theology knows no Eden Fall, no redemption by blood, no atonement, no new birth by the Holy Spirit, no inspired Scriptures, no eternal judgment, no hell for the im penitent; no Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but in his place a "Jesus" who is "the ideal of almost perfect manhood." And not only are the Hebrew Scriptures discredited, but the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament are brought down practically to the level of mere human writings. No fair man, therefore, whose mind is unclouded by the superstitions of religion, will deny that these "ministers of righteousness" hold the

only position logically tenable if the Higher Criticism is to prevail. And the next generation cannot fail to recognise this. The lists are thus preparing for the great predicted struggle of the latter days, between the cult of rationalistic man-worship and the ancient apostasy of Christendom. If the reader fails to appreciate the origin and significance of this movement, this closing chapter will have been written in vain. But in the midst of this "deepening gloom" let the Christian recall the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, which remind us that the gathering darkness bears the promise of coming dawn: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption is drawing nigh." And as the teaching of this system is so persistently dinned into our ears, we do well to have our minds steeped in the thoughts and words of Holy Scripture about Him whom we worship as Lord and Saviour - words, for instance, such as these, expressly given to save us from the "vain deceit" of "scientific Christologies" "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature; "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him; "And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. "And He is the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that IN ALL THINGS HE MIGHT HAVE THE PRE-EMINENCE."

Appendix Note 1 The Church

THE Lord Jesus Christ would never have been crucified, neither would Stephen have been martyred, nor Paul imprisoned, but for words or acts that were deemed derogatory to the Temple. And in these days a man may with impunity deny all the vital truths of Christianity, and reject our Divine Lord's teaching about the Scriptures which He came to fulfil; but let him say a word in disparagement of "the Church" or of any human element of the "Christian religion," and he is at once cast out of the synagogue. And yet false conceptions of the Church are working grave mischief. (*Footnote - The case of Mr. J. N. Darby, the greatest of the very great men of the "Brethren" movement, is a notable instance of this. Like his contemporaries of the High Church movement, the false conception of the Church, which obtains in Christendom, ensnared him. Quite extraordinary in his case, for his early writings bore clear and emphatic testimony against it, The unity of the Church was the rock on which his life work was wrecked; and a movement which might have proved a blessing to all the churches ended in adding another to their number.*) Most of the perverts to Rome are duped by them; and advocates of the sham "Higher Criticism" appeal to them to justify their rejection of Scripture. For with mingled effrontery and folly they make the doctrine of the Spirit's presence in the Church an excuse for rejecting the teaching of the inspired Apostles and prophets of the New Testament. These false conceptions, moreover, are a fruitful cause of unfaithfulness to Christ on the part of many earnest and spiritual Christians. It is essential to distinguish between "the Church" as a society the administration of which was entrusted to men on earth, and "the Church" as the Body of Christ, dependent only upon Himself as its Lord and Head. The building of "the Church which is His Body" is His own work, and it cannot fail. But surely fanaticism or folly alone can refuse to recognise that "the gates of hell" have prevailed against the organised society on earth - "the outward frame," as Alford calls it, which, in its full and final development of evil, will yet appear as "the woman drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (Rev. xvii. 6). The Epistle to the Ephesians deals with the Church as the Body of Christ, and gives the provision for its perfecting (chap. iv. 8—1,2). The Epistle to the Corinthians deals with the Church as a human society (chap. xii. 8). In Ephesians we have nothing but spiritual ministry; and evangelists are prominently named, for it is by the preaching of the

Gospel in the world that men are brought to Christ. Corinthians omits evangelists, because the sphere of their ministry is the world and not the Church; and it includes "helps, governments," &c. &c., which are necessary to the outward society, but not to the vital unity. And here I venture to think that, through overlooking this distinction, Bishop Lightfoot, in his great treatise on "The Christian Ministry" unduly disparages the ministry. For the New Testament clearly distinguishes between office in the Church, and spiritual ministry. Bishops (or elders, for the terms are interchangeable) had to do with the administration and discipline of the Society; ministers with the spiritual needs of the flock. In 1 Tim. v. 17, we read, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." Their essential duty was connected with rule; if they excelled in this, they merited double honour; and that honour was to be greater still if they "laboured in the word and doctrine." It was not a case of "two orders," but of a combination of office and gift. Timothy himself was both a bishop and a minister. The Elders, or Bishops, were appointed by Apostolic authority, but not the ministers. For Ephesians iv. 8—11 tells us that evangelists and pastors and teachers were, like the apostles and prophets, gifts of the ascended Christ. And I Tim. iii. 8—10 tells us that a minister was to be tried by certain specified tests, and, if "found blameless," he was to be recognised. The injunction is not "let him be ordained," but "let him minister." The only instance given in the New Testament of "ordaining" ministers of the Gospel, is the "ordaining" of the Apostles Barnabas and Paul by the Christians of Antioch (Acts xiii. 3). The laying on of hands was a Jewish custom, the meaning of which is not doubtful. When the Israelite laid his hands upon his sin-offering, he made himself one with it, so that the victim died in his stead. And this is precisely the significance of the act here. The Christians of Antioch conferred no mystical powers - that is a thought, as Bishop Lightfoot shows, unknown to Scripture; it is altogether pagan - but they identified themselves with the Apostles. They said, by an act more eloquent than words, "We are going forth with you in this mission to which God has called you." And when the Apostles conferred spiritual gifts by laying on of hands, their action was not an exception to, but a further instance of, this same principle of identification; just as when the Lord Jesus touched the leper, and laid His hands upon the sick (Matt. viii. 3, 15; cf. Luke iv. 40). The distinction between the appointment of an elder or bishop and the recognition of a minister may be illustrated by the analogous case of the priest and the prophet in Israel. By Divine decree none but the sons of Aaron were to be consecrated as priests. But the consecration conferred no mystical powers. There was nothing which even the high priest had to do that any Israelite could not have done. But the absurdity of appointing a man to be a prophet is obvious. The prophet declared himself by the exercise of his gift, and the duty of the people was to acknowledge him. No less absurd is the suggestion that human appointment could constitute a man a minister in the spiritual sense. The duty of the Church was to recognise him, and the laying on of hands was merely a method of public and formal recognition. There is no evidence that in Apostolic times the practice prevailed in the case of ministers. And in the Church of the Fathers the practice was not universal even in the appointment of bishops. And "it is impossible that, if it was not universal, it can have been regarded as essential." I use the word "minister" advisedly, for, of course, that is the meaning of the word. The word occurs thirty times in the New Testament. It means primarily a servant in the ordinary sense; and in the Gospels it is used only in that sense, save in John xii. 26. In the Epistles it is the equivalent of our word "minister." The Apostle Paul uses it of himself seven times, and of the Lord Jesus once (Rom. xv. 8). It is never applied to Stephen and his fellows, with whom it is popularly associated (Acts vi.). As Dr. Hatch shows, the duties temporarily assigned to them were essentially those of the bishops when the Church was fully organised. For, as Dean Alford says bluntly, "the 'ministers' of the New Testament have officially nothing in common with our bishops." But this is a digression. What we need to keep in view is that

the apostasy of "the visible Church" in no way affects the Divine provision "for the building up of the Body of Christ" (Eph. iv. 11, 12). "The visible Church" is competent to select and appoint its own officers to administer its affairs; but in this other sphere its duty is to recognise and honour those who are "truly called to the ministry, according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ." Having regard to the black and hateful history of Christendom, God help us if we are dependent for anything upon a historical succession. But here at least we are dependent only upon our Divine Lord. And we cannot have too high thoughts of Him, or trust too implicitly to His faithfulness and care, come what may of evil or of peril. But of the Professing Church, the lowest and worst estimate we can form cannot be much amiss. Ordinary Christians know nothing of its history, and Protestantism stultifies itself with the theory that its corruptions are due to Rome. Rome has merely systematised the errors of the "Primitive Church" of the Fathers; and the shameless immorality of its pre-Reformation days will bear comparison with the condition of the "Primitive Church." "The virgins of the Church," held in special honour for their sanctity, were denounced by Cyprian for violating "the commonest dictates of feminine modesty." At a single visitation the great Chrysostom had to depose no fewer than thirteen bishops for simony and licentiousness. To call "the Catholic Church" - which drove that great saint into exile and practically to death - the Church of God savours of profanity. In characterising "Saint" Cyril of Alexandria, nephew of Theophilus, one of Chrysostom's enemies, Dean Milman uses the words ambition, intrigue, arrogance, rapacity, barbarity, persecution, bloodshed. And this evil man was the ruling spirit in the third of the "(Ecumenical" Councils, held at Ephesus (431), to deal with the Nestorian heresy. Theology holds that this Council was controlled by the Holy Ghost. History testifies that it was controlled by a hired mob, and that at last the Emperor, unable to restrain the disorder which prevailed, dismissed the bishops with the scathing rebuke, "Return to your provinces, and may your private virtues repair the mischief and scandal of your meeting." The great names of Jerome and Augustine have raised a glamour round the Church of their time. But the famous treatise of their contemporary, Salvian of Marseilles, published ten years after Augustine's death, discloses what the state of the Church actually was in that age. I will not soil the page with details, but content myself with a single sentence, in which he sums up his terrible indictment: "Almost every assembly of Christians has become a sink of vices." Even the heathen world was scandalised by the exhibition of immorality and hatred presented by what is profanely called the Church of Christ. "See how these Christians love one another!" had long given place to "See how these Christians hate one another!" In one of the fights for the bishopric of Rome, one hundred and thirty-seven corpses were left on the pavement of one of the churches in a single day. What wonder that a Pagan historian of that age - a man whose writings are praised for the moderation with which he speaks of the Christians - declared that no savage beasts could equal the cruelty of Christians to one another! What wonder that penal laws of merciless severity were needed to keep the baptismally regenerated Pagans from turning back to paganism ! Religious superstition is deaf both to Reason and to Scripture; but people who are guided either by their Bibles or their brains will take account of these things. And they will recognise that no reasonable compromise is possible between the superstitious and profane traditional view of "the Church" and the intelligent and Scriptural view of the Reformers. "Clear the decks" is one of the first orders issued in naval warfare. And in the battle for the faith, now raging so fiercely, our safety requires that we shall ruthlessly jettison all superstitious beliefs on this subject. In his Commentary upon Matt. xii. 43 - 45, Dean Alford, after noticing the application of the passage to "the Jewish Church," uses these words : - "Strikingly parallel with this runs the history of the Christian Church. Not long after the Apostolic times, the golden calves of idolatry were set up by the Church of Rome. What the effect of the captivity was to the Jews, that of the Reformation has been to Christendom. The first evil spirit has been cast out. But by the growth of hypocrisy,

secularity, and rationalism, the house has become empty, swept, and garnished: swept and garnished by the decencies of civilisation and discoveries of secular knowledge, but empty of living and earnest faith. And he must read prophecy but ill, who does not see under all these seeming improvements the preparation for the final development of the man of sin, the great repossession, when idolatry and the seven [more wicked spirits] shall bring the outward frame of so-called Christendom to a fearful end." This is entirely in keeping with the teaching of the Reformers. The claim of the Churches of the Reformation to be Churches of Christ depends only upon the Scriptures, and upon the presence of Christ in heaven and of the Holy Spirit on earth. To base it upon a succession from the historic "Christian Church" of Christendom is to incur participation in the awful guilt and doom of that hideous apostasy. 'The only true "Holy Catholic Church" is the Church of the Martyrs, "the whole company of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world." The Catholic Church of Apostolic Succession is stained with the martyrs' blood. If "the validity of orders" depends on "Apostolic Succession," the chain includes such links as Pope John XXIII., who was deposed by the Council of Constance on charges of "piracy, murder, rape, sodomy, and incest"; and of Alexander VI., whose vices and crimes, albeit he was never deposed, are declared by the historian to be "totally unmentionable." In dealing with such subjects people are apt to ignore their Bibles; but surely they might be expected to have some respect for their own brains, and to maintain diplomatic relations with common sense.

Appendix Note 2 1 Thess 4:1-18

"Words are the index of thoughts, and where an unusual construction is found, it points to some reason in the mind of the writer for using it, which reason is lost in the ordinary shallow method of accounting for it by saying that it is 'put for' some other word." This sentence, quoted from Dean Alford's Commentary (Greek Testament, John i. 18), may fitly preface the present note upon 1 Thess. iv. 14; for our translators have given us, not what the Apostle wrote, but what they suppose he ought to have written. But the authorised rendering is popular, because the expression "sleeping in Jesus" fosters the sort of sentiment in which "religion" delights. No one, however, who has made a study of the use of the Lord's names in the New Testament can fail to recognise that it is foreign to Scripture. "The dead in Christ," and "the dead which die in the Lord" - these are Scriptural expressions; but "sleeping (or dying) in Jesus" is a phrase the Apostle would never have written. And a kindred objection applies to the alternative rendering, "that God will through Jesus bring with Him the sleeping ones." "A clause which I am persuaded the Apostle could never have written," is Dean Alford's comment upon it. And it is certain that no English writer would pen such a sentence. I venture to think that commentators have erred in taking "the sleeping ones" of verse 13 as identical with "the dead in Christ" of verse 16. Verse 16 deals with the righteous dead in general; verses 13 and 14 with the particular individuals whose death they were mourning. And the first eight verses of chapter iii. indicate that those deaths affected them so deeply that the Apostle feared lest their faith in Christ should give way, and "his labour be in vain." Will the reader, then, carefully peruse the first chapter of the Epistle, and ask himself the question, Is it credible, is it possible, that Christians such as are there described could have been in danger of apostatising because some of their number had died in the ordinary course of nature? It is absolutely certain that what tried their faith was not the fact that deaths had occurred, but the circumstances in which they had occurred. And what were the circumstances? The reference to martyrdom in chapters ii. 14, 15, and iii. 3, supplies the obvious clue. For obvious that clue seems to me now; and yet I acknowledge humbly and gratefully that it is to my friend the Rev. C. H. Waller, D.D., that I am indebted for this solution of a difficulty which perplexed me for forty years. To

Anderson – “The Way”

recapitulate. As already noticed (see pp. 117 - 120 ante), the words of 1 Thess. iv. 15 are not Apostolic teaching about "the dead in Christ" in general, but a definite Divine message to the Thessalonians with reference to the death of certain definitely known persons - "the sleeping ones" of verse 13. Of course, the words may bear the meaning given them by the Revisers. But Dean Alford's translation, "them which are sleeping" (or, as we should say in colloquial English, "the sleeping ones") is the simple and natural rendering, and the context makes it clear that this is what is intended. If the Revisers' gloss were correct, we should expect the repetition of the present participle in verse 15. Now a general statement that, at the Lord's coming, the righteous dead shall not be at a disadvantage relatively to people then living upon earth, is very different from a specific statement to the Thessalonians about certain individuals whose death they were mourning. If by a Divine decree the Coming were a far-distant event, that would not affect the truth of the one statement, whereas it would render the other at least disingenuous. Certain it is, therefore, that when these words were written, there was nothing to preclude their fulfilment at the time. And that being so, it is certain there can be nothing in prophecy to necessitate delay in these days of ours. For the question is not whether any foretold events may intervene - that may be conceded - but whether they must intervene; in other words, not whether the Coming may be further delayed, but whether delay is inevitable. The fact that the promise, "Surely I am coming quickly" remains unfulfilled, does not clash with the truth that "God is not slack concerning His promise." And the explanation of the seeming paradox is to be sought in the history of Christendom and not in the prophetic Scriptures. "The Apostolic age maintained that which ought to be the attitude of all ages, constant expectation of the Lord's return" (Alford: 1 Tim. vi. 14). 14