

Numbers 1 - 8, Section 1 of 3.

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Numbers 1 & Numbers 2.

We now enter upon the study of the fourth grand division of the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses; and we shall find the leading characteristic of this book quite as strongly marked as that of any of the three books which have already engaged our attention. In the Book of Genesis, after the record of creation, the deluge, and the Babel dispersion, we have God's election of the seed of Abraham. In the book of Exodus, we have redemption. Leviticus gives us priestly worship and communion. In Numbers we have the walk and warfare of the wilderness. Such are the prominent subjects of these most precious sections of inspiration, while, as might be expected, many other points of deepest interest are collaterally introduced. The Lord, in His great mercy, has led us through the study of Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus; and we can reckon on Him, with confidence, to conduct us through the Book of Numbers. May His Spirit lead the thoughts, and guide the pen, so that not a sentence may be committed to writing that is not in strict accordance with His holy mind! May every page and every paragraph bear the stamp of His approval, and be, at once, conducive to His glory, and the permanent profit of the reader!

"And the Lord spake unto Moses *in the wilderness* of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls; From twenty years old and upward, all that are *able to go forth to war* in Israel; thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies." Num. 1: 1-3.

Here we find ourselves, at once, "in the wilderness, where those only are to be taken account of who are "able to go forth to war." This is strongly marked. In the book of Genesis the seed of Israel were in the loins of their father Abraham. In the Book of Exodus they were in the brick-kilns of Egypt. In Leviticus they were gathered round the tabernacle of the congregation. In Numbers they are seen in the wilderness. Then, again, in full keeping with the above, and in confirmation thereof, in Genesis we hearken to the call of God in election; in Exodus we gaze upon the blood of the Lamb in redemption; in Leviticus we are almost entirely occupied with the worship, and service of the sanctuary. But no sooner have we opened the book of Numbers than we read of men of war, of armies, of standards, of camps, and trumpets sounding alarm.

All this is highly characteristic, and marks off the book on which we are now entering as one of special interest, value, and importance to the Christian. Each book of the Bible, each section of the inspired canon, has its own distinct place and object. Each has its own niche assigned to it by its divine Author. We must not entertain, for a moment, the thought of instituting any comparison in point of intrinsic value, interest, and importance. All is divine, and therefore perfect. The Christian reader fully and heartily believes this. He reverently sets his seal to the truth of the plenary inspiration of holy scripture — of all scripture, and of the Pentateuch amongst the rest; nor is he to be moved, one hair's breadth, from this by the bold and impious attacks of infidels, ancient, medieval, or modern. Infidels and rationalists may traffic in their unhallowed reasonings. They may exhibit their enmity against the book and its author; but the pious Christian rests, notwithstanding all, in the simple and happy belief that "All scripture is given by inspiration God."

But while we must utterly reject the idea of any comparison as to authority and value, we may, with, much profit, compare the contents, design, and scope of the various books of the Bible. And the more profoundly we meditate upon these, the more forcibly shall we be struck with the exquisite beauty, infinite wisdom, and wonderful precision of the volume a whole, and of each distinct division the thereof. The inspired writer never swerves from the direct object of the book, whatever that object may be. You will never find anything in any one book of the Bible which is not in the most perfect harmony with the main design of that book;. To prove and illustrate this statement would lead us through the entire canon of holy scripture, and hence we shall not attempt it. The intelligent Christian does not need the proof, however much he might be interested in the illustration. He takes his stand upon the great fact that the book, as a whole, and in all its parts, is from God; and His heart reposes in the conclusion, that in that whole, and in each of those parts, there is not a jot or a tittle which is not in every way worthy of the divine Author.

Hear the following words from the pen of one who expresses himself as "deeply convinced of the divine inspiration of the scriptures, given to us of God, and confirmed in this conviction by daily and growing discoveries of their fullness, depth, and perfectness, ever more sensible, through grace, of the admirable perfection of the parts, and the wonderful connection of the whole." "The scriptures," says this writer, "have a living source, and living power has pervaded their composition: hence their infiniteness of bearing, and the impossibility of separating any one part from the whole, because one God is the living centre from which all flows; one Christ the living centre round which all its truth circles, and to which it refers, though in various glory; and one Spirit the divine sap which carries its power from its source in God to the minutest branches of the all-uniting truth, testifying of the glory, the grace, and the truth of Him whom God sets forth as the object, and centre, and head of all that is in connection with Himself, of Him who is, withal, God over all, blessed for evermore.The more — beginning from the utmost leaves and branches of this revelation of the mind of God, by which we have been reached when far from Him — we have traced it up towards its centre, and thence looked down again towards its extent and diversity, the more we learn its infiniteness, and our own feebleness of apprehension. We learn, blessed be God, this, that the love which is its source is found in unmingled perfectness and fullest display of those manifestations of it which have reached us even in our ruined state. The same perfect God of love is in it all. But the unfoldings of divine wisdom in the counsels in which God has displayed Himself remain ever to us a subject of research, in which every new discovery, by increasing our spiritual intelligence, makes the infiniteness of the whole, and the way in which it surpasses all our thoughts, only more and more clear to us."

It is truly refreshing to transcribe such lines from the pen of one who has been a profound student of scripture for forty years. They are of unspeakable value, of a moment when so many are ready to cast a slight upon the sacred volume. Not that we are, in any wise, dependent upon human testimony in forming our conclusions as to the divine origin of the Bible, inasmuch as these conclusions rest upon a foundation furnished by the Bible itself. God's word, as well as His work, speaks for itself; it carries its own credentials with it; it speaks to the heart; it reaches down to the great moral roots of our being; it penetrates the very innermost chambers of the soul; it shows us what we are; it speaks to us as no other book can speak; and, as the woman of Sychar argued that Jesus must be the Christ because He told her all things that ever she did, so may we say in reference to the Bible, It tells us all that ever we did, is not this the word of God? No doubt it is only by the Spirit's teaching that we can discern and appreciate the evidence and credentials with which holy scripture presents itself before us; but still it does speak for itself, and needs not human testimony to make it of value to the soul. We should no more think of having our faith in the Bible established upon man's testimony in its favour than we should think of having it shaken by his testimony against it.

It is of the very last possible importance, at all times, but more especially at a moment like the present, to have the heart and mind established in the sound truth of the divine authority of holy scripture - its plenary inspiration — its all-sufficiency for all purposes, for all people, at all times. There are two hostile influences abroad, namely, infidelity, on the one hand, and superstition, on the other. The former denies that God has spoken to us in His word. The latter admits that He has spoken, but it denies that we can understand what He says, save by the interpretation of the Church.

Now, while there are very many who recoil with horror from the impiety and audacity of infidelity, they do not see that superstition, just as completely, deprives them of the scriptures. For wherein, let us ask, lies the difference between denying that God has spoken, and denying that we can understand what He says? In either case: are we not deprived of the word of God? Unquestionably. If God cannot make me understand what He says — if He cannot give me the assurance that it is He Himself who speaks, I am, in no wise, better off than if He had not spoken at all. If God's word is not sufficient, without human interpretation, then it cannot be God's word at all. That which is insufficient is not God's word. We must admit either of two things, namely, that God has not spoken at all, or if He has spoken, His word is perfect. There is no neutral ground in reference to this question. Has God given us a revelation? Infidelity says, "No." superstition says, "Yes, but you cannot understand it without human authority." Thus are we, in the one case as well as in the other, deprived of the priceless treasure of God's own precious word; and thus, too, infidelity and superstition, though apparently so unlike, meet in the one point of depriving us of a divine revelation. But, blessed be God, He has given us a revelation. He has spoken, and His word is able to teach the heart and the understanding also. God is able to give the certainty that it is He who speaks, and we do not want any human authority to intervene. We do not want a poor rush-light to enable us to see that the sun is shining. The beams of that glorious Luminary are quite enough without any such miserable addition. All we want is to stand in the sunshine and we shall be convinced that the sun shines. If we retire into a vault or into a tunnel, we shall not feel his influence; and just so is it with regard to scripture, if we place ourselves beneath the chilling and darkening influences of superstition or infidelity, we shall not experience the genial and enlightening power of that divine revelation.

Having said thus much as to the divine volume as a whole, we shall now proceed to consider the contents of the section which lies open before us. In Numbers 1 we have the declaration of the *pedigree*;" and in Numbers 2, the recognition of the "*standard*." "And Moses and Aaron took these men which are expressed by their names: and they assembled all the congregation together on the first day of the second month, and *they declared their pedigrees* after their families, by the house of their fathers; according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, by their polls. as the Lord commanded Moses, so he numbered them in the wilderness of Sinai." Num. 1: 17-19.

Has this any voice for us? Does it convey any great spiritual lesson to our understanding? assuredly it does. In the first place, it suggests this important question to the reader, "Can I declare my pedigree?" It is greatly to be feared there are hundreds, if not thousands, of professing Christians who are wholly incompetent to do so. They cannot say with clearness and decision, "*Now are* we the sons of God." (1 John 3: 2) "We are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." " And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3: 26, 29) " For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God....The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we *are* the sons of God." Rom. 8: 14, 16.

This is the Christian's "pedigree," and it is his privilege to be able to "declare" it. He is born from above — born again — born of water and the spirit, i.e., by the word and by the Holy Ghost. (Compare, diligently, John 3: 5; James 1: 18; 1 Peter 1: 23; Eph. 5: 26) The believer traces his pedigree directly up

to a risen Christ in glory. This is Christian genealogy. So far as our natural pedigree is concerned, if we trace it up to its source, and then declare it honestly, we must see and admit that we are sprung from a ruined stock. Ours is a fallen family. Our fortunes are gone; our very blood attainted; we are irrecoverably ruined; we can never regain our original position; our former status and the inheritance which belonged to it are irretrievably lost. A man may be able to trace his genealogical line throughout a race Of nobles, of princes, or of kings; but is he is finally to "declare his pedigree," he cannot stop short of a fallen, ruined, outcast head. We must get to the source of a thing to know what it really is. It is thus God looks at and judges of things, and we must think with Him if we would think aright. His judgement of men and things must be dominant for ever. Man's judgement is only ephemeral, it lasts but for a day; and hence, according to faith's estimate, the estimate of sound sense, "It is a small thing to be judged of man's day." (1 Cor. 4: 3) Oh! how small! Would that we felt more deeply how small a thing it is to be judged of man's judgement, or, as the margin reads it, of man's day! Would that we walked, habitually, in the real sense of the smallness thereof! It would impart a calm elevation and a holy dignity which would lift us above the influence of the scene through which we are passing. what is rank in this life? What importance can attach to a pedigree which, if honestly traced, and faithfully declared, is derived from a ruined stock? A man can only be proud of his birth when he stops short of his real Origin: as born in sin and shapen in iniquity." Such is man's origin — such his birth. Who can think of being proud of such a birth, of such an origin? Who but one whose mind the god of this world hath blinded?

But how different with the Christian! His pedigree is heavenly. His "genealogical tree strikes its roots into the soil of the new creation. Death can never break the line, inasmuch as it is formed in resurrection. We cannot be too simple as to this. It is of the utmost importance that the reader should be thoroughly clear on this foundation point. We can easily see from this first chapter of Numbers, how, essential it was that every member of the congregation of Israel should be able to declare his pedigree. Uncertainty, on this point, would have proved disastrous; it would have produced hopeless confusion. We can hardly imagine an Israelite, when called to declare his pedigree, expressing himself in the doubtful manner adopted by many Christians now-a-days. We cannot conceive his saying, well, I am not quite sure. Sometimes I cherish the hope that I am of the stock of Israel, but at other times, I am full of fear that I do not belong to the congregation Of the Lord at all. I am all in uncertainty and darkness. Can we conceive of such language. Assuredly not. Much less could we imagine anyone maintaining the monstrous notion that no one could possibly be sure as to whether he was a true Israelite or not until the day of judgement.

All such ideas and reasonings — all such doubts, fears, and questions, we may rest assured, were foreign to the mind of the Israelite. Every member of the congregation was called to declare his pedigree, ere taking his place in the ranks as a man of war. Each one was able to say, like Saul of Tarsus, "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel," &c. All was settled and clear, and necessarily so if there was to be any real entrance upon the walk and warfare of the wilderness.

Now, may we not legitimately ask, "If a Jew could be certain as to his pedigree, why may not a Christian be certain as to his? Reader, weigh this question, and if you are one of that large class of persons who are never able to arrive at the blessed certainty of their heavenly lineage, their spiritual birth, pause, we beseech you, and let us reason with you on this momentous point. It may be you are disposed to ask, "How can I be sure that I am, really and truly, a child of God, a member of Christ, born of the word and Spirit of God? I would give worlds, were they mine, to be certain as to this most weighty question."

Well, then, we would earnestly desire to help you in this matter. Indeed one special object before

us in penning these "Notes" is to assist anxious souls, by answering, as the Lord may enable us, their questions, solving their difficulties, and removing the stumbling-blocks out of their way.

And, first of all, let us point out one special feature which belongs to all the children of God, without exception. It is a very simple, but a very blessed feature. If we do not possess it, in some degree, it is most certain we are not of the heavenly race; but if we do possess it, it is just as certain that we are, and we may, therefore, without any difficulty or reserve, "declare our pedigree." now what is this feature? What is this great family characteristic? Our Lord Jesus Christ supplies the answer. He tells us that "Wisdom is justified of *all* her children." (Luke 7: 35; Matt. 11: 19) all the children of Wisdom, from the days of Abel down to the present moment, have been marked by this great family trait. There is not so much as a single exception. All God's children — all the sons of Wisdom have always exhibited, in some degree, this moral feature — they have justified God. Let the reader consider this. It may be he finds it hard to understand what is meant by justifying God; but a passage or two of holy scripture will, we trust, make it quite plain. We read in Luke 7 that "all the people that heard Jesus, and the publicans, justified God, being baptised with the baptism of John. But, the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptised of him." (ver. 29, 30) Here we have the two generations brought, as it were, face to face. The publicans justified God and condemned themselves. The Pharisees justified themselves and judged God. The former submitted to the baptism of John — the baptism of repentance. The latter refused that baptism — refused to repent — refused to humble and to judge themselves.

Here we have the two great classes into which the whole human family has been divided, from the days of Abel and Cain down to the present day; and here, too, we have the simplest possible test by which to try our "pedigree." Have we taken the place of self-condemnation? Have we bowed in true repentance before God? This is to justify God. The two things go together — yea, they are one and the same. The man who condemns himself justifies God; and the man who justifies God condemns himself. On the other hand, the man who justifies himself judges God; and the man who judges God justifies himself.

Thus it stands in every case. And be it observed that the very moment we take the ground of repentance and self judgement, God takes the ground of a Justifier. God always justifies those who condemn themselves. All His children justify Him, and He justifies all His children. The moment David said, "I have sinned against the Lord," the answer was, "the Lord hath put away thy sin." Divine forgiveness follows, with the most intense rapidity, human confession.

Hence it follows that nothing can be more foolish than for any one to justify himself, inasmuch as God must be justified in His sayings, and overcome when He is judged. (Comp. Psalm 51: 4; Rom. 3: 4) God must have the upper hand in the end, and then all self justification shall be seen in its true light. The wisest thing therefore is to condemn ourselves. This is what all the children of wisdom do. Nothing is more characteristic of the true members of wisdom's family than the habit and spirit of self-judgement. Whereas, on the other hand, nothing so marks all those who are not of this family as a spirit of self-vindication.

These things are worthy of our most earnest attention. Nature will blame anything and everything, any one and every one but itself. But where grace is at work, there is ever a readiness to judge self, and take the lowly place. This is the true secret of blessing and peace. All God's children have stood on this blessed ground, exhibited this lovely moral trait, and reached this grand result. we cannot find so much as a single exception in the entire history of Wisdom's happy family; and we may safely say, that if the reader has been led, in truth and reality, to own himself lost — to condemn

himself — to take the place of true repentance—then is he, in very deed, one of the children of Wisdom, and he may therefore, with boldness and decision, "declare his pedigree."

We would urge this point at the outset. It is impossible for any one to recognise and rally round the proper "standard" unless he can declare his "pedigree." In short, it is impossible to take up a true position in the wilderness so long as there is any uncertainty as to this great question. How could an Israelite of old have taken his place in the assembly — how could he have stood in the ranks — how could he expect to make any progress through the wilderness, if he could not distinctly declare his pedigree? Impossible. Just so is it with Christians now. Progress in wilderness life — success in spiritual warfare, is out of the question if there be any uncertainty as to the spiritual pedigree. We must be able to say, "*we know* that we have passed from death unto life" — "*We know* that we are of God" — "We believe and are sure, ere there can be any real advance in the life and walk of a Christian.

Reader, say, can you declare your pedigree? Is this a thoroughly settled point with you? Are you clear as to this in the very depths of your soul? When you are all alone with God, is it a perfectly settled question between you and Him? Search and see. Make sure work of it. Do not slur the matter over. Build not upon mere profession. Say not "I am a member of such a church; I receive the Lord's supper; I hold such and such doctrines; I have been religiously brought up I live a moral life; I have done nobody any harm; I read the Bible and say my prayers; I have family worship in my house; I give largely in the cause of philanthropy and religion." All this may be perfectly true of you, and yet you may not have a single pulse of divine life, a single ray of divine light. Not one of these things, not all of them put together, could be accepted as a declaration of spiritual pedigree. There must be the witness of the spirit that you are a child of God, and this witness always accompanies simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. "He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself." (1 John 5: 10) It is not, by any means, a question of looking into your own heart for evidences. It is not a building upon frames, feelings, and experiences. Nothing of the sort. It is a childlike faith in Christ. It is having eternal life in the Son of God. It is the imperishable record of the Holy Ghost. It is taking God at His word. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into judgement (*krisin*), but *is passed* from death unto life." John 5: 24.

This is the true way to declare your pedigree; and be assured of it, you must be able to declare it ere you can "go forth to war." We do not mean to say you cannot be saved without this. God forbid we should say any such thing. We believe there are hundreds of the true Spiritual Israel who are not able to declare their pedigree. But we ask, Are such able to go forth to war? Are they vigorous military men? Far from it. They cannot even know what true conflict is; on the contrary, persons of this class mistake their doubts and fears, their dark and cloudy seasons, for true Christian conflict. This is a most serious mistake; but alas! a very common one. We continually find a, low, dark, legal condition of soul defended on the ground of Christian conflict, whereas, according to the New Testament, true Christian conflict or warfare is carried on in a region where doubts and fears are unknown. It is when we stand in the clear daylight of God's full salvation—salvation in a risen Christ — that we really enter upon the warfare proper to us as Christians. Are we to suppose, for a moment, that our legal struggles, our culpable unbelief, our refusal to submit to the righteousness of God, our questionings and reasonings, can be viewed as Christian conflict? By no means. All these things must be regarded as conflict with God; whereas Christian conflict is carried on with Satan. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in high places." Eph. 6: 12.

This is Christian conflict. But can such conflict be waged by those who are continually doubting whether they are Christians or not? We do not believe it. Could we imagine an Israelite in conflict with

Amalek in the wilderness, or with the Canaanites in the land of promise, while yet unable to "declare his pedigree" or recognise his "standard?" The thing is inconceivable. No, no; every member of the congregation, who was able to go forth to war was perfectly clear and settled as to those two points. Indeed he could not go forth if he were not so.

And, while on the important subject of Christian conflict, it may be well to call the reader's attention to the three portions of New Testament scripture in which we have three distinct characters of conflict presented, namely, Romans 7: 7-24; Galatians v. 17; Ephesians 6: 10-17. If the reader will just turn, for a moment, to the above scriptures, we shall seek to point out the true character of each.

In Romans 7: 7-24 we have the struggle of a soul quickened but not emancipated — a regenerated soul under the law. The proof that we have before us, here, a quickened soul is found in such utterances as these, "That which I do, I allow not" — "to will is present with me" — "*I delight in the law of God after the inward man.*" None but a regenerated soul could speak thus. The disallowance of the wrong, the will to do right, the inward delight in the law of God — all these are the distinct marks of the new life — the precious fruits of regeneration. No unconverted person could truthfully use such language

But, on the other hand, the proofs that we have before us, in this scripture, a soul not fully emancipated, not in the joy of known deliverance, not in the full consciousness of victory, not in the assured possession of spiritual power — the plain proofs of all this we have in such utterances as the following, "I am carnal, sold under sin" — "what I would that do I not; but what I hate that do I" — "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" Now, we know that a Christian is not "carnal," but spiritual; he is not "sold under sin," but redeemed from its power; he is not a "wretched man" sighing for deliverance, but a happy man who knows himself delivered. He is not an impotent slave, unable to do the right thing, and ever compelled to do the wrong; he is a free man! endowed with power in the Holy Ghost, and able to say, "I can do *all* things through Christ that strengtheneth me." Philippians 4.

We cannot here attempt to enter upon a full exposition of this most important scripture; we merely offer a suggestion or two which may help the reader to seize its scope and import. We are fully aware that many Christians differ widely as to the interpretation of this chapter. Some deny that it presents the exercises of a quickened soul; others maintain that it sets forth the experiences proper to a Christian. We cannot accept either conclusion. We believe it exhibits to our view the exercises of a truly regenerated soul, but of a soul not set free by the knowledge of its union with a risen Christ, and the power of the Holy Ghost. Hundreds of Christians are actually in the seventh of Romans but their proper place is in the eighth. They are, as to their experience, under the law. They do not know themselves as sealed by the Holy Ghost. They are not in possession of full victory in a risen and glorified Christ. They have doubts and fears, and are ever disposed to cry out "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver we? But is not a Christian delivered? Is he not saved? Is he not accepted in the Beloved? Is he not sealed by that Holy Spirit of promise? Is he not united to Christ? Ought he not to know and enjoy, and to confess all this? Unquestionably. Well then he is no longer, as to his standing, in the seventh of Romans. It is his privilege to sing the song of victory at heaven's side of the empty tomb of Jesus, and to walk in the holy liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free. The seventh of Romans is not liberty at all, but bondage, except indeed at the very close, where the soul is able to say, "I thank God." No doubt, it may be a very wholesome exercise to pass through all that is here detailed for us with such marvellous vividness and power; and, furthermore, we must declare that we should vastly prefer being honestly in the seventh of Romans to being falsely in the eighth. But all this leaves wholly untouched the question as to the proper application of this profoundly interesting passage of scripture.

We shall now glance, for a moment, at the conflict in Galatians 5: 17 we shall quote the passage. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* This passage is often quoted to account for continual *defeat*, whereas it really contains the secret of perpetual victory. In verse 16 we read, "This I say, then, walk in the Spirit, and *ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*" This makes it all so clear. The presence of the Holy Ghost secures power. We are assured that God is stronger than the flesh, and therefore, where He is in conflict the triumph is secured. And be it carefully noted that Galatians 5: 17 does not speak of the conflict between the Two natures, the old and the new, but between the Holy Ghost and the flesh. This is the reason why it is added, "In order that ye may not do the things that ye would." If the Holy Ghost were not dwelling in us, we should be sure to fulfil the lust of the flesh; but, inasmuch as He is in us to carry on the warfare, we are no longer obliged to do wrong, but blessedly enabled to do right.

{*We ought, perhaps, to inform the reader that many able scholars render the last clause of Galatians 5: 17 thus, "In order that we may not do the things that we would." We assuredly believe this rendering.. to be in full keeping with the spirit of the context; though we are, each day, more convinced of the unrivalled excellence of our precious English Bible.}

Now this precisely marks the point of difference between Romans 7: 14, 15 and Galatians 5.17. In the former we have the new nature, but not the power of the indwelling Spirit. In the latter, we have not only the new nature, but also the power of the Holy Ghost. we must ever bear in mind that the new nature in a believer is dependent. It is dependent upon the Spirit for power, and upon the word for guidance. But, clearly, where God The Holy Ghost is, there must be power. He may be grieved and hindered; but Galatians 5: 16 distinctly teaches that if we walk in the Spirit, we shall have sure and constant victory over the flesh. Hence, therefore, it would be a very serious mistake indeed to quote Galatians 5: 17 as a reason for a low and carnal walk. Its teaching is designed to produce the direct opposite.

And now one word on Ephesians 6: 10-17. where we have the conflict between the Christian and wicked spirits in heavenly places. The Church belongs to heaven, and should ever maintain a heavenly walk and conversation. It should be our constant aim to make good our heavenly standing — to plant the foot firmly upon our heavenly inheritance, and keep it there. This the devil seeks to hinder, in every possible way, and hence the conflict; hence too "the whole armour of God," by which alone we can stand against our powerful spiritual foe.

It is not our purpose to dwell upon the armour, as we here merely called the reader's attention to the above three scriptures in order that he may have the subject of conflict, in all its phases, fully before his mind, in connection with the opening lines of the Book of Numbers. Nothing can be more interesting; nor can we possibly over estimate the importance of being clear as to the real nature and ground of Christian conflict. If we go forth to war without knowing what the war is about, and in a state of uncertainty as to whether our "pedigree" is all right, we Shall not make much headway against the enemy,

But, as has been already remarked, there was another thing quite as necessary for the man of war as the clear declaration of his pedigree, and that was the distinct recognition of his standard. The two things were essential for the walk and warfare of the wilderness. Moreover, they were inseparable. If a man did not know his pedigree, he could not recognise his standard, and thus all would have been plunged in hopeless confusion. In place of keeping rank, and making steady progress, they would have been in each other's way, and treading one upon another. Each had to know his post and keep it — to

know his standard and abide by it. Thus they moved on together; thus progress was made, work done. and warfare carried on. The Benjaminite had his post, and the Ephraimite had his, and neither was to interfere with, or cross the path of, the other. Thus with all the tribes, throughout the camp of the Israel of God. Each had his pedigree, and each had his post; and neither the one nor the other was according to their own thoughts; all was of God. He gave the pedigree, and He assigned the standard. Nor was there any need of comparing one with another, or any ground of jealousy one of another; each had his place to fill, and his work to do, and there was work enough and room enough for all. There was the greatest possible variety, and yet the most perfect unity. "Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house." "and the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses: so they pitched by their standards, and so they set forward, every one after their families, according to the house of their fathers." (Num. 2: 2, 34)

Thus, in the camp of old, as well as in the Church now, we learn that "God is not the author of confusion." Nothing could be more exquisitely arranged than the four camps, of three tribes each, forming a perfect square, each side of the square exhibiting its own specific standard. "Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house: over against the tabernacle of the congregation shall they pitch." The God of the armies of Israel knew how to marshal His hosts. It would be a great mistake to suppose that God's warriors were not ordered according to the most perfect system of military tactics. We may plume ourselves upon our progress in arts and sciences, and we may fancy that the host of Israel presented a spectacle of rude disorder and wild confusion, compared with what may be seen in modern times. But this would be an empty conceit. We may rest assured that the camp of Israel was ordered and furnished in the most perfect manner, for the simplest and most conclusive of all reasons, namely, that it was ordered and furnished by the hand of God. Grant us but this, that God has done anything, and we argue, with the most perfect confidence, that it has been perfectly done.

This in a very simple, but a very blessed principle. Of course it would not satisfy an infidel or a sceptic; what would? It is the province and prerogative of a sceptic to doubt everything, to believe nothing. He measures everything by his own standard, and rejects whatever he cannot reconcile with his own notions. He lays down, with marvellous coolness, his own premises, and then proceeds to draw his own conclusions. But if the premises are false, the conclusions must be false likewise. And there is this invariable feature attaching to the premises of all sceptics, rationalists, and infidels, *they always leave out God*; and hence all their conclusion's must be fatally false. On the other hand, the humble believer starts with this great first principle, that God Is; and not only that He is, but that He has to do with His creatures; that He interests Himself in, and occupies Himself about, the affairs of men.

What consolation for the Christian! But infidelity will not allow this at all. To bring God in is to upset all the reasonings of the sceptic, for they are based upon the thorough exclusion of God.

However, we are not now writing in order to meet infidels, but the edification of believers, and it is sometimes well to call attention to the thorough rottenness of the whole system of infidelity; and surely in no way can this be more clearly or forcibly shown than by the fact that it rests entirely upon the exclusion of God. Let this fact be seized, and the whole system crumbles into dust at our feet. If we believe that God is, then, assuredly, everything must be wicked in relation to Him. We must look at all from His point of view. Nor is this all. If we believe that God is, then we must see that man cannot judge Him. God must be the judge of right or wrong, of what is and what is not worthy of Himself. So also in reference to God's word. If it be true that God is, and that He has spoken to us, He has given us a revelation, then, assuredly, that revelation is not to be judged by man's reason. It is above and beyond any such tribunal. Only think of measuring God's word by the rules of human arithmetic! and yet this is

precisely what has been done in our own day, with this blessed Book of Numbers with which we are now engaged, and with which we shall proceed, leaving infidelity and its arithmetic aside.

We feel it very needful, in our notes and reflections on this book, as well as on every other book, to remember two things, namely, first, the *book*; and secondly, the *soul*: the book and its contents the soul and its necessities. There is a danger of becoming so occupied with the former as to forget the latter. And, on the other hand, there is the danger of becoming so wholly engrossed with the latter as to forget the former. Both must be attended to. And we may say that what constitutes an efficient ministry, whether written or oral, is the proper adjustment of these two things. There are some ministers who study the word very diligently, and, it may be, very profoundly. They are well versed in biblical knowledge; they have drunk; deeply at the fountain of inspiration. All this is of the utmost importance, and of the very highest value. A ministry without this will be barren indeed. If a man does not study his Bible diligently and prayerfully, he will have little to give to his readers or his hearers; at least little worth their having. Those who minister in the word must dig for themselves, and "*dig deep.*"

But then the *soul* must be considered — its condition anticipated, and its necessities met. If this be lost sight of, the ministry will lack point, pungency, and power. It will be inefficient and unfruitful. In short, the two things must be combined and properly adjusted. A man who merely studies the *book* will be unpractical, a man who merely studies the *soul* will be unfurnished. A man who duly studies *both* will be a good minister of Jesus Christ.

Now, we desire, in our measure, to be this to the reader; and hence as we travel, in his company, through the marvellous book which lies open before us, we would not only seek to point out its moral beauties, and unfold its holy lessons, but we would also feel it to be our bounden duty to put an occasional question to him or her, as to how far those lessons are being learnt, and those beauties appreciated. We trust the reader will not object to this, and hence, ere we close this our first section, we would ask him a question or two thereon.

And first, then, dear friend, art thou clear and settled as to thy "pedigree?" Is it a settled thing that thou art on the Lord's side? Do not, we beseech thee, leave this grand question unsettled. We have asked it before, and we ask it again. Dost thou know — canst thou declare thy spiritual pedigree? It is the first thing for God's warrior. It is of no use to think of entering the militant host so long as you are unsettled as to this point. We say not that a man cannot be saved without this. Far be the thought. But he cannot take rank as a man of war. He cannot do battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, so long as he is filled with doubts and fears as to whether he belongs to the true spiritual stock. If there is to be any progress, if there is to be that decision, so essential to a spiritual warrior, we must be able to say, "*We know* that we have passed from death unto life" — "*We know* that we are of God."

This is the proper language of a man of war. Not one of that mighty host that mustered "over against the tabernacle of the congregation" would have understood such a thing as a single doubt, or shadow of a doubt as to *his own very pedigree*. Doubtless, he would have smiled, had any one raised a question on the subject. Each one of the six hundred thousand knew well whence he had sprung, and, therefore, where he was to take his stand. And just so with God's militant host now. Each member thereof will need to possess the most unclouded confidence as to his relationship, else he will not be able to stand in the battle.

And then as to the "standard." What is it? Is it a doctrine? Nay. Is it a theological system? Nay. Is it an ecclesiastical polity? Nay. Is it a system of ordinances, rites, or ceremonies. Nothing of the sort, God's warriors do not fight under any such banner. What is the standard of God's militant host? Let us hear and remember. It is Christ. This is the only standard of God and the only standard of that warrior

band which musters in this wilderness world, to wage war with the hosts of evil, and fight the battles of the Lord. Christ is the standard for everything. To have any other would only unfit us for that spiritual conflict to which we are called. What have we, *as Christians*, to do with contending for any system of theology church organisation? Of what account, is our estimation, are ordinances, ceremonies, or ritualistic observances? are we going to fight under such banners as these? God forbid! Our theology is the Bible. Our church organisation is the one God, formed by the presence of the Holy Ghost, and united to the living and exalted Head in the heavens. To contend for anything less than these is entirely below the mark of a true spiritual warrior.

Alas! alas! that so many who profess to belong to the Church of God should so forget their proper standard, and be found fighting under another banner. we may rest assured it super-induces weakness, falsifies the testimony, and hinders progress. If we would stand in the day of battle, we must acknowledge no standard whatsoever but Christ and His word — the living Word, and the written word. Here lies our security in the face of all our spiritual foes. The more closely we adhere to Christ and to Him alone the stronger and safer we shall be. To have Him as a perfect covering for our eyes — to keep close to Him — fast by His side, this is our grand moral safeguard. "The Children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard throughout their hosts."

Oh! that thus it may be throughout all the host of the Church of God! May all be laid aside for Christ! may He be enough for our hearts. As we trace our "pedigree" up to Him, may His name be inscribed on the "standard" round which we encamp in this wilderness, through which we are passing home to our eternal rest above! Reader, see to it, we beseech thee, that there be not one jot or tittle inscribed on thy banner save Jesus Christ — that name which is above every name, and which shall yet be exalted for ever throughout the wide universe of God.

Numbers 3 — Numbers 4.

What a marvellous spectacle was the camp of Israel, in that waste howling wilderness! What a spectacle to angels, to men, and to devils! God's eye ever rested upon it. His presence was there. He dwelt in the midst of His militant people. It was there He found His habitation. He did not, He could not, find His abode amid the splendours of Egypt, of Assyria, or of Babylon. No doubt those nations presented much that was attractive to nature's eye. The arts and sciences were cultivated amongst them. Civilization had reached a far loftier point amongst those ancient nations than we moderns are disposed to admit. Refinement and luxury were probably carried to as great an extent there as amongst those who put forth very lofty pretensions.

But, be it remembered, Jehovah was not known among those nations. His name had never been revealed to them. He did not dwell in their midst. True, there, were the ten thousand testimonies to His creative power. And moreover, His superintending providence was over them. He gave them rain and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness. The blessings and benefits of His liberal hand were showered upon them, from day to day, and year to year. His showers fertilized their fields, His sunbeams gladdened their hearts. But they knew Him not, and cared not for Him. His dwelling was not there. Not one of those nations could say, "Jehovah is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare will an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him." Exodus 15: 2.

Jehovah found His abode in the bosom of His redeemed people, and nowhere else. Redemption was the necessary basis of God's habitation amongst men. Apart from redemption the divine presence could only prove the destruction of men; but, redemption being known, that presence secures man's

highest privilege and brightest glory.

God dwelt in the midst of His people Israel. He came down from heaven, not only to redeem them out of the land of Egypt, but to be their travelling companion through the wilderness. What a thought! The most High God taking up His abode on the sand of the desert, and in the very bosom of His redeemed congregation! Truly there was nothing like that throughout the wide, wide world. There was that host of six hundred thousand men, beside women and children, in a sterile desert, where there was not a blade of grass, not a drop of water — no visible source of subsistence. How were they to be fed? God was there! How were they to be kept in order God was there! How were they to track their way through a howling wilderness where there was no way? God was there!

In a word, God's presence secured everything. Unbelief might say, "What! are three millions of people to be fed on air? Who has charge of the commissariat? Where are the military stores? Where is the baggage? Who is to attend to the clothing?" Faith alone could answer, and its answer brief, and conclusive: "God was there!" And that was quite sufficient. All is comprehended in that one sentence. In faith's arithmetic, God is the only significant figure, and, having Him, you may add as many ciphers as you please. If all your springs are in the living God, it ceases to be a question of your need, and resolves itself into a question of His sufficiency.

What were six hundred thousand footmen to the Almighty God? What the varied necessities of their wives and children? In man's estimation, these things might seem overwhelming. England has just sent out ten thousand troops to Abyssinia; but only think of the enormous expense and labour; think of the number of transports required to convey provisions and other necessaries for that small army. But imagine an army sixty times the size, together with the women and children. Conceive this enormous host entering upon a march that was to extend over the space of forty years, through "a great and terrible wilderness," in which there was no corn, no grass, no water-spring. How were they to be sustained? No supplies with them — no arrangements entered into with friendly nations to forward supplies — no transports despatched to meet them at various points along their route — in short, not a single visible source of supply — nothing that nature would consider available.

All this is something worth pondering. But we must ponder it in the divine presence. It is of no possible use for reason to sit down and try to solve this mighty problem by human arithmetic. No, reader; it is only faith that can solve it, and that, moreover, by the word of the living God. Here lies the precious solution. Bring God in, and you want no other factors to work out your answer. Leave Him out, and the more powerful your reason, and the more profound your arithmetic, the more hopeless must be your perplexity.

Thus it is that faith settles the question. God was in the midst of His people. He was there in all the fullness of His grace and mercy — there in His perfect knowledge of His people's wants, and of the difficulties of their path — there in His almighty power and boundless resources, to meet these difficulties and supply these wants. And so fully did He enter into all these things, that He was able, at the close of their long wilderness wanderings, to appeal to their hearts in the following touching accents, "for the Lord thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand; he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee; *thou hast lacked nothing.*" And again, "Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years." Deut. 2: 7; Deut. 8: 4.

Now, in all these things, the camp of Israel was a type — a vivid, striking type. A type of what? A type of the Church of God passing through this world. The testimony of scripture is so distinct on this point, as to leave no room and no demand for the exercise of imagination. "all these things happened

unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." 1 Cor. 10: 11.

Hence, therefore, we may draw near and gaze, with intense interest upon that marvellous spectacle, and seek to gather up the precious lessons which it is so eminently fitted to teach. and, oh, what lessons! Who can duly estimate them? Look at that mysterious camp in the desert, composed, as we have said, of warriors, workers, and worshippers! what separation from all the nations of the world! What utter helplessness! What exposure! What absolute dependence upon God! They had nothing — could do nothing — could know nothing. They had not a morsel of food, nor a drop of water, but as they received it day by day from the immediate hand of God. When they retired to rest at night, there was not a single atom of provision for the morrow. There was no storehouse, no larder, no visible source of supply, nothing that nature could take any account of.

But God was there, and that, in the judgement of faith, was quite enough. *They were shut up to God.* This is the one grand reality. Faith owns nothing real, nothing solid, nothing true, but the one true, living, eternal God. Nature might cast a longing look at the granaries of Egypt, and see something tangible, something substantial there. Faith looks up to heaven and finds *all* its springs there.

Thus it was with the camp in the desert; and thus it is with the Church in the world. There was not a single exigency, not a single contingency, not a single need of any sort whatsoever, for which the Divine Presence was not an all-sufficient answer. The nations of the uncircumcised might look on and marvel. They might, in the bewilderment of blind unbelief, raise many a question as to how such a host could ever be fed, clothed, and kept in order. Most certainly they had no eyes to *see* how- it could be done. They knew not Jehovah, the Lord God of the Hebrews; and therefore to tell them that He was going to undertake for that vast assembly would indeed seem like idle tales.

And so it is now, in reference to the assembly of God, in this world, which may truly be termed a moral wilderness. Looked at from God's point of view, that assembly is not of the world; it is in complete separation. It is as thoroughly apart from the world, as the camp of Israel was apart from Egypt. The waters of the Red Sea rolled between that camp and Egypt; and the deeper and darker waters of the death of Christ roll between the Church of God and this present evil world. It is impossible to conceive separation more complete. "They," says our Lord Christ, "are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." John 17.

Then, as to entire dependence; what can be more dependent than the church of God in this world? She has nothing in or of herself. She is set down in the midst of a moral desert, a dreary waste, a vast howling wilderness, in the which there is literally nothing on which she can live. There is not one drop of water, not a single morsel of suited food for the Church of God, throughout the entire compass of this world.

So also as to the matter of exposure to all sorts of hostile influences. Nothing can exceed it. There is not so much as one friendly influence. All is against her. She is in the midst of this world like an exotic plant belonging to a foreign clime, and set down in a sphere where both the soil and the atmosphere are uncongenial.

Such is the Church of God in the world — a separated — dependent — defenceless thing, wholly cast upon the living God. It is calculated to give great vividness, force, and clearness to our thoughts about the Church, to view it as the antitype of the camp in the desert; and that it is in no wise fanciful or far-fetched to view it thus, 1 Corinthians 10: 11 does most clearly show. We are fully warranted in saying that what the camp of Israel was literally, that the Church is morally and spiritually. And, farther, that what the wilderness was literally to Israel, that the world is, morally and spiritually, to the Church

of God. The wilderness was the sphere of Israel's toil and danger, not of their supplies or their enjoyment; and the world is the sphere of the Church's toil and danger, not of its supplies or its enjoyment.

It is well to seize this fact, in all its moral power. The assembly of God in the world, like "the congregation in the wilderness," is wholly cast upon the living God. we speak, be it remembered, from the divine standpoint — of what the Church is in God's sight. Looked at from man's point of view — looked at as she is, in her own actual practical state, it is, alas! another thing. We are now only occupied with the normal, the true, the divine idea of God's assembly is this world.

And let it not be forgotten, for one moment, that, as truly as there was a camp in the desert, of old — a congregation in the wilderness — so truly is there the Church of God, the body of Christ, in the world now. Doubtless, the nations of the world knew little, and cared less, about that congregation of old; but that did not weaken or touch the great living fact. So now, the men of the world know little and care less about the assembly of God — the body of Christ; but that, in no wise, touches the grand living truth that there is such a thing actually existing in this world, and has been ever since the Holy Ghost descended on the day of Pentecost. True, the congregation, of old, had its trials, its conflicts, its sorrows, its temptations, its strifes, its controversies — its internal commotions — its numberless and nameless difficulties, calling for the varied resources that were in God — the precious ministrations of prophet, priest, and king which God had provided; for, as we know, Moses was there as "king in Jeshurun," and as the prophet raised up of God; and Aaron was there to exercise all the priestly functions.

But, in spite of all these things that we have named — in spite of the weakness, the failure, the sin, the rebellion, the strife — still there was the striking fact, to be taken cognisance of by men, by devils, and by angels, namely, a vast congregation, amounting to something like three millions of people (according to the usual mode of computation) journeying through a wilderness, wholly dependent upon an unseen arm, guided and cared for by the eternal God, whose eye was never for one moment withdrawn from that mysterious typical host; yea, He dwelt in their midst, and never left them, in all their unbelief, their forgetfulness, their ingratitude, and rebellion. God was there to sustain and guide, to guard and keep them day and night. He fed them with bread from heaven, day by day; and He brought them forth water out of the flinty rock.

This, assuredly, was a stupendous fact — a profound mystery. God had a congregation in the wilderness — apart from the nations around, shut up to Himself. It may be the nations of the world knew nothing, cared nothing, thought nothing, about this assembly. It is certain the desert yielded nothing in the way of sustenance or refreshment. There were serpents and scorpions — there were snares and dangers — drought, barrenness, and desolation. But there was that wonderful assembly maintained in a manner that baffled and confounded human reason.

And, reader, remember this was a type. A type of what? a type of something that has been in existence for over eighteen centuries; is in existence still; and shall be in existence until the moment that our Lord Christ rises from His present position, and descends into the air. In one word, a type of the Church of God in the world. How important to recognise this fact! How sadly it has been lost sight of! How little understood even now! and yet every Christian is solemnly responsible to recognise, and practically to confess it. There is no escaping it. Is it true that there is something in this world, at this very moment, answering to the camp in the desert? Yes, verily; there is, in very truth, the Church in the wilderness. There is an assembly passing through this world, just as the literal Israel passed through the literal desert and, moreover, the world is, morally and spiritually, to that Church what the desert was,

literally and practically, to Israel of old. Israel found no springs in the desert; and the Church of God should find no springs in the world. If she does, she proves false to her Lord. Israel was not of the desert, but passing through it; and the Church of God is not of the world, but passing through it.

If this be thoroughly entered into by the reader, it will show him the place of complete separation which belongs to the Church of God as a whole, and to each individual member thereof. The Church, *in God's view of her*, is as thoroughly marked off from this present world, as the camp of Israel was marked off from the surrounding desert. There is as little in common between the Church and the world, as there was between Israel and the sand of the desert. The most brilliant attractions and bewitching fascinations of the world are to the Church of God what the serpents and scorpions, and the ten thousand other dangers of the wilderness, were to Israel.

Such is the divine idea, of the Church; and it is with this idea that we are now occupied. Alas! alas! how different it is with that which calls itself the Church! But we want the reader to dwell, for the present, on the true thing. We want him to place himself, by faith, at God's standpoint, and view the Church from thence. It is only by so doing that he can have anything like a true idea of what the Church is, or of his own personal responsibility with respect to it. God has a Church in the world. There is a body now on the earth, indwelt by God the Spirit, and united to Christ the Head. This Church — this body — is composed of all those who truly believe on the Son of God, and who are united by the grand fact of the presence of the Holy Ghost.

And, be it observed, this is not a matter of opinion - a certain thing which we may take up or lay down at pleasure. It is a divine fact. It is a grand truth, whether we will hear or whether we will forbear. The Church is an existing thing, and we, if believers, are members thereof. We cannot avoid this. We cannot ignore it. We are actually in the relationship — baptised into it by the Holy Ghost. It is as real and as positive a thing as the birth of a child into a family. The birth has taken place, the relationship is formed, and we have only to recognise it, and walk in the sense of it, from day to day. The very moment in the which a soul is born again — born from above, and sealed by the Holy Ghost — he is incorporated into the body of Christ. He can no longer view himself as a solitary individual — an independent person — an isolated atom; he is a member of a body, just as the hand or the foot is a member of the human body. He is a member of *the* Church of God, and cannot, properly or truly, be a member of anything else. How could my arm be a member of any other body? And, on the same principle, we may ask, how could a member of the body of Christ be a member of any other body?

What a glorious truth is this respecting the Church of God — the antitype of the camp in the desert, "the congregation in the wilderness!" What a fact to be governed by! There is such a thing as the Church of God, amid all the ruin and the wreck, the strife and the discord, the confusion and division, the sects and parties. This surely is a most precious truth. But not only is it most precious, it is also most practical and formative. We are as bound to recognise, by faith, this Church in the world, as the Israelite was bound to recognise, by sight, the camp in the desert. There was one camp, one congregation, and the true Israelite belonged thereto; there is one Church — one body, and the true Christian belongs to it.

But how is this body organised? By the Holy Ghost, as it is written, "By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body." (1 Cor. 12: 13.) How is it maintained? By its living Head, through the Spirit, and by the word, as it is written, "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." (Eph. 5: 29) Is not this enough? Is not the Lord Christ sufficient? Doth not the Holy Ghost suffice? Do we want anything more than the varied virtues that are lodged in the name of Jesus? Are not the gifts of the eternal Spirit quite sufficient for the growth and maintenance of

the Church of God? Doth not the fact of the Divine presence in the Church secure all that the Church can possibly need? Is it not sufficient for the exigence of every hour!" Faith says, and says it with emphasis and decision — "Yes!" Unbelief — human reason, says, "No! we want a great many things as well." What is our brief reply! Simply this, "If God be not sufficient, we know not whither to turn. If the name of Jesus doth not suffice, we know not what to do. If the Holy Ghost cannot meet all our need, in communion, in ministry, and in worship, we know not what to say."

It may, however, be said that "Things are not as they were in apostolic times. the professing church has failed; Pentecostal gifts have ceased; the palmy days of the Church's first love have passed away; and therefore we must adopt the best means in our power for the organisation and maintenance of our churches." To all this we reply, "God has not failed. Christ the Head of the Church has not failed. The Holy Spirit has not failed. Not one jot or tittle of God's word has failed." This is the true ground of faith. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He has said, "Lo, I am with you." How long! During the days of first love? during apostolic times? so long as the Church shall continue faithful? No; "I am with you *always*, even unto the end of the age." (Matt. 28) So also, at an earlier moment when, for the first time in the whole canon of scripture, the Church, properly so called, is named, we have those memorable words, "On this rock [the Son of the living God] I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matthew 16.

Now, the question is, "Is that Church on the earth at this moment?" Most assuredly. It is as true that there is a Church now on this earth, as that there was a camp in the desert of old. Yes; and as truly as God was in that camp to meet every exigence, so truly is He, now, in the Church to order and guide in everything, as we read, "Ye are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. 2) This is quite sufficient. All we want is to lay hold, by a simple faith, of this grand reality. The name of Jesus is as sufficient for all the exigencies of the Church of God as it is for the soul's salvation. The one is as true as the other. "Where two or three are gathered together in (or, unto) my name, there am I in the midst." (Matt. 18.) Has this ceased to be true? And if not, is not Christ's presence quite enough for His Church? Do we need to set about planning or working for ourselves in church matters? No more than in the matter of the soul's salvation. What do we say to the sinner? Trust Christ. 'What do we say to the saint? Trust Christ. What do we say to an assembly of saints, few or many! Trust Christ. Is there anything that He cannot manage? "Is there a thing too hard for Him?" Has His treasury of gift and grace become exhausted? Is He not able to supply ministerial gifts? Can He not furnish evangelists, pastors, and teachers? Can He not perfectly meet all the manifold necessities of His Church in the wilderness? If not, where are we? What shall we do: Whither shall we turn? What had the congregation of old to do? To look to Jehovah. For everything? Yes, for everything; for food, for water, for clothing, for guidance, for protection, for all. All their springs were in Him. Must we turn to some one else? Never. Our Lord Christ is amply sufficient, in spite of all our failure and ruin, our sin and unfaithfulness. He has sent down the Holy Ghost, the blessed Paraclete, to dwell with and in His people — to form them into one body, and unite them to their living Head in heaven. He is the power of unity, of communion, of ministry, and of worship. He has not left us, and He never will. Only let us trust Him; let us use Him; let us give Him room to act. Let us carefully guard against everything that might tend to quench, to hinder, or to grieve Him. Let us acknowledge Him, in His own proper place in the assembly, and yield ourselves, in all things, to His guidance and authority.

Here, we are persuaded, lies the true secret of power and blessing. Do we deny the ruin? How could we? Alas! alas! it stands forth as a fact too palpable and glaring to admit of denial. Do we seek to deny our share in the ruin — our folly and sin? Would to God we felt it more deeply! But shall we add to our sin by denying our Lord's grace and power to meet us in our folly and ruin? Shall we forsake

Him, the fountain of living waters, and hew out for ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water? Shall we turn from the Rock of Ages and lean upon the broken reeds of our own devising? God forbid! Rather let the language of our hearts be, as we think of the name of Jesus,

"Salvation in that name is found,
Cure for my grief and care;
A healing balm for every wound,
all, all I want is There."

But let not the reader suppose that we want to lend the smallest countenance to ecclesiastical pretension. We perfectly abhor any such thing. We look upon it as utterly contemptible. We believe we cannot possibly take too low a place. A low place and a lowly spirit are what alone become us in view of our common sin and shame. All we seek to maintain is this, the all sufficiency of the name of Jesus for all the exigencies of the Church of God, at all times, and under all circumstances. There was all power in that name in apostolic times; and why not now? Has any change passed over that glorious name? No, blessed be God! Well then it is sufficient for us, at this moment, and all we want is to confide in it fully, and to show that we so confide by discarding thoroughly every other ground of confidence, and coming out, with bold decision, to that peerless and precious name. He has, blessed be His name, come down to the smallest congregation — the smallest plurality, inasmuch as He has said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I." Does this still hold good? Has it lost its power? Does it no longer apply? Where has it been repealed?

Oh! Christian reader, we call upon you, by every argument which ought to weigh with your heart, to give your cordial assent and consent to this one eternal truth, namely, *The all-sufficiency of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the assembly of God, in every possible condition in which it can be found, throughout its entire history** We call upon you not merely to hold this as a true theory, but, to confess it practically and then, assuredly, you will taste the deep blessedness of the presence of Jesus in the outside place — a blessedness which must be tasted in order to be known; But, when once really tasted, it can never be forgotten or surrendered for anything beside.

{*In using the expression, "The all-sufficiency of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ," we understand by it all that is secured to His people in that name — life; righteousness; acceptance; the presence of the Holy Ghost with all His varied gifts: a divine centre or gathering point. In a word, we believe that everything that the Church can possibly need, for time or eternity, is comprehended in that one glorious name, The Lord Jesus Christ. }

But we had no intention of pursuing the foregoing line of thought so far, or of penning such a lengthened introduction to the section of our book which lies open before us, and to which we shall now invite the reader's particular attention.

On looking attentively at "the congregation in the wilderness" (Acts 7: 38), we find it composed of three distinct elements, namely, *warriors, workers, and worshippers*. There was a *nation* of warriors, a tribe of *workers*, a *family* of worshippers or priests. We have glanced at the first of these and seen each one according to his "pedigree," taking up his position by his "standard," according to the direct appointment of Jehovah; and we shall now dwell for a few moments on the second, and see each one at his work and service, according to the same appointment. we have considered the warriors; let us meditate on the workers.

The Levites were distinctly marked off from all the other tribes, and called to a very specific

place and service. Thus we read of them, "But the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not numbered among them. For the Lord had spoken unto Moses, saying, Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take the sum of them among the children of Israel. But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle. And when the tabernacle setteth forward, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. and the children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, throughout their hosts. But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel: and the Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony." (Num. 1: 47-53.) And again we read, "But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel, as the Lord commanded Moses." Num. 2: 33.

But why the Levites? why was this tribe specially marked off from all the others, and set apart for so holy and elevated a service? Was there any special sanctity or goodness about them to account for their being so distinguished? Not by nature, certainly, nor yet by practice, as we may see by the following words "Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O, my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for *in their anger they slew a man*, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." Genesis 49. Such was Levi by nature and by practice — self-willed, fierce, and cruel. How remarkable that such an one should be singled out and brought into a place of such high and holy privilege! Surely we may say it was grace from first to last. It is the way of grace to take up the very worst cases. It stoops to the lowest depths and gathers up its brightest trophies from thence. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." (2 Tim. 1: 16) "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Ephesians 3.

But how striking the language, "O, my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united." God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity. God could not come into Levi's secret, or be united unto his assembly. That was impossible. God could have nought to do with self-will, fierceness, and cruelty. But yet He could bring Levi into His secret, and unite him to His assembly. He could take him out of his habitation, wherein were instruments of cruelty, and bring him into the tabernacle to be occupied with the holy instruments and vessels that were there. This was grace — free, sovereign grace; and herein must be sought the basis of all Levi's blessed and elevated service. So far as he was personally concerned there was an immeasurable distance between him and a holy God — a chasm which no human art or power could bridge. A holy God could have nothing to do with self-will fierceness, and cruelty; but a God of grace could have to do with Levi. He could visit such an one in sovereign mercy, and raise him up from the depths of his moral degradation, and bring him into a place of nearness to Himself.

And oh what a marvellous contrast between Levi's position by nature, and his position by grace! between the instruments of cruelty and the vessels of the sanctuary! between Levi in Genesis 34 and Levi in Numbers 3 and 4.

But let us look at the mode of God's dealing with Levi — the ground on which he was brought into such a place of blessing. In doing this, it will be needful for us to refer to Numbers 8, and there we are let into the secret of the whole matter. We shall see that there was, and could be, no allowance of

anything that belonged to Levi, no sanction of any of his ways; and yet there was the most perfect display of grace — grace reigning through righteousness. We speak of the type and its significance. We do so in view of that statement already referred to: "Now all these things happened unto them for types." It is not a question of how far the Levites saw through these things. This is not at all the point. We are not to ask, What did the Levites see in God's dealings with them? But, What do we learn?

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them. And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean." Num. 8: 5-7.

Here we have, in type, the only divine principle of cleansing. It is the application of death to nature and all its habits. It is the word of God brought to bear upon the heart and conscience, in a living way. Nothing can be more expressive than the double action presented in the above passage. Moses was to sprinkle water of purifying upon them; and then they were to shave off all their hair, and wash their garments. There is great beauty and precision here. Moses, as representing the claims of God, cleanses the Levites according to those claims; and they, being cleansed, are able to bring the sharp razor to bear upon all that was the mere growth of nature, and to wash their garments, which expresses, in typical form, the cleansing their habits according to the word of God. This was God's way of meeting all that appertained to Levi's natural state — the self-will, the fierceness, and the cruelty. The pure water and the sharp razor were called into action—the washing and shaving had to go on, ere Levi was fit to approach the vessels of the sanctuary.

Thus it is in every case. There is, there can be, no allowance of nature among God's workers. There never was a more fatal mistake than to attempt to enlist nature in the service of God. It matters not how you may endeavour to improve or regulate it. It is not improvement, but death that will avail. It is of the very last possible importance for the reader to lay hold, with clearness and force, of this great practical truth. Man has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. The plummet has been applied to him, and he has been found crooked. It is of no possible use seeking to reform. Nothing will do save the water and the razor. God has closed up man's history. He has brought to an end in the death of Christ. The first grand fact that the Holy Ghost presses upon the human conscience is, that God has delivered His solemn verdict upon human nature, and that each one must accept that verdict against himself personally. It is not a matter of opinion, or a matter of feeling. A person may say, "I do not see, or I do not feel, that I am so bad as you seem to make out." We reply, That does not affect the question in the least. God has declared His judgement about us, and it is man's first duty to fall in with, and bow to that. Of what use would it have been for Levi to say that he did not agree with what God's word had said about him? Would that — could that, have altered the question as to him? In no wise. The divine record remained the same whether Levi felt it or not; but clearly, it was the first step in wisdom's pathway to bow down under the weight of that record.

All this is expressed, in type, in the "water" and the "razor" the "washing" and the "shaving." Nothing could be more significant or impressive. These acts set forth the solemn truth of the sentence of death upon nature, and the execution of judgement upon all that nature produces.

And what, let us ask, is the meaning of the initiatory act of Christianity — the act of baptism? Does it not set forth the blessed fact that "our old man" — our fallen nature — is completely set aside, and that we are introduced into an entirely new position Truly so. And how do we use the razor? By rigid self-judgment, day by day; by the stern disallowance of all that is of nature's growth. This is the true path for all God's workers in the wilderness. When we look at Levi's conduct at Shechem, in

Genesis 34, and the record concerning him in Genesis 49, we may ask, How can such an one ever be allowed to carry the vessels of the sanctuary? The answer is, Grace shines in Levi's call; and holiness shines in Levi's cleansing. He was called to the work, according to the riches of divine grace; but he was fitted for the work according to the claims of divine holiness.

Thus it must be with all God's workers. We are most thoroughly convinced that we are fit for God's work just so far as nature is brought under the power of the cross, and the sharp razor of self-judgment. Self-will can never be made available in the service of God; nay, it must be set aside, if we would know what true service is. There is, alas! A large amount of what which passes for service which, if judged in the light of the divine presence, would be seen to be but the fruit of a restless will. This is most solemn, and demands our most earnest attention. We cannot exercise too severe a censorship over ourselves, in this very thing. The heart is so deceitful that we may be led to imagine that we are doing the Lord's work, when, in reality, we are only pleasing ourselves. But, if we would tread the path of true service, we must seek to be, more and more, apart from nature. The self-willed Levi must pass through the typical process of washing and shaving, ere he can be employed in that elevated service assigned him by the direct appointment of the God of Israel.

But, ere proceeding to examine particularly the work and service of the Levites, we must look for a moment at a scene in Exodus 32, in which they act a very prominent and a very remarkable part. We allude, as the reader will at once perceive, to the golden calf. During the absence of Moses, the people so completely lost sight of God and His claims as to set up a molten calf and bow down thereto. This terrible act called for summary judgement. "And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked to their shame among their enemies:) then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. and he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day." Exodus 32: 25-29.

This was a testing moment. It could not be otherwise, when this great question was pressed home upon the heart and conscience, "*Who is on the Lord's side?*" nothing could be more searching. The question was not, "Who is willing to work?" No! it was a far deeper and more searching question. It was not who will go here or there — do this or that? There might be a vast amount of doing and going, and, all the while, it might be but the impulse of an unbroken will which, acting upon religious nature, gave an appearance of devotedness and piety imminently calculated to deceive oneself and others.

But to be "on the Lord's side" implies the surrender of one's own will — yea, the surrender of oneself, and this is essential to the true servant — the real workman. Saul of Tarsus was on this ground when he exclaimed, "Lord, what wilt *thou* have *me* to do?" What words, from the self-willed, fierce, and cruel persecutor of the Church of God!

"Who is on the Lord's side?" Reader, art thou? Search and see. Examine thyself closely. Remember, the question is not at all "What art thou doing?" No; it is far deeper. If thou art on the Lord's side, thou art ready for anything and everything. Thou art ready to stand still, or ready to go forward; ready to go to the right or to the left; ready to be active, and ready to be quiet; ready to stand on thy feet, and ready to lie on thy back. the grand point is this, namely, the surrender of thyself to the claims of another, and that other the Lord Christ.

This is an immense point. Indeed we know of nothing more important, at the present moment, than this searching question, "Who is on the Lord's side?" We live in days of immense self-will. Man exults in his liberty. And this comes out, very prominently, in religious matters. Just as it was in the camp of Israel, in the days of the thirty-second of Exodus — the days of The golden calf. Moses was out of sight, and the human will was at work; the graving tool was called into operation. And what was the result? The molten calf; and when Moses returned, he found the people in idolatry and nakedness. Then came forth the solemn and testing question, "Who is on the Lord's side" This brought things to an issue, or rather it put people to the test. Nor is it other wise now. Man's will is rampant, and that too in matters of religion. Man boasts of his lights, of the freedom of his will, the freedom of his judgement. There is the denial of the Lordship of Christ; and therefore it behoves us to look well to it, and see that we really are taking sides with the Lord against ourselves; that we are in the attitude of simple subjection to His authority. Then we shall not be occupied with the amount or character of our service; it will be our one object to do the will of our Lord.

Now, to act thus under the Lord may often give an appearance of narrowness to our sphere of action; but with this we have nothing whatever to do. If a master tells his servant to stand in the hall, and not to stir until he rings the bell, what is the servant's duty? Clearly to stand still; nor should he be moved from this position or this attitude, even though his fellow-servants should find fault with his apparent inactivity and good-for-nothingness; he may rest assured his Master will approve and vindicate. This is enough for any true-hearted servant, whose one desire will ever be not so much to do a great deal, as to do the will of his Lord.

In a word, then, the question for the camp of Israel, in the day of the golden calf, and the question for the Church, in this day of human will, is this, "Who is on the Lord's side?" Momentous question! It is not, Who is on the side of religiousness, philanthropy, or moral reform? There may be a large amount of any or all of these things, and yet the will be thoroughly unbroken. Let us not forget this; nay, rather we should say, let us continually bear it in mind. We may be very zealous in promoting all the various schemes of philanthropy, religiousness, and moral reform, and, all the while, be ministering to self, and feeding self-will. This is a most solemn and weighty consideration; and it behoves us to give earnest heed to it. We are passing through a moment in the which man's will is being pampered with unparalleled diligence. We believe, most assuredly, that the true remedy for this evil will be found wrapped up in this one weighty question, "Who is on the Lord's side" There is immense practical power in this question. To be really on *the Lord's side* is to be ready for anything to which He may see fit to call us, no matter what. If the soul is brought to say, in real truth, "*Lord*, what wilt thou have me to do?" "*Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth,*" then we are ready for everything. Hence, in the case of the Levites, they were called to "slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour." This was terrible work for flesh and blood. But the moment demanded it. God's claims had been openly and grossly dishonoured. Human invention had been at work, with the graving tool, and a calf had been set up. The glory of God had been changed into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass; and therefore all who were on the Lord's side were called to gird on the sword. Nature might say, "No; let us be tender, and gentle, and gracious. We shall accomplish more by kindness than by severity. It can do no good to wound people. There is far more power in love than in harshness. Let us love one another." Thus might nature throw out its suggestions — thus it might reason and argue. But the command was distinct and decisive: "Put every man his sword by his side." The sword was the only thing when the golden calf was there. To talk of love at such a moment, would be to fling over-board the just claims of the God of Israel. It belongs to the true spirit of obedience to render the very service which suits the occasion. A servant has no business to reason, he is simply to do as he is bid. To raise a question, or put forth a demur, is to abandon our place as a servant. It might seem most dreadful work

to have to slay a brother, a companion, or a neighbour; but the word of the Lord was imperative. It left no room for evasion; and the Levites, through grace, yielded a full and ready obedience. "The children of Levi did according to the word of Moses."

This is the only true path for those who will be God's workers, and Christ's servants in this world where self-will is dominant. It is immensely important to have the truth of the Lordship of Christ deeply engraved upon the heart. It is the only regulator of the course and conduct. It settles a thousand questions. If the heart be really subject to the authority of Christ, it is in readiness for anything and everything to which He calls us, be it to stand still or to go forward, to do little or much, to be active or passive. To a really obedient heart, the question is not at all, "What am I doing? or where am I going?" It is simply, "am I doing the will of my Lord?"

Such was the ground occupied by Levi. And mark: the divine comment on this, as given in Malachi. "And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity." (Mal. 2: 4-6.) Mark also the blessing pronounced by the lips of Moses, "And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children; for they have observed thy word and kept thy covenant. They shall teach Jacob thy judgements, and Israel thy law; they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar. Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again." (Deut 33: 8-11.)

It might have appeared unwarrantably harsh and severe in Levi not to have seen his parents or known or acknowledged his brethren. But God's claims are paramount; and our Lord Christ hath declared these solemn words, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Luke 14: 26.

These are plain words; and they let us into the secret of what it is which lies at the bottom of all true service. Let no one imagine that we are to be without natural affection. Far be the thought. To be so would be to connect us, morally, with the apostasy of the last days. (See 2 Tim. 3: 3) But when the claims of natural affection are allowed to stand in the way of our whole-hearted service to Christ, and when the so-called love of our brethren receives a higher place than faithfulness to Christ, then are we unfit for His service and unworthy of the name of His servants. Let it be carefully noted that what formed the moral ground of Levi's title to be employed in the Lord's service was the fact that he did not see his parents, acknowledge his brethren, or know his children. In a word, he was enabled to set the claims of nature completely aside, and to give the claims of Jehovah the paramount place in his heart. This, we repeat, is the only true basis of the servant's character.

This is a most weighty consideration, and one which demands the most serious attention of the Christian reader. There may be a vast amount of what looks like service — a great deal of activity, of coming and going, of doing and saying — and, all the while, there may not be a single atom of true Levite service, yea, it may, in God's estimation, be only the restless activity of the will. "What," it may be said, "can the will show itself in the service of God — in matters of religion?" Alas, alas, it can and does. And very often the apparent energy and fruitfulness in work and service is just in proportion to

the energy of the will. This is peculiarly solemn. It calls for the most rigid self-judgment, in the light of the divine presence. True service doth not consist in great activity, but in profound subjection to the will of our Lord, and where this exists there will be the readiness to sink the claims of parents, brethren, and children, in order to carry out the will of Him whom we own as Lord. True, we should love our parents, our brethren, and our children. It is not that we should love these less, but we should love Christ more. He and His claims must ever have the paramount place in the heart, if we would be true workers for God, true servants of Christ, true Levites in the wilderness. It was this that marked the actings of Levi, on the occasion to which we are referring. God's claims were in question, and hence the claims of nature were not to be entertained for a moment. Parents, brethren, and children, how dear soever these might be, were not to stand in the way when the glory of the God of Israel had been changed into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.

Here lies the whole question, in all its weight and magnitude. The ties of natural relationship, with all the claims, duties, and responsibilities arising out of such ties, Will ever get their proper place, their due respect, from those whose hearts, and minds, and consciences have been brought under the adjusting power of the truth of God. Nought save what is really due to God and His Christ should ever be suffered to infringe those rights which are founded upon natural relationship. This is a most necessary and wholesome consideration, and one which we would particularly press upon the young Christian reader. We have ever to be on our guard against a spirit of self-will and self-pleasing which is never so dangerous as when it clothes itself in the garb of religious service, and work so called. It behoves us to be very sure indeed that we are directly and simply governed by the claims of God when we disregard the claims of natural relationship. In Levi's case, the matter was as clear as a sunbeam, and hence the "*sword*" of judgement, not the kiss of affection, befitted the critical moment. So, also, in our history, there are moments in which it would be open disloyalty to our Lord Christ to hearken, for one instant, to the voice of natural relationship.

The above remarks may help the reader to understand the actings of the Levites to Exodus 32, and the words of our Lord in Luke 14: 26. May God's Spirit enable us to realise and exhibit the adjusting power of truth!

We shall now dwell, for a few moments, on the consecration of the Levites, in Numbers 8, in order that we may have the whole subject before our minds. Truly it is a theme full of instruction for all who desire to be workers for God.

After the ceremonial acts of "washing" and "shaving" already referred to, we read, "Then let them (i.e., the Levites) take a young bullock with his meat offering, even fine flour mingled with oil, and another young bullock shalt thou take for a sin offering. And thou shalt bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt gather the whole assembly or the children of Israel together. And thou shalt bring the Levites before the Lord: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites. And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the Lord. And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks; and thou shalt offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, unto the Lord, to make an atonement for the Levites."

Here we have presented to us, in type, the two grand aspects of the death of Christ. The sin offering furnishes the one; the burnt offering furnishes the other. Into the details of those offerings we do not enter here, having sought to do so in the opening chapters of our "Notes on Leviticus." We would merely observe here, that, in the sin offering, we see Christ bearing sin in His own body on the tree, and enduring the wrath of God against sin. In the burnt offering, we see Christ glorifying God

even in the very matter of making atonement for sin. Atonement is made in both; but in the former, it is atonement according to the depth of the sinner's need; in the latter, it is atonement according to the measure of Christ's devotedness to God. In that, we see the hatefulfulness of sin; in this, the preciousness of Christ. It is, we need hardly say, the same atoning death of Christ, but presented in two distinct aspects.*

{*For further instruction on the doctrine of the sin offering and the burnt offering, the reader is referred to "Notes on Leviticus," Lev. 1: 4. This little volume can be had of the publisher.}

Now, the Levites laid their hands on both the sin offering and the burnt offering; and this act of the imposition of hands expressed the simple fact of identification. But how different the result in each case. When Levi laid his hands on the head of the sin offering, it involved the transfer of all his sins, of all his guilt, of all his fierceness, cruelty, and self-will to the victim. And on the other hand, when he laid his hands on the head of the burnt offering, it involved the transfer of all the acceptableness of the sacrifice, of all its perfectness, to Levi. Of course, we speak of what the type set forth. We do not undertake to state anything as to Levi's intelligent entrance into these things; we merely seek to unfold the meaning of the ceremonial figure; and, most assuredly, no figure could be more expressive than the imposition of hands, whether we view it in the case of the sin offering, or in the case of the burnt offering. The doctrine of all this is embodied in that most weighty passage at the close of 2 Corinthians 5, "He hath made him [Christ] to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him." "And thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto the Lord. Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel; and the Levites shall be mine, and after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; and thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them for an offering. For they are wholly given unto ME from among the children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the firstborn of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me. For all the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself. And I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel. And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come nigh unto the sanctuary. And Moses, and Aaron, and all the congregation of the children of Israel, did to the Levites according unto all that the Lord commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did the children of Israel unto them." Numbers 8: 13-20.

How forcibly are we reminded, by the foregoing lines, of the words of our Lord in John 17, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word.... I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them." Verses 6-10.

The Levites were a separated people — God's special possession. They took the place of all the firstborn in Israel — of those who were saved from the sword of the destroyer by the blood of the lamb. They were, typically, a dead and risen people, set apart to God, and by Him presented as a gift to Aaron the high priest, to do the service of the tabernacle.

What a place for the self-willed, fierce, and cruel Levi! What a triumph of grace! What an illustration of the efficacy of the blood of atonement and the water of purification! 'They were, by nature and by practice, far off from God; but the "blood" of atonement, and the "water" of cleansing,

and the "razor" of self-judgment had done their blessed work, and hence the Levites were in a condition to be presented as a gift to Aaron and to his sons, to be associated with them in the hallowed services of the tabernacle of the congregation.

In all this the Levites were a striking type of God's people now. These latter have been lifted from the depths of their degradation and ruin as sinners. They are washed in the precious blood of Christ, purified by the application of the word, and called to the exercise of habitual and rigid self-judgment, Thus are they fitted for that holy service to the which they are called. God has given them to His Son in order that they may be His workers in this world. "Thine they were and thou gavest them me." Wondrous thought! To think that such as we could be thus spoken of! To think of our being God's property and God's gift to His Son! Well may we say it surpasses all human thought. It is not merely that we are saved from hell; that is true. It is not, merely that we are pardoned, justified, and accepted; all this is true; but we are called to the high and holy work of bearing through this world the Name, the testimony, the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is our work as true Levites. As men of war, we are called to fight; as priests, we are privileged to worship; but as Levites, we are responsible to serve, and our service is to carry through this dreary desert scene the antitype of the tabernacle, and that tabernacle was the figure of Christ. This is our distinct line of service. To this we are called — to this we are set apart.

The reader will, we doubt not, notice, with interest, the fact that it is in this book of Numbers, and here alone, that we are furnished with all the precious and deeply instructive details respecting the Levites. In this we have a fresh illustration of the character of our book. It is from a wilderness standpoint that we get a full and proper view of God's workers as well as of God's warriors.

And, now, let us examine for a few moments, the service of the Levites, as detailed in Numbers 3 and 4. "and the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle. And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle. And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel." Num. 3: 5-9.

The Levites represented the whole congregation of Israel, and acted on their behalf. This appears from the fact that the children of Israel laid their hands on the heads of the Levites, just as the Levites laid their hands on the heads of the sacrifices. (See Num. 8: 10) The act of imposition expressed identification, so that, according to this, the Levites furnish a distinct view of the people of God in the wilderness. They present them to us as a company of earnest workers, and that too, be it noted, not as mere desultory labourers, running to and fro, and doing each one what seemed right in his own eyes. Nothing of the sort. If the men of war had their pedigree to show and their standard to adhere to, so had the Levites their centre to gather round and their work to do. All was as clear, distinct, and defined as God could make it; and, moreover, all was under the immediate authority and direction of the high priest.

It is most needful for all who would be true Levites, proper workmen, intelligent servants, to weigh, with all seriousness, this point. Levite service was to be regulated by the appointment of the priest. There was no more room for the exercise of self-will in the service of the Levites, that there was the position of the men of war. All was divinely settled; and this was a signal mercy to all whose hearts were in a right condition. To one whose will was unbroken it might seem a hardship and a most irksome task to be obliged to occupy the same position, or to be engaged in precisely the same line of

work. Such an one might sigh for something fresh — some variety in his work. But, on the contrary, where the will was subdued, and the heart adjusted, each one would say, "my path is perfectly plain; I have only to obey." This is ever the business of the true servant. It was pre-eminently so with Him Who was the only perfect servant that ever trod the earth. He could say, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." And again, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

But there is another fact which claims our attention, in reference to the Levites; and that is, their service had exclusively to do with the tabernacle and its belongings. They had nothing else to do. For a Levite to think of putting his hand to anything beside would have been to deny his calling, to abandon his divinely appointed work, and to fly in the face of God's commandments.

Just so is it with Christians now. Their exclusive business — their one grand work — their absorbing service, is Christ and His belongings. They have nothing else to do. For a Christian to think of putting his hand to anything beside is to deny his calling, to abandon his divinely-appointed work, and fly in the face of the divine commandments. A true Levite of old could say, "To me to live is the tabernacle;" and a true Christian, now, can say, "To me to live is Christ." The grand question, in every matter which may present itself before the Christian, is this, "Can I connect Christ with it?" If not, I have nothing whatsoever to do with it.

This is the true way to look at things. It is not a question as to the right or wrong of this or that. No; it is simply a question as to how far it concerns the name and glory of Christ. This simplifies everything amazingly. It answers a thousand questions, solves a thousand difficulties, and makes the path of the true and earnest Christian as clear as a sunbeam. A Levite had no difficulty as to his work. It was all settled for him with divine precision. The burden that each had to carry, and the work that each had to do, was laid down with a clearness which left no room for the questionings of the heart. Each man could know his own work and do it; and let us add the work was done by each one discharging his own specific functions. It was not by running hither and thither, and doing this or that; but by each man sedulously adhering to his own particular calling, that the service of the tabernacle was duly discharged.

It is well to bear this in mind. We, as Christians, are very apt to jostle one another; indeed we are sure to do so if we do not each one pursue his own *divinely* appointed line of work. We say "divinely appointed," and would press the word. We have no right to choose our own work. If the Lord has made one man an evangelist, another a teacher, another a pastor, and another an exhorter, how is the work to go on? surely it is not by the evangelist trying to teach, and the teacher to exhort, or one who is not fitted for either trying to do both. No; it is by each one exercising his own divinely-imparted gift. No doubt it may please the Lord to endow one individual with a variety of gifts; but this does not, in the smallest degree, touch the principle on which we are dwelling, which is simply this, every one of us is responsible to know his own special line and pursue it. If this be lost sight of we shall get into hopeless confusion. God has His quarrymen, His stone-squarers, and His masons. The work progresses by each man attending diligently to his own work. If all were quarry-men, where were the stone-squarers? if all were stone-squarers, where were the masons? The greatest possible damage is done to the cause of Christ, and to the cause of Christ, and to God's work in the world, by one man aiming at another's line of things, or seeking to imitate another's gift. It is a grievous mistake, against which we would solemnly warn the reader. Nothing can be more senseless. God never repeats Himself. There are not two faces alike, not two leaves in the forest alike, not two blades of grass alike. Why then should any one aim at another's line of work, or affect to possess another's gift? Let each one be satisfied to be just what His Master has made him. This is the secret of real peace and progress.

All this finds a very vivid illustration in the inspired record concerning the service of the three distinct classes of the Levites, which we shall now proceed to quote at length for the reader. There is nothing, after all, to be compared with the veritable language of holy scripture.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying, number the children of Levi after the house of their fathers, by their families: every male from a month old and upward shalt thou number them. and Moses numbered them *according to the word of the Lord, as He was commanded*. And these were the sons of Levi by their names, Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari. And these are the names of the sons of Gershon by their families; Libni, and Shimei. And the sons of Kohath by their families; Amram, and Izehar, Hebron, and Uzziel. And the sons of Merari by their families; Mahli, and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to the house of their fathers. Of Gershon was the family of the Libnites, and the family of the Shimites: these are the families of the Gershonites. Those that were numbered of them, according to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, even those that were numbered of them were seven thousand and five hundred. The families of the Gershonites shall pitch behind the tabernacle westward. And the chief of the house of the father of the Gershonites shall be Eliasaph the son of Lael. And the charge of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of the congregation shall be the tabernacle, and the tent, the covering thereof, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the hangings of the court, and the curtain for the door of the court, which is by the tabernacle, and by the altar round about, and the cords of it for all the service thereof." (Num. 3: 14-26.) and again, we read, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take also the sum of the sons of Gershon, throughout the houses of their fathers, by their families; from thirty years old and upward until fifty years old shalt thou number them; all that enter in to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation. This is the service of the families of the Gershonites, to serve, and for burdens: and they shall bear the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tabernacle of the congregation, his covering, and the covering of the badgers' skins that is above upon it, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the hangings of the court, and the hanging for the door of the gate of the court, which is by the tabernacle and by the altar round about, and their cords, and all the instruments of their service, and all that is made for them: so shall they serve. At the appointment of Aaron and his sons shall be all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, in all their burdens, and in all their service: and ye shall appoint unto them in charge all their burdens. This is the service of the families of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of the congregation: and their charge shall be under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest." Numbers 4: 21-28.

Thus much as to Gershon and his work. He, with his brother Merari, had to carry "the tabernacle whereas Kohath was called to bear "the sanctuary," as we read in Numbers 10 "And the tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon, and the sons of Merari set forward, bearing *the tabernacle* And the Kohathites set forward, bearing the *sanctuary*: and the other (i.e., the Gershonites and the Merarites) did set up the tabernacle against they came." (Ver. 17, 21.) There was a strong moral link connecting Gershon and Merari in their service, although their work was perfectly distinct, as we shall see from the following passage.

"As for the sons of Merari, thou shalt number them after their families, by the house of their fathers; from thirty years old and upward, even unto fifty years old, shalt thou number them, every one that entereth into the service, to do the work of the tabernacle of the congregation. And this is the charge of their burden, according to all their service in the tabernacle of the congregation; the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and sockets thereof, and the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords, with all their instruments, and with all their service: and by name ye shall reckon the instruments of the charge of their burden. This is the

service of the families of the sons of Merari, according to all their service to the tabernacle of the congregation, under the hand of Ithamar, the son of Aaron the priest." Numbers 4: 29-33.

All this was clear and distinct. Gershon had nothing to do with the boards and pins; and Merari had nothing to do with the curtains or the coverings. And yet they were very intimately connected, as they were mutually dependent. "The boards and sockets" would not do without "the curtains;" and the curtains would not do without the boards and sockets. And as to "the pins," though apparently so insignificant, who could estimate their importance in keeping things together, and maintaining the visible unity of the whole? Thus all worked together to one common end, and that end was gained by each attending to his own special line. If a Gershonite had taken it into his head to abandon "the curtains" and address himself to "the pins," he would have left his own work undone and interfered with the work; of the Merarite. This would never do. It would have thrown everything into hopeless confusion; whereas by adhering to the divine rule, all was maintained in the most exquisite order.

It must have been perfectly beautiful to mark God's workers in the wilderness. Each one was at his post, and each moved in his divinely appointed sphere. Hence, the moment the cloud was lifted up, and the order issued to strike, every man knew what he had to do, and he addressed himself to that and to nothing else. No man had any right to think for himself. Jehovah thought for all. The Levites had declared themselves "on the Lord's side;" they had yielded themselves to His authority; and this fact lay at the very base of all their wilderness work and service. looked at in this light it would be deemed a matter of total indifference whether a man had to carry a pin, a curtain, or a golden candlestick. The grand question for each and for all was simply, "Is this my work? Is his what the Lord has given we to do?"

This settled everything. Had it been left to human thinking or human choosing, one man might like this; another might like that; and a third might like something else. How then could the tabernacle ever be borne along through the wilderness, or set up in its place? Impossible! There could be but one supreme authority, namely Jehovah Himself. He arranged for all, and all had to submit to Him. There was no room at all for the exercise of the human will. This was a signal mercy. It prevented a world of strife and confusion. There must be subjection — there must be a broken will — there must be a cordial yielding to divine authority, otherwise it will turn out to be like the book of Judges, "Every man doing that which is right in his own eyes." A Merarite might say, or think if he did not say it, "what! am I to spend the very best portion of my life upon earth — the days of my prime and vigour — in looking after a few pins? Was this the end for which I was born? Am I to have nothing higher before me as an object in life? Is this to be my occupation from the age of thirty to fifty?"

To such questions there was a twofold reply. In the first place, it was enough for the Merarite to know that Jehovah had assigned him his work. This was sufficient to impart dignity to what nature might esteem the smallest and meanest matter. It does not matter what we are doing, provided always we are doing our divinely appointed work. a man may pursue what his fellows would deem a most brilliant career he may spend his energies, his time, his talents, his fortune, in pursuits which the men of this world esteem grand and glorious, and, all the while, his life may prove to be but a splendid bubble. But, on the other hand, the man that simply does the will of God. whatever that may be — the man who executes his Lord's commands, whatever such commands may enjoin — that is the man whose path is illuminated by the beams of divine approbation, and whose work shall be remembered! when the most splendid schemes of the children of this world have sunk in eternal oblivion.

But, besides the moral worth attaching always to the act of doing what we are told to do, there was also a special dignity belonging to the work of a Merarite, even though that work was merely

attending to a few "pins" or "sockets." Everything connected with the tabernacle was of the very deepest interest and highest value. There was not, in the whole world, anything to be compared with that boarded tent with all its mystic belongings. It was a holy dignity and privilege to be allowed to touch the smallest pin that formed a part of that wonderful tabernacle in the wilderness. It was more glorious, by far, to be a Merarite looking after the pins of the tabernacle, than to wield the sceptre of Egypt or Assyria. True, that Merarite, according to the import of his name, might seem a poor sorrowful, labouring man; but oh! his labour stood connected with the dwelling-place of the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth. His hands handled the things which were the patterns of things in the heavens. Every pin, every socket; every curtain, and every covering was a shadow of good things to come — a foreshadowing of Christ.

We do not mean to assert that the poor labouring Merarite or Gershonite understood these things. This is not, by any means, the point. We can understand them. It is our privilege to bring all these things—the tabernacle and its mystic furniture — under the brilliant light of the New Testament, and there read Christ in all.

While, therefore, we predicate nothing as to the measure of intelligence possessed by the Levites, in their respective work; we at the same time, may say, with confidence, that it was a very precious privilege to be allowed to touch and handle, and bear through the wilderness, the earthly shadows of heavenly realities. Moreover, it was a special mercy to have the authority of a "Thus saith the Lord" for everything they put their hand to. Who can estimate such a mercy — such a privilege? Each member of that marvellous tribe of workers had his own particular line of things marked out by God's hand, and superintended by God's priest. It was not each doing what he liked himself, nor one man running in the wake of another, but all bowing to the authority of God, and doing precisely what they were told to do. This was the secret of order throughout the eight thousand five hundred and eighty workers. (Num. 4: 48) and, we may say, with all possible confidence, it is the only true secret of order still. Why is it that we have so much confusion in the professing church? Why such conflicting thoughts, feelings, and opinions? why such clashing one with another? Why such crossing of each other's path? Simply from the lack of entire and absolute submission to the word of God. Our *will* is at work, we choose our own ways, instead of allowing God to choose for us. We want that attitude and temper of soul in the which all human thoughts, our own amongst them, shall be put down at what they are really worth; and God's thoughts shall rise into full unqualified dominion.

This, we feel persuaded, is the grand desideratum — the crying want of the day in which our lot is cast Man's will is everywhere gaining the ascendant. It is rising like a mighty tide and bearing away those ancient barriers which have, in some measure, kept it in check. Many an old and time-honoured institution is, at this moment, giving way before the rushing torrent. Many an edifice, whose foundations, as we supposed, were laid deep down in the fond and reverent affections of the people, is giving way beneath the battering ram of popular feeling. "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."

Such is, pre-eminently, the spirit of the age. What is the antidote? *Subjection!* Subjection to what? Is it to what is called the authority of the Church? Is it to the voice of tradition? Is it to the commandments and doctrines of men? No; blessed be God, it is not to any of these things, nor to all of them put together. To what then? To the voice of the living God — the voice of holy scripture. This is the grand remedy for self-will, on the one hand, and submission to human authority, on the other. "we must *obey*." This is the answer to self-will. "We must obey *God*." This is the answer to mere bowing down to human authority. we see these two elements all around us. The former, self-will, resolves itself into infidelity. The latter, subjection to man, resolves itself into superstition. These two will bear sway

over the whole civilized world. They will carry away all save those who are divinely taught to say, and feel, and act upon, that immortal sentence, "We must obey God rather than man."

It was this that enabled the Gershonite, in the wilderness, to look after those rough unattractive looking "badger skins;" and that enabled the Merarite to look after these, apparently, insignificant "pins." Yes, and it is this which will enable the Christian, now, to address himself to that special line of service to which his Lord may see fit to call him. What, though, to human eyes, it seems rough and unattractive, mean and insignificant: it is enough for us that our Lord has assigned us our post, and given us our work; and that our work has direct reference to the Person and glory of Him who is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. We, too, may have to confine ourselves to the antitype of the rough unsightly badger skin, or the insignificant pin. But let us remember that whatever has reference to Christ — His name — His Person — His cause, in the world, is unspeakably precious to God. It may be very small, in man's account; but what of that? we must look at things from God's point of view, we must measure them by His standard, and that is Christ. God measures everything by Christ. Whatever has even the very smallest reference to Christ is interesting and important in God's account. Whereas the most splendid undertakings, the most gigantic schemes, the most astonishing enterprises of the men of this world, all pass away like the morning cloud and the early dew. Man makes *self* his centre, his object, his standard. He values things according to the measure in which they exalt himself, and further his interests. Even religion itself, so called, is taken up in the same way, and made a pedestal on which to display himself. Everything, in short, is marked up as capital for self, and used as a reflector to throw light upon, and call attention to, that one object. Thus there is a mighty gulf between God's thoughts: and man's thoughts; and the shores of that gulf are as far apart as *Christ* and *self*. All that belongs to Christ is of eternal interest and moment. All that belongs to self shall pass away and be forgotten. Hence, therefore, the most fatal mistake into which any man can fall is to make *self* his object. It must issue in everlasting disappointment. But, on the other hand, the very wisest, safest, best thing that any man can do, is to make Christ his one absorbing object. This must, infallibly, issue in everlasting blessedness and glory.

Beloved reader. pause here a moment and commune with thine own heart and conscience. It seems to us, at this point, that we have a sacred responsibility to discharge in reference to thy soul. We are penning these lines in the solitude of our chamber at Bristol, and you may, perchance, read them in the solitude of thy chamber in New Zealand, Australia, or some other distant spot. we would therefore remember that our object is not to write a book, nor yet, merely, to expound scripture. We desire to be used of God in the blessed work of dealing with thy very inmost soul. Permit us, therefore, to put this solemn and pointed question home to thee, *What is thy object?* Is it Christ or self? Be honest with thyself before the almighty and all-seeing Searcher of hearts. Sit in stern judgment upon thyself, as in the very light of the divine presence. Be not deceived by any gilding or false colouring. God sees below the surface of things, and He would have thee do so likewise. he presents Christ to thee in contrast with all beside. Hast thou accepted Him? Is He thy wisdom, thy righteousness, thy sanctification, and thy redemption? Canst thou say, without hesitation, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his?" Search and see. Is this a thoroughly settled point, deep down in the very depths of thy soul? If so, art thou making Christ thy exclusive object? Art thou measuring everything by Him?

Ah! dear friend, these are searching questions. Be assured we do not put them to thee without feeling their edge and power for ourselves. As God is our witness, we do feel, though in a very small degree, their weight and seriousness. We are deeply and thoroughly convinced that nothing will stand save that which is connected with Christ; and, moreover, that the very smallest matter which refers, however remotely, to Him is of commanding interest in the judgement of heaven. If we may be

permitted to awaken a sense of this in any heart, or to deepen the sense where it has been awakened, we shall feel we have not penned this volume in vain.

We must now, ere closing this lengthened section, glance, for a few moments, at the Kohathites and their work.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, take the sum of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, after their families, by the house of their fathers, from thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work; in the tabernacle of the congregation. This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, about the most holy things: and when the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering veil, and cover *the ark* of testimony with it: and shall put thereon the covering of badgers' skins, and shall spread over it a cloth wholly of blue, and shall put in the staves thereof. and upon the *table* of showbread they shall spread a cloth of blue, and put thereon the dishes, and the spoons, and the bowls, and covers to cover withal: and the continual bread shall be thereon: and they shall spread upon them a cloth of scarlet, and cover the same with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put in the staves thereof. And they shall take a cloth of blue, and cover the candlestick of the light, and his lamps, and his tongs, and his snuff dishes, and all the oil vessels thereof, wherewith they minister unto it; and they shall put it and all the vessels thereof within a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put it upon a bar. And upon *the golden altar* they shall spread a cloth of blue, and cover it with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put to the staves thereof: and they shall take all the instruments of ministry, wherewith they minister in the sanctuary, and put them in a cloth of blue, and cover them with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put them on a bar: and they shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth thereon: and they shall put upon it all the vessels thereof, wherewith they minister about it, even the censers, the flesh-hooks, and the shovels, and the basons, all the vessels of the altar; and they shall spread upon it a covering of badgers' skins, and put to the staves of it. And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation." Numbers 4: 1-15.

Here we see what precious mysteries were committed to the charge of the Kohathites. The ark, the golden table, the golden candlestick, the golden altar, and the altar of burnt offering — all these were shadows of good things to come — the patterns of things in the heavens—the figures of the true — the types of Christ, is His Person, His work, and His offices, as we have sought to show in our "Notes on Exodus." (Ex. 24 - 30) They are here presented in the wilderness, and, if we may be allowed the expression, in their travelling dress. With the exception of the ark of the covenant, all these things presented the one unvarying appearance to the human eye, namely, the rough covering of the badgers skins. With the ark there was this difference, that above the badgers' skins there was "a cloth wholly Of blue," setting forth, doubtless, the entirely heavenly character of the Lord Jesus Christ, in His own divine Person. That which was essentially heavenly in Him lay upon the very surface of His blessed life here below. He was ever the entirely heavenly man — "the Lord from heaven." Underneath this covering of blue were the badger' skins, which may be viewed as the expression of that which protects from all evil. The ark was the only thing that was covered in this peculiar manner.

With regard to "the table of showbread," which was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His connection with the twelve tribes of Israel, there was first "a cloth of *blue*," and then a cloth of *scarlet*," and over all, the badgers' skins. In other words, there was that which is essentially heavenly; then that which expresses human splendour; and above all, that which protects from evil. It is the purpose of

God that Israel's twelve tribes shall be pre-eminent in the earth — that in them the very highest type of human splendour shall be exhibited. Hence the appropriateness of the "scarlet" covering on the table of showbread. The twelve loaves evidently point to the twelve tribes; and as to the scarlet colour, the reader has only to look through scripture in order to see that it sets forth that which man considers splendid.

The coverings of the golden candlestick and of the golden altar were identical, namely, first the heavenly covering; and then the external badgers' skin. In the candlestick we see our Lord Christ, in connection with the work of the Holy Ghost in light and testimony. The golden altar shows us Christ and the preciousness of His intercession — the fragrance and value of what He is before God. Both these, when passing along the sand of the desert, were wrapped up in that which was heavenly, and protected above by the badgers' skins.

Finally, in reference to the brazen altar, we observe marked distinction. It was covered with "purple" instead of "blue," or "scarlet." Why was this? Doubtless because the brazen altar prefigured Christ as the one who "*suffered* for sins," and who shall therefore wield the sceptre of royalty. "Purple" is the royal colour. The One who suffered in this world, shall reign. The One who wore the crown of thorns, shall wear the crown of glory. Hence the moral fitness of the "purple" covering on the brazen altar — for on that altar the victim was offered. We know there is nothing in scripture without its own divine meaning, and it is our privilege as well as our duty to seek to know the meaning of all that our God has graciously written for our learning. This, we believe, can only be reached by humble, patient, prayerful waiting upon Him. The One who has penned the Book knows perfectly the scope and object of the book as a whole, and of each division of the book in particular. This will have the effect of checking the unhallowed flights of the imagination. The Spirit of God alone can open scripture to our souls. "God is His own interpreter" in revelation, as well as in providence, and the more we lean on Him, in true self-emptiness, the deeper insight we shall have both into His word and His ways.

We would therefore say to the Christian reader, Take the first fifteen verses of Numbers 4 and read them in the presence of God. Ask Him to explain to thee the meaning of each clause — the meaning of the ark, and why it alone was covered with "a cloth wholly of blue." And so of all the rest. We have ventured, we trust in humility of mind, to suggest the meaning, but we earnestly desire that thou shouldst get it directly from God, for thyself, and not accept it merely from man. We confess we are terribly afraid of imagination; and we know not that we have ever sat down to write on sacred scripture with a deeper sense of this that none but the Holy Ghost can really explain it.

Thou wilt say, then, "Why sit down to write at all?" Well, it is with the fond hope of being permitted, in some feeble manner, to help the earnest student of scripture to catch sight of the rare and exquisite gems that lie scattered along the inspired page, so that he may pick them up for Himself. Thousands of readers might read, again and again, the fourth of Numbers, and not even perceive the fact that the ark was the only part of the mystic furniture of the tabernacle that did not exhibit the badger skin. And if the simple fact be not laid hold of, how can its import be seen? So also, as to the brazen altar, how many have failed to notice that it alone put on the "purple?"

Now, we may rest assured that both these facts are full of spiritual meaning. The ark was the very highest manifestation of God, and, therefore, we may understand why it should exhibit, at first sight, that which was purely heavenly. The brazen altar was the place where sin was judged — it typified Christ in His work as a sin bearer it set forth that most distant place to which He travelled for us; and yet that brazen altar was the only thing that was wrapped in royal covering. Can anything be more exquisite than the teaching here? What infinite wisdom in all these fine distinctions! The ark conducts

us to the very highest point in heaven. The brazen altar conducts us to the lowest point on earth. They stood at extreme points in the tabernacle. In the former, we see the One who magnified the law; in the latter, we see the One who was made sin. In the one, that which was heavenly was seen at the first sight; and it was only when you looked deeper, you saw the badger skin; and deeper still, that mysterious veil, the type of Christ's flesh. But, in the other, the first thing you saw was the badger skin, and deeper down we see the royal covering. Christ in each, though in a different aspect. In the ark, we have Christ maintaining the glory of God, In the brazen altar, we have Christ meeting the sinner's need. blessed combination for us!

But, further, has the reader noticed that in the entire of this marvellous passage to which we have been calling his particular attention, there is no mention of a certain piece of furniture which we know, from Exodus 30 and other scriptures, occupied a, very important place in the tabernacle? We allude to the brazen laver. Why is this omitted in Numbers 4? It is more than probable that some of our keen-eyed rationalists would find here what they would pronounce an error — a defect — a discrepancy. But is it so? No, thank God! The devout Christian student knows full well that such things are wholly incompatible with the volume of God. He knows and confesses this, even though he may not be able to account for the absence of this or the presence of that particular thing in any given passage. But just in so far as we are enabled, through the mercy of God, to see the spiritual reason of things, do we always find that where the rationalist, sees, or affects to see flaws, the pious student sees brilliant gems.

Thus it is, we doubt not, in reference to the omission of the brazen laver from the catalogue in Numbers 4. It is only one of the ten thousand illustrations of the beauty and perfectness of the inspired volume.

But, the reader may enquire, "Why is the laver omitted?" The reason may be found in the double fact of what that laver was made from, and what it was made for. This double fact we have noticed in Exodus. The laver was made of the looking-glasses of the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. (Ex. 38: 8) This was its material. And, as to its object, it was provided as a means of purification for man. Now, in all those things which formed the special burden and charge of the Kohathites, we see only the varied manifestations of God in Christ, from the ark in the holiest of all, to the brazen altar in the court of the tabernacle; and, inasmuch as the laver was not a manifestation of God, But a purification for man, it is therefore not found in the custody and charge of the Kohathites.

But we must now leave the reader to meditate alone on this most profound section of our book, (Num. 3 - 4) It is really inexhaustible. We might go on expatiating upon it until we had filled volumes instead of pages, and, after all, we should feel as though we had barely penetrated the surface of a mine whose depth never can be sounded — whose treasures never can be exhausted. What human pen can bring out the marvellous instruction contained in the inspired account of the tribe of Levi? who can attempt to unfold that sovereign grace which shines in the fact that the self-willed Levi should be the very first to respond to that soul-stirring call, "Who is on the Lord's side?" Who can speak aright of that rich, abounding, distinguishing mercy illustrated in the fact that those whose hands had been embued in blood should be permitted to handle the vessels of the sanctuary; and that those into whose assembly God's Spirit could not enter should be brought into the very bosom of the congregation of God, there to be occupied with that which was so precious to Him?

And then those three divisions of workers, Merarites, Gershonites, and Kohathites! What instruction is here! what a type of the various members of the Church of God, in their various service! What depth of mysterious wisdom in all this? Is it speaking too strongly — is it too much to say that

nothing, at this moment, so deeply impresses us as the sense of the utter feebleness and poverty of all that we have advanced on one of the very richest sections of the inspired volume! Still we have conducted the reader to a mine of infinite depth and richness, and we must leave him to penetrate thereinto by the gracious aid of Him to whom the mine belongs and who alone is able to evolve its wealth. All that man can write or say on any portion of God's word can, at best, be but suggestive; to speak of it as exhaustive would be to cast a slight upon the sacred canon. may we tread the holy place with unshod feet, and be as those who inquire in the temple, and whose studies are perfumed by the spirit of worship.*

{*For further suggestions on the subjects touched upon in the foregoing section, the reader is referred to "Notes on Exodus." (Ex. 24 - 30) Also to a small pamphlet entitled, "the History of the Tribe of Levi Considered."}

Numbers 5.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead: both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps, *in the midst whereof I dwell*. And the children of Israel did so, and put them out without the camp: as the Lord spake unto Moses, so did the children of Israel." Numbers 5: 1-4.

Here we have unfolded to us, in few words, the great foundation principle on which the discipline of the assembly is founded — a principle, we may say, of the very last importance, though, alas! so little understood or attended to. It was the presence of God in the midst of His people Israel that demanded holiness on their part. "That they defile not their camps in the midst of which I dwell." The place where the Holy one dwells must be holy. This is a plain and a necessary truth.

We have already remarked that *redemption* was the *basis* of God's dwelling in the midst of His people. But we must remember that *discipline* was essential to His continuance amongst them. He could not dwell where evil was deliberately and avowedly sanctioned. Blessed be His name, He can and does bear with weakness; but He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity. Evil cannot dwell with Him, nor can He have fellowship with it. It would involve a denial of His very nature; and He cannot deny Himself.

It may, however, be said, in reply, "Does not God the Holy Ghost dwell in the individual believer, and yet there is much evil in him?" True, the Holy Ghost dwells in the believer, on the ground of accomplished redemption. He is there, not as the sanction of what is of nature, But as the seal of what is of Christ: and His presence and fellowship are enjoyed just in proportion as the evil in us is habitually judged. Will any one assert that we can realise and delight in the Spirit's indwelling while allowing our indwelling pravity, and indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind? Far away be the impious thought! No; we must judge ourselves, and put away everything inconsistent with the holiness of the One who dwells in us. Our "old man" is not recognised at all. It has no existence before God. It has been condemned, utterly, in the cross of Christ. we feel its workings, alas! and have to mourn over them, and judge ourselves on account of them; but God sees us in Christ — in the Spirit — in the new creation. And, moreover, the Holy Ghost dwells in the body of the believer, on the ground of the blood of Christ; and His indwelling demands the judgement of evil in every shape and form.

So also, in reference to the assembly. No doubt, there is evil there — evil in each individual member, and therefore evil in the body corporate. But it must be judged; and, if judged, it is not allowed to act, it is rendered null. But to say that an assembly is not to judge evil is nothing more or less than corporate antinomianism. What should we say to a professing Christian who maintained that

He was not solemnly responsible to judge evil, in himself and in His ways? we should, with great decision, pronounce him an antinomian. And if it be wrong for a single individual to take such ground, must it not be proportionally wrong for an assembly? We cannot see how this can be called in question.

What would have been the result, had Israel refused to obey the peremptory "command" given at the opening of the chapter before us? Supposing they had said, "We are not responsible to judge evil; and we do not feel that it becomes poor, failing, erring mortals such as we to judge anybody. These people with the leprosy, and the issue, and so forth, are as much Israelites as we are, and have as good a right to all the blessings and privileges of the camp as we have; we do not therefore feel it would be right for us to put them out."

Now what, we ask, would have been God's rejoinder to such a reply? If the reader will just turn for an instant to Joshua 7 he will find as solemn an answer as could well be given. Let him draw near and carefully inspect that "great heap of stones" in the valley of Achor. Let him read the inscription thereon. What is it? "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his: saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him." "*Our God is a consuming fire.*" What is the meaning of all this? Let us hear it and consider it! Lust had conceived in the heart of one member of the congregation, and brought forth sin. What then? Did this involve the whole congregation? Yes, verily, this is the solemn truth, "*Israel (not merely Achan) hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed thing from among you.*" Joshua 7: 11, 12.

This is peculiarly solemn and searching. It, most assuredly, utters a loud voice in our ears, and conveys a holy lesson to our hearts. There were, so far as the narrative informs us, many hundreds of thousands throughout the camp of Israel as ignorant, as Joshua himself seems to have been, of the fact of Achan's sin and yet the word was, "*Israel hath sinned — transgressed — taken the accursed thing — stolen and dissembled.*" How was this? The assembly was one. God's presence in the midst of the congregation constituted it one, so one, that the sin of each was the sin of all. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Human reason may demur to this, as it is sure to demur to everything that lies beyond its narrow range. But God says it, and this is enough for the believing mind. It doth not become us to ask, "Why? how? or wherefore?" The testimony of God settles everything, and we have only to believe and obey. It is enough for us to know that the fact of God's presence demands holiness, purity, and the judgement of evil. Let us remember this. It is not upon the principle so justly repudiated by every lowly mind, "Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou." No, no; it is entirely on the ground of what God is. "Be ye holy, for I am holy." God could not give the sanction of His holy presence to unjudged wickedness. What! Give a victory at Ai with an Achan in the camp? Impossible! a victory, under such circumstances, would have been a dishonour to God, and the very worst thing that could have happened to Israel. It could not be. Israel must be chastised. They must be humbled and broken. They must be brought down to the valley of Achor — the place of trouble, for there alone can "a door of hope" be opened when evil has come in.

Let not the reader misunderstand this great practical principle. It has, we fear, been greatly misunderstood by many of God's people. Many there are who seem to think that it can never be right for those who are saved by grace, and who are themselves signal monuments of mercy, to exercise discipline in any form, or on any ground whatsoever. To such persons, Matthew 7: 1 seems to condemn utterly the thought of our undertaking to judge. Are we not, say they, expressly told by our Lord, not to

judge? are not these His own veritable words, "Judge not, that ye be not judged?" No doubt. But what do these words mean? Do they mean that we are not to judge the doctrine and manner of life of such as present themselves for Christian fellowship? Do they lend any support to the idea that, no matter what a man holds, or what he teaches, or what he does, we are to receive him all the same? Can this be the force and meaning of our Lord's words? Who could, for one moment, cede anything so monstrous as this? Does not our Lord, in this very same chapter, tell us to "beware of false prophets?" But how can we beware of any one, if we are not to judge? If judgement is not to be exercised in any case, why tell us to beware?

Christian reader, the truth is as simple as possible. God's assembly is responsible to judge the doctrine and morals of all who claim entrance at the door. We are not to judge motives, but we are to judge ways. We are directly taught by the inspired apostle, in 1 Corinthians 5, that we are bound to judge all who take the ground of being inside the assembly. "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that within? But them that are without God judgeth. *Therefore* put away from among yourselves that wicked person." Verses 12, 13.

This is most distinct. We are not to judge those "without" but we are to judge those "within." That is, those who take the ground of being Christians — of being members of God's assembly — all such come within the range of judgement. The very moment a man enters the assembly, he takes His place in that sphere where discipline is exercised upon everything contrary to the holiness of the One who dwells there.

And let not the reader suppose, for a moment, that the unity of the *body* is touched when the discipline of the *house* is maintained. This would be a very serious mistake indeed; and yet alas! it is a very common one. We frequently hear it said of those who rightly seek to maintain the discipline of the house of God, that they are rending the body of Christ. There could hardly be a greater mistake. The fact is, the former is our bounden duty; the latter, an utter impossibility? The discipline of God's house must be carried out; but the unity of Christ's body can never be dissolved.

Again, we sometimes hear persons speak of cutting off the limbs of the body of Christ. This also is a mistake. Not a single limb of the body of Christ can ever be disturbed. Each member has been incorporated into its place by the Holy Ghost, in pursuance of the eternal purpose of God, and on the ground of the accomplished atonement of Christ; nor can any power of men or devils ever sever a single limb from the body. All are indissolubly joined together in a perfect unity, and maintained therein by divine power. The unity of the Church of God may be compared to a chain stretching across a river; you see it at either side, but it dips in the middle, and if you were to judge by the sight of your eyes, you might suppose that the chain had given way at the centre. So is it with the Church of God; it was seen to be one at the beginning; it will be seen to be one by and by; and it is, in God's sight, one now, though the unity be not visible to mortal eyes.

It is of the very last moment that the Christian reader should be thoroughly clear on this great Church question. The enemy has sought, by every means in his power, to cast dust into the eyes of God's dear people, in order that they might not see the truth in this matter. We have, on the one side, the boasted unity of Roman Catholicism; and, on the other hand, the deplorable divisions of Protestantism. Rome points, with an air of triumph, to the numerous sects of Protestants; and Protestants likewise point to the numerous errors, corruptions, and abuses of Romanism. Thus the earnest seeker after truth hardly knows where to turn or what to think; while, on the other hand, the careless, the indifferent, the self-indulgent, and the world-loving are only too ready to draw a plea, from all that they see around them, for flinging aside all serious thought and concern about divine things; and even if, like Pilate,

they sometimes flippantly ask the question, "What is truth?" they, like him, turn on their heel without waiting for an answer.

Now, we are firmly persuaded that the true secret of the whole matter — the grand solution of the difficulty — the real relief for the hearts of God's beloved saints, will be found in the truth of the indivisible unity of the church of God, the body of Christ, on the earth. This truth is not merely to be held as a doctrine, but to be confessed, maintained, and carried out, at all cost to ourselves. It is a great formative truth for the soul, and contains in it the only answer to Rome's boasted unity on the one hand, and to Protestant divisions on the other. It will enable us to testify to Protestantism that we have found unity, and to Roman Catholicism that we have found the unity of the Spirit.

It may, however, be argued, in reply, that it is the veriest Utopianism to seek to carry out such an idea, in the present condition of things. Everything is in such ruin and confusion that we are just like a number of children who have lost their way in a wood, and are trying to make the best of their way home, some in large parties, some in groups of two or three, and some all alone.

Now this may seem very plausible; and we do not doubt, in the least, but that it would carry immense weight with a large number of the Lord's people, at the present moment. But, in the judgement of faith, such a mode of putting the matter possesses no weight whatever. And for this simple reason, that the one all important question for faith is this, namely, "Is the unity of the Church a human theory or a divine reality?" A divine reality, most surely, as it is written, "There is one body, and one Spirit." (Eph 4: 4) If we deny that there is "one body," we may, with equal force, deny that there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all," inasmuch as all lie side by side, on the page of inspiration, and if we disturb one, we disturb all.

Nor are we confined to one solitary passage of scripture on this subject; though had we but one, it were amply sufficient. But we have more than one. Hearken to the following: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Cor. 10: 16, 17) Read also 1 Corinthians 12: 12-27, where this whole subject is unfolded and applied.

In a word, then, the word of God doth, most clearly and fully, establish the truth of the indissoluble unity of the body of Christ; and, moreover, it establishes, as clearly and as fully, the truth of the discipline of God's house. But, be it observed, the proper carrying out of the latter will never interfere with the former. The two things are perfectly compatible. Are we to suppose that when the apostle commanded the church of Corinth to put away from amongst them "that wicked person," the unity of the body was touched? Surely not. And yet was not that man a member of the body of Christ? Truly so, for we find him restored in the second epistle. The discipline of the house of God had done its work with a member of the body of Christ, and the erring one was brought back. Such was the object of the church's act.

All this may help to clear the mind of the reader as to the deeply interesting subject of reception at the Lord's table and exclusion from it. There seems to be a considerable amount of confusion in the minds of many Christians as to these things. Some there are who seem to think that provided a person be a Christian, he should, on no account, be refused a place at the Lord's table. The case in 1 Corinthians 5 is quite sufficient to settle this question. Evidently that man was not put away on the ground of his not being a Christian. He was, as we know, spite of his failure and sin, a child of God; and yet was the assembly at Corinth commanded to put him away; and had they not done so, they would have brought down the judgement of God upon the whole assembly. God's presence is in the

Assembly, and therefore evil must be judged.

Thus, whether we look at the fifth chapter of Numbers or at the fifth chapter of 1 Corinthians, we learn the same solemn truth, namely, that "Holiness becometh God's house for ever." And farther we learn that it is with God's own people that discipline must be maintained, and not with those outside. For what do we read in the opening lines of Numbers 5: 1. Were the children of Israel commanded to put out of the camp every one that was not an Israelite, every one that was not circumcised, every one who could not trace his pedigree, in an unbroken line, up to Abraham? Were these the ground of exclusion from the camp? Not at all. Who then were to be put out "Every leper" — that is, every one in whom sin is *allowed* to work. "Every one that hath an issue" — that is, every one from whom a defiling influence is emanating: and, "whosoever is defiled by the dead." These were the persons that were to be separated from the camp in the wilderness, and their antitypes are to be separated from the assembly now.

And why, we may ask, was this separation demanded? Was it to uphold the reputation or respectability of the people? Nothing of the sort. What then? "That they defile not their camps in the midst whereof I *dwell*." And so is it now. We do not judge and put away bad doctrine, in order to maintain *our* orthodoxy; neither do we judge and put away moral evil, in order to maintain our reputation and respectability. The only ground of judgement and putting away is this, "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever." God dwells in the midst of His people. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I." Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"(1 Cor. 3: 16) And again, "Now therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an *holy temple* in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Ephesians 2: 19-22.

But it may be that the reader feels disposed to put some such question as the following, How is it possible to find a pure, a Perfect church? Is there not, will there not — must there not be some evil in every assembly, in spite of the most intense pastoral vigilance and corporate faithfulness? How then can this high standard of purity be maintained?" No doubt there is evil in the assembly, inasmuch as there is indwelling sin in each member of the assembly. But it must not be allowed; it must not be sanctioned; it must be judged and kept under. It is not the presence of judged evil that defiles, But the allowance and sanction of evil. It is with the Church, in its corporate character, as with the members in their individual character. If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." (1 Cor. 11: 31) Hence, therefore, no amount of evil should lead a man to separate from the Church of God; but if an assembly denies its solemn responsibility to judge evil, both in doctrine and morals, it is no longer on the ground of the Church Of God at all, and it becomes your bounden duty to separate from it. So long as an assembly is on the ground of the Church of God, however feeble it be, and few in number, to separate from it is schism. But if an assembly be not on God's ground — and most certainly it is not, if it denies its duty to judge evil — then it is schism to continue in association with it.

But will not this tend to multiply and perpetuate divisions? Most assuredly not. It may tend to break up mere human associations; but this is not schism, but the very reverse, inasmuch as all such associations, however large, powerful, and apparently useful, are positively antagonistic to the unity of the body of Christ, the Church of God.

It cannot fail to strike the thoughtful reader that the Spirit of God is awakening attention, on all hands, to the great question of the Church. Men are beginning to see that there is very much more in

this subject than the mere notion of an individual mind, or the dogma of a party. The question, "What is the Church?" is forcing itself upon many hearts and demanding an answer. And what a mercy to have an answer to give! an answer as clear, as distinct, and as authoritative as the voice of God, the voice of holy scripture, can give. Is it not an unspeakable privilege, when assailed on all sides, by the claims of churches, "High Church," "Low Church," "Broad Church," "State Church," "Free Church," to be able to fall back upon the one true Church of the living God, the body of Christ? We most assuredly esteem it as such; and we are firmly persuaded that here alone is the divine solution of the difficulties of thousands of the people of God.

But where is this Church to be found? Is it not a hopeless undertaking to set out to look for it amid the ruin and confusion which surround us? No, blessed be God! for, albeit we may not see all the members of the Church gathered together, yet it is our privilege and holy duty to know and occupy *the ground* of the Church of God, and no other. And how is this ground to be discerned? We believe that the first step towards discerning the true ground of the Church of God is, to stand apart from everything that is contrary thereto. We need not expect to discover what is true while our minds are beclouded by what is false. The divine order is, "Cease to do evil; learn to do well." God does not give us light for two steps at a time. Hence, the moment we discover that we are on wrong ground, it is our duty to abandon it, and wait on God for further light, which He will, most surely, give.

But we must proceed with our chapter.

"The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel; when a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the Lord, and that person be guilty; then they shall confess their sin which they have done; and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed. But if the man have no kinsman to recompense the trespass unto, let the trespass be recompensed unto the Lord, even to the priest; beside the ram of the atonement, whereby an atonement shall be made for him."

The doctrine of the trespass offering has been considered in our "Notes on Leviticus," chapter 5; and to that we must refer our reader, as we do not mean to occupy his time or our own in going into any points which have been already considered. We shall merely notice here the very important questions of confession and restitution. Not only is it true that both God and man are gainers by the Great Trespass Offering presented on the cross at Calvary; but we also learn, from the foregoing quotation, that God looked for confession and restitution, when any trespass had been committed. The sincerity of the former would be evidenced by the latter. It was not sufficient for a Jew, who had trespassed against his brother, to go and say, "I am sorry," He had to restore the thing wherein he had trespassed and add a fifth thereto. Now, although we are not under the law, yet may we gather much instruction from its institutions; although we are not under the schoolmaster, we may learn some good lessons from him. If, then, we have trespassed against any one, it is not enough that we confess our sin to God and to our brother, we must make restitution; we are called upon to give practical proof of the fact that we have judged ourselves on account of that thing in which we have trespassed.

We question if this is felt as it ought to be. We fear there is a light, flippant, easy-going style in reference to sin and failure, which must be very grievous indeed to the Spirit of God. We rest content with the mere lip confession, without the deep, heartfelt sense of the evil of sin in God's sight. The thing itself is not judged in its moral roots, and, as a consequence of this trifling with sin, the heart becomes hard, and the conscience loses its tenderness. *This is very serious.* We know of few things more precious than a tender conscience. We do not mean a *scrupulous* conscience, which is governed

by its own crotchets; or a *morbid* conscience, which is governed by its own fears. Both these are most troublesome guests for any one to entertain. But we mean a *tender* conscience, which is governed, in all things, by the word of God, and which refers, at all times, to His authority. This sound description of conscience we consider an inestimable treasure. It regulates everything, takes cognisance of the very smallest matter connected with our daily walk and habits — our mode of dress — our houses — our furniture — our table — our entire deportment, spirit, and style — our mode of conducting our business, or, if it be our lot to serve others, the mode in which we discharge the service, whatever it be. In short, everything falls under the healthful moral influence of a tender conscience. "Herein," says the blessed apostle, "do I exercise myself, to have *always* a conscience void of offence toward God and men." Acts 24: 16.

This is what we may well covet. There is something morally beautiful and attractive in this exercise of the greatest and most gifted servant of Christ. He, with all his splendid gifts, with all his marvellous powers, with all his profound insight into the ways and counsels of God, with all he had to speak of and glory in, with all the wonderful revelations made to him in the third heavens; in a word, he, the most honoured of apostles and privileged of saints, gave holy diligence to keep always a conscience void of offence both toward God and man; and if, in an unguarded moment, he uttered a hasty word, as he did to Ananias the high priest, he was ready, the very next moment, to confess and make restitution, so that the hasty utterance, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall" was withdrawn, and God's word given instead — "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people."

Nor we do not believe that Paul could have retired to rest, that night, with a conscience void of offence, if he had not withdrawn his words. There must be confession, when we do or say what is wrong; and if there be not the confession, our communion will assuredly be interrupted. Communion, with unconfessed sin upon the conscience, is a moral impossibility. We may talk of it; but it is all the merest delusion. We must keep a clean conscience if we would walk with God. There is nothing more to be dreaded than moral insensibility a slovenly conscience, an obtuse moral sense that can allow all sorts of things to pass unjudged; that can commit sin, pass on, and coolly say, "What evil have I done?"

Reader, let us, with holy vigilance, watch against all this. Let us seek to cultivate a tender conscience. It will demand from us what it demanded from Paul, namely, "exercise." But it is blessed exercise, and it will yield most precious fruits. Do not suppose that there is anything that savours of the legal in this exercise; nay, it is most thoroughly Christian; indeed we look upon those noble words of Paul as the very embodiment, in a condensed form, of the whole of a Christian's practice. "To have *always* a conscience void of offence toward God and men" comprehends everything.

But alas! how little do we habitually ponder the claims of God, or the claims of our fellow-man! How little is our conscience up to the mark! Claims of all sorts are neglected, yet we feel it not.

There is no brokenness and contrition before the Lord. We commit trespass in a thousand things, yet there is no confession or restitution. Things are allowed to pass that ought to be judged, confessed, and put away. There is sin in our holy things; there is lightness and indifference of spirit in the assembly and at the Lord's table; we rob God, in various ways; we think our own thoughts, speak our own words, do our own pleasure; and what is all this but robbing God, seeing that we are not our own but bought with a price?

Now, we cannot but think that all this must sadly hinder our spiritual growth. It grieves the Spirit of God and hinders His gracious ministry of Christ to our souls whereby alone we grow up into Him. We know, from various parts of God's word, how much He prizes a tender spirit, a contrite heart. "To this man will I look, even to him that is of a contrite spirit and trembles at my word." With such an one

God can dwell; but with hardness and insensibility, coldness and indifference, He can have no fellowship. Oh! then let us exercise ourselves to have always a pure and uncondemning conscience, both as to God and as to our fellow-man.

The third and last section of our chapter, which we need not quote at length, teaches us a deeply solemn lesson, whether we view it from a dispensational or a moral point of view. It contains the record of the great ordinance designed for the trial of jealousy. Its place here is remarkable. In the first section, we have the corporate judgement of evil: in the second, we have individual self-judgement, confession, and restitution: and in the third, we learn that God cannot endure even the mere suspicion of evil.

Now, we fully believe that this very impressive ordinance has a dispensational bearing upon the relationship between Jehovah and Israel. The prophets dwell largely upon Israel's conduct as a wife, and upon Jehovah's jealousy, on that score. We do not attempt to quote the passages, but the reader will find them throughout the pages of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Israel could not abide the searching trial of the bitter water. Her unfaithfulness has been made manifest. She has broken her vows. She has gone aside from her Husband, the Holy One of Israel, whose burning jealousy has been poured forth upon the Faithless nation. He is a jealous God, and cannot bear the thought that the heart that He claims as His own should be given to another.

Thus we see that this ordinance for the trial of jealousy bears very distinctly upon it the impress of the divine character. In it He most fully enters into the thoughts and feelings of an injured husband, or of one who even suspected an injury. The bare suspicion is perfectly intolerable, and where it takes possession of the heart, the matter must be sifted to the very bottom. The suspected one must undergo a process of such a searching nature that only the faithful one can endure. If there was a trace of guilt, the bitter water could search down into the very depths of the soul, and bring it full out. There was no escape for the guilty one; and, we may say, that the very fact of there being no possible escape for the guilty, only made the vindication of the innocent more triumphant. The self-same process that declared the guilt of the guilty, made manifest the innocence of the faithful. To one who is thoroughly conscious of integrity, the more searching the investigation the more welcome it is. If there were a possibility of a guilty one escaping, through any defect in the mode of trial, it would only make against the innocent. But the process was divine, and therefore perfect; and hence, when the suspected wife had gone through it in safety, her fidelity was perfectly manifested, and full confidence restored.

What a mercy, then, to have had such a perfect mode of settling all suspected cases! Suspicion is the death blow to all loving intimacy, and God would not have it in the midst of His congregation. He would not only have His people collectively to judge evil, and individually to judge themselves; But where there was even the suspicion of evil, and no evidence forthcoming, He Himself devised a method of trial which perfectly brought the truth to light. The guilty one had to drink death, and found it to be judgement.* The faithful one drank death, and found it victory.

{*The "*dust*" lifted from the floor of the tabernacle may be viewed as the figure of death. "Thou hast brought me into the dust of death." The "*water*" prefigures the word, which, being brought to bear upon the conscience, by the power of the Holy Ghost, makes everything manifest. If there has been any unfaithfulness to Christ, the true husband of His people, it must be thoroughly judged. This holds good with regard to the nation of Israel, to the Church of God, and to the individual believer. If the heart be not true to Christ, it will not be able to stand the searching power of the word. But if there be truth in the inward parts, the more one is searched and tried, the better. How blessed it is when we can truly say, "Search me, O God, and know my Heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139: 23, 24}

Numbers 6.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the Lord: he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk. All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord he shall come at no dead body. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God is upon his head. All the days of his separation he is holy unto the Lord." Verse 1-8.

The ordinance of Nazariteship is full of interest and practical instruction. In it we see the case of one setting himself apart, in a very special manner, from things which, though not absolutely sinful in themselves, were, nevertheless, calculated to interfere with that intense consecration of heart which is set forth in true Nazariteship.

In the first place, the Nazarite was not to drink wine. The fruit of the vine, in every shape and form, was to him a forbidden thing. Now, wine, as we know, is the apt symbol of earthly joy — the expression of that social enjoyment which the human heart is so fully capable of entering into. From this the Nazarite in the wilderness was sedulously to keep himself. With him it was a literal thing. He was not to excite nature by the use of strong drink. All the days of his separation he was called to exercise the strictest abstinence from wine.

Such was the type, and it is written for our learning — written too, in this marvellous book of Numbers, so rich in its wilderness lessons. This is only what we might expect. The impressive institution of the Nazarite finds its appropriate place in the book of Numbers. It is in perfect keeping with the character of the book, which, as has been already remarked, contains all that specially belongs to life in the wilderness.

Let us then inquire into the nature of the lesson taught us in the Nazarite's abstinence from everything pertaining to the vine, from the kernel even to the husk.

There has been but one true and perfect Nazarite in this World — but one who maintained, from first to last, the most complete separation from all mere earthly joy. From the moment He entered upon His public work, He kept Himself apart from all that was of this world. His heart was fixed upon God and His work, With a devotion that nothing could shake. No claims of earth or nature were ever allowed, for a single moment, to come in between His heart and that work which He came to do. "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" And again, "What have I to do with thee?" With such words did the true Nazarite seek to adjust the claims of nature. He had one thing to do, and to that He separated Himself perfectly. His eye was single and His heart undivided. This is apparent from first to last. He could say to His disciples, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of;" and when they, not knowing the deep significance of His words, said, "Hath any man brought Him anything to eat?" He replied, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work (John 4) So also, at the close of His course here below, we hear Him giving utterance to such words as these, as He took into His hand the paschal cup: "Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." Luke 22: 17, 18.

Thus we see how the perfect Nazarite carried himself throughout. He could have no joy in the

earth, no joy in the nation of Israel. The time had not come for that, and therefore He detached Himself from all that which mere human affection might find in association with His own, in order to devote Himself to the one grand object which was ever before His mind. The time will come when He, as the Messiah, will rejoice in His people and in the earth; But, until that blissful moment arrives, He is apart as the true Nazarite, and His people are united with Him. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. and for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." John 17: 16-19.

Christian reader, let us deeply ponder this first grand feature of the Nazarite character. It is important we should faithfully examine ourselves in the light of it. It is a very grave question indeed how far we, as Christians, are really entering into the meaning and power of this intense separation from all the excitement of nature, and from all merely earthly joy. It may perhaps be said, "What harm is there in having a little amusement or recreation? Surely we are not called to be monks. Has not God given as richly all things to enjoy? And while we are in the world, is it not right we should enjoy it?"

To all this we reply, It is not a question of the harm of this, that, or the other. There was no harm, as a general rule, in and, nothing abstractedly wrong in the vine tree. But the point is this, if any one aimed at being a Nazarite, if he aspired to this holy separation unto the Lord, then was he to abstain *wholly* from the use of wine and strong drink. Others might drink wine; but the Nazarite was not to touch it.

Now, the question for us is this, Do we aim at being Nazarites? Do we sigh after thorough separation and devotion of ourselves, in body, soul, and spirit, unto God? If so, we must be apart from all these things in which mere nature finds its enjoyment. It is upon this one hinge that the whole question turns. The question, most assuredly, is not "Are we to be monks?" but "Do we want to be Nazarites?" Is it, our heart's desire to be apart, with our Lord Christ, from all mere earthly joy — to be separated unto God from those things which, though not absolutely sinful in themselves, do, nevertheless, tend to hinder that entire consecration of heart which is the true secret of all spiritual Nazariteship? Is not the Christian reader aware that there are, in very deed, many such things? Is he not conscious that there are numberless things which exert a distracting and weakening influence upon his spirit, and yet were they to be tried by the standard of ordinary morality, they might be allowed to pass as harmless?

But we must remember that God's Nazarites do not measure things by any such standard. Theirs is not an ordinary morality at all. They look at things from a divine and heavenly standpoint, and hence they cannot suffer anything to pass as harmless which tends, in any wise, to interfere with that high tone of consecration to God after which their souls are fervently breathing.

May we have grace to weigh these things, and to watch against every defiling influence. Each one must be aware of what it is which, in his case, would prove to be wine and strong drink. It may seem to be a trifle; but we may rest assured that nothing is a trifle which breaks the current of our soul's communion with God, and robs us of that holy intimacy which it is our privilege ever to enjoy.

But there was another thing which marked the Nazarite. He was not to shave his head. "All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled in the which he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow."

In 1 Corinthians 11: 14, we learn that it argues a lack of dignity for a man to have long hair. "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him" From this

we learn that if we really desire to live a life of separation to God, we must be prepared to surrender our dignity in nature. This our Lord Jesus Christ did perfectly. He made Himself of no reputation. He surrendered His rights in everything. He could say, "I am a worm and no man." He emptied Himself thoroughly, and took the very lowest place. He neglected Himself, while He cared for others. In a word, His Nazariteship was perfect in this as in all beside.

Now here is just the very thing which we so little like to do. We naturally stand up for our dignity and seek to maintain our rights. It is deemed manly so to do. But the perfect Man never did so; and if we aim at being Nazarites we shall not do so either. We must surrender the dignities of nature, and forego the joys of earth, if we would tread a path of thorough separation to God in this world. By and by both will be in place; but not now.

Here again, be it remarked, the question it is not as to the right or wrong of the case. As a general rule, it was right for a man to shave his locks; but it was not right, nay it was altogether wrong, for a Nazarite to do so. This made all the difference. It was quite right for an ordinary man to shave and drink wine; but the Nazarite was not an ordinary man; he was one set apart from all that was ordinary to tread a path peculiar to himself; and to use a razor or taste wine would involve the entire surrender of that peculiar path. Hence, if any inquire, "Is it not right to enjoy the pleasures of earth, and maintain the dignities of nature?" Quite right, if we are to walk as men but wholly wrong, yea, absolutely fatal, if we want to walk as Nazarites."

This simplifies the matter amazingly. It answers a thousand questions and solves a thousand difficulties. It is of little use to split hairs about the harm of this or that particular thing. The question is, What is our real purpose and object? Do we merely want to get on as men, or do we long to live as true Nazarites? According to the language of 1 Corinthians 3: 3, to "Walk as men" and to be "carnal" are synonymous. Does such language really govern us? Do we drink into the spirit and breathe the atmosphere of such a scripture? Or are we ruled by the spirit and principles of a Godless, Christless world? It is useless to spend our time arguing points which would never be raised at all if our souls were in the right temper and attitude. No doubt, it is perfectly right, perfectly natural, perfectly consistent, for the men of this world to enjoy All that it has to offer them, and to maintain their rights and their dignities to the very utmost of their power. It were childish to question this. But, on the other hand, what is right, and natural, and consistent for the men of this world, is wrong, unnatural, and inconsistent for God's Nazarites. Thus the matter stands, if we are to be governed by the simple truth of God. we learn from Numbers 6, that if a Nazarite drank wine or shaved his locks, he defiled the head of his consecration. Has this no voice, no lesson for us? assuredly it has. It teaches us that if our souls desire to pursue a path of whole-hearted consecration to God, we must abstain from the joys of earth, and surrender the dignities and the rights of nature. It must be thus, seeing that God and the world, flesh and spirit, do not and cannot coalesce. The time will come when it will be otherwise; But, just now, all who *will* live to God, and walk in the Spirit, must live apart from the world, and mortify the flesh. May God, of His great mercy, enable us so to do!

One other feature of the Nazarite remains to be noticed. He was not to touch a dead body. "All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall come at no dead body. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die; because the consecration of his God is upon his head."

Thus we see that whether it was drinking wine, shaving his locks, or touching a dead body, the effect was the same; any one of the three involved the defilement of the head of the Nazarite's consecration. Wherefore it is plain that it was as defiling to the Nazarite to drink wine or to shave his

Head, as it was to touch a dead body. It is well to see this. We are prone to make distinctions which will not stand for a moment in the light of the divine presence. When once the consecration of God rested upon the head of any one, that great and important fact became the standard and touchstone of all morality. It placed the individual on entirely new and peculiar ground, and rendered it imperative upon him to look at everything from a new and peculiar point of view. He was no longer to ask what became him as a man; but what became him as a Nazarite. Hence, if his dearest friend lay dead by his side he was not to touch him. He was called to keep himself apart from the defiling influence of death, and all because "the consecration of God" was upon his head.

Now, in this entire subject of Nazariteship, it is needful for the reader to understand, very distinctly, that it is not, by any means, a question of the soul's salvation, of eternal life, or of the believer's perfect security in Christ. If this be not clearly seen it may lead the mind into perplexity and darkness. There are, two grand links in Christianity which, though very intimately connected, are perfectly distinct, namely, the link of eternal life, and the link of personal communion. The former can never be snapped by anything; the latter can be snapped in a moment, by the weight of a feather. It is to the second of these that the doctrine of Nazariteship pertains.

We behold, in the person of the Nazarite, a type of one who sets out in some special path of devotedness or consecration to Christ. The power of continuance in this path consists in secret communion with God; so that if the communion be interrupted, the power is gone. This renders the subject peculiarly solemn. There is the greatest possible danger of attempting to pursue the path in the absence of that which constitutes the source of his power. This is most disastrous, and demands the utmost vigilance. We have briefly glanced at the various things which tend to interrupt the Nazarite's communion; but it would be wholly impossible, by any words of ours, to set forth the moral effect of any attempt to keep up the appearance or Nazariteship when the inward reality is gone. It is dangerous in the extreme. It is infinitely better to confess our failure, and take our true place, than to keep up a false appearance. God will have reality; and we may rest assured that, sooner or later, our weakness and folly will be made manifest to all. It is very deplorable and very humbling when "the Nazarites that were purer than snow," become "blacker than a coal;" but it is far worse when those who have become Thus black, keep up the pretence of being white.

Let us look at the solemn case of Samson, as set before us in the sixteenth chapter of Judges. He, in an evil hour, betrayed his secret and lost his power—lost it though he knew it not. But the enemy soon knew it. It was soon made manifest to all that the Nazarite had defiled the head of his consecration. "And it came to pass, when Delilah pressed will daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death; that he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man." Verses 16, 17.

Here alas! was the betrayal of the deep and holy secret of all his power. Up to this, his path had been one of strength and victory, simply because it had been one of holy Nazariteship. But the lap of Delilah proved too much for the heart of Samson, and what a thousand Philistines could not do was done by the ensnaring influence of a single woman. Samson fell from the lofty elevation of the Nazarite down to the level of an ordinary man.

"And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath showed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand. And she made him sleep upon her knees; Alas! alas! a fatal sleep to God's Nazarite! and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave

off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house." Judges 16: 18-21.

Oh! reader, what a picture! How solemn! How admonitory! What a melancholy spectacle was Samson, going out to shake himself, "as at other times!" Alas! the "as" was out of place. He might shake himself, But it was no longer "as at other times," for the power was gone; the Lord was departed from him; and the once powerful Nazarite became a blind prisoner; and instead of triumphing over the Philistines, he had to grind in their prison house. So much for yielding to mere nature. Samson never regained his liberty. He Was permitted, through the mercy of God, to gain one more victory over the uncircumcised; but that victory cost him his life. God's Nazarites must keep themselves pure or lose their power. In their case, power and purity are inseparable. They cannot get on without inward holiness; and hence the urgent need of being ever on the watch against the various things which tend to draw away the heart, distract the mind, and lower the tone of spirituality. Let us ever keep before our souls those words of our chapter, "all the days of his separation he is holy unto the Lord." Holiness is the grand and indispensable characteristic of all the days of Nazariteship; so that when once holiness is forfeited, Nazariteship is at an end.

What then, it may be asked, is to be done? The scripture before us supplies the answer. "And if any man die very suddenly by him, and he hath defiled the head of his consecration; then he shall shave his head in the day of his cleansing, on the seventh day shall he shave it. And on the eighth day he shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons, to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; and the priest shall offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, and make an atonement for him, for that he sinned by the dead, and shall hallow his head that same day. And he shall consecrate unto the Lord the days of his separation, and shall bring a lamb of the first year for a trespass offering; but the days that were before shall be lost, because his separation was defiled." Numbers 6: 9-12.

Here we find atonement, in its two grand aspects, as the only ground on which the Nazarite could be restored to communion. He had contracted defilement, and that defilement could only be removed by the blood of the sacrifice. We might deem it a very trying matter to touch a dead body, and particularly under such circumstances. It might be said, "How could he help, touching it when the man had suddenly dropped dead by his side?" To all this the reply is at once simple and solemn. God's Nazarites must maintain personal purity; and, moreover, the standard by which their purity is to be regulated is not human but divine. the mere touch of death was sufficient to break the link of communion; and had the Nazarite presumed to go on as though nothing had happened, he would have been flying in the face of God's commandments, and bringing down heavy judgment upon himself.

But, blessed be God, grace had made provision. There was the burnt offering — the type of the death of Christ to Godward. There was the sin offering — the type of that same death to usward. And there was the trespass offering — the type of the death of Christ, not only in its application to the root or principle of sin in the nature, but also to the actual sin committed. In a word, it needed the full! virtue of the death of Christ to remove the defilement caused by the simple touch of a dead body. This is peculiarly solemnizing. Sin is a dreadful thing in God's sight — most dreadful. A single sinful thought, a sinful look, a sinful word is enough to bring a dark, heavy cloud over the soul, which will hide from our view the light of God's countenance, and plunge us into deep distress and misery.

Let us, then, beware how we trifle with sin. Let us remember that ere one stain of the guilt of sin even the very smallest could be removed, the blessed Lord Jesus Christ had to pass through all the unutterable horrors of Calvary. That intensely bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is the only thing that can give us any proper idea of what sin is; and into the profound depths of that cry no mortal or angel can ever enter. But though we can never fathom the mysterious depths of the sufferings of Christ, we should at least seek to meditate more habitually upon His cross and passion, and, in this way, reach a much deeper view of the awfulness of sin, in the sight of God. If, indeed, sin was so dreadful, so abhorrent to a holy God, that He was constrained to turn away the light of His countenance from that blessed One who had dwelt in His bosom from all eternity; if He had to forsake Him because He was bearing sin in His own body on the tree, then what must sin be?

Oh! reader, let us seriously consider these things. May they ever have a place deep down in these hearts or ours that are so easily betrayed into sin! How lightly, at times, do we think of that which cost the Lord Jesus everything, not only life, but that which is better and dearer than life, even the light of God's countenance! May we have a far deeper sense of the hatefulness of sin! May we, most sedulously, watch against the bare movement of the eye in a wrong direction, for we may rest assured that the heart will follow the eye, and the feet will follow the heart, and thus we get away from the Lord, lose the sense of His presence and His love, and become miserable, or, if not miserable, what is far worse, dead, cold, and callous — "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

May God, in His infinite mercy, keep us from falling! May we have grace to watch, more jealously, against everything, no matter what, that might defile the head of our consecration! it is a serious thing to get out of communion; and a most perilous thing to attempt to go on in the Lord's service with a defiled conscience. True it is that grace pardons and restores, but we never regain what we have lost. This latter is set forth, with solemn emphasis, in the passage of scripture before us: "He shall consecrate unto the Lord the days of his separation, and shall bring a lamb of the first year for a trespass offering; *but the days that were before shall be lost* (or shall fall, as the margin reads it), because his separation was defiled."

This is a point, in our subject, full of instruction and admonition for our souls. When the Nazarite became defiled, by any means, even by the touch of a dead body, he had to begin over again. It was not merely the days of his defilement that were lost, or let fall, but actually all the days of his previous Nazariteship. All went for nothing, and this simply by reason of touching a dead body.

What does this teach us? It teaches this, at least, that when we diverge, the breadth of a hair, from the narrow path of communion, and get away from the Lord, we must return to the very point from which we set out, and begin *de novo*. We have many examples of this in scripture; and it would be our wisdom to consider them, and also to weigh the great practical truth which they illustrate.

Take the case of Abraham, in his descent into Egypt, as recorded in Genesis 12. This was, very evidently, a divergence from his proper path. and what was the consequence? The days were lost or let fall, and he had to set back to the point whence he had swerved, and begin over again. Thus, in Genesis 12: 8, We read, "And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east; and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord." Then, after his return out of the land of Egypt, we read, "He went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been *at the beginning*, between Bethel and Hai; unto the place of the altar which he had made there *at the first*: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord." (Gen. 13: 3, 4) All the time spent in Egypt went for nothing. There was no altar there, no worship, no communion; and Abraham had to get back to the self-same

point from which he had diverged, and begin on the new.

Thus it is in every case; and this will account for the miserably slow progress which some of us make in our practical career. We fail, turn aside, get away from the Lord, are plunged in spiritual darkness; and then His voice of love reaches us in restoring power, and brings us back to the point from which we had wandered; our souls are restored, but we have lost time and suffered incalculably. This is most serious, and it should lead us to walk with holy vigilance and circumspection, so that we may not have to double back upon our path, and lose what can never be regained. True it is that our wanderings, and our stumblings, and our failings give us an insight into our own hearts, teach us to distrust ourselves, and illustrate the boundless and unchangeable grace of our God. All this is quite true; but still there is a very much higher way of learning both ourselves and God, than by wandering, stumbling, or failing. *Self*, in all the terrible depths of that word, should be judged in the holy light of the divine presence; and there, too, our souls should grow in the knowledge of God as He unfolds Himself, by the Holy Ghost, in the face of Jesus Christ, and in the precious pages of holy scripture. This surely is the more excellent way of learning both ourselves and God; and this, too, is the power of all true Nazarite separation. The soul that habitually lives in the sanctuary of God, or, in other words, that walks in unbroken communion with God, is the one who will have a just sense of what nature is, in all its phases, though it be not learnt by sad experience. And not only so; but he will have a deeper and more just sense of what God is, in Himself, and to all who put their trust in Him. It is poor work to be learning self by experience. We may depend upon it, the true way to learn it is in communion; and when we learn it thus, we shall not be characterised by perpetually dwelling upon our personal vileness, but rather we shall be occupied with that which is outside and above self altogether, even the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

We shall, in closing this section, quote, at length, for the reader, the statement of "The law of the Nazarite, when the days of his separation are fulfilled: he shall be brought unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; and he shall offer his offering unto the Lord, one he lamb of the first year without blemish for a burnt offering, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish for a sin offering, and one ram without blemish for peace offerings; and a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, and wafers of unleavened bread anointed with oil, and their meat offering, and their drink offerings. And the priest shall bring them before the Lord, and shall offer his sin offering and his burnt offering. And he shall offer the ram for a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the Lord, with the basket of unleavened bread: the priest shall offer also his meat offering, and his drink offering. And the Nazarite shall shave the head of his separation at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall take the hair of the head of his separation, and put it in the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings. And the priest shall take the sodden shoulder of the ram, and one unleavened cake out of the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and shall put them upon the hands of the Nazarite, after the hair of his separation is shaven; and the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before the Lord: this is holy for the priest, with the wave breast and the heave shoulder: and *after that the Nazarite may drink wine*. This is the law of the Nazarite who hath vowed, and of his offering unto the Lord for his separation, beside that that his hand shall get: according to the vow which he vowed, so he must do after the law of his separation." Numbers 6: 13-21.

This marvellous "law" leads us onward to something future, when the full result of Christ's perfect work shall appear; and when He, as the Messiah of Israel, shall, at the close of his Nazarite separation, taste true joy in His beloved people, and in this earth. The time will then have come for the Nazarite to drink wine. From all this He set Himself apart, for the accomplishment of that great work, so fully set forth, in all its aspects and in all its bearings, in the foregoing "law." He is apart from the

nation, and apart from this world, in the power of true Nazariteship, as He said to His disciples on that memorable night, "I will not drink henceforth (*ap arti*) Of this fruit of the vine, until *that day* when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Matthew 26: 29.

But there is a bright day coming, when Jehovah Messiah shall rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in His people. The prophets, from Isaiah to Malachi, are full of the most glowing and soul-stirring allusions to that bright and blissful day. To quote the passages would literally fill a volume. But if the reader will turn to the closing section of Isaiah's prophecy, he will find a sample of that to which we refer; and he will find many similar passages throughout the various books of the prophets.

We must not attempt to quote; but we would warn the reader against the danger of being led astray by the uninspired headings attached to those magnificent passages which refer to Israel's future, such, for example, as "The blessings of the gospel" — "The enlargement of the Church." These expressions are calculated to mislead many pious readers who are apt to take for granted that the headings are as much inspired as the text; or, if not inspired, that they, at least, contain a correct statement of what the text sets forth. The fact is, there is not a syllable about the Church from beginning to end of the prophets. That the Church can find most precious instruction, light, comfort, and edification from this grand division of the inspired volume, is blessedly true; but she will do this just in proportion as she is enabled, by the Spirit's teaching, to discern the real scope and object of this portion of the book of God. To suppose, for a moment, that we can only derive comfort and profit from that which exclusively or primarily refers to ourselves, would be to take a very narrow, if not an egotistical, view of things. Can we not learn from the Book of Leviticus And yet who would assert that that section refers to the Church?

No, reader; you may rest assured that a calm, unprejudiced, prayerful study of "The law the prophets" will convince you that the great theme of both the one and the other is God's government of the world in immediate connection with Israel. True it is, that throughout "Moses and all the prophets" there are things concerning (the Lord) Himself. This is plain from Luke 24: 27. But it is "Himself" in His government of this world, and of Israel in particular. If this fact be not distinctly seized, we shall study the Old Testament with little intelligence or profit.

It may seem to some of our readers, a strong statement to assert that there is nothing about the Church, properly so called, throughout the prophets, or indeed in the Old Testament; but a statement or two from the inspired pen of St. Paul will settle the whole question for any one who is really willing to submit to the authority of holy scripture. Thus in Romans 16. we read, "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, *which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest*, and by the scriptures of the prophets evidently of the New Testament, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." Verses 29, 26.

So also in Ephesians 3 we read, "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the Grace of God, which is given me to youward; how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ;) *which. in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men,, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit** that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel..... and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which *from the beginning of the world hath been* HID IN God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold

wisdom of God." Verses 1-10.

{*The "Prophets" in the above quotations, are those of the New Testament, as is evident from the form of expression. Had the apostle meant Old Testament prophets, he would have said, "His holy prophets and apostles." But the very point he is insisting upon is, that the mystery had never been revealed until his time — that it had not been made known to the sons of men in other ages — that it was hid in God; not hid in the scriptures, but in the infinite mind of God.}

But we must not pursue this deeply interesting subject of the Church; we have merely referred to the foregoing plain passages of scripture, in order to settle the reader's mind as to the fact that the doctrine of the Church, as taught by Paul, finds no place in the page of the Old Testament; and therefore, when he reads the prophets and meets the words "Israel," "Jerusalem," "Zion," he is not to apply such terms to the Church of God, inasmuch as they belong to the literal people of Israel, the seed of Abraham, the land of Canaan, and the city of Jerusalem.* God means what He says; and, therefore, we must not countenance anything that borders upon, or looks like, a loose and irreverent mode of handling the word of God. When the Spirit speaks of Jerusalem, He means Jerusalem; if He meant the Church, He would say so. We should not attempt to treat a respectable human document as we treat the inspired volume. We take it for granted that a man not only knows what he means to say, but says what he means; and if this be so, in regard to a poor fallible mortal, how much more so, in regard to the only wise and living God, who cannot lie?

{*The statement in the text refers, of course, to the Old Testament prophecies. There are passages in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians in which all believers are viewed as the seed of Abraham (see Rom. 4: 9-17; Gal. 3: 7, 9, 21; Gal. 6: 16); but this is, obviously, a different thing altogether. We have no revelation of "the Church," properly so called, in the Old Testament scriptures.}

But we must draw this section to a close, and leave the reader to meditate alone upon the ordinance of the Nazarite, so pregnant with sacred teaching for the heart. We wish him to ponder, in a special way, the fact that the Holy Ghost has given us the full statement of the law of Nazariteship in the Book of Numbers — the wilderness book. And not only so, but let him carefully consider the institution itself. Let him see that he understands why the Nazarite was not to drink wine; why he was not to shave his locks; and why he was not to touch a dead body. Let him meditate upon these three things, and seek; to gather up the instruction contained therein. Let him ask himself, "Do I really long to be a Nazarite — to walk along the narrow path of separation unto God and, if so, am I prepared to surrender all those things which tend to defile, to distract, and to hinder God's Nazarites?" And, finally, let him remember that there is a time coming when "the Nazarite may drink wine;" or, in other words, when there will be no need to watch against the varied forms of evil within or around; all will be pure; the affections may flow out without check; the garments may flow around us without a girdle; there will be no evil to be separated from, and therefore there will be no need of separation. In a word, there will be "a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." May God, in His infinite mercy, keep us until that blessed time, in true consecration of heart unto Himself

The reader will observe that we here reach the close of a very distinct section of our book. The camp is duly arranged; every warrior is set in his proper place (Num. 1, 2); every workman is set to his proper work (Num. 3, 4); the congregation is purified from defilement. (Num. 5) Provision is made for the highest character of separation to God. (Num. 6) All this is very marked. the order is strikingly beautiful. we have before us not only a cleansed and well ordered camp, but also a character of consecration to God beyond which it is impossible to go, inasmuch as it is that which is only seen, in its integrity, in the life of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Having then reached this lofty point,

nothing remains but for Jehovah to pronounce His blessing upon the whole congregation, and accordingly we get that blessing at the close of Num. 6; and surely we may say, a right royal blessing it is. Let us read and consider.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise we shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them."

This copious blessing flows through the channel of priesthood. Aaron and his sons are commissioned to pronounce this wonderful benediction. God's assembly is to be blessed and kept of Him, continually; it is ever to bask in the sunlight of His gracious countenance; its peace is to flow as a river; Jehovah's name is to be called upon it; He is ever there to bless.

What a provision Oh! that Israel had entered into it, and lived in the power of it! But they did not. They quickly turned aside, as we shall see. They exchanged the light of God's countenance for the darkness of Mount Sinai. They abandoned the ground of grace and placed themselves under law. In place of being satisfied with their portion in the God of their Fathers, they lusted after other things. (Compare Ps. 105 and Ps. 106) In place of the order, the purity, and the separation to God with which our book opens, we have disorder, defilement, and giving themselves to idolatry.

But, blessed be God, there is a moment approaching in the which the magnificent benediction of Numbers 6 shall have its full application; when Israel's twelve tribes shall be ranged round that imperishable standard, "Jehovah-shammah" (Ezek. 48: 35); when they shall be purified from all their defilements, and consecrated unto God in the power of true Nazariteship. These things are set forth in the fullest and clearest manner, throughout the pages of the prophets. All these inspired witnesses, without so much as one dissentient voice, bear testimony to the glorious future in store for the literal Israel; they all point forward to that time when the heavy clouds which have gathered and still hang upon the nation's horizon shall be chased away before the bright beams of "the Sun of righteousness;" when Israel shall enjoy a cloudless day of bliss and glory, beneath the vines and fig-trees of that very land which God gave as an everlasting possession unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

If we deny the foregoing, we may as well cut out a large portion of the Old Testament, and not a small Part of the New, for in both the one and the other the Holy Ghost doth most clearly and unequivocally bear testimony to this precious fact, namely, mercy, salvation, and blessing to the seed of Jacob. We hesitate not to declare our conviction that no one can possibly understand the Prophets who does not see this. There is a bright future in store for God's beloved, though now rejected people. Let us beware How we deal with this fact. It is a very grave matter to attempt to interfere, in any wise, with the true and proper application of the word of God. If He has pledged Himself to bless the nation of Israel, let us have a care how we seek to force the stream of blessing to flow in a different channel. It is a serious thing to tamper with the declared purpose of God. He has declared it to be His purpose to give the land of Canaan an everlasting possession to the seed of Jacob; and if this be called in question, we do not see how we can hold fast the integrity of any one portion of the word of God. If we show ourselves to trifle with a large division of the inspired canon and most assuredly it is trifling with it when we seek to divert it from its true object — then what security have we in reference to the application of scripture at all? If God does not mean what He says when He speaks of Israel and the land of Canaan, how do we know that He means what He says when He speaks of the Church and her heavenly portion in Christ? If the Jew be robbed of his glorious future, what security has the Christian

as to his?

Reader, let us remember that "All (not merely some of) the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus," and while we rejoice in the application of this precious statement to ourselves, let us not seek to deny its application to others. We most fully believe that the children of Israel shall yet enjoy the full tide of blessing presented in the closing paragraph of Numbers 6; and until then the Church of God is called to partake of blessings peculiar to herself. She is privileged to know the presence of God with her and in her midst continually — to dwell in the light of His countenance — to drink of the river of peace — to be blessed and kept, from day to day, by Him who never slumbers nor sleeps. But let us never forget — yea: let us deeply and constantly remember — that the practical sense and experimental enjoyment of these immense blessings and privileges will be in exact proportion to the measure in which the Church seeks to maintain the order, the purity, and the Nazarite separation to which she is called as the dwelling-place of God — the body of Christ - the habitation of the Holy Ghost.

May these things sink down into our hearts, and exert their sanctifying influence upon our whole life and character!

Numbers 7.

This is the very longest section in the entire Book of Numbers. It contains a detailed statement of the names of the twelve princes of the congregation, and of their respective offerings on the occasion of the setting up of the tabernacle. "It came to pass on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and sanctified it, and all the instruments thereof, both the altar and all the vessels thereof, and had anointed them, and sanctified them, that the princes of Israel, heads of the house of their fathers, who were the princes of the tribes, and were over them that were numbered, offered. And they brought their offering before the Lord, six covered wagons, and twelve oxen; a wagon for two of the princes, and for each one an ox; and they brought them before the tabernacle. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take it of them, that they may be to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; and thou shalt give them unto the Levites, to every man according to his service. And Moses took: the wagons and the oxen, and gave them unto the Levites. Two wagons and four oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershon, according to their service. and four wagons and eight oxen he gave unto the sons of Merari, according unto their service, under the hand of Ithamar, the son of Aaron the priest. But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none; because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders." Verses 1-9.

We noticed, when meditating on Numbers 3 and 4, that the sons of Kohath were privileged to carry all that was most precious of the instruments and furniture of the sanctuary. Hence they did not receive any of the princes' offering. It was their high and holy service to bear upon their shoulders, and not to make use of wagons or oxen. The more closely we examine those things which were committed to the custody and charge of the Kohathites, the more we shall see that they set forth, in type, the deeper and fuller manifestations of God in Christ. The Gershonites and Merarites, on the contrary, had to do with those things which were more external. Their work was rougher and more exposed, and therefore they were furnished with the needed help which the liberality of the princes placed at their disposal. The Kohathite did not want the aid of a wagon or an ox in his elevated service. His own shoulder was to bear the precious mystic burden.

"And the princes offered for dedicating of the altar in the day that it was anointed, even the princes offered their offering before the altar. And the Lord said unto Moses, They shall offer their offering, *each prince on his day*, for the dedicating of the altar."

An unspiritual reader, in running his eye over this unusually long chapter, might feel disposed to

ask why so much space is occupied, in an inspired document, with what might be given in the compass of a dozen lines. If a man were giving an account of the transaction of those twelve days, he would, in all probability, have very briefly summed up all in one statement, and told us that the twelve princes offered each such and such things.

But that would not have suited the divine mind at all. God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways. Nothing could satisfy Him but the fullest and most detailed account of each man's name, of the tribe which he represented, and of the offering which we made to the sanctuary of God. Hence this long chapter of eighty-nine verses. Each name shines out in its own distinctness. Each offering is minutely described and duly estimated. The names and the offerings are not huddled promiscuously together. This would not be like our God; and He can only act like Himself, in whatever He does, and speak like Himself, whatever He says. Man may pass hastily or carelessly over gifts and offerings; but God never can, never does, and never will. He delights to record every little act of service, every little loving gift. He never forgets the smallest thing; and not only does He not forget it Himself, but He takes special pains that untold millions shall read the record. How little did those twelve princes imagine that their names and their offerings were to be handed down, from age to age, to be read by countless generations! Yet so it was, for God would have it so. He will enter upon what might seem to us tedious detail, yea, if you please, what man might deem tautology, rather than omit a single name of any of His servants, or a single item of their work.

Thus, in the chapter before us, "each prince" gets his own appointed day for the presenting of his offering, and his own allotted space on the eternal page of inspiration, in the which the most complete record of his gifts is inscribed by God the Holy Ghost.

This is divine. And may we not say that this seventh chapter of Numbers is one of those specimen pages from the book of eternity, on which the finger of God has engraved the names of His servants, and the record of their work We believe it is; and if the reader will turn to the twenty-third of second Samuel, and the sixteenth of Romans, he will find two similar pages. In the former, we have the names and the deeds of David's worthies; in the latter, the names and the deeds of Paul's friends at Rome. In both we have an illustration of what, we feel persuaded, is true of all the saints of God, and the servants of Christ, from first to last. Each one has his own special place on the roll, and each one his place in the Master's heart; and all will come out by and by. Amongst David's mighty men, we have "the first three" — "the three" and "the thirty." Not one of "the thirty" ever attained a place among "the three;" nor did one of "the three" ever reach to "the first three."

Nor this only. Every act is faithfully set down; and the substance and style most accurately put before us. We have the name of the man, *what* he did, and *how* he did it. All is recorded, with sedulous care and minuteness, by the unerring and impartial pen of the Holy Ghost.

So also, when we turn to that remarkable sample page furnished in Romans 16. we have all about Phebe, what she was and what she did, and what a solid basis she had on which to rest her claim upon the sympathy and succour of the assembly at Rome. Then we have Priscilla and Aquila — the wife put first — and how they had laid down their own necks for the life of the blessed apostle, and earned his thanks and that of all the churches of the Gentiles. Next we have "the *well* beloved Epaenetus;" and "Mary who bestowed," not merely labour, but "*much* labour" on the apostle. It would not have expressed the mind of the Spirit, or the heart of Christ, merely to say that Epaenetus was "beloved," or that Mary had bestowed "labour." No; the little adjuncts "well" and "much" were necessary in order to set forth the exact *status* of each.

But we must not enlarge, and we shall merely call the reader's attention to verse 12. Why does not

the inspired penman place "Tryphena, Tryphosa," and "the beloved Persis" under one head Why does he not assign them one and the same position? The reason is perfectly beautiful; because he could only say of the two former that they had "laboured in the Lord," whereas it was due to the latter to add that she had "laboured *much* in the Lord." Can anything be more discriminating? It is "the three" — "the first three" — and "the thirty" over again. There is no promiscuous jumbling of names and services together; no haste; no inaccuracy. We are told what each one was, and what he did. Each one gets his own place, and receives his own meed of praise.

And this, be it observed, is a specimen page from the book of eternity. How solemn And yet, how encouraging There is not a single act of service which we render to our Lord that will not be set down in His book; and not only the *substance* of the act, but the *style* of it also, for God appreciates style as well as we do. — He loves a cheerful giver, and a cheerful worker, because that is precisely what He is Himself. It was grateful to His heart to see the tide of liberality flowing around His sanctuary from the representatives of the twelve tribes. It was grateful to his heart to mark the actings of David's worthies, in the day of his rejection. It was grateful to His heart to trace the devoted path of the Priscillas, the Aquilas, and the Phebes of a later date. And, we may add, it is grateful to His heart, in this day of so much lukewarmness and vapid profession, to behold, here and there, a true-hearted lover of Christ, and a devoted worker in His vineyard.

May God's Spirit stir up our hearts to more thorough devotedness! May the love of Christ constrain us, more and more, to live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him who loved us and washed us from our scarlet sins in His most precious blood, and made us all we are, or ever hope to be.

Numbers 8.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and say unto him, When thou lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick. And Aaron did so; he lighted the lamps thereof over against the candlestick, as the Lord commanded Moses. And this work of the candlestick was of beaten gold, unto the shaft thereof, unto the flowers thereof, was beaten work: according unto the pattern which the Lord had showed Moses, so he made the candlestick." Verses 1-4.

On reading the foregoing paragraph, two things claim the reader's attention, namely, first, the position which the type of the golden candlestick occupies; and, secondly, the instruction which the type conveys.

It is not a little remarkable, that the candlestick is the only part of the furniture of the tabernacle introduced in this place. We have nothing about the golden altar, nothing about the golden table. The candlestick alone is before us, and that not in its covering of blue and of badgers' skins, as in chapter 4, where it, like all the rest, is seen in its travelling dress. It is here seen lighted, not covered. It comes in between the offerings of the princes, and the consecration of the Levites, and sheds forth its mystic light according to the commandment of the Lord. Light cannot be dispensed with in the wilderness, and therefore the golden candlestick must be stripped of its covering, and allowed to shine in testimony for God, which, be it ever remembered, is the grand object of everything, whether it be the offering of our *substance*, as in the case of the princes; or the dedication of our *persons*, as in the case of the Levites. It is only in the light of the sanctuary that the true worth of anything or any one can be seen.

Hence the moral order of the whole of this part of our book is striking and beautiful; indeed it is divinely perfect. Having read, in chapter 7, the lengthened statement of the princes' liberality, we, in our wisdom, might suppose that the next thing in order would be the consecration of the Levites, thus presenting, in unbroken connection, "our persons and offerings." But no. The Spirit of God causes the light of the sanctuary to intervene, in order that we may learn, in it, the true object of all liberality and

service, in the wilderness.

Is there not lovely moral appropriateness in this? Can any spiritual reader fail to see it? Why have we not the golden altar, with its cloud of incense, here? Why not the pure table, with its twelve loaves? Because neither of these would have the least moral connection with what goes before, or what follows after; But the golden candlestick stands connected with both, inasmuch as it shows us that all liberality and all work must be viewed in the light of the sanctuary, in order to ascertain its real worth. This is a grand wilderness lesson, and it is taught us here as blessedly as type can teach us. In our progress through the Book of Numbers, We have just read the account of the large-hearted liberality of the great heads of the congregation, on the occasion of the dedication of the altar; and we are about to read the record of the consecration of the Levites; but between the one and the other, the inspired penman pauses, in order to let the light of the sanctuary shine on both.

This is divine order. It is, we are bold to say, one of the ten thousand illustrations which lie scattered over the surface of scripture, tending to demonstrate the divine perfectness of the volume, as a whole, and of each book, section, and paragraph therein. And we are glad — intensely glad to point out these precious illustrations to our reader, as we pass along in his company. we consider we are doing him good service herein; and, at the same time, presenting our humble tribute of praise to that precious book which our Father has graciously penned for us. Well indeed we know it does not need our poor testimony, nor that of any mortal pen or mortal tongue. But still it is our joy to render the testimony, in the face of the enemy's manifold but futile attacks upon its inspiration. The true source and character of all such attacks will become more and more manifest, as we become more deeply, livingly, and experimentally acquainted with the infinite depths and divine perfections of the Volume. And hence it is that the internal evidences of holy scripture — its powerful effect upon ourselves, no less than its intrinsic moral glories — its ability to judge the very roots of character and conduct, no less than its admirable structure, in all its parts — are the most powerful arguments in defence of its divinity. A book that exposes me to myself — that tells me all that is in my heart — that lays bare the very deepest moral springs of my nature — that judges me thoroughly, and at the same time reveals to me One who meets my every need — such a book carries its own credentials with it. It craves not, and needs not, letters of commendation from men. It stands in no need of his favour, in no dread of his wrath. It has often occurred to us that were we to reason about the Bible as the woman of Sychar reasoned about our Lord, we should reach as sound a conclusion about it as she reached about Him. "Come," said this simple and happy reasoner, "see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" May we not, with equal force of reasoning, say, "Come, see a book which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the word of God?" Yes, truly; and not only so, but we may argue, *a fortiori*, inasmuch as the book of God not only tells us all that ever we did, but all we think, and all we say, and all we are. see Romans 3: 10-18; Matthew 15: 19.

But is it that we despise external evidences? Far from it. We delight in them, We value every argument and every evidence calculated to strengthen the foundations of the heart's confidence in the divine inspiration of holy scripture; and, most assuredly, we have abundance of such material. The very history of the book itself, with all its striking facts, furnishes a broad tributary stream to swell the tide of evidence. The history of its composition; the history of its preservation; the history of its translation from tongue to tongue; the history of its circulation throughout earth's wide domain — in a word, its entire history, "surpassing fable, and yet true," forms a powerful argument in defence of its divine origin. Take, for example, that one fact of most commanding interest, namely, its having been kept for over a thousand years, in the custody of those who would have gladly consigned it, if they could, to eternal oblivion. Is not this a telling fact? Yes; and there are many such facts in the marvellous history

of this peerless, priceless Volume.

But after allowing as wide a margin as may be desired, in the which to insert the value of external evidences, we return, with unshaken decision, to our statement, that the internal evidences — the proofs to be gleaned from the book itself — form as powerful a defence as can be erected with which to stem the tide of sceptical and infidel opposition.

We shall not, however, pursue any further this line of thought into which we have been led, while contemplating the remarkable position assigned to the golden candlestick, in the Book of Numbers. We felt constrained to say thus much in testimony to our most precious Bible, and having said it, we shall return to our chapter, and seek to gather up the instruction contained in its opening paragraph.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and say unto him, when thou lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick." Those "seven lamps" express the light of the Spirit in testimony. They were connected with the beaten shaft of the candlestick which typifies Christ, who, in His Person and work, is the foundation of the Spirit's work in the Church. All depends upon Christ. Every ray of light in the Church, in the individual believer, or in Israel by and by, all flows from Christ.

Nor is this all we learn from our type. "The seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick." Were we to clothe this figure in New Testament language, we should quote our Lord's words when He says to us, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5: 16) Wherever the true light of the Spirit shines it will always yield a clear testimony to Christ. It will call attention not to itself, but to Him; and this is the way to glorify God. "The seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick."

This is a great practical truth for all Christians. The very finest evidence which can be afforded of true spiritual work is that it tends directly to exalt Christ. If attention be sought for the work or the workman, the light has become dim, and the minister of the sanctuary must use the snuffers. It was Aaron's province to light the lamps; and he it was who trimmed them likewise. In other words, the light which, as Christians, we are responsible to yield, is not only founded upon Christ, but maintained by Him, from moment to moment, throughout the entire night. Apart from Him we can do nothing. The golden shaft sustained the lamps; the priestly hand supplied the oil and applied the snuffers. It is all *in* Christ, *from* Christ, and *by* Christ.

And more, it is all *to* Christ. Wherever the light of the Spirit — the true light of the sanctuary — has shone, in this wilderness world, the object of that light has been to exalt the name of Jesus. 'Whatever has been done by the Holy Ghost, whatever has been said, whatever has been written, has had for its aim the glory of that blessed One. And we may say with confidence, that whatever has not that tendency — that aim, is not of the Holy Ghost, be it what it may. There may be an immense amount of work done, a great deal of apparent result reached, a quantity of that which is calculated to attract human attention, and elicit human applause, and yet not one ray of light from the golden candlestick. And why? Because attention is sought for the work, or for those engaged in it. Man and his doings and sayings are exalted, instead of Christ. The light has not been produced by the oil which the hand of the great High Priest supplies; and, as a consequence, it is false light. It is a light which shines not over against the candlestick, but over against the name or the acting's of some poor mortal.

All this is most solemn, and demands our deepest attention. There is always the utmost danger when a man or his work becomes remarkable. He may be sure Satan is gaining his object, when attention is drawn to anything or to any one but the Lord Jesus Himself. A work may be commenced in the greatest possible simplicity, but through lack of holy watchfulness and spirituality on the part of the

workman, he himself, or the results of his work, may attract general attention, and he may fall into the snare of the devil. Satan's grand and ceaseless object is to dishonour the Lord Jesus; and if he can do this by what seems to be Christian service, he has achieved all the greater victory for the time. He has no objection to work, as such, provided he can detach that work from the name of Jesus. He will even mingle himself, if he can, with the work; he will present himself amongst the servants of Christ, as he once presented himself amongst the sons of God; but his object is ever one and the same, namely, to dishonour the Lord. He permitted the damsel, in Acts 16 to bear testimony to Christ's servants, and say, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." But this was simply with a view to ensnare: those servants and mar their work. He was defeated, however, because the light that emanated from Paul and Silas was the genuine light, of the sanctuary, and it shone only for Christ. They sought not a name for themselves; and, inasmuch as it was to them and not to their Master that the damsel bore witness, they refused the witness, and chose rather to suffer for their Master's sake than to be exalted at His expense.

This is a fine example for all the Lord's workmen. And if we turn, for an instant to Acts 3 we shall find another very striking illustration. There the light of the sanctuary shone out in the healing of the lame man, and when attention was drawn, *unsought*, to the workmen, we find Peter and John, at once, with holy jealousy, retiring behind their glorious Master and giving all the praise to Him. "And, as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them, in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by *our own* power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus."

Here we have, in very deed, "the seven lamps giving their light over against the candlestick;" or, in other words, the sevenfold or perfect display of the Spirit's light in distinct testimony to the name of Jesus. "Why," said these faithful vessels of the Spirit's light, "look ye so earnestly on *us*?" No need of the snuffers here. The light was undimmed. It was, no doubt, an occasion which the apostles might have turned to their own account, had they been so disposed. It was a moment in the which they might have surrounded their own names with a halo of glory. They might have raised themselves to a pinnacle of fame, and drawn around them the respect and veneration of wondering, if not worshipping, thousands. But had they done so, they would have robbed their Master; falsified the testimony; grieved the Holy Ghost, and brought down upon themselves the just judgement of Him who will not give His glory to another.

But, no; the seven lamps were shining brightly in Jerusalem, at this interesting moment. The true candlestick was in Solomon's porch just then, and not in the temple. At least the seven lamps were there, and doing their appointed work most blessedly. Those honoured servants sought no glory for themselves; yea, they instantly put forth all their energies in order to avert the wondering gaze of the multitude from themselves, and fix it upon the only worthy One, who, though He had passed into the heavens, was still working by His Spirit on earth.

Many other illustrations might be drawn from the pages of the Acts of the Apostles; but the above will suffice to impress upon our hearts the great practical lesson taught in the golden candlestick, with its seven lamps. We are deeply sensible of our need of the lesson at this very moment. There is always a danger of the work and the workman being more the object than the Master. Let us be on our guard against this. It is a sad evil. It grieves the blessed Spirit, who ever labours to exalt the name of Jesus. It is offensive to the Father, who would ever be sounding in our ears, and deep down in our hearts, those words heard, from an open heaven, on the mount of transfiguration: "This is my beloved Son, in whom

I am well pleased, hear ye him." It is in the most direct and positive hostility to the mind of heaven, where every eye is fixed on Jesus, every heart occupied with Jesus, and where the one eternal, universal, unanimous cry shall be, "*Thou art worthy.*"

Let us think of all this — think deeply — think habitually; that so we may shrink from everything bordering upon, or savouring of, the exaltation of man — of self — our doings and sayings and thinkings. May we all more earnestly seek the quiet, shady, unobtrusive path where the spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus will ever lead us to walk and serve. In a word, may we so abide in Christ, so receive from Him, day by day, and moment by moment, the pure oil, that our light may shine, without our thinking of it, to His praise, in whom alone we have ALL, and apart from whom we can do absolutely NOTHING.

The remainder of the eighth chapter of Numbers contains the record of the ceremonial connected with the consecration of the Levites, to which we have already referred in our notes on chapter 3 and 4.