

DEUTERONOMY

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Scope and Divisions of Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy, as the closing book of the Pentateuch, completes and sums up the law, impressing it upon the hearts and consciences of the people by the retrospect of their wilderness-history and the dying appeal of their prophet-lawgiver. It ends, manifestly, the first stage of Israel's history, the foundation and seed-germ of all that is to follow. Joshua is not the last book of a Hexateuch, as some would have it, but a distinct new beginning as we shall fully see, if the Lord will, when we enter upon it. So also the spiritual, typical sense, which carries with it the highest assurance of inspiration, the power of prophecy, and reigns throughout the historical books, declares. Joshua, the entrance into Canaan, does not speak of our entrance into heaven at death or in resurrection, but of our entering by faith now. In the former way, not the wildest imagination could apply it in any detail; in the latter, it is full of meaning, and pregnant with most important instruction. In this way, it does not succeed, but runs parallel, with the earth-pilgrimage; while Deuteronomy winds up the wilderness-history, giving the moral intelligence and profit of the past as wisdom for the future, as the manifestation at the judgment-seat of Christ will do for our lives here. For the present life has its significance for heaven itself, and the light of heaven must illumine it all, not that we may then forget it, but that it may become a permanent possession.

Deuteronomy has but three plain divisions, the second of which is the large part of the book. The first is historic; the second, legislative; the third in the main, prophetic:—

Div.1. (Ch.1—4:43.) The righteousness and grace of the Almighty as persuasive to obedience.

Div.2. (Ch.4:44—30.) The exposition and enforcement of the law.

Div.3. (Ch.31—34.) The outcome, as revealed prophetically.

NOTES.

DIVISION 1. (Ch.1:1—4:43.) The righteousness and grace of the Almighty as the motive to obedience.

1. God sovereign in spite of man's rebellion against Him

The introduction to the “expounding” of the law is most naturally a persuasive to obedience; and this is found where it would be the strongest, in their recent history, fresh and vivid as it was in the memories of the people. They had shown themselves out fully in it; in this way it was a history full of sorrow. But God too had manifested Himself in surpassing majesty,—in holiness and in grace; and the double record might serve, if any thing would, to arouse the conscience and stir the heart, and produce fidelity to One whose favour to them had been so conspicuous, and whose discipline withal so uncompromising. Day by day He ministered to them; day and night His presence had been amongst them: He who slept not nor slumbered was the keeper of Israel; and if He smote, it was because He would not give them up, and could not give up His own character.

The wilderness was the place of education for the land. The word for ‘wilderness’ “comes” says Krummacher “from a word which means both to ‘speak’ and to ‘lead’, so that, to be in the wilderness and under leading in Hebrew, amounts nearly to one and the same thing.”¹ All this long, and in so much of it sad history was not to be without its final profit: the wilderness in this sense was yet to have its harvest, and “blossom as the rose.” All its painful experience was to be wisdom for the land. And so with all the lessons which day by day we are all learning. Time is not cut off from eternity in such a way as to make it our joy and profit to forget there what we have passed through here; nor will its scroll be then rolled up and cast aside. No, but it is rather then that its history shall be fully unsealed and stand out as prophecy. And as the assurance of this, between us and eternity, or just as we step into it, we have the judgment-seat of Christ, and “manifestation” at the judgment-seat: “every one of us shall give account of himself to God,” says the apostle. (Rom.14:12.) And again, “For we must all appear” — literally, “be manifested” — before the

¹ Quoted in Schaff's Lange.

judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” (2 Cor.5:10.)

Many have the strange thought that this does not apply to the Christian, and that so applied it would be contradictory to the gospel, as doing away with the assurance given by God, “their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” (Jer.31:34; Heb.8:12; 10:17.) But this is not a remembrance of sins, in the divine sense: nothing is reckoned against the believer; all that can be rewarded comes up for reward, all that cannot be rewarded is “loss” as to reward (1 Cor.3:15) — no more. The very triumph of God’s grace will be seen in this, that, told out in the presence of God, there is no imputation of sins at all. Thus the work of Christ will appear in its full glory; and we shall be manifested, not as unsinning angels, but as redeemed men. Thus we have our song and our worship. Thus the robes granted us in that day — the “fine linen” which “is the righteousnesses” (in the Revised Version, “righteous deeds”) of the saints, — are washed in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev.19:8, cf. 7:14; 22:14, RV.) Who would exchange these blood-washed robes for the most unspotted record that could be furnished by a creature?

And who would lose the apprehension of this grace in God for his own soul? or who would not desire to have it displayed before the universe? Who would take away the glory of Christ in this? Who would not rather say, “Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul”? (Ps.66:16.) There, in the ears of the most magnificent assembly ever gathered, God in Christ shall have His fullest praise; and “God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.” (Eccles.12:14.)

How wondrous that day of revelation! All the darkness of God’s dealings with us gone forever! All our record His fullest praise! Not His grace alone seen, but His wisdom, righteousness, truth — every attribute glorified forever! What would we miss, if we missed this? And that eternity may be to us the perfect, unchanging happiness which is grounded in holiness — inasmuch as God deals with His reasonable creatures according to the nature He has given them, by argument and proof — how much may depend upon this day of manifestation! His purpose is that “in the ages to come He may show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness to us

through Christ Jesus.” (Eph.2:7.)

Deuteronomy then, as closing at once the history of the wilderness and the first Pentateuch of Scripture, has its fitting place. It is in some true sense the book of the judgment-seat. beginning with this recital of wilderness-history, and at the end expanding into that glorious “song,” in which (as if already amid the concourse of the coming day) the heavens, along with the earth, are exhorted to hear the words of his mouth! “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: because I will proclaim the name of Jehovah: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. The Rock — His work is perfect; for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right, is He.”

1. (1:1-8.) A command which is promise.

Israel are now, though still characteristically “in the wilderness,” at their journey’s end. They have taken, to accomplish a few days’ journey, the life of a generation. They have come a long distance, with toil and hardship, where faith in God would have easily and long since brought them. Still, over all this God triumphs, using it as a homily for them, and an encouragement to confidence. The forty years of trial are at length concluded, and their inheritance lies before them, the other side of the headlong river which alone intervenes. And now the lawgiver’s voice, soon to be heard no more among them, as he and they alike well know, utters itself in a solemn last address, in which the fullness of his heart overflows to the people so long his care. Characteristic of the book are the opening sentences in which Moses’ words are emphasized as the subject of it: not now any more Jehovah’s words through him, not the law itself properly, but Moses’ exposition and enforcement of it. And this is set in the framework of the circumstances which set it off and impress one with its significance. The names in the first verse cannot be those of stations on the way hither therefore from Sinai on, although two of them are identical with and two more resemble some of these; but they were not “beyond Jordan, in the Arabah,” or in any relation to these such as could warrant the terms used. “Similarity of names,” says Keil, “cannot prove any thing by itself, as the number of places of the same name, but in different localities, that we meet with in the Bible, is very considerable.” Yet this similarity, where the name is often all we have about the place, may still be quite significant. Certainly the site of this memorable discourse is beyond Jordan and in the

Arabah, the deep cleft in which both the river and the sea of salt are found. Suph is not necessarily the sea of Suph or weeds, the common title of the Red Sea; nor Laban Libnah. With Paran and Hazeroth we are indeed familiar; but Hazeroth (“enclosures”) is only the plural of Hazar, of which there are many; while Paran was the name of a wide district. However, we can say little to purpose about these names.

“From Horeb to Kadesh-barnea” (the “sanctuary of the wanderer”) is the first stage of the journey, as Moses recites it, a history of unbelief and rebellion, which avails only to illustrate the vanity of opposition to the power of God. But in the first place we have the land set before them, not in poetical rhapsody, exaggerating the much smaller territory which in fact they possessed, but according to the promise to their fathers, which we have in Genesis 15., and still more fully in Exodus 23:31. But this promise was, as the last passage shows, to be fulfilled to them by instalments, and as they had faith to lay hold of it and make it their own,—and they had not faith. Yet grace will not be finally defeated of its intent, nor the promise he left unfulfilled; no more than will to us the better promise of a heavenly land, which now we are bidden to make ours, and so little do. This parallel, full of reproof, and full of encouragement to us, we shall have abundantly before us as we go on. Meanwhile, the command is for us, as it was for them, a promise, which individual faith may make much of, if it cannot accomplish what that of a host may.

2. (1:9-18.) The service of rule, and Israel’s humbling to the yoke.

Moses next reminds them of the institution of officers for the host to bear with him the burden of so great a multitude. God had fulfilled to them, and under the most adverse circumstances, the promise to their fathers, and already they were as the stars of heaven for number. This necessitated the appointment of those who should be recognized as chiefs and magistrates among them; rule in Israel being thus manifestly service; and they are invited to put their own hands to this work, in choosing from among themselves men that enjoyed their confidence, and deserved the confidence they enjoyed. And they do this, recognizing their need of the yoke, as all men ever have recognized it, spite of all abuses of authority. As Paul says of the magistrate, “He is the minister of God to thee for good” (Rom.13:4), although, in the time in which he wrote, the abuse was everywhere evident.

We are mutually dependent and need each other’s help, not simply against

others but against ourselves. In our own cause we are not fit to be judges, and no laws, the world over, would allow this to be; yet there is no office we more naturally assume. Self-interest prompts and urges us to do that for which it is itself the disqualification. How good for us, then, to stand aside and allow those more competent for impartial judgment to give judgment. How good to see ourselves through the keener eyes of others, even sometimes of those not friendly. But in this way to what a height does Paul raise the Christian in that rebuke to the Corinthians, which it makes so keen,— “If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set those to judge who are least esteemed in the Church.” (1 Cor.6:4.) This seems the exact opposite of Moses, nor does he of course mean that it should be literally carried out: “I speak to your shame. Is it so that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?” He would not have those judge who lacked in wisdom; but he considers on the one hand that “the least esteemed in the Church” ought to have an elevation and impartiality of spirit fit for such an office; and on the other, that those whose worldly matters are to be judged should be so above care, as to things of this kind, as to be ready to submit their cause to any of their brethren!

This is no doubt an unattained—we ought not to say, unattainable—ideal. Good it is yet to have the ideal before us. In truth, how blessed to be so before God, so in the joyful consciousness of that supreme will, to which, little as men may mean it, every other bows, as to be able to see in all a Father’s hand, and to be subject without reserve to every expression of His will, though it were an enemy’s voice that gave it utterance:— “The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?”

Good it is thus to serve,—to be in subjection; and it need be no wonder to find, therefore, in this place the mention of an institution by which human will is curbed, and that spirit induced which is true preparation for a divine inheritance: “the meek shall inherit the earth.” Israel with their inheritance before them are to cultivate the spirit of heirs.

3. (1:19-21.) The land ready to be

The incidents of the journey to Kadesh are passed over: “the great and terrible wilderness “ is only mentioned to make them realize the power of the hand that led them. Trained to encounter difficulties, as accustomed to see them overcome by the power of God, how ready they might be

expected now to face the only foe that was to be feared, when now at Kadesh their next step would be upon the land of so many memories, pledged to them by the full value of Jehovah's name. Unbelief alone could prevail against them; yet how could they disbelieve? So one might indeed argue; but the facts of history and of experience are alike against the argument.

4. (1:22-33.) The test and the failure.

We pass on quickly to the result; and now we find, what had not appeared in the history itself, that the mission of the spies was primarily the people's own suggestion. True, Moses had entered into it, and God Himself had sanctioned it; for in Numbers they are sent out at His bidding. It is plain, therefore, that there was nothing wrong in the suggestion, while it does not follow that there was nothing wrong in the motive. Unbelief desires, as we know, to see the way before it, likes to know what there is to meet, and to have its plans beforehand. God might sanction it, as a new witness to them of the goodness of the land, the fruit of which was evidence that could not be denied. But nothing is more senseless than unbelief: if men believe not Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded though one rose from the dead. If the Word of God fails, sense and sight cannot avail. There are walled cities and tall men: granted; and the power of God, at how much will one reckon that? Alas, with amazing hardihood, they dare to say that all His goodness and care hitherto have been but hatred, and that He has been at the pains to bring them across sea and wilderness to destroy them at last by the hands of the Amorites!

5. (1:34-45.) The judgment of God.

Plainly, argument is at an end. God can do no mightier wonders, nor convince those to whom love and hatred are indistinguishable from one another. Their unbelief excludes them from the land and ordains a long discipline for their children, whom yet at last He brings in according to His purpose. Their folly and evil cannot change the Immutable: it is only of avail against themselves. The sure Word which had been for them is now their doom; while their fatal unbelief finally stirs even the meek spirit of Moses, and shuts him also out from the land. Once more they rebel when the word is pronounced against them, and will go in without God, who just now could not go in by His help: a mere presumption, presently bitterly rebuked, when the Amorites come down from the hill, and chase them as a

swarm of bees might, even to Hormah, the place of the ban. Then they break down in tears as vain before the Lord: His judgment is as faithful as His loving-mercy.

2. (2:1-25.) Israel's progress, and different relation to the people round.

In the next section we find Israel upon the road in their strange roundabout journey, in which we have already traced them, round Mount Seir. But the path itself is little touched upon: what we have rather is their different relation to the different nations by which they pass,—Edom, Moab, and Ammon on the one hand, and the Amorites on the other. The one, they are strictly forbidden to meddle with; the other, they are bidden to make war upon, and their land becomes Israel's first possession. So, we may be sure, is it important for us to know, as we travel on, what to contend with, what simply to pass by. All this in Israel's history is still to be our lesson; we may be confident as ever, and shall find our confidence justified, that “the things that happened unto them happened unto them for types.”

1. (2:1-8.) Esau, the natural first-born; “that which is first is natural:” flesh, and the natural man.

First of these nations we have the “children of Esau, who dwelt in Seir,” and we have already got more than a hint of the typical meaning. Esau and Seir have a natural connection. “Esau” means “hairy,” “rough,” and so does Seir; which for this reason is one of the words for “goat,”—a “shaggy one.” This last significance is striking enough, the goat standing in its fundamental meaning for the sinner, as in the Lord's use of it. The wild nature of Esau thus is shown in its affinity to the “far-off country” to which he belongs. Edom has thus another sign that it is Adam, if disguised, as in the child of God the flesh is often well disguised. And Edom lies here in Seir, as we have elsewhere seen, right across (as we might imagine) the whole path of progress. This is emphasized by Israel's attempt to pass through Seir, a passage which is refused and has to be given up. God's way is “round,” not across it, and “by the way of the sea,” under the shelter of the serpent of brass. This is the way of death, the way of the cross: “in the Arabah,” God's furrow of death, cut through the land from sea to sea, we

find our track, and no Mount Seir to stop us.² But the truth is further emphasized for us here. Esau is not to be dispossessed,—the flesh cannot be,—nor even warred against. Mount Seir is given them for a possession. It is the lesson of the sea, which is given its place on the third day of the six in which the earth was built up; or, again, the lesson of Cain, marked by God for life, not death. The flesh abides still in the believer, and has its place from God—therefore its use, as we may boldly say. What use has Esau in his stronghold at Seir? Just as a needful barrier, to force Israel into the path by the sea; so has the flesh its use to destroy self-confidence, to make the cross a daily necessity to us, to teach, us to abide in Christ, and find our sanctification in occupation with Himself. If self-occupation could in Satan change an angel to a devil, worthy is it of God to make the ineradicable evil in us a means of turning our eyes from ourselves to Him, by whom, as we behold His glory, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory!

With the men of the flesh, the children of this world, we may have traffic, as we pass on heavenward: contend with them we may not; their land is not ours; our possessions are else where:—a good land, which forbids coveting any other.

2. (2:8-23.) The brother-tribes of Lot; and the help of the Lord against the giants.

Passing Edom, the children of Israel find themselves in the neighbourhood of the brother-tribes descended from Lot, as to whom they are equally forbidden to make war upon them or to possess their land. “I have given Ar,” says Jehovah, “unto the children of Lot for a possession.” What is represented to us, then, by these children of Lot? Their descent is naturally the first thing which should help us. They are the posterity, in a way of shame and sin, of one who stands as the typical opposite to Abraham, the man true to the divine call. He is the man, who, though himself “righteous,” is yet a settler in the world, sunk into it, ignoring what it is for God, saved through the fire at last, but never restored to the place from which he had departed. The child of Lot is the child of the “cover” under which Lot walked, and according to the inevitable tendency from bad to

² Those who may yet find this unintelligible are referred to notes on Num. xx. 14-21 and xxi. 4-9 for explanation.

worse, inheriting the evil only,—alien and hostile to Israel and to Israel’s God. His territory is outside Israel’s, though a border-land, and which is named from its chief city Ar, which means but “city,” carrying us back to that which one of old had gone out of the presence of the Lord to build. (Gen.4.)

All seems to speak of that which is the natural result of the true church sinking into the world,—a profession which is but the world, alien and hostile to the true people of God, characterized largely by the principles of confederacy, mutual interest, etc., which the city, as it now exists, implies. In Moab, the “city” covers, as it were, the country. Thus we need not wonder that their God is not Jehovah. For Moab God is Chemosh, the “vanquisher,” as the mere professor goes with what in fact is prevalent, what has gained the day. In Ammon he is Moloch,—i.e., “king,”—in fact, whether or not in right. Nay, rather, fact is right: not God is King,—reigns because He is divine; but the king is God—is divine because he reigns. And this is no strange thing among men: the sect of Herodians has always been a large one. Hence again, (for this is a system connected in all its parts,) to both Chemosh³ and Moloch they sacrificed men: humanity is immolated at such shrines constantly.

Between Moab and Ammon it is harder to distinguish. “The near relation between the two peoples indicated in their origin,” says Grove, “continued throughout their existence: from their earliest mention (Deut.2) to their disappearance from biblical history, the brother-tribes are named together. (Cf. Judg.10:6; 2 Chron.20:1; Zeph.2:8, etc.) Indeed, so close was their union, and so near their identity, that each would appear to be occasionally spoken of under the name of the other... They are both said to have hired Balaam to curse Israel (Deut.23:4)... In the answer of Jephthah to the king of Ammon the allusions are continually to Moab (Judg.11:15, 18, 25), while Chemosh, the peculiar deity of Moab (Num.21:29), is called ‘thy god’ (24.) The land from Arnon to Jabbok, which the king of Ammon calls ‘my land’ (13), is elsewhere distinctly stated to have once belonged to a ‘king of Moab.’ (Num.21:26.)”

On the other hand he notices that but one city of Ammon (Rabbah) is spoken of, and that the allusions to the habits and circumstances of

³ The Moabite stone has shown us this as to Chemosh.

civilization, so common in connection with Moab, are absolutely wanting in regard to Ammon. The Ammonites have the fierce habits of marauders, cruelty to their enemies (1 Sam.11:2; Amos 1:13; Jer.41:6-7; Jn.11:7,12), “as well as a suspicious discourtesy to their allies, which on one occasion (2 Sam.10:1-5) brought all but extermination on the tribe, (12:31.)” “Taking the above into account,” he says, “it is hard to avoid the conclusion that, while Moab was the settled and civilized half of the nation of Lot, the Bene-Ammon formed its predatory and Bedouin section. A remarkable confirmation of this opinion occurs in the fact that the special deity of the tribe was worshiped, not in a house, nor on a high place, but in a booth or tent designated by the very word which most keenly expressed to the Israelites the contrast between a nomadic and a settled life (Amos 5:26).”

In Moab, we may perhaps see, then, the mere quiet worldling, satisfied with the gains of his profession; in Ammon, the heretic raider upon Israel’s possession. We have had a type of this nature in the Philistines of the sea-coast, Israel’s enemies on the other side; but these are nevertheless different in what they represent. Every form of spiritual existence, good or evil, we may expect to find embodied in these types, which so vividly picture the life and warfare of the people of God.

It may at first sight seem strange, however, if this be true, that God should have distinctly provided a place for Moab and Ammon, and not suffer Israel to dispossess them. We have seen, however, the same to be the case as to Edom, and how the fact answers to the type. As to the tares in the field too, which would correspond essentially to Ammon, the word is, “Let them grow with the wheat unto the harvest,” which is very similar to what we have here. If we find, too, that Lot’s children have their use, and that they have been the means of destroying certain giants, the Emim and the Zamzummim, out of the lands which they have occupied, this is true also of Edom and the Horites, and the Avvim before the Caphtorim, who seem to have become united with the Philistines. It is no new thing for God to overrule the growth of one evil for the destruction of another, that the world may be at least more tolerable for those that inhabit it. Those that mean nothing less than to serve God are thus compelled to do it; just as “He maketh the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder of wrath He will restrain.” (Ps.61:10.)

As to these giants, of whom little except the names remains, even the names are at present too uncertain in their interpretation to be able to say anything reliable about them. Vocabularies of this sort need to have more of the intelligence of faith in them, before questions such as these can receive any proper treatment. In the meantime we must perforce be content with marking them as questions remaining for the patient explorer of the Word in a time to come,—if indeed there shall be for it time to come! For the end is surely near at hand.

3. (2:24-25.) The war for possession now at hand.

The war for possession is now about to begin, God's threatening as to the former generation being now accomplished, and the hindrance to occupation of the land removed. They are therefore encouraged to go forward, doubting nothing.

3. (2:26—3:29.) Possession.

Possession, as we see plainly here, begins this side Jordan. Israel are directly bidden to possess themselves of the land of the Amorites, which is in fact a good land, and worthy of God to give. So with us: "godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Tim.4:8.) Yea, says the apostle, "all things are yours, whether... the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." (1 Cor.3:21-23.) Here it is plain that we have possessions both sides of death, both banks of Jordan, yea, and Jordan itself.

Yet we may make very serious mistake none the less, as the two and a half tribes certainly did. What more natural for them than the language we have heard them use, when God had said to them, "Begin, take possession"? But Israel's land must be apportioned by lot; and they do not wait for the lot. The country suits them: it is fit for cattle, and they have cattle; thus, like Lot of old, they cannot trust God to choose for them,—they must choose for themselves. And they do choose peremptorily: they will not go over Jordan,—which they modify presently by undertaking to go and fight to give their brethren possession of the land which for themselves they refuse: to that refusal they hold fast.

The spiritual explains the natural here as so often elsewhere. As heavenly men the world belongs to us; but only to use as heavenly men. Gilead and

Bashan may be ours as a dependency, but Canaan is the land of our inheritance and of our hearts. The world is ours, only as we are Christ's. It belongs to us, and therefore we do not belong to it.

1. (2:26-37.) Sihon.

The victory over Sihon, and the meaning of the whole history, so far as we could learn it, have been considered already. What is emphasized here, as suited to Moses' purpose, is that God gave him into their hand, even the stubbornness which refused passage to the advancing host being of Him, the iniquity of the Amorites being now full, and so the ban upon them being dwelt on also, by which Israel became simply the executioners of the divine judgment. It was with them neither lust of possession nor passion for destroying which brought on Sihon and his people this merciless extirpation. The mercy was for the world, in rooting out of it a virulent evil. The indictment against them is given elsewhere; and the execution of God's sentence put into Israel's hand was well calculated to impress them with a sense of divine holiness which should not leave them.

2. (3:1-11.) Og

The significance of Og and the conquest of Bashan has also been considered; nor does it seem possible here to add to it.

3. (3:12-17.) The land acquired.

The whole subject of the land will come before us, if the Lord permit, in the consideration of the book of Joshua, and we shall defer till then any attempt to read the significance of what we find here. That there is significance everywhere, we must not doubt: what Canaan was to Israel ought for us to find its parallel in spiritual import, surely. What must not this land, "the glory of all lands," "where the eyes of the Lord are continually," furnish to a believing study of it? Nothing has been done in this way as yet: has it been attempted? Shall we not find here certainly that "in all labour there is profit," and that "the soul of the diligent shall be made fat"?

4. (3:18-22.) Practical exhortation.

After the apportionment of the land already acquired, Moses reminds the people of the obligation of those entering into possession of it to take part with their brethren in the future conquest; to which Joshua also is

encouraged with the assurance that the present success is but an earnest of the future. Jehovah is with them in unchanging strength and faithfulness.

5. (3:23-29.) God's way with Moses.

And then, once more, he who had been Jehovah's instrument in bringing them out of Egypt seeks, with all the longing of his soul, to be permitted to go over Jordan, and see the good land beyond it. But there is no repentance with One who never speaks in haste, nor can mend what He speaks: Moses is refused, for the sake of the people, who must learn in him God's ways; but he is granted Pisgah, for there is no breach between holiness and love; and he shall see the land, with God.

4. (4:1-40.) The exhortation of experience.

The admonition follows, given by this experience. The history has a moral, as all man's history, indeed, when read aright; as all will be proved when it is first fully told out and accented right. Israel is a sample, not an exception: it is thus alone that it can have any voice for us, or be other than words spoken into the air.

1. (4:1-8.) To wholehearted obedience, neither adding nor diminishing.

The voice preaches obedience; but obedience is only that when it is uncompromising loyalty, never tampering with the statute-book. There must be no addition, which would exalt man's word to God's; no subtraction, reducing God's word to man's. For this there must be a single eye, so that the vision shall not be blurred: the commandment itself is light as it is life. This, experience had shown to Israel: where were the men that went after Baal-Peor? But those who clave unto Jehovah lived. And what nation beside had ever such perfect statutes? What wisdom and understanding would be theirs who kept them!

2. (4:9-14.) The covenant.

The people had met God, and they had His word:—two things that must go together for us also if we are to be adequately furnished for the path. The example of Job shows us the necessity of the first, for one beyond all others of his day in blamelessness of character. It was when his eye saw God that he came to abhor himself in dust and ashes. It is here man's will is broken, with his pride, and God's will becomes all in all to him. Then God, who is a consuming fire, speaks out of the midst of the fire, and the

written Word becomes the record of a living Voice, which has spoken, and which speaks to us. Nothing can possibly take the place of this real meeting with God—this being face to face with His Majesty. Neither for Israel nor yet for Job was this a falling into a Father’s arms—the gospel had not been spoken, save in parables. But now there is a danger of God being *lost* in the Father, rather than (as He should be) *manifested* in the Father. How much lack there is, among those too who have well learnt the gospel, of that broken spirit—so priceless a thing with God— and which is the unfailing consequence of having *met God!* For one who has done this, it is henceforth “*God* and the word of His grace:” the sweet and wholesome, childlike, not slave-like, “fear of God” will accompany the “comfort of the Holy Ghost,” and the issue will be a persuasive witness for God, by which, as in the beginning, the Church will be “multiplied” (Acts 9:31). It is the glory of God in the face of him that has been with Him.

3. (4:15-24.) They are to be separated to God, as the people of His inheritance.

After such a manner, then, as the day permitted, these two things appear in Israel’s history. They were a people separated to God as His possession. *He* was toward them a jealous God, because of His love to them. They were to be His alone; and He was to be for them separate from all else, not confounded with any imagination of man’s, or likeness of any thing in heaven or earth, who can be represented by nothing but Himself. For us, Christ as the “image of the invisible God” has only emphasized, not lessened, this unapproachable glory. God is indeed brought near; but if He draw near, the more we realize our nothingness in His presence.

We are His: if Israel were brought out of Egypt, the iron furnace, we are the subjects of a more wondrous and spiritual redemption. For Israel, this was the first argument of the law; for us, it is that which above all speaks of His title to us.

4. (4:25-31.) Failure forewarned.

But even as he speaks of that separation to Jehovah, which the love He had to them claimed at their hands, and in which lay all their glory and felicity, the shadow of the future sweeps over the soul of the prophet-lawgiver; and he sees their departure from Jehovah, their idolatry, to which God must give them up, only to enjoy it, not in the land which was devoted to

Him, but scattered in that of strangers. There they would realize the miserable bondage they had chosen, until with their whole heart they should seek again the God of their fathers: seek, then to find; for such is the mercy of Him against whom they have rebelled, and His faithfulness to the unforgotten covenant.

Thus, before their actual possession of the land of promise, they are warned of how, though not forever, they will lose it. And so the Church, from the very beginning, was warned of like departure, the seeds of which already were found in the apostle's days, and would develop into a darker apostasy than that of Israel. Only the end here is the removal of her candlestick upon earth, while the true saints are caught up to heaven, that "*Israel*" may "bud and blossom, and fill the face of the earth with fruit."

5. (4:32-40.) God with them their peculiar blessing above all people.

God with them, that was their glory. Had any other nation heard His voice out of the fire kindled by His presence, enabled to hear it and to live? Had any other people been taken to be His own, plucked out of the grasp of another nation with such a hand of power, with signs and wonders and mighty deeds? The question implies that there could be but one answer then. Now, we can speak of God more marvellously displayed—of a salvation greater and more wondrous. How pregnant, then, should be for us Moses' conclusion here: "Know therefore, and consider it in thy heart, that Jehovah He is God, in the heavens above and in the earth beneath: He, and none else"! Do we always act as though we believed it? Are His commandments kept in simplicity, as if we did? *Absolute* obedience, is it so common among us yet? And this is the measure of faith, and of the love by which faith works.

5. (4:41-43.) How God can be with man.

This part of Deuteronomy is closed with a significant act on the part of Moses. He sets apart three cities of refuge for the land already in possession on the east of Jordan. The spiritual meaning of these cities of refuge has been already considered in general; here we shall find it extended and developed in a way full of the deepest interest to every spiritual mind. How full of interest that which, penetrating beneath a comparatively unattractive surface, discovers to us the thoughts of God, then hidden, (and of necessity hidden,) when the events passed into history, but preserved for us, nevertheless, in the record of them by the hands of

those who, led of the Spirit, thus immeasurably transcended their own knowledge! Here, it is evident that it is the inner meaning that must illumine the history, and that those who stop short of this lose all the power of the history. We shall be easily content, for the sake of showing, as God may grant, this inner meaning, to be counted romancers and fabulists by the many (alas!) with whom divine history is nothing more than history, and with whom their “immanent deity” is too impartial to favour an Israelite chronicler beyond a Greek or Roman historian. Science may, for the purpose of anatomy, rejoice in the carcass rather than the living form; but for us, the breath of the Spirit of life is in these pages, and we will not give them up to that which, having used its knife upon them, will restore them to us in a state fit only for the charnel-house.

These cities of refuge, set at intervals through the land of Israel, are a garrison for it from God, which even still, in ruin, as the land is, watch over it, as ministers of unchanging grace, and prophets of now near-coming glory. This people of God, separated to Him in the wonderful way attested by their annals,—what, after all, has been their condition for many and long centuries of subjection to hostile races? They have been strangers and wanderers, Cain-like, and indestructible as Cain,—a nation surviving even in death, but as if to perpetuate only the memory of the doom under which they lie,—the doom of an awful fratricide. Such is, in fact, their condition,—a condition hopeless to most yet, though it may be now with a streak of grey dawn widening upon it. But these cities of refuge have all the time been watch-towers set to face eastward, ramparts round prostrate Zion, upon which the watchmen hold not their peace, and give Him no rest, till He establish it again,—yea, till He make it a praise upon earth. (Isa.52:6-7.)

They are His pledge, in view of what has in fact come to pass, that what He has foreseen cannot thwart His purposes, nor their sin His long-foreshown grace. Preach they may in sackcloth, but it is good tidings that they preach, of a place of security even for homicides,—for those for whom His plea shall yet avail, “They know not what they do.”

Thus alone can their blessing come—can the favour which of old distinguished them be again shown them; thus only can God be with man at any time. The Crucified is our shelter from the avenger, and the pledge of full possession of our destined inheritance; and the more we contemplate

the type here, the more we shall see the features of Christ and of our blessing in Him.

Six cities gird the whole land,—the land as far as Israel in the past enjoyed it: in their number thus speaking of the victory of divine grace over and in them. Three only are here: Jordan dividing equally the six into two threes, the number of testimony and that of the divine fullness. This victory is indeed such a witness: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as they are for the first time fully made known in the New Testament, so it is in personal activity in our behalf that they are manifested.

At present, we have only three to consider: first, for the Reubenites, Bezer, in the wilderness, in the table-land. “Bezer” means “fortification,” a place enclosed, sometimes a “store” or treasure so enclosed. The application to our Lord scarcely needs enlarging on. God’s enclosure can never be a mere defence; it must be planted, like the first garden, with “every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.” Or, better than all, when we are thus shut up, He makes us a “garden enclosed,” out of which for Him north wind and south alike make the spices to flow out. In Him, we are not merely with evil and enemy shut out; we are shut in with blessing.

And this for the Reubenite, self-willed, impetuous against restraint as we have seen him,—a restraint which shall overcome and hold him fast, remould, deliver him from himself, make him fruitful. Blessed be God!

Bezer is “in the wilderness;” and it is even in this world that this great gift is made our own. The life-boat is needed for the seas, the armour for the battle; and “as He is, so are we in this world.”

Bezer is also “in the level country,”—the *mishor*,—a word which in Isa.11:4 and Mal.2:6 is used for “equity.” It is indeed thus that Christ has become a refuge for us,—no mere escape, but righteousness..

Next, we have Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites. “Ramoth” means “heights,” as “Gilead” a “rocky” region. As security would be attained in a level country by a simple enclosure, such as we find in Bezer, so in a rocky district the natural place of security would be a height. The plural form may be, in Hebrew, only intensification. And here it seems scarcely possible to miss the application. Christ our refuge is indeed exalted to a height which renders it impossible for any earthly thing to assail or threaten our security in Him. In Him, risen out of death and ascended to

heaven, we are “risen together,” and “seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” No difficulties of the rough path we tread can affect for a moment our perfect peace in Him whose path is ended in the joy of victory and His work accomplished. Heaven can be no surer to us when we are in it than in Christ having gone in for us, our Representative Head. And this, how comforting for the Gadite assailed by a troop, and yet thus able and certain to conquer in the end! Jacob’s wondrous prophecy, we can see, accompanies us all through, and, as a foundation, governs all the superstructure.

We have yet one of these cities remaining,—“Golan in Bashan for the Manassites.” To Golan is assigned very diverse meanings: we take, as always in these cases, that which is in most harmony with its context, and has thus the sanction of fullest significance. The idea suggested by Bashan, the kingdom of Og, we have already considered (Num.21:33-35). It speaks of pleasure, in a bad sense,—luxury, sensuous pleasure, with which even the common acceptation of “Bashan” as “rich soil” is not discordant. It contained then, probably,—does now certainly,—some of the richest land in Syria. “Golan,” in keeping with all this, means “joy,”—even that which expresses itself in bodily movement, “exultation.” We “rejoice in Christ Jesus,” says the apostle: “boast,” or “exult,” is the better term. What more needful for a Manassite, especially, as here, one who has failed in steadfast purpose, than Christ in that character as a “refuge” from himself? Let us not make light of joy, if it be right joy,—that is, joy in the right Object; but let us remember that joy even in salvation is not enough, and may fail us in the time of need. Only that joy in Him “whom, having not seen, ye love, in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice” is “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” (1 Pet.1:8.)

Thus if our life-history, like that of Israel, afford us little material for boasting in ourselves, these cities of refuge fittingly remind us of what is our security and our full resource. Like the Nazarite with his vow fulfilled, the end of our course shall only make our divorce from self complete, and Christ in absolute attainment our occupation forever. Amen.

DIVISION 2. (Ch.4:44—30.) The Exposition and Enforcement of the Law.

We now come to that exposition and enforcement of the law which occupies evidently the body of the book. In the first of its three subdivisions we have its governing principle,—that is, of course, its essence, and this is embodied in the first commandment of its first table. In the second, we have the illustration of it in special commands. In the third, its sanctions,—the rewards and penalties which actualize it as law.

SUBDIVISION 1. (Ch.4:44—11:32.)The governing principle, or the law in its essence.

1. (4:44—6:3.) The text to be expounded.

In the first subdivision there are five sections; in which we find, first, the law itself, and in the repetition of this we are called back to the manner and circumstances of its first announcement. In the first two commandments of the law, by which God is enthroned in the affections of His people, the spirit of the whole is seen. For this, the testimony to Him, and to the salvation He has wrought for them, is to be constantly maintained,—kept before their own eyes, and taught their children. For this also all toleration of the false gods of the heathen and of their worship is forbidden: they are to be a people holy to their God, the only true God. Then they are to beware of self-righteousness, which the enjoyment of His favour might engender; and in this, the lessons of the wilderness—of their humbling and discipline there, and of their need of it—are to have their permanent use. Then responsibility is finally insisted on, and the issue of their conduct in blessing or in curse.

1. (4:44—5:21.) The law at Horeb.

The exposition of the law begins with the place in which and the circumstances under which it is given,—after their deliverance from Egypt, Jordan reached, the land of the two Amorite kings already in possession. It is evident that these are motives and encouragements to obedience—pledges of the full blessing yet to come.

In a similar interest, Israel are carried back to Horeb, and placed amid the solemn surroundings of the first giving of the law. Many of the eyes which were upon Moses now had beheld the glory of the fiery mount, as he

reminds them. Face to face, out of the midst of the fire, God had talked with them. They needed no argument as to His being or power; but that power had been used in their behalf, and the first words of Him who spake declared Him their Deliverer out of Egyptian bondage. He did not claim their love without having done that which would secure it for Him. But this love must have reverence in it also: nothing is more offensive than that familiar tone assumed toward God by some who have been moulded upon the lax gospel often preached today. Yet God would have us near Him—truly near—the nearer, the more His majesty will impress us, the infinite distance between ourselves and Him will penetrate us.

True, it was here the fiery mount: for the people had accepted law, and put themselves under it; yet the fear with which God sought to impress them was preservative, and in that sense gracious. And there remains for us, after grace has fully come, a “fear of the Lord” which is not terror, but which allows no levity, and along with which “the comfort of the Holy Ghost” is ever found. (Acts 9:31.)

Spoken before written, the law of the Lord is a living reality; and while it may be a “ministry of death,” is never a dead letter. Our hearts may well delight to recognize in it all through, indeed, a “ministry” meant to blight only the pretentious pride and self-righteousness of man, and thus deliver him—to shut him up among those “lost” for whom a Saviour is provided.

In the recapitulation of the law, it is evident, as especially in the fourth commandment, that Moses does not confine himself to a literal quoting of the divine words. The ground for the observance of the Sabbath is here, not the six days’ making of heaven and earth, but the redemption of the people out of Egypt. Of course, the one reason does not conflict with the other; and indeed the latter is a needed supplement to the former. Man as the creature of God can only now by grace be sustained in this place, and at rest; and after his wilderness-history is closed, as it is in Deuteronomy, this comes in more naturally than in Exodus, where the people stand as yet under the unbroken covenant. God’s Word is perfect and divine in every part.

In the fifth commandment, the words, “as Jehovah thy God commanded thee,” brought in, show clearly that Moses is not simply repeating. The same words are found in the fourth commandment, but might be thought in that place to refer to the first institution of the Sabbath, when the manna

fell. He adds here also, “that it may be well with thee.” Except in the fourth commandment, the differences are, however, slight.

2. (5:22—6:3.) In relation to God by a mediator.

Moses, after the recapitulation of the law, dwells upon their need of a mediator—a need met, obviously, only typically in himself. A greater than Moses speaks to us here through him; and we see how Deuteronomy presents to us the great features of the history as suited to us. Owning that Jehovah had actually spoken to them, and they lived, they yet declare this impossible to last; and God owns this (from their stand-point) as true. But then the legal covenant was plainly hopeless. One only reason can there be why God and His creature should not meet together in security. No necessary distance between finitude and the Infinite One could make His presence destructive to what His hands had fashioned. No, it is sin which absolutely demands judgment, unless Another can intervene in righteousness in his behalf; and here Moses can make no real atonement, as we know. He is a shadow, not the substance. Man’s refuge is not from God, but in God Himself.

2. (6:4-25.) The exposition begins.

1. (6:4-5.) The first commandment, and its demand of the whole man.

Such is the text, and now we come to the exposition. Moses sums up in two brief sentences what the law implies in its first table. First, the unity and immutability of God: “Jehovah our God is one Jehovah;” founded upon this, His claim to the undivided allegiance of man. — “Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” If there be but one God, there is none beside to divide the heart with; and Jehovah claims in the most absolute way the whole of it. The words stand for the inner man, with all his affections, and in their full energy. And this is the reasonable claim of the Creator to the full answer of the heart to Him who created him, and in whose service alone all his faculties find their full occupation, rest, and satisfaction. All freedom apart from this is only slavery. All slavery here is only freedom; as he knew well who could say, “To me, to live is Christ,” and who in his epistle to the Romans signs himself His “bondsmen,” — “Paul, bondsmen of Jesus Christ.” (Rom1:1, Greek.) Yet none can insist more earnestly that “we have not received the spirit of bondage” (8:15.) To live in love, and serve

Him who is love, is indeed the opposite.

2. (6:6-9.) The testimony to be mainlined.

Whose they were, they were to remind themselves and others at all times, and on all occasions. Their confession of God was to be of the most open character. How great a help and strength to the soul itself is this conspicuous putting God foremost! “I have set the Lord always before me” has necessarily for its companion-word, “He is at my right hand: I shall not be moved” (Ps.16:8.) God’s seal is for the forehead, not the back of the head; and how many are saved by it from the devil’s locusts! (Rev.9:4.) Nor does the apostle hesitate to say, “With the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom.10:10.) Let us not think it legal to insist upon commandment, and to write upon every available space a “Thus saith the Lord.” Such a consecration of things is the way to prevent the devil’s scribbling, who has not the least hesitation or delicacy in appropriating every vacant spot. God’s word is no intrusion, and never out of place. By it the heavens were framed, and the earth established; and still it establishes, harmonizes, gives fullest meaning, character, beauty, to every thing. It is no more out of place any where than a ray of sunshine is; and, like it, glorifies what it rests upon.

3. (6:10-15.) Its memory not to be lost amid the enjoyment of possession.

But, alas! then as now, and now as then, the very fullness of the blessing enjoyed might cause forgetfulness of the gracious hand from which it came. “Fullness of bread” had of old been the destruction of Sodom. Trial and necessity awake the consciousness of man’s need of God, while without want he may lose easily the sense of his still existing dependence. Egypt, the type of the world away from Him, we have seen to be fed by her unfailing river. Mercies thus may through our pride and wilfulness become curses, so that plagues shall have to become our mercies. In this condition the gods which man’s own heart has devised are more attractive than the glorious God who is our Creator, not our creature; and Israel can go after the idols of Canaan—of the nations they have seen driven out before Jehovah—away from Him who had given them these for a possession.

Of this, then, they are warned beforehand, that they may retain Him in their fear, serve Him, and swear by His name. The God who loves them is jealous of their affections. They must choose between that love

heretofore so fruitful to them and the wrath which will alike be fruitful; for indifferent He cannot be.

4. (6:16-25.) The practical effect, and the personal experience.

They must not tempt Jehovah, then, as they tempted Him in Massah. There, it was, in fact, belief in His indifference. They said, “Is the Lord among us, or not?” He had been, surely; but in their change of circumstances, they had imagined fickleness in Him, and that His shoulder had thrown off the burden it had assumed. How little we judge it our sin that we have not counted on Him, that we have judged Him capable of abandoning the objects of His choice! No: He would fill His place; let it be only their care to fill theirs. Let them diligently observe His commandments, which were also His testimonies, and the result could not but follow—that it should be well with them, and that they should go in to possess the land.

One blessed experience they had, and which was to be their testimony to the generations following. They had been bond-slaves in Egypt, and Jehovah had broken their bonds to bring them forth. This He had enshrined for their remembrance in those ordinances which, as they abode, should be testimonies that He abode still, their changeless God and Saviour. Thus was perpetuated among them the memory of a love which in all else manifested itself for them,—statutes which would be righteousness to those who observed them, and for their good always: assurances of what He who gave them was in His own nature, as loving righteousness,—who commands love, because He loves. So in man also does conscience testify to the one of these, as the heart of parent, brother, friend testify to the other. In these, man cannot but be, however feebly, the reflection of his Maker.

3. (7:1-26.) The sanctification of the land, by the extirpation of the Canaanite idolaters.

So far as to Israel, simply looked at as from within: a sterner duty awaited them as to the land into which Jehovah was about to bring them. They were completely to destroy out of it the Canaanite inhabitants, showing them no mercy, making no covenant or alliance with them. Over and over again the cause of this has been explained. They were a people whose iniquity was now full, as in Abraham’s time it yet was not. (Gen.15.) The

land itself was spewing them out for their abominations, and Israel was in this respect but the executioner of divine judgment, not of their own passion or lust of acquisition. Instead of destroying them, as He might, by plague or famine, He chose Israel to perform this office, and thus gave His people themselves the moot solemn lesson that could be given them, in the holiness of His own nature, and in what sin is before Him. They themselves would incur similar awful judgments if they followed them in their sin, of which their loathsome gods of lust and murder were the full outcome and expression. There must be no dalliance with this evil, no league of any kind with those infected with it. Axe and fire must deal with all its symbols, and Israel must be wholly devoted to Him who had set His love upon them in all their insignificance, and in that love, and faithful to His promise to their fathers, had now redeemed them to Himself. Thus they knew God, this true and faithful God,—faithful in holy judgment as in loving mercy. How needful all this reiteration Israel's after-history shows abundantly. Here, therefore, follows the detail of various blessing, just such things as every man values, which would go with obedience; while the power of God, which they had witnessed in Egypt, would be against their enemies and consume them; if slowly, even this in tender mercy to them, lest the wild beasts should increase too much in the vacant land.

4. (8:1—10:11.) Lessons of the wilderness.

Again, Moses returns to enforce all this with the ever-fruitful wilderness-lessons;—we too, in eternity, shall return to feast upon harvests gathered out of such barren soil. If these are lessons of humiliation, it is just this that is so needful for the proud heart of man. To the meek and contrite of heart God looks—yea, dwells with these. Humility is the true undoing of the fall in one main feature; and thus the forty years of discipline have their justification.

1. (8:1-20.) Jehovah's care.

They were to remember, then, all the way by which God had led them—a way which had brought out for them, as His way still does for all, all that was in their hearts. This in its design was but their Father's care, whether He suffered them to hunger, or fed them with His strange food, still by man so little appreciated. Patient weaning from self it was, patient instilling of lessons of dependence, so easy-seeming, so hard to acquire. Ah, in the life that He has taught us to be our possession, how sure that God's Word is

that which sustains it!— “By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live.”

If there was trial, how God’s tenderness was shown! Raiment never growing old; feet never swelling as they trod that flinty soil. We too have a robe of beauty that is fresh eternally; “feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,” of which the rough places only prove the abiding comfort. Discipline— yes! but the tender discipline of a father for the son in whom he delighteth.

Beyond, the good land beckoning them— “a land of water-brooks, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills,” reminding us of the fullness of the Spirit which abounds at all levels for us; a land of grain and fruits, and stored within with precious metals. Alas! there lay for them dangers which the wilderness was meant to prepare them for; and they might say, “My power, and the might of my hand, have gotten me this wealth.” Into our land, thank God! we shall enter with this lesson learnt; and yet how in this the wilderness may still be remembered as our teacher, and its teachings still be treasured up for endless blessing!

2. (9:1-24.) The contradiction of sinners: a testimony.

Not only might there be the thought that their own hand had gained them what they had, a subtler one might use the very acknowledgment of God as having bestowed it to foster a spirit of self-righteousness. Moses goes on, therefore, to review their course, as far back as Horeb itself, the place of covenant, and where it was so soon and so terribly broken through. When Jehovah’s power had cast out before them nations mightier than themselves, they might impute it to their own credit that He had thus manifestly favoured them. No; but on account of the wickedness of these nations He had cast them out. And as to themselves, they had always been a stiff-necked people. And again he recites how he had gone up at first into the mount to receive the tables of the law, and how in that short space in which he had remained there, they had forfeited every thing, and provoked Jehovah so that His wrath threatened to destroy them all. Yet He had hearkened to his intercession both for them and Aaron. And from there to Kadesh-barnea they had constantly rebelled.

3. (9:25—10:11.) Restoration.

It was divine mercy only that had restored every thing. In that extremity of

theirs, the promise to their fathers and the glory of His own name had given Him ground to take them up again. The tables had been renewed, and this time to be received into the ark for safe-keeping; and there they still abide. Aaron died long after, transmitting the priesthood to Eleazar his son. While the whole tribe of Levi were separated to God to minister to Him and to bless the people in His name, having Jehovah alone for their portion and inheritance.

The statement as to Aaron is quite intelligible as showing the answer to Moses' prayer, to which without any doubt it stands related, the section closing as it began with this, and the reiteration that God had answered it. But there are, at first sight, difficulties nevertheless connected with it, which furnish, a pretext for cavil by those ready to find it.

The main difficulty is, that the passage reads like a part of the itinerary of the wilderness, beginning before Mosera, at which Aaron died, and going on beyond to Gudgodah and Jotbath. The only other that can be really called so is that the time of the separation of the Levites seems to come after Aaron's death, which in fact it preceded thirty-eight years. But this is founded only upon the expression "at that time," coming after the account of Aaron's death, which it does, but does not necessarily refer to it. It is the "time" of his great intercession that is in Moses' mind; and to this he has before returned after going beyond it (as 9:24-25).

But the first difficulty needs more attention. It will be perceived at once that the death of Aaron, and the succession of Eleazar are the central points quite evidently; and that these are indeed in such relation to the whole history here, we have seen in Numbers. In Eleazar the priesthood of Aaron is maintained, spite of his death, and in the power of resurrection; and this connects significantly with the rapid advance of the people, who now press on through all opposition triumphantly to the very border of the land. Our great High-Priest, His work accomplished, and risen out of death, is able thus to lead on His people. In the passage before us indeed but a few stages of the journey are given; they are however a good sample; and those who realize the connection of the smitten Rock with the outflowing waters, and of Christ dead and risen with the gift of the Spirit, will mark with interest, as others have done, the record (surely not purposeless) of what was indeed so important for their journey, the water which they found. First, before Aaron's death, and giving perhaps the meaning of the commencement here—the "wells of the (Horite) sons of Jaakan." After Mosera and

when Eleazar has succeeded Aaron, Gudgodah, which has been said to mean “a well with much water.” Then Jotbath, which (it is openly stated) is “a land of water-brooks.” Thus there is progress: has there not at least been corresponding progress since Christ our High-Priest has entered the heavens? From the wells which indeed furnish water, but in Horite hands—they were cave-dwellers, as we know, these Horites—to first the rise of many waters in that of Pentecost, and then the far and wide-flowing streams among the nations?

5. (10:12—11:32.) Israel’s responsibility.

This part is now closed with a solemn reminder of their responsibility to God.

1. (10:12-15.) As the elect of God.

What did God require of them but a loving obedience to commandments which were always for their good? love to One who while infinitely great, heaven and earth belonging to Him, had nevertheless chosen them above all people in His love to them? Here was what made them so responsible beyond all men, while it should have made their duty easy of fulfilment. They had but to wear the light yoke of love, a thing which is indeed the moral power of the gospel: “We love Him, because He first loved us.” How far, then, does our responsibility exceed that of Israel?

2. (10:16-22.) As called to imitate Him.

They indeed knew God in His wonderful work for them, as well as in the commandments which displayed His character. They were called to imitate Him. If He cared for the fatherless and widows, and for the stranger, they too must care. And had they not known what it was to be strangers in that land out of which (marvellously multiplied amid all their suffering) He had delivered them with an outstretched arm?

3. (11:1-9.) His holiness.

In Egypt and at the Red Sea they had seen His signs, His anger, the more terrible for its holiness. And in the wilderness, when the earth acted for Him, and swallowed up the insolence of the stubborn transgressor. Now, the good land before them waited to receive them, and welcome them with all its wealth. But they must enjoy it holily or not enjoy it.

4. (11:10-21.) Their dependence on Him.

Indeed, this land was a land not like the land of Egypt. There, independent, as they might think, of heaven, the overflowing river both watered and fertilized it, needing but guidance upon man's part, who with his foot could guide it as he would. Not so Israel's land of hills and valleys and rain from heaven. Here God had chosen for them the better part of creature-dependence, therefore of the Creator's care. "A land which Jehovah thy God careth for: the eyes of Jehovah thy God are continually upon it, from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year." Could those vigilant eyes overlook their need? No, assuredly; but their need might be, alas! of chastening, and He would give it. Israel's land might thus suffer where Egypt escaped. It is the secret of the seventy-third psalm, only to be read aright, and acquiesced in joyfully, in the presence of God, in the sanctuary. If the wicked are "not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued as other men,"—if, on the other hand, "all the day long have *I* been plagued, and chastened every morning,"—here is the meaning of it, that "I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me with Thy right hand." How blessed a reason! how glorious a compensation! "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in respect of Thee." The presence of the Holy One with us necessarily implies discipline; but it is a Father's discipline of the "son in whom He delighteth."

This, then, is what God appoints for Israel. They are perpetually to be upon His arm. They are to know the "living God" in the constant display of His resources for them, even as their land is to be not a dead level, such as Egypt's, but a land of valley and hill, such as must needs have the direct "rain from heaven" upon it. And then with it what Pisgah prospects, and what a place for a hardy race such as mountaineers are! And what mines of wealth in the bowels of these hills,— "a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou shalt dig copper"! what "fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills"!

This is the creature-place—not a hard one, at its worst, when the opened eye beholds Him on whom all things wait. And at last its full meaning shall come out, how blessed! for in the creature it has been God's will to manifest Himself; and into the creature-place the Creator Himself has been pleased to come, and to know fully all that dependence upon Him which to us only unbelief makes hard. "I was cast upon Thee from the womb," is the

word of Him, whom yet all nature shall put on its bridal dress to welcome—the “MAN,” God’s “fellow”! (Zech.13:7.)

Let Israel keep only in the place of dependence, taking from no hand but that of their God, serving Him with the only service fitting for Him to receive, then they have pledged a word that shall never be broken, for their full deliverance in the land. It is also pledged—and the pledge has been redeemed—that if they go away from Him, they shall learn in a closed heaven and a barren earth His faithfulness to the covenant they have despised. Let them only lay up in their hearts His word, and confess it in their lives, in multiplied days they and their children shall enjoy the fullness of a blessing, of which He who knows heaven can say, “*As the days of heaven upon the earth.*”

5. (11:22-32.) The blessing and the curse.

A career of conquest was now before them, and the land is conditionally made over to them, not merely in the extent to which they actually possessed it, but expressly all Lebanon and the wilderness—east of it—as far as the Euphrates itself. In David’s time a shadow of this was reached, but only in the way of supremacy over the nations that filled these countries. Israel is yet to have this in possession, and much more, for the southern limit is not defined here according to promise, and Edom, Moab, and Ammon were at present, as we have seen, excepted from the land assigned them. By and by these also are to be their own. Meanwhile, a large and plentiful land was put before them, which they did not possess, simply because of their own rapid declension and apostasy, their non-observance of the conditions so again and again insisted on.

The blessing and the curse were to be solemnly rehearsed in the centre of the land when God should give it them, from the slopes respectively of Gerizim and Ebal. The last words which point out the site, “beside the oaks of Moreh,”—full of touching recollections for an Israelite,—show that this is the place where Abraham first rested upon entering Canaan. “Moreh” means “teacher,” as the oak itself suits well with the robustness of growth where the Word of God is that which teaches. The connection of Moreh with Shechem is seen in Genesis, and this lies between Ebal and Gerizim. “Shechem” means “shoulder,” and there Israel as a nation, now brought into the land, were finally to take up the burden of the law; a law which is commonly *torah*, or “teaching,” from the same root as Moreh. These are

links which show us how God would carry back His people to the position of their great ancestor, so definitely the “man of faith, and set them where he had been. Alas, they had accepted law, to stand in covenant-relation to Jehovah on that ground; and the shadow of this falls darkly over them. Ebal o’ertops Gerizim. Even this should have been but a voice of recall to Abraham’s blessing through a faith like his: some surely heard it.

SUBDIVISION 2. (Ch.12—26.) Application to the various relationships in which men stand to God or the world around them.

The essence of the law, then, is whole-hearted love to God, who has revealed Himself in such a way as to be fully entitled to it. He who was of old their Creator is now their Redeemer; and the law comes to them laden with the mercies of life which man so keenly appreciates, (if not, alas! as mercies,) and with the memories of broken bonds to enhance their appreciation.

But the love of God of necessity implies the desire of moral assimilation to Him; and thus the law becomes a means to this. In His commandments we learn Himself—not, indeed, as Christ reveals Him, for there was yet, and in this sense, a veil over His face—but in such measure as was at present possible. In the practical application of the “ten words,” we find still more than in the tables themselves, that the law made nothing perfect, and that such and such allowances had to be made in view of the hardness of their hearts, as the Lord declares (Matt.19:8). Spite of this, the imitation of God Himself is plainly what the law requires (ch10:18-19).

1. (12—16:17.) Godward: laws of the first table.

We have now the illustration of this in special commandments which amplify and apply the law to the special relationships of life, and in an orderly way, beginning once more with the first table though, of course, not with the first commandment which has been already dwelt upon and emphasized. The first section is thus marked out as applying to the first table—to duties Godward.

1. (12:1-28.) One only centre of gathering to Himself in all the land.

And of these the first subsection gives one whose importance must be apparent by the way it is insisted on. It is emphasized too as imposed of the

Lord's own will. He would choose one place out of all their tribes to put His name, and there they were to bring their gifts and offerings. There was to be one centre of gathering for all Israel: it is no question of what exceptionally God might Himself command, as in the case of Gideon (Judg.6:26), or of Manoah (13:16), or of a prophet like Samuel (1 Sam.7:9; 10:8)—things which merely show that God was necessarily above His own law, and which might be argued as much to set aside the distinctive priesthood in Aaron's family, as the one place of sacrifice. How should a law for Israel as a whole take notice of such rare exceptions? In fact, to none of these places were the people to come, nor did they. Shiloh first after the conquest of the land, and then Jerusalem, were the chosen centres. Between the two was a time of ruin, in which, it is said, irrespective of law, "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judg.21:25). In such a time God acted in His goodness, outside the established order.

These ordinances are expressly given for the land, and are in character often supplementary to those given at Sinai (ch.29:1). This accounts for much, of the seeming contradiction, out of which infidelity has sought to make capital in her own behalf. To these cavils there have been replies in abundance, and they need not be repeated here, where we have but too little room for what is directly for edification. For souls to be nourished up in the positive teaching of the Word of God is also the best preserver from the questionings of unbelief, so easy to multiply, and whose factories pay such poor wages to the workman.

Here as a first necessity in order to maintain that pure worship of God which their existence as a nation in the midst of surrounding idolatry was to conserve, He once more insists upon the absolute extirpation of idolatry out of the land. All signs, every memorial of it, they were to destroy: the very names of the false gods were to be forgotten. Heathenism had possessed itself of the land: hills, groves, everywhere had been associated with the pollutions of impure and cruel rites. From all these, Israel's eyes were to be called away to their one place chosen of God, where, without visible image or similitude, among all the creatures of His hand, Jehovah dwelt. There they were to bring all their offerings, and, filled with the blessing of the Lord, to eat and rejoice before Him—theirself and their households.

A precious thing is this ability to rejoice before God. It is all power, all security for holiness—the "joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh.8:10).

Israel attached by the heart to this light- and heat-giving centre, their whole life was to revolve around it in the orbit of obedience, no more seeking release than the earth would of the sun. Here, then, God fixes the centre for them—His sanctuary the heart of the land, from which should pulse and return the vivifying streams to every part. For He will be no man's debtor: of His own only can we give Him; and he who gives to Him indeed, enriches himself by giving. Has He hunger that shall be fed with Israel's offerings? Has He need that He ordains them to satisfy? Yes: the need of love for its object. He is Love. His "delights are with the sons of men."

In a lesser sense they are taught to make all taking of life a "sacrifice" to the Lord, the word being used here with regard to what is at any time used for food, the blood being poured upon the ground as the life which belongs to God. It is the application of the principle of Lev.17 (which in its full detail was only possible in the camp in the wilderness) to the land at large. Here, as there, the sacredness of life was to be realized, and their own life to be constantly lifted into spiritual meaning, and brought near to God. Each common meal was to have, as far as this could be given to it, the character of a peace-offering: it was to be enjoyed in communion with God.

Care for the Levite is also insisted on, for if we are with God, He is master of the table at which He sits, and His pensioners become ours. Finally, the extension of the boundaries of the land beyond their present assignment is distinctly contemplated and provided for.

The uses of this provision of one only centre of gathering in the land for a people exposed and prone to yield to the seductions of an idolatry which had connected itself with every part of the scene around them, are evident enough in turning their eyes away from these, removing as far as possible the old associations, so powerful as they prove themselves, and bringing the whole people together under one manifest allegiance. This one sanctuary, with its Levite guard, and the awful Presence which abode there, was a security against the introduction of man's will which for a people such as Israel nothing else could give. For her own purposes, and with evident wisdom, Rome has sought to imitate this. All she has lacked is that divine presence with her, which she has recognized indeed as necessary, and has not failed to claim. Metropolitanism in spiritual things has never been transferred from Jerusalem, though Jerusalem for centuries has been set aside from what was her glory—what will again be this—that she

was the city of God. The city of God for Christianity is heavenly—“Jerusalem which is *above*, which is our mother” (Gal.4:26). The dwelling-place of God on earth is the Church which is formed by the Holy Ghost of *living* stones, which Peter himself has with prophetic significance been made to announce to us (1 Pet.2:5). Practically, the presence of the Lord is with any “two or three gathered to” His “name” (Matt.18:20). Unity now is spiritual, not local. To put it better, the centre of gathering is One hid in heaven, whose “name” alone unites us upon earth. But thank God we are not thus at distance from our centre ever: *wherever* we gather to His name He is.

2. (12:29—13:18.) Of those going aside to serve other gods.

As the first subsection has thus to do with the maintenance of the sovereignty of the one true God, the second naturally treats of those who should turn aside to follow other gods. And here the closing verses of the twelfth chapter seem clearly the beginning of the subject of the thirteenth. The prohibition of all thought of such service, or of mixing it in any way with the service of Jehovah, which they were jealously to adhere to without addition or diminution, leads on to the treatment of seducers in the shape of false prophets, or among kindred and bosom friends, and then where even a whole city might have gone astray.

In the first place, there was to be no borrowing from the worship of false gods, much less going after themselves. A false god implies necessarily what is false and evil morally; for were not man’s conscience defiled, he could not be away from God. The apostle’s history of the development of idolatry (Rom.1) is a true picture of every case, and the gods men take to themselves are a faithful picture of the lusts which call for them. It follows as a thing of course that their service gratifies these and develops them, remorse of conscience coming in, however, and claiming frightful penalties, until men offer the fruit of their bodies for the sin of their souls, passion and fear holding them alternately in bondage. God’s will as proclaimed by His commandments is the only path of light and freedom: they were not to add or take away from it.

Secondly, they were to learn the supremacy of the moral in what might claim to be miracle, and thus decisive witness of what it was wrought to attest. This is a most important principle even now, when from Romanism to Mormonism and to Spiritualism, the supernatural is appealed to as

establishing any thing as truth. Not so does the Word of God use it. Confirm the truth it may; awaken attention to it, it will: sound the alarm-bell in the conscience, summon response from the heart; but that which compels belief is the manifest truth—truth which is always pure, always holy, always witnesses for God within the soul. “By their *fruits* shall ye know them,” says the Lord as to the false prophets. No jugglery can bring forth grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles.

God may, it is plainly stated, allow a sign to come to pass as predicted. The “wicked one” of the last days comes with “all power and signs and *lying* wonders,” things that shall take captive with strong delusion those that have “not received the love of the *truth*, that they might be saved” (2 Thess.2). There is a moral order in all this, and no cause for marvel that they that love lies, and will have them, should find that what they have embraced for truth has been a lie. Those that are *of* the truth hear the truth—Christ’s voice—none others. This is the unalterable and holy law of God’s holy government: “there is a way that seemeth *right* unto a man, and the end thereof are the ways of death.”

How deep this sends home to us the question, so necessary and so healthful as it is, where, and what are we? How well it assures us that if in any thing we deal untruly with our souls, we can make no covenant with the deceit we have invited—deceit will deceive all round! How well may the voice of Truth cry to the sons of men: “All they that hate *Me* love *death*”! (Prov.8:36).

This does not displace the miracle, as some would have it, from its place of witness. It only fixes its place, and refuses to make a servant master; assures us that we everywhere have need of open eyes and conscience, lest we become the poor slaves of superstition that millions are, and from which our vaunted civilization in no wise delivers us.

This second warning is against deception; but “Adam was not deceived,” yet was seduced. The wife gave to her husband, and with open eyes he fell. The third section here warns against this seduction. If it come from thy brother, the son of thy mother, or from the wife of thy bosom, or the friend who is as thine own soul, still the seducer to false gods must perish, and thou thyself have the responsibility of this, thy hand must be first upon him. This supposes public trial and full proof, of course—sufficient witness, without which no life could be taken in Israel. The thing so

proved, nothing remained but judgment: the judgment that fell upon Canaan and her gods must fall upon him who would bring back the gods and so the Canaan. It was God's judgment—amply just as God's must be; just, if ever judgment is just; and the smiting of a love which could not suffer the blight and canker to come upon His people whom He had saved from Egypt and brought home to Himself. Christianity does not smite thus, not because it is not just, but because Christianity is the spirit of grace in a world which has rejected Christ, and in which no divine throne any longer exists as it existed in Israel. But the judgment is reserved only for the time that is surely coming, upon all who refuse still the grace. The tenderest lips that have ever spoken shall pronounce it, the hearts of saints shall say their amen to it, and the consciences of those condemned shall own its justice in that day.

The last case provided for is where a whole city is gone astray from God, in which case it comes under the ban, and is to be destroyed utterly, never to be rebuilt. Thus only could the mercy of God go forth in blessing once more for the land.

3. (14:1-27.) Personal consecration.

We have now three things put together which seem to have little connection with one another or with the topic of consecration to God upon which the first commandment is here directly based. We have indeed to remember that (as has been already said) only illustrations are given us of principles much wider in application. Yet we shall find surely here, as always, that divine wisdom has ordered every thing, and that the illustrations are really such as this supposes. If we take from the passage the typical, that is, the prophetic, spiritual meaning, then indeed we may expect the meagreness which must result from such spoliation; but this will be our own fault entirely, and we do not so propose to treat the blessed Word of God. The New Testament must light up the Old; and in this we deal no more untruly with it than the light does when it floods a landscape with the day. For us the day is come, and we are children of it.

a) No disfigurement of the sons of the living God.

Whatever may be the value of what follows, it is plain that it is based upon a wondrous place that Israel had, their being sons to Jehovah their God. This was their special place among the nations: they had, as the apostle says, "the adoption." It did not involve for them, what it does for us

now, their being children of God as new-born of the Spirit, although where faith was truly in the heart, there of course was new birth at any time. If we read this, then, in the light of God's desire for them, we may and must bring it in. By and by, it will be in fact accomplished as to the whole nation.

"Life," and that in its full sense, a life which the children of God have, gives evidently its fullness to the meaning here. Death is not to have power over the sons of God. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." It would be to dishonour Him, therefore, to make cuttings in the flesh for the dead—ineffaceable marks of grief for that which touched not the true life, and which the hand of God was to remove forever. Except we take in this thought of life, who could refuse to own the power of that under which in fact all would be? Death brings things here to an end, and the more their value, the greater ruin accomplished. It is not to be endured, then, the notion that the Pentateuch is Sadducean, although only by the gospel indeed are life and incorruption fully brought to light. There is darkness, but to faith not impenetrable, as, in fact, we know it was not unpenetrated.

Israel must not disfigure themselves. They were wholly God's, and not to mutilate what He claimed for Himself. So a mere asceticism is a mere dishonour to Him whose we are, and to whom to give one's life is to make it full, perfect, exuberant. "Thou wilt show me the path of life," says the Psalmist, and then adds at once, "in Thy presence fullness of joy; at Thy right hand, pleasures for evermore." If it be answered to this, "Yes, but in heaven," Deuteronomy has enriched us already with the thought of "days of heaven upon the earth."

b) Distinction to be made of what was fit food to sustain life.

It need not surprise us now that we find immediately upon this the insistence once more upon distinction of food, and that Israel shall only partake of what God pronounces clean. Food is the sustenance of life, and spiritually it is fully true that as the food is so the life must be. Christ is thus our Life itself, and the Bread of life. Strength cannot be ours without food, or without proper food; and if we only receive of Christ, it is He who says, "He that eateth Me, shall even live by Me."

Though the distinctions here insisted on have passed away as letter, as spirit they remain as things imperatively to be maintained. Would that we were careful always as to what we fed upon, and realized more fully that

what we assimilate we are assimilated to. But in art, in literature, even for the Christian, genius is permitted to gild vice, and beauty of style to adorn error, until virtue in a rough garb is disdained, and evil in a fine coat welcomed. This has been in measure true at all times, never perhaps more, however, than in the present day; and therefore the commandment here never needed enforcement more.

The lists of clean and unclean are shorter and more concise than in Leviticus 11, with some differences also, of which we can at present unhappily give no account. All has been said already that we are able to say, in the notes upon Leviticus.

c) The life put in connection with the sanctuary presence.

In the third part of this chapter, the practical life of the Israelite is put in connection with the Sanctuary-Presence. An immense point it is that is here insisted on, although the reality is only faintly imaged in the legal statute.

The tithe spoken of is one of the supplementary laws of Deuteronomy, a second tithe, not the first, which belonged to God alone: while this was consumed, at the sanctuary, by the person whose land was tithed, with his household, and the Levite, never to be forgotten. He thus comes up to own before God His mercies and enjoy them with God.

The life is characterized by dependence—faith: and faith has its one object and need in God Himself. The psalms emphasize this need of God, the personal God, for the soul. “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” (Ps.42:2.) The eighty-fourth psalm celebrates the blessedness of those who dwell in God’s house, whose life is one perpetual praise; and the blessedness next to that, of him in whose heart are the “ways” that lead there, who goes from strength to strength, though through the vale of weeping, making it a well, and the rain of heavenly refreshment filling the pools.

What is faith indeed without the God in whom it is? what divine life that draws not up to its source and centre? The journeys of the Israelite to Zion year by year, with their eating and drinking, and joy before Him, do indeed but feebly express the truth here: yet they shadow, and remind us of it.

4. (14:28—15:18.) The practical outgoing in mercy to the poor.

Of this joy in God the practical life is the outflow: on this we do not need to dwell, it is so manifest. Completely in place is it, therefore, that now we find every third year this tithe consumed at home, shared with the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. Not simply given to them, but shared with them—a deeper thing. Christ does not give merely, that we may carry it away from Him; He shares. This is fellowship. We are called to joy in His joy, who came here to sorrow in our sorrow: “I will drink the wine new with you,” He says, “in My Father’s kingdom.”

This is only the first illustration, however, of the mercy to be shown to the needy in Israel, the witness of His mercy who was Israel’s God. We find beyond this two other cases of need.

First, the debtor, to whom the seventh—the Sabbatic—year brought “release” as to his debt. The comparison with Ex.23:11, where the same word as used for “release” here is applied to the land—the letting it rest—assures us plainly that this was not an absolute remission of all debt, but a temporary one during the time of the land-rest, which might hinder payment. This, which did not of course affect the foreigner, shows the reason of his exemption. God would have no poor among His people, although such there would always be, left to test and draw out the mercy of their brethren, who were to make them practically to cease by their care for them. (Comp. v.4 with v.11.) Nor need they fear to suffer by this liberty; for so they would be blessed in all they put their hand to. How tender a witness this Sabbatic year to the bounty of His hand who supported all!

The other case is that of a person who through want might have been compelled to become a bondman: for him also the seventh year of his service was to bring release; nor was he to be sent empty away, but furnished liberally. They were to remember the bond-service in Egypt, and their redemption. Yet love might rather choose continued service; and we know Whose love is pictured here.

This enforcement of mercy to the poor was the more needed because the law had promises of earthly blessing to him who kept it, which self-righteousness might abuse to justify another treatment. And for this reason the Lord’s story of Lazarus and the rich man would come home to covetous Pharisees. In this, the poor man—one in utter destitution—is taken to Abraham’s bosom, and the rich man shut out. But this is not legal right, but salvation, a very different thing, in the line of which comes the

exhortation here in Deuteronomy to remember Egypt and their own redemption. To them all, and always, God's blessings were but mercy; and the lesson of the law was not learnt by those in ignorance of this.

5. (15:19—16:17.) The ways that lead up to God.

The first section ends now with the repetition of that which is all through a governing thought—the going up to the sanctuary. The life which is of God must be lived with Him, of which these goings up are an imperfect yet real expression, in accordance with the number of this subsection, we have the occasions insisted on on which they went up, which naturally typify the ways that lead up. Blessed indeed he in whose heart they are!

a) The first-born.

First, however, and as introductory to these, we have a supplementary note—in this, quite in the style of Deuteronomy—as to the first-born of the herd and flock. They were not to be worked, nor used by man for his own profit, but to be the Lord's entirely, and eaten when they went up to the sanctuary, except there were some blemish; in which case, though not fit to be taken up, they were still to be eaten, as a portion from God in the family.

As supplementary to the former law (Num.18), it is, no doubt, the priest who is to eat this in the way stated. Nor does it seem possible that even such a modification should be intended as that the people should share with the priests, as some have thought: nothing like this is said. As a supplement to what was well known, there would be no misunderstanding of what, if it stood alone, would naturally be otherwise taken than now we take it. In fact, the Jews seem to have had no question.

Nationally, there was no separate going up to Jerusalem to present the firstlings, yet the fulfilment of the law required them to go up. It is thus a suited introduction to that of the three feasts following. The first-born belonged to God, as having been spared in Egypt, and to eat it before God speaks for us of realizing that relationship to God which is founded upon birth and redemption. Israel had this double position—are for the earth, as the Church is for heaven, God's first-born; and when they truly take it, it will be as born to God—newborn, as we—a new birth, which implies the bringing home to Him, though the knowledge of redemption be the actual call. Perfectly in its place, then, is this introductory note as to the first-

born. They must eat it at the sanctuary, therefore—that is, if without blemish; if blemished, it was not a fit presentation of what God’s work and gift must be; and thus it lost its place, and became mere ordinary food.

b) The passover (redemption).

We now come to the three feasts which actually brought Israel to the sanctuary. The first of these was the passover, in which, as seen here, the feast of unleavened bread is merged. Redemption is the prominent thought, though the putting away of leaven surely accompanies it. Unleavened bread is the “bread of affliction”—the soul’s self-humiliation because of the remembrance of the bondage out of which the mercy of God has delivered; for us, indeed, how shameful an one! a sorrow which is to be the subduing of pride forever, and thus, morally, our deliverance.

Here is the first direct call to the sanctuary, though new birth underlies it, as we know. In the knowledge of redemption it is that the new life comes to itself, and so to God. In its second-first place in this series, the passover-feast is found in perfect order, as all is order here.

c) Pentecost: the Spirit given.

The feast of weeks, or Pentecost, comes next to the passover—a type, as we well know, of the gift of the Spirit, but which is characterized here by its effects—the fruit produced, of which a free-will offering is presented to God according to the measure of the blessing realized.

Upon this as bringing to God there is no need to dwell at length. The Spirit of God is He by whom we draw nigh, and the Spirit in us will not acquiesce in distance. He is the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, “Abba, Father”; and it is good to notice, as connected with the type, the voluntary offering, and the joy before God, in which those who have special need are specially remembered and made to share. Such are the characteristics, indeed, of the work of the Spirit.

d) Tabernacles: the wilderness from the land.

Lastly, we have now the feast of tabernacles. This, as we have already seen, speaks of the perfected blessing, when, the harvest of the earth and the vintage of wrath being past, Israel, in the enjoyment of the land, shall remember all wilderness-experience as past forever, and the long joy widespread and unchecked shall reach on to eternal day. For us also, in a higher

sphere, there are “pleasures at God’s right hand for evermore.”

This completes the picture. The perpetuity of blessing means God’s unbroken delight in the work of His hands forever—God with us, we with Him, abidingly. Thus the three feasts that call Israel up to God do not speak of temporary or intermitting fellowship. That would be injurious to God as to man. “Emmanuel”— “God with us” can be of no mere temporary significance.

2. (16:18—25.) Duties manward.

1. (16:18—18:22.) Headship in Israel.

We pass now from the first table of the law to the second—from duties Godward to duties manward; in the first section, finding connection between the two by means of the fifth commandment, under which the duties to rulers naturally come, especially in Israel, where, as we have seen, the idea of the family, the natural order, underlies the whole national constitution. Authority here, as it is derived from God, represents Him, as it is plain: a principle which the apostle applies for the Christian in a most sweeping way (Rom.13), and which is seen clearly in Scripture— “Calling those gods to whom the word of God came,” (the judges in Israel, that is, who had divine commission)—a phrase which the Lord seals with the emphatic assurance, “Scripture cannot be broken” (Jn.10:35.)

Those who would put the fifth commandment into the first table may find here their strongest argument, as confirmatory of which they urge the special commandments as to idolatry which follow in this place. One would think this view, however, to be self-evidently wrong, the numerical stamp also justifying fully the common division, as we have seen. The fifth commandment does indeed by this means only stand as the first of the second table—the representative of the first in the second, and this most perfectly.

The duties of rulers also are implied in the duties to them, and come under the same head here.

a) (16:18—17:20.) The maintenance of justice and choice of a king.

We have, first, the institution of civil authority, that righteousness may be maintained throughout the land: judges everywhere, with a court for the settlement of difficult cases at the sanctuary, taking the place of the appeal

hitherto to Moses himself; a king viewed as in the future in God's thought for them, and the choice of one provided for.

The judges sat in the gates of the cities, because every one going out or coming in was to be under their eye; and justice thus, as it was to be open-eyed, and toward all, would come under the eyes of all, as able to bear the light. There was to be no respect of persons, no taking of gift. Righteousness in Israel was to be the basis of every thing, the condition of life and of inheritance.

But in the maintenance of this, the claim of God was first, and thus the commandments as to idolatry follow this immediately. There was to be no toleration in such cases at all, but sharp excision by the sword of justice, the government being exercised by God openly among them, and the worship of other gods manifest rebellion. Church and state were here really one, and ecclesiastical penalties also civil ones. This is, of course, no justification of such a course in entirely different conditions under another dispensation. The kingdom of God is now "not of this world"; Christ's people reign not, but are patient sufferers; their weapons spiritual, and not carnal; and grace to be manifested by them while God in His grace forbears toward men.

In these cases, the law required sufficient witness, and of such sort as would be willing to put their hands to the confirmation of it: the witnesses must first execute the sentence of the judge.

Appeal in doubt.

In matters too difficult to settle by the ordinary procedure, the sanctuary became the place of final appeal, where the priest's voice could re-enforce that of the judge; and this appeal was ultimate. A sentence so given none could resist without rebellion.

The culmination in the king.

A king is contemplated in due time, when they should desire, in this, to be like the nations round about. But when the people make this very plea in Samuel's time (1 Sam.8:5), it is taken, not by him only, but by the Lord also, as the rejection of Him as their King. From this, it has been urged that this passage in Deuteronomy must have been the insertion of a later time. But why? Granted that it was failure on the people's part, (and that is clear) it is surely not clear that God could not foresee this, nor that, foreseeing,

He might not provide for it. Certainly, a desire to be like the Gentiles, in one of those things that mainly distinguished them from the Gentiles, could not indicate a right appreciation of their blessings. And yet the wisdom and grace of God are only the more, not the less, conspicuous in this provision. True, of Saul it was said, “I gave thee a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath” (Hos.13:11). But this only brings out God’s real choice—David, “the beloved,” type of One who is indeed that, and in whom a King is found who reigns forever. He is the One of whom the king that Deuteronomy announces is the shadow. Brought forth when priesthood has failed in Eli, and prophet in Samuel, the true king is God’s resource for Israel and the earth. For neither priesthood nor prophecy alone will set right the earth, or bring in the time when it shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. He must come to whom the throne belongs, and who shall bring back judgment to righteousness; He in whom Prophet, Priest, and King are one—a threefold cord that never shall be broken.

Here it is but the type, the mere human king, needing to be reminded of his dependence upon God, and liable to trust in horses and chariots, and to yield himself to the lusts which enslave the greatest. In Solomon, the wisest of kings, is found the failure which is here anticipated. He is but the shadow. The reins of absolute empire are reserved for One who alone can hold them aright.

b) (18:1-8.) Levite ministry.

The rights of priests and Levites follow—the ministers of Jehovah, ministering in His name: identified with Him, not in rule, but in that which attests rather His heart than, as before, His righteousness. To them the people were in turn to minister a recognized portion, they having none with the other tribes in the land.

There was also a special privilege accorded to these, wherever there was a longing desire in the heart to dwell near the sanctuary, there was no fixed location which would prevent the accomplishment of this. Such an one could come and minister among his brethren who stood there before Jehovah, and was to find his portion among these. A precious witness for us of how God delights in and welcomes the approach of one who, as a worshiper, would draw nigh, and abide in His presence. Oh for more of this longing of heart among us—the importunate faith of one to whom God must say, Be it unto thee even as thou wilt!

c) (18:9-22.) The prophet, and His signs.

As the judge or the king represents God characteristically in His righteousness, and the Levite-priest represents Him in His love, the prophet now gives utterance to His voice as the Living One. Through the Urim and Thummim of the priest He could be sought indeed and would respond, as we know; but the prophet waited not for inquiry. God's word abode in him as a fire that must break out, urging him on in spite of fears and hesitation of nature and opposition of the evil around. It was the voice of holiness that spake to the conscience also, bringing all into the light because God is light. Hence the prophet was the man of God in days of reproach and apostasy, and the voice of revival wherever there were hearts yet to be reached.

Alas! the heart that drew away from God, and shunned Him, drew only the nearer, by this, to the living and active enemy of God; and the very needs which should have drawn him as of necessity to Him who could satisfy them, put him then the more completely in the power of the dark and dreadful apostasy in heavenly spheres. Thus the word as to the true prophet here is prefaced by the prohibition of all divination, witchcraft, necromancy, and recurrence to the supernatural apart from God—if apart, then in sure and deadly opposition.

The one need in seeking God is the remembrance of the holiness of His presence—the need of truth, therefore, in the inward parts. Where it was not openly another god that was sought, the false way revealed itself by its essential unholiness, and never more clearly than where apparently purification was insisted on. For this purification was but a mockery of it, cruel and terrible as it might be in its demands. Thus the list of forbidden things begins here with the “making son or daughter to pass through the fire,” a form of expression by which is intended that giving the “fruit of the body for the sin of the soul” which has been practiced among most heathen nations in their sore perplexity away from God.⁴

⁴ Cf. 2 Kings 16:3—“he made pass through”—with 2 Chron.28:3—“he burnt.” That there were lighter modes of passing through the fire, however, is not to be denied; and they have survived in various parts of Christendom, as in the midsummer fires of St John's Eve, in some places in England.

Following this, we have “all the words which the language contained for the different modes of exploring the future and discovering the will of God” (Keil) practiced by the heathen, brought together under one general condemnation. Nor are we past the need of reviewing them, so constantly does the power of evil work through the need and corruption of man to the same results—modified only and disguised by the manners of the age, but which in no wise affects their inner meaning. Spiritualism, clairvoyance, and theosophy today have only freshened our apprehension of what has been in some shape always at work, although now energetically working in proportion as the end approaches, and the enfeebled power of Christianity allows them to appear with boldness.⁵

⁵ We have in this list, first, *qosem*, the “diviner,” which seems the general term, including all the rest.

2. *Meonen*, in the common version, the “observer of times,” predicting lucky or unlucky days from the observation of the heavens, is, in the RV, the “augur” in general. The Septuagint and the Syriac versions differ from these and from each other: the former giving *klhdnezomenov*—“presaging from chance words;” the latter, “fascinating with the eyes,” from which Pember conjectures perhaps a mesmerist, but which might refer as well to the power of the “evil eye.” Neither of the last seem likely, however, here, nor does the derivation seem certain, whether it be part of the verb to “eye,” (as 1 Sam.18:9) or of the verb to “cover”—“one who covers,” or uses secret arts, which on the whole seems to give the simplest meaning.

3. *Menachesh*, in both versions, “enchanter.” Pember well says, “The word is connected With *nachash*, ‘a serpent,’ and is usually explained to mean ‘a hisser,’ or ‘whisperer,’ and then ‘a mutterer of enchantments.’ But the use of the verb, of which it is the Piel participle, seems to point in a different direction. In Gen.30, Laban entreats Jacob to stay with him; ‘for,’ says he, ‘I divine [or, more literally, perceive by observation] that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake.’ And again, when, to the pleading of Benhadad’s servants, Ahab replied, ‘Is he yet alive? he is my brother,’ we are told that the men ‘divined,’ ‘took an omen,’ from what he had said. Hence the verb seems to have been used primarily of drawing an inference from rapid observation, and then of divining. From the first meaning comes *nachash*, ‘a serpent,’ on account of its quick intelligence; from the second, *menachesh*, ‘an augur’—one who divines by observing signs and tokens, such as the singing and flight of birds, aerial phenomena, and other sights and sounds.” (*Earth’s Earliest Ages*, p.156.)

4. *Mecashsheph*, constantly rendered, in the Septuagint, *farmakov*— “one who uses drugs,” seems to be the enchanter proper, working through natural things endued, by magical formulae or prayers, with supernatural power.

5. *Chover*, literally, “binding” as with a spell; “charmer” in the common version.

All who do these things are declared emphatically to be an abomination to Jehovah; not merely the things are such, but the people who do them. Christianity has not changed this, nor can subtly disguised names hinder divine judgment.

If the professing people of God turn to such things, it is not because God has refused them the joy and blessing of direct communication of His mind: it is because they have turned their back on Him. He would not even wait for the people to call on Him, but would come near to them Himself in the Prophet that He would raise up like unto Moses, and whom they were to hear; and of him who did not hear the Prophet it would be required.

It should be as certain that Christ is the only complete fulfilment of this as, on the other hand, that every prophet raised up was a partial anticipatory fulfilment. The threefold form of headship in Israel—King, Priest, and Prophet—we have here complete, and of each we must say exactly the same thing. Christ it is alone to whom they all looked forward, and without him, any fulfilment would be trivial and unworthy. Yet the terms of what is said show plainly that others are contemplated, as steps not unneeded by which we reach Him—certainly to Israel gracious helps by which in the meanwhile faith might be sustained and need ministered to.

It may be said by those who deny the lesser application, that neither king nor priest here are prophesied of in any direct way, while the prophet is: and this is true; yet the three offices are brought together surely for a purpose, each one to be filled by Christ at last, and each emphasizing one main attribute of Jehovah as Supreme Head in Israel—righteousness, love, holiness—as we have seen.

6. *Shoel obh*—“one who consults a familiar spirit.” The *obh* was *in* the person, as Lev.20:27 literally reads, although it is also applied to the person himself in whom it is, and this generally. It means, primarily, “a (skin) bottle” (Job 32:19), apparently from its dilatibility, and its transference to the possessed person has been supposed to be either from the swelling of the body of which Virgil speaks (Aeneid, 6:46, etc.) with the demoniac inspiration, or from the ventriloquism attending, to which the rendering of the Septuagint refers it. From, the demoniac, the term was transferred to the demon.

7. *Yidoni*—the wise one in unlawful wisdom, the wizard.

8. The necromancer—the seeker to the dead.

There is a reason also to be found for what is said of the prophet being more strictly predictive. For while the continuance of the priesthood and of the judgeship was provided for, and the king also when the time should come, the prophetic office was neither elective nor successional, but depended upon the mere good pleasure of God. Hence the promise, “God will raise up.” A distinction of the prophet it is that even in Israel he existed only by the direct call and qualification of God only. Each one was therefore very distinctly the “man of God” in his day; and the “testimony of Jesus,” which the “spirit of prophecy” was, was preserved from the corruption by which priest and king were overcome.

Thus the prophet marked the activity of the living God in behalf of His people, and throughout reign after reign of the later kings of Israel, the existence of the prophet is the one ray of light—the link still existing between God and the people who drew not near to God: in this way like Moses, although not of the full stature of Moses, no doubt, a fulfilment of what is here, though not the fulfilment; which easily reconciles the last saying of this book with such minor accomplishments, while it justifies the faith which even in Israel looked forward to “that Prophet” in whom, blessed be God, He has drawn nigh to us.

Christ has come: the Word of God is complete—no new revelation need be or can be added to it. Yet in a minor sense the voice of prophecy should be found among us. The apostle, in writing to the Corinthians, after bidding them “desire spiritual gifts,” adds as the chief of all, “but rather that ye may prophesy;” his reason for the preference, “he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification and exhortation and comfort.” “Love edifieth”; and, he writes, “ye may all prophesy, one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.” We see that he is not thinking of uttering predictions, which is what so many think to be all the business of a prophet, but of that speaking from God and for God which he can do best who has not necessarily most knowledge or most utterance, but most communion with Him, and who most stands in His presence, waiting for His word. The Church of God has much need of such men as these today.

2. (19:1—21:9.) Second commandment of second table: the salvation of life.

The subsection following now confirms the previous one by its clear reference to the sixth commandment—the salvation-ordinance, as we have

already called it, of the life that is. On account of its clearness, there will be little for us to say about it. It falls naturally into three parts, which are indicated by the divisions of the chapters in our common version.

a) (19:1-21.) The individual life.

Of these, the first respects the individual life, and divides again in three parts, as is quite plain. First, it is enjoined on them to carry out in the land into which God is bringing them the law of the cities of refuge, by dividing it into three portions, with roads prepared in each, and a central city as an asylum for the man-slayer innocently such, that the land may not be stained with innocent blood. Also if their borders should be extended, according to the promise made conditional upon obedience, then they were to mark off three cities more. This repetition of the number 3 cannot be without meaning, as indeed these cities had a notable significance for Israel themselves, as we have seen. Surely in them was the very secret of their future told out, and how God shall manifest Himself for them at last. In the meanwhile, by this provision human life is made known as the object of God's care, and cherished. The extension of the land waits their future possession of it.

Secondly, the law against the removal of landmarks comes in here, no doubt, as generally seen, because the land was their life, as sustaining it. They were to be a nation of husbandmen, each for himself cultivating the soil of that good land—a much-needed lesson of what God would have His people to be spiritually now. Here is our wealth and sustenance indeed; and “*much food*”—would that we did believe it!—“in the tillage of the *poor*.”

Thirdly, life is guarded by a retributive law of false witness—a law under which the world that crucified Christ is crucified to the Christian. That precious life itself could not be preserved, and yet by being given up abides for us and becomes fruitful.

b) (20:1-20.) The Israelite in war.

The subject next taken up is war, and here we have again three parts; first, Israel themselves being regarded; then their enemies; then the land itself in which they might be.

As to Israel themselves, they were to rely upon God as with them. We are to remember that this supposes that they too are with God, and therefore their going out and coming in according to His word. Then their enemies

would be indeed God's enemies, and resistance would be resistance to Himself. Had they indeed abode in His covenant, how evident would this have been to all the world! and with what irresistible might would they have been clothed!

God then being thus with them, there was to be no craven fear in their hearts: he who was afraid might stay at home. God's host must be not conscripts but volunteers. Then, too, if a man had built a new house and not lived in it, if he had planted a vineyard and not eaten of it, if he had betrothed a wife and not taken her, there was to be no sundering a man from what he was in pursuit of, no bringing home-sickness into the battle-field.

As to the enemy, a besieged town was always to have the offer of peace by submission. If it resisted, it suffered the penalty of resisting God, not man merely; but the non-combatants were to be spared. The Canaanites, as under the divine curse, are excepted from this. As to the land, the fruit-trees were not to be cut down, but left to minister to the support of life.

c) (21:1-9.) The expiation of an uncertain murder.

Thirdly, we have the expiation of an uncertain murder. Yet is it an expiation? There is certainly no mention of blood poured out, still less presented to God. In the land, at any distance from the sanctuary, it could not, of course, be put upon the altar. But the murderer is not found; and if he were, for him there could be no atonement; the elders who represent the city profess innocence, not assume guilt; atonement in this way, therefore, it would seem as if there could hardly be.

On the other hand, the heifer unbroken to the yoke reminds us irresistibly of the red heifer of purification for sin (Num.19), and as plainly seems to speak of Christ; and here vicarious penalty seems to be shown forth, even to some who dispute it elsewhere. Through all this, the broken neck of the victim strangely unites the deed which has to be cleansed away with that which cleanses it—as if it were Christ murdered and yet dying to put away the crime, though the law of the city of refuge assures us that it cannot be put away.

The man was murdered—murder attaches somewhere: Christ too was the Victim of an enmity with which men “hated,” He says, “both Me and My Father.” (Jn.15:24.) Yet, again, at the cross He cries, “Father, forgive them,

for they know not what they do.” Here we have what at least approaches the mystery of the case before us: there were those of whom the one thing must be said; there were those also of whom grace could say the other. Thus the nation can be spared, though shut out in the meanwhile from their inheritance, as he was whom the city of refuge sheltered, but who could not return home till the death of the high-priest (see Num.35). There is governmental penalty, though not death; and when the years of chastisement have run out, then it will be said of Jerusalem, “She hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins” (Is.40:2). The “unearned, unsown land” indeed (how like Israel’s for so long!) testifying to this. But then, at last, there will be a generation who, as to the guilt of Christ’s death, can plead, with these elders of the city, that they “have not shed this blood, nor have” their “eyes seen it,” the “perennial stream” of God’s abiding love having carried it away forever.

How wonderful is this picture! how all parts unite to give expression to it when the key is once in our hands! even as all contrary-seeming things shall unite to accomplish His purpose at the last.

3. (21:10-23:25.) The third commandment: marriage and the family.

The third subsection speaks of marriage and the family, in evident connection with the seventh commandment, although there are laws to follow which would seem as plainly so or more, if we had regard to them apart from their context. But the order of the Decalogue can be traced as far as the end of the twenty-second chapter, the illustrations, however, becoming continually briefer, as, in fact, less needed. The internal connection also becomes continually more difficult—which does not mean, however, that it is loose or wanting.

a) (21:10-17.) The power of the man subjected to authority.

The first part treats of marriage with a captive taken in war—a distinct permission, of course, of marriage with a Gentile, where there was not the hindrance of such a ban as rested upon Canaan.

Here, as we know by our Lord’s words, in the law of marriage, we find, more than anywhere, the failure of the law. The hardness of man’s heart forbid, until grace should come, the full restraint of absolute righteousness. Polygamy and divorce, as practiced among the nations round, could only be modified by partial curbing of the will and prevention of mere

lawlessness. It was reserved for Christianity to restore woman to her original place in creation by the side of man.

Yet here, where most of all (and that is surely the reason why the commandment takes the peculiar form it does,) the woman was in the hand and power of the man, he was fenced round with prohibition. She must be given the wife's place, allowed a month for natural sorrow over the separation from her kindred, perhaps to test also somewhat the reality of the affection that has sprung up in him. If the tie is formed, she can never be enslaved again; and should she be divorced, is free to go whither she please.

Thus it would seem that what is emphasized is the government of the will—the putting restraint upon desire, so that at least it shall not be lawless; and this, with regard to a captive, the legitimate property of the conqueror according to the customs everywhere else prevailing, is a witness to the character of Him who ruled in Israel, which we must estimate, not by the full light of Christianity now come, but as contrasted with what was around. Thus seen, it becomes indeed the dawning of the day.

We have now the recognition of polygamy as a fact, but a provision against one of its many evils. If a man had two wives, and children by both, the one loved, the other hated; and if the first-born were the son of the hated; in this case, the first-born was not to be displaced from his rights as such because of the father's preference for the mother of the later-born. In the case of Jacob, this might seem to have occurred—Reuben gave place to Joseph, the son of the beloved Rachel; but then, as we know from Jacob's own words, it was Reuben's sin that forfeited the inheritance. (Gen.49:4.) This, however, might single out this case for special legislation.

“Here too we have in God's ways another remarkable type; for, having first chosen Israel, He afterward (as we know, because of their sin) was pleased to take the Gentiles to Himself. The Jews refused the testimony; and as for the Gentiles, it is said that they will hear. Nevertheless, here He gives a beautiful provision, to show that He has not done with that which shall come forth as the first-born son of the apparently hated one—of her He had first. On the contrary, this is the very one for whom the rights of the inheritance will be preserved when repentance will be wrought in their hearts. Thus it is evident that the godly remnant of the latter day will have

its rights reserved, according to His own precious word in this chapter.” (Lectures Introductory to the Pentateuch, by Wm Kelly, p.492.)

b) (21:18-21.) The rebellious son.

But in contrast with this, we have the end of the disobedient son, given up at last by father and mother into the hands of the elders, by whose sentence he is stoned to death. The application is easy to the end of final disobedience on the part of those in Israel put in the place but not having the spirit of sons, as well as to those outwardly but not in heart sons among the Gentiles.

c) (21:22-23.) The curse of God.

In connection with this, we have an unspeakably solemn yet precious word. If a man had committed a sin worthy of death, and were put to death, and he were hang upon a tree, his body was not to remain all night upon the tree, but. to be buried, that the land might not be defiled, “for he that is hanged,” it is said, “is accursed of God.”

This is literally “a curse of God,” which the apostle in Galatians takes as having the same meaning, for while he quotes it as “accursed” (3:13), he argues from this that Christ was “made a curse for us.” The Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate similarly render it “accursed;” but the Jews, since the second century of our era, have mostly decided for a different meaning, viz., “an injury, insult, mockery to God,” a meaning possible to the language, no doubt, but used in a very obvious interest, which cannot commend it to us. How Jews of old understood it we may see by the Septuagint. And the typical application as given in the New Testament puts the whole subject in a light by which it is illumined.

It should be noted that hanging, or crucifixion—the Jews used the same word for either—was not a mode of putting to death by the law of Moses. It came after death, to express peculiar enormity, and put a special brand upon the one so treated. As “lifting up from the earth” (Jn.3:14; 12:32), it expressed rejection from among men; as lifting up toward heaven, it might well challenge heaven’s approval of that rejection, and thus imply the “curse of God” upon the sinner. We can in this way understand better the apostle’s appeal to this passage in Deuteronomy, and distinguish the two elements of the cross, death and curse—the forsaking of God, which we have already had before us in the ritual of the sin-offering. (Lev.6.)

We see also why the body of one hanging on a tree could not be permitted to remain there. The burial was not in this case an end of penalty. Rather it expressed the defiling character of sin and the abhorrence with which God beheld it. It was to be put out of sight and away, buried not with honour, but in the grave of a criminal; and here we see at once the significance of the change in the Lord's case. His grave was appointed with the wicked; but this could not be suffered to take effect: He was with the rich in His death. Joseph's tomb was the only fitting receptacle for its brief sojourn there, of the body of the Holy One who could not see corruption—His providential justification until resurrection should justify Him openly.

4. (22:1-30.) Of Inhumanity: the invasion of creature-rights. In which the rest of the commandments come under the fourth.

a) (22:1-12.) Righteousness only found in mercy, in congruity to nature.

The last three commandments of the Decalogue, more briefly illustrated than the former ones, are found together in the fourth subsection. At first sight indeed, this is not evident: one would say that each commandment would, here as elsewhere, claim a subsection to itself. But the twenty-third chapter, which speaks of Israel as the congregation of Jehovah, has thus the plain character of a fifth part; and when we come to look more closely, we gain sufficient assurance of the correctness of this grouping.

We have first to ask, however, are these commandments really represented in the three parts of this subsection? This has been denied, though certainly we should look for some regular treatment of these, such as we find in the case of previous ones. No doubt our anticipations of what ought to be are often astray; but the twenty-second chapter begins with what is plainly an expansion of the eighth commandment, as v.13-21 speak of false witness, and the rest of the chapter applies the tenth. So much should be plain; and only v.5-12 can remain at all doubtful. These give the laws as to the confusion of sex, as in a man wearing a woman's garment, as to not taking the mother-bird with its brood, as to putting a battlement around the flat top of the house, the prohibition of certain mixtures as of seeds or of materials of a garment, and finally of putting fringes on a garment. These have been all by Schroder (in Lange's Commentary) reduced under the fourth commandment of the second table, though in some cases it would seem in a somewhat artificial manner.

But we must note now that we have in these three parts an evident reference to the *first* three laws of the second table, and each in its place. Thus v.7 repeats the promise of the fifth commandment, and in a parallel case. Secondly, the false witness in the case mentioned would if it succeeded involve *murder*, the breach of the sixth; while the seventh and tenth come so plainly together in the third part, as to need no insisting on. Here, then, we have the relation of these three parts to one another clearly marked out. While as to their coming together under a fourth head, the beginning of the first part clearly must do so; the cases of violation of nature, as in the confusion of sexes, would do the same, as in the fourth section of the expanded second table of the Decalogue in Exodus 21-23; and the first law of this section gives the last case supposed in the third part of what is here before us.

Although there may be more or less difficulty in some of the details, yet the spirit of the eighth commandment—that is, the fourth of the second table—seems to run through the whole of this: the prohibition of plunder and theft, with that which connects with it, the lack of tenderness and mercy toward others. How near the fourth and last of these commandments come to one another needs not to be insisted on. Let us go through the chapter briefly now.

How much beyond the mere letter is to be read in the commandments is plain in the tenderness of the opening words. To fulfil the commandment not to steal, you must not consent to the destruction or loss of any thing that is your neighbour's. It must be cared for, guarded, and kept for him.

The disguise as to sex would plainly serve all kinds of fraudulent and dishonest purpose, whilst it falsified the stamp which God has put upon nature, and mutilated, so to speak, the coin of His realm. The taking the mother-bird, held by her affection to her young, was shameful advantage used of natural instincts, and a violation of honour to parents in this reproduction of motherly love in the lower creatures. The repetition of the promise here is very striking. It shows how sensitive will be the really obedient heart, and how God has in nature encompassed us with remembrances as well as tests of our condition. The law as to the battlements for the flat roofs of houses is simple enough as a rebuke of that thoughtlessness which is really hardness of heart. The three laws which follow as much resemble one another as they differ from what goes before. As prohibitions of mixture they come naturally enough under the first

head here. The interpretation of the “unequal yoke” is plainly given in 2 Cor.6:14. Christ’s yoke cannot be borne by the unclean—the unbeliever—and for the believer there is no other. The garment of woollen and linen speaks similarly of mixed *habits*; while the sowing seed represents the necessity of keeping the truth unmixed. Failure in all these points involves a real robbery, not only of God, but of one’s neighbour: we owe both to Christians and the men of the world the maintenance of our Christian simplicity and singleness of life and testimony. The last thing here, the tassels upon the garment, which we have had in Num.15:38, reminds us that this is to be true natural development—the development of the new nature, not artificial, for the word speaks primarily of flower-buds. How beautifully again does the spiritual meaning declare the perfection of the Word of God!

b) (22:13-21.) False testimony against the neighbour.

As to the ninth commandment we have but one case supposed, and that how shameful an one! What a heart is man’s!—that is to say, ours! Schultz, as quoted in Lange, remarks that “Moses must have held a different view of unions in the face of great aversion from that prevalent among us.”

c) (22:22-30.) Wrongs against marriage.

The exemplification of the tenth commandment for our purpose needs no remark.

5. (23.) The congregation of Jehovah: the moral results of His place with them.

The methodical exposition of the “ten words” is thus complete; but there are yet three chapters more before the close is reached of the commandments, which now at first sight seem to be given without order or internal connection for the most part. Of course we know this cannot be, and that we only need more carefully to search it out. The most precious things often lie deepest; and our rule with Scripture is to believe in order to see—the opposite of the world’s rule, but which will always have experience to confirm it.

If the three chapters following stand for real divisions, then with the four previous ones we shall have seven subsections in this second section—the second table of the law complete. That the first four parts should close

one division of this is quite in accordance with what we have seen to be the rule in a septenary series. In this case, we may expect the final three to form a whole, and the connection to be deeper, more spiritual and inward, than in the former case. And this seems indeed to be so.

The twenty-third chapter is in fact a fifth part, and, as already said, we have in it Israel as the congregation of Jehovah, the moral results of His place with them. Let us examine it.

a) (23:1-8.) In its constitution.

First, then, we have the assembly in its refusal of all discordant elements; and here the exclusion of the unsexed male is based on the need of maintaining the integrity of the creature. Mutilation was a reproach to God; and thus the whole spirit of asceticism is condemned and excluded both for Israel and for us today. The word for “bastard” — “one born of corruption” — only occurs once beside in Zech.9:6, is explained by the Rabbins, and received by commentators in general as meaning “one born of incest or adultery.” Typically, one corruptly born is not the mere child of nature; but rather one corruptly introduced among the people of God. “Baptismal regeneration,” as the ritualist holds it, is such a birth; and the Moabite and the Ammonite following here emphasizes this thought, though it be true that they are not distinctly reprobated for their birth, but for their enmity to the true people of God and their employment of Balaam to curse. But even thus does the false professor, like an Ammonite or a Moabite, show his birth today. The Edomite is the simple natural man, and for him there is more hope, and the Egyptian is classed with him, though only in the third generation (dead and risen with Christ) could they enter the congregation of the Lord.

b) (23:9-14.) Israel in camp.

In the next place, we have Israel going forth to war, and here men might plead the work in hand for lack of care as to minor things; but not so thinks God. The most scrupulous purity is insisted on: for is not God with them their strength? What is all their human might if, because of their ways, He is unable to manifest Himself for them? Very simple is the lesson, incontrovertible the argument here; and yet have His people learnt it?

c) (23:15-18.) Israel the home of liberty in sanctification.

Next, Israel's home must be the refuge of the oppressed. True, slavery as yet was not banished from her midst—perfection, we must ever remember, the Word itself asserts, could not be by the law—yet it was greatly guarded and limited, so as to be another thing from that absolute subjection to the will of another which was every where recognized as lawful among the nations around. If, then, one of these human chattels broke its bands and fled, Israel was to be for such a secure asylum. In this way the enmity of the nations might be roused against them: this little people, nevertheless, were to extend their arms to the distressed whatever the consequences. According to the beautiful figure so often used, He under the shelter of whose wings they had come to rest could not destroy that confidence. Let it be a poor slave, he must yet be sheltered from the kings of the earth: there was one sanctuary of refuge for the oppressed; and it was in the bosom of the God of Israel.

The sanctuary—and such was all Israel compared with the world outlying—must indeed first of all be the place of freedom, in order that it may be the place of holiness; and this freedom must be found with God for it to be real and sanctifying: the heart is brought to Him. Hence, the enfranchisement of the slave comes in its right place here, and its connection is seen with what follows, and which for us has much fuller meaning, that there is to be no harlotry among the people of God. In plain, intentional antagonism to Israel's sanctification, the harlot is called here *kedeshah*, “consecrated,” as indeed the heathen consecrated themselves in this abominable manner to the service of their gods. May not we, too, easily cover with a well-seeming name what is merely the straying of the heart from God? Here let us note also, though it be simple, that the gain of such prostitution with which we would vindicate it to ourselves, or compensate the Lord, is only abomination to Him.

d) (23:19-20.) Care of the poor.

The need of the poor is next considered; and as, on the one hand, liberality to them had been enjoined, so to take usury from them is forbidden. The stranger, from whom it was allowed to take it, probably borrowed for purposes of trade, but Israel were not themselves intended to be a commercial people, and certainly not to thrive upon the necessities of their brethren.

e) (23:21-25.) Relation to God in giving and receiving.

Fifthly, relationship to God seems to be illustrated in a double way. First, the vow illustrates the freedom and yet the seriousness of this relation; while the other case reminds us of God's real ownership of the land, and of a bounty which would banish scarcity and hunger from it, yet respecting the rights of possession which He has given, and so allowing no lack to him whose fields were thus called to witness to the plenteous hand which has the fullness of the earth in it, and every good and perfect gift.

6. (24.) God's restraint upon the evil that cannot yet be removed.

In the last subsection, we have Israel as the congregation of the Lord, in the dignity of that relationship. Schroder gives as a heading to the whole three chapters— "The perfection of Israel"; but this is so little true of the twenty-fourth chapter that it might be entitled, rather, "The *imperfection* of Israel." As to the law, we know well that, in fact, there was not perfection under it; and the present subsection, strictly according to the numerical stamp upon it, speaks plainly of the evil, while also showing the limit set to it by God. Every part of the chapter seems to be in conformity with this. It has, like the last chapter, five divisions, its close being also naturally similar.

a) (24:1-5.) The bond of marriage.

The first commandment here has very plainly the character of a toleration of what could not be yet entirely done away, with a restraint upon it in the meantime, however. And of this the Lord's own words directly assure us. The numerical place seems even to affirm the unity which divorce sets aside; and this agrees with the law itself which treats the divorced woman as in some sense "defiled" by another marriage, and the broken bond in that case as incapable of being renewed.

The law of the "new wife," as supplementary to this, is a tender provision honouring the marriage tie, and bidding the man cherish the wife he has taken.

What could be more expressive of the mind of the lawgiver, or adapted for its purpose than such an injunction as this?

b) (24:6-7.) The limitation as to pledge and slavery.

In the next place we have two laws also, of which the first is again a concession with a limit. A creditor might take a pledge of his poor

neighbour, but not the hand-mill which ground his corn from day to day: it would be taking a man's life as pledge. The greed that would actually steal a man was to be punished with death.

c) (24:8-9.) Leprosy: its treatment and infliction.

And they were to take care not to bring the plague of leprosy upon them, as even Miriam had done in the wilderness. This was the typical punishment, as we know, involving banishment from God Himself, and directly announced here as His infliction. In this, Israel lost what was his most precious and peculiar privilege.

d) (24:10-15.) Mercy to the poor.

The fourth part contains again two laws, once more contemplating the poor, whether as debtor or as creditor. In the first place, the pledge is again limited: the creditor must not intrude upon the debtor's house for it; and if it be something which he can spare but for the day, it must be returned by nightfall. On the other hand, the labourer's hire must not be kept back, lest he cry to the Lord about it, and the Lord visit it as sin.

e) (24:16-22.) Perversion of judgment.

Next we have the perversion of judgment forbidden—again two laws. First, the father must not suffer death for the children, nor the children for the fathers: a common thing among the nations round about. Secondly, there must be no oppression of the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow: their own Redeemer out of the oppression of Egypt bade them observe this.

These commandments close with the injunction to leave the gleanings of the olive and the vineyard for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, the cultivation of an opposite spirit to that of the oppressor—the ready giver scarcely can be that—and they are again reminded of their bondage in Egypt that they may show mercy to the poor.

7. (25.) Looking forward to complete blessing.

Thus much is said or implied of evil in Israel, which can as yet have only partial remedy. Still this is not, of course, to intimate any failure on God's part—any less than perfect mastery of the evil at the last. God is strong, though patient, and provoked indeed every day. And now this seventh subsection, though it cannot, of course, after what we have seen, speak of any present perfection, yet prophesies, as one may say, of it. As the third of

these closing chapters, it hints, as it were, at resurrection, and brings them to an end in peaceful confidence in God with its series of six—the mastery number, which in subjection to the seven of the section speaks of what, being final, is perfect. God will show fully the entire supremacy which He had all through,

a) (25:1-3.) God’s chastening not to degrade, but to maintain the honour of His people: thus for preservation in His grace who is yet righteous.

First of all here, there was to be no excessive punishment; and that punishment would be excessive that made a brother to seem vile. This, in its application to Israel or to the Church, may tell us of the care which in all chastening He has for His people. They are to be preserved for honour, not cast away as refuse, “salted with fire,” in the gracious sense of that.

b) (25:4.)The ministry of the Word, by which the separation of wheat from chaff is effected.

The next commandment seems to come in very strangely; and the spiritual sense as given by the apostle alone explains it. Wordsworth rightly dwells upon the use he makes of it “not only as showing that the law has a spiritual sense, in which it is still binding upon all, but as giving us the key by which we may unlock the casket and take out of it its treasures.” Gosman objects to this that it “opens wide the door to a very loose and fanciful exposition.” No doubt this is to be dreaded, but the remedy is not to reject the principle, but guard rigidly the application. And when he further urges that the “apostle seems to use the words rather as illustrative of the truth he was teaching than assigning to them a figurative and spiritual sense,” he surely is himself taking very loosely what the apostle says. We have only to look at it to see that, as plainly and definitely as can be, he asserts the very opposite: “Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the fruit of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or *saith not the law the same?* For it is written in the law of Moses, ‘Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn.’ Doth God take care for oxen? or *saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes no doubt this is written:* that he that ploweth should plow in hope.” (1 Cor.9:7-10.)

Language could scarcely be plainer; and it does justify us in believing that a spiritual sense governs all here. Even our imperfect outline certainly has proved it to be so; and here if the apostle has interpreted this for us of the labourer in the Word, the numerical stamp is accordingly 2, the number of service.

What is the real connection with the preceding verses may be still in question. The ministry of the Word is that by which judgment is wrought in the conscience, and even outward chastenings produce their fruit in blessing. The reference to the threshing-floor seems to confirm this as the connection. It is by the patient labour of the spiritual workman that the grain is sifted from the chaff and the product of the seed sown laid up in the store at last. In God's mastery of the evil—in the victory of the good over it, could this be omitted? would it not have necessary place?

c) (25:5-6.) The resurrection of the house by the kinsman-redeemer (Christ).

Next follows the law which has so prominent a part in the story of Ruth. If a man die, and leave no issue, his nearest of kin was to marry his wife, and raise up seed to his brother, and the first-born son of this union was to succeed to the inheritance. In the story of Ruth we find a clear and beautiful type of the resurrection of Israel by means of the Kinsman-Redeemer, when the law, the nearest of kin, cannot take this place. The proof must be reserved until we come to Ruth, but the numerical place of the section is clear as a resurrection type, and in relation to the whole character of this part, as showing the resources that are in God Himself. But here also the spiritual meaning must come in for this, no strange or unwelcome thing to him who realizes the true dignity and glory of the law.

d) (25:7-12.) The impotency of the law to redeem.

But the failure contemplated as possible comes evidently under a separate head, and is, indeed, according to Ruth still, the failure of the law—an ever-needed lesson, coming as clearly also into its right place. The law is really the next of kin to man; but he is dead, and it cannot, raise him from the dead.

e) (25:13-16.) Responsibility yet maintained (by grace).

But the fifth part shows that if the law be helpless as a saviour, righteousness is yet maintained—a just weight and measure, and this is

what assuredly grace does: “sin shall not have dominion over you, because ye are not under the law, but under grace.” Simple enough this for us; but how beautifully is it put together, just when, under the guidance of the spiritual meaning, we consider that connection of one part with another, which while we take merely the letter, seems to be so perplexing and without a clue. Now we have only one thing more, entirely different from all the rest, and yet how perfectly in place!

f) (25:17-19.) The final conquest of Amalek (the flesh).

Sixthly and last, they are bidden not to forget Amalek, their wilderness foe, and pointed onward to the time when, full rest in the land attained, and all enemies subdued, Amalek shall be blotted out from remembrance forever. A blessed time! when the lusts of the flesh shall no more have to be thought of at all—their remembrance come practically to an end—internal conflict passed away forever! Sweet note of triumph from the silver trumpets, sounding only for the gathering of assembly for the time to come—no pilgrimage, no alarm! Sweet prophet art thou, Moses! for the greater Prophet than thyself is speaking through thee now!

3. (26.) The Israelite in possession, a worshipper before Jehovah

We have now one closing section in which for a moment we see the Israelite in possession of the inheritance, and rich with the blessing of God, returning to God in confession and worship. This is the proper effect of the blessing, which else would not be that. It is the sign of the Spirit’s work, of distance put away, of God and man once more together. It is the token of the satisfied heart, full with a spring of joy which needs must overflow. It is what Israel should have been as the people of the living God; it is what they shall be in the glorious time to come. It is what the Church of God, indwelt of the Spirit, should be—*shall* be—in a higher sphere, and in a more wondrous relation; what it, too, has but little been, although, thank God, many in every age have learnt this and much more—for the “Abba, Father” is not yet in this book of Deuteronomy: it waits for Him who is able to declare the Father’s name.

1. (26:1-11.) The confession at the first-fruits

The confession is very simple; yet, Christians as we are, we may learn much from it. The first thing that is owned is the faithfulness of God in the fulfilment of His word. It is one in the land who speaks in the

consciousness of what he has. He is not hoping what will be; he is realizing what is. The Lord swore to give us this land: we have it; we are in it. Such is already the privilege of the child of God, whose worship is even now, not merely *at* the sanctuary, as the Israelite's was, but who has "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." How we dishonour the One who has so wrought for us if we take the place of one longing to draw nigh, instead of in fact drawing near: "let us draw near," says the apostle, "with *full assurance* of faith." For us it is faith, of course. The Israelite, one may say, could not doubt: but that makes him only the more impressive as a type for us. Neither can we doubt, if it be simply God's Word and Christ's work that are before us, and we are not arguing from what we have been or what we are. The sanctuary has been opened for us by blood shed for sinners, for all sinners: we may, if we will, draw nigh; what more do we need for drawing nigh?

But then also there are fruits of the land; not of *their* labours either, let us remember. When Israel came into possession of Canaan, it was to enjoy great and goodly cities which they built not, houses full of all good things which they filled not, wells digged which they digged not, vineyards and olive trees which they planted not. (Ch.6:10-11.) And so with the fruits of the land into which even now we are called to enter—rich enjoyment, wondrous experiences, precious realizations, belong to us there, but faith must precede and bring us in where alone they can be ours. They cannot bring us in: we must have entered in by faith, in order to have them.

Having so entered, our apprehension of what we were will only fill our hearts the more with praise for what grace has done for us. "A Syrian ready to perish was my father; and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous." Then comes the bondage in Egypt, and how they were delivered: the types for us of a more glorious deliverance. The mere confession of this is praise; and we owe it to Him to confess with unhesitating simplicity, Christ has saved us. Is there presumption in this? No, it is His due. We have done nothing, except, indeed, incurred the penalty which Christ has borne in His own body on the tree. And the faith which gives Him the glory of this salvation is that which works in us also by the love which we have believed in. The first-fruits of this land are indeed His offerings: "sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving," which bring us to Him as priests to offer them.

2. (26:12-15.) The outflow manward where God is thus acknowledged.

“And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee.” Yes, He has given us nothing from the enjoyment of which He would keep us back. We cannot too frankly accept or too fully enjoy the blessings that are ours in Christ Jesus. This joy opens the heart, not shuts it up in selfishness and indifference: “thou shalt rejoice—thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you.” This is, therefore, now what follows, account being to be rendered to God of those tithes of the third year which we have already had before us, and which are destined for the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. (Ch.14:28-29.) The dependence of the second table of the law upon the first it is not necessary again to insist upon.

3. (26:16-19.) Jehovah’s acknowledgment of His people as peculiar to Himself.

Thereupon the seal of God is openly put upon this people which is His: “Thou hast avouched this day the Lord to be thy God, to walk in His ways... and the Lord hath avouched thee to be His peculiar people, and to make thee high above all nations that He hath made... and that thou mayest be a holy people unto the Lord thy God, as He hath spoken.”

“God is not ashamed to be called their God.” Alas, as yet for them this glory of theirs has been but a passing vision. And why? Because they had but too faithfully repeated the history of the generation of the wilderness, and it had yet to be said of all this blessing, “they could not enter in because of unbelief.”

SUBDIVISION 3. (Ch.27—30.) The rewards and penalties which actualize the law as such.

The law being thus ended, we have now in the next four chapters the rewards and penalties which are its sanctions—by which it becomes actualized as law. And there are here three sections:

1. (Ch.27) First, the perpetuity of the law under which they place themselves, and its power and promise are plainly signified by the monument upon Ebal.
2. (Ch.28) Secondly, the blessing and the curse are put before them in

emphatic contrast, declared by the Word of One that will not lie.

3. (Ch.29-30) In the third and concluding section we have the recapitulation of the covenant before the Lord, looking on to the predicted restoration of the people in the time to come.

1. (27.) The perpetuity, power, and promise of the law.

The first section is of great significance. It is one of many proofs that not isolated passages, but the whole word here is prophetic, the things that happened unto Israel happened unto them for types. How much was here for faith in a humble and convicted soul to lay to heart, and in which to find most serious, in the end most blessed, lessons! Even if none learned them, there was no less in all of it God's faithfulness—His witness to Himself, and which now for us ought to be without a cloud upon it.

1. (27:1-8.) Its authority proclaimed.

They are commanded, when they shall have passed over Jordan into the land, to set up great stones on Mount Ebal, plaster them with lime or gypsum, and write upon them all the words of the law. There also they were to build an altar of unhewn stones, and offer burnt-offerings and peace-offerings upon it, and eat and rejoice before God.

Mount Ebal, as we already know, and as is again directly stated, is the mountain upon which the curses of the law were to be proclaimed, as upon Mount Gerizim the blessings. How significant of the true power of the law, that it was to stand there permanently identified with the curse and not with the blessing! "As many as are of the works of law are under the curse," is here the language of the law itself. The Samaritans long afterward strove to reverse this sentence, and their copy of the Pentateuch puts Gerizim here in place of Ebal. Upon Gerizim their schismatic temple stood, a type and prophecy of much legal worship since. But the Old Testament unites in this its witness with the New; and the spiritual Samaritan is still at schism with the law, and a rebel against its sentence. The power of the law is thus lost, for its true power is to destroy self-righteousness, and humble men to the gospel.

But side by side with this monument of the law therefore, as if God would not have this connection even then mistaken, they were to build their altar and offer their burnt-offerings and their peace-offerings, and on the dreaded mount itself rejoice before God. They could do so, for this

worship was sanctified by the law, the righteousness of the law being maintained by the death of the victim. This for faith completes the testimony.

2. (27:9-26.) Its confirmation by the people.

Gerizim and Ebal lay opposite to one another—the mount of blessing to the south, the mount of cursing to the north, in the middle of the land of Canaan. Ebal, it is said, overtops Gerizim by about a hundred feet, and is the steeper and more barren of the two. Gesenius takes it to mean “stripped of foliage;” while Gerizim also approaches this in meaning, being given as signifying “dwellers in a shorn land.” Between them in the valley lies Shechem, “shoulder”—the place of obedience (Gen.12:6, *n.*), and where Jacob gets so thoroughly tested. (Gen.33:18.) All this is easily suggestive. The tribes are to stand half on the one mount, half on the other—not to utter, but to confirm for themselves the blessing and the curse: for the blessing, the children of Leah, and Rachel; for the curse, those of the bondmaids, with Reuben, the displaced first-born, and Zebulun, Leah’s youngest son. But in fact, as all commentators notice, the blessings here are significantly never uttered. The law, as witnessed for the second time, is potent only for curse: and under this shadow Israel enter the land. That all this happened unto them for types, who can rightly question?

“As the whole ceremony and the special form of the curses are practical, so also the inward peculiar nature of the examples selected. Gross transgressions incur the penalty, but the more secret and refined meet with the curse, ‘in order to show that God will in any case visit such sinners, and to instil into the hypocrite a terror of his works of darkness.’ ” (Schroder, Von Gerlach.)

2. (28:1-68.) The blessing and the curse in contrasted testimony.

1. (28:1-14.) The blessing.

2. (28:15-68.) The curse.

The blessing and the curse are now taken up by Moses, and spread out before the people’s eyes, especially the curse, which has had long, sad fulfilment for many generations, and needed thus to be set before them for their conviction and turning to God when overtaken by it. It was thus already a prophecy of what the legal covenant would bear as fruit; and it is God’s love to His people that speaks in these terrible denunciations, yet

insufficient to turn back the unbelieving generation from the path of ruin. So is it with all the sorrow and evil of life, which God, alas, must so much dwell upon for us because souls are so largely born to Him in sorrow, and by night we see farthest into heaven. The blessing occupies but fourteen verses; the curse, fifty-four. It would carry us much beyond our limits to go into the details. As with him who is at peace with God all things are at peace, so, on the other hand, with the enemies of God, all things are hostile really; not the least so when there is the most fair-seeming prosperity, and gentle breezes and calm skies lure the ship on to destruction.

3. (29–30.) The recapitulation of the covenant.

We have now the recapitulation of the covenant, the people standing, as Moses warns them before God, a covenant far-reaching in its effects upon the generations to come; fruitful of blessing, if there were only a heart to respond to Him who had drawn near to them, and who would fain have drawn them near to Himself, but in their condition could not. For this, therefore, and that He may have this witness to Himself, they are pointed forward to a future day.

1. (29:1-15.) God's present goodness the incentive to obedience.

Once more the goodness of the Lord is brought before them as the incentive to obedience. From Egypt onward they had had abundant proofs of His power, as displayed against their enemies, and in tenderness toward themselves. Their clothes had not waxen old, nor the shoes upon their feet: for us the easily read types of better things. Already also they were in possession of part of their inheritance, the pledge of what was still to come. With the knowledge of all this, they stood that day before the Lord to renew their covenant, the whole people, for themselves and for the generations yet to come.

2. (29:18-29.) The repetition of the curse.

If they turned aside from Him, God's threatenings would be as faithful as His promises. They had seen the abominations of the heathen, and could thus realize the wickedness which had brought down God's judgment. Let them not awaken it, then, against themselves by following in their steps; otherwise their own posterity and the stranger from a far country should see in the desolation of the land the manifest anger of the Lord against them for sins as manifest; and they would be rooted out of it.

3. (30:1-10.) The predicted return, in heart to God.

And all these things would, in fact, come upon them, both the blessing and the curse. It would be as scattered among the nations, that their hearts would finally return to God, in whole-hearted obedience. Then He would have compassion on them, and gather as He had scattered them. He would circumcise their hearts, and that of their seed (the nation in continuance), so that they should love the Lord their God whole-heartedly and live indeed. Then would the blessing be for themselves, the curses only for their enemies; and He would rejoice over them for good, as He had rejoiced in their past deliverance. But this is of course grace, not law; and the grace of God cannot lack ability to display itself where the heart thus turns to God.

4. (30:11-14.) The law a real test.

Meanwhile, in the law itself was the test for them, a plain thing, not hidden, speaking not from afar off, but very nigh, in the heart and in the mouth. The heart might refuse it, the mouth even disown it; yet, in fact, God had made all as simple as possible, and been as tender to man's infirmity as He could. Only man himself was to blame, if evil came. It was here indeed that man's state was fully made known. The test was not useless, but did its work well; and the law was holy and just and good; but it is Christ that is the "end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

5. (30:15-20.) The appeal to responsibility.

Thus the way and the end on both sides had been put before them; and with one more solemn appeal to "choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live," the exposition of the law comes to an end.

DIVISION 3. (Ch.31—34.) The outcome, as revealed prophetically.

The substance of the third division of Deuteronomy is evidently prophetic—the song of Moses, and the blessing of the tribes, with which we have as introduction the leadership of the people committed to Joshua, and the law to the heads of the people. The last chapter, as an appendix to the whole, and of course by another hand, gives Moses' vision of the land from Pisgah, with his death and burial by the Lord Himself.

1. (31:1-29.) Moses' last charge.

Again we find, along with the giving of the law to the people, and the inspiring words to them and their new leader to go in and take possession of the land, the positive assurance of the apostasy that would come, and the judgment of that apostasy. Even so the Church started with the assurance of latter day perilous times, the power of godliness denied, and the coming of Antichrist. Nor, in either case, was the beginning of this state of things far off. One generation only of Israel was faithful under Joshua, and then we have the confusion of the book of Judges. Paul lives to speak of all those in Asia having departed from him, and to find none in Rome to stand with him. While John writes already that it is (in principle) the last time, and that there are many Antichrists.

So little confidence can be placed in man; so surely does testing mean failure, even with the saint. History is a terrible witness against the pride of man; and prophecy, which is but divinely given history written beforehand, emphasizes the lesson. Instead of hiding the darkness of the future from those in the glow of first enthusiasm, God does the very reverse. He holds it up; He bids us never forget it; He sings it in our ears, making with it strange funeral music which shall linger there sweetly though sorrowfully: and why? Is this indeed armour for warriors, strength for a pilgrim path? Yes, it is a SONG; nay, it is a song of praise: "I will publish Jehovah's name," says Moses, "ascribe ye greatness unto our God." Nor does He after all reign among ruins merely: He has a people whom He loves and cares for: "Jehovah's portion is His people." But the lesson needs to be well learnt, and emphasized with all the intensity of a prophet's utterance: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." (Jer.17:5-7.) Thus we may have still a song over the destruction of all mere human hopes when they leave us the Lord to trust in, and make it our one necessity to trust in Him.

1. (31:1-8.) The appointed leader.

They need not be afraid, then, though Moses' strength is now to fail, nor to faint if even he be stricken of God and set aside. Jehovah abides, and He will go over before them and subdue all their enemies; Joshua too shall go before them: they shall have a leader, that they may learn subjection, and yet it must be God to whom they are really subject. Leader and people, let

them be strong: for feebleness dishonours Him whose they are. *He* will not fail nor forsake.

2. (31:9-13.) The Word, which measures all service.

But they must have the law ever in remembrance. How strengthening and inspiriting a thing is it to have one's life moulded by the declared will of God! What encouragement is there in the consciousness that one is simply obeying, and that the word we obey is perfect as it is authoritative! What a yoke is that which Christ gives, and which gives rest to the soul that takes it! We must not, of course, confuse the type and antitype here. But the principle has always been true, that the path of obedience is that of real strength and blessing and fruitfulness; and we need not wonder if the first psalm begins with this; for in this alone does God find His throne among men aright.

Moses therefore now gives them the law, and ordains it to be solemnly read to all the people every seventh year at the feast of tabernacles. In the midst of that which reminded them of the wilderness-course at an end for them and the land theirs by the favour of God, obedience could be most persuasively pressed upon them.

3. (31:14-29.) In the presence of God, where the future can be seen and faced with a song.

Joshua is now called with Moses into the presence of the Lord Himself to receive his charge. It is thus with all true leaders. "Am I not an apostle? have I not seen the Lord?" Commissions must thus finally be given by the only One who has right to confer them, and who does not keep at a distance from Himself those whom He sends forth. Moses is also to write out the song which Israel is to learn—the remedy against the evil it predicts for those who really learn it; so gladly would divine love have, if it were possible, its prophecy made untrue, and the unrepenting One repent of what He is forced to do. (Jer.18:7-8.)

Alas! the book in the side of the ark, and the words of the song, are alike witnesses against the people of His choice.

2. (31:30—32:43.) The Witnessing Song.

We come now to the Song itself, a song which was, as we see, to have a peculiar place of testimony for God, and of warning to His people. Yet it is

a “song,” and this we have seen to be significant, A “song” supposes in itself joy, and not sorrow; a battle-song, victory over enemies; a funeral song, victory over death. This of Moses unites these characters; and that it is above all a song of joy in God, explains all, assures that all must be. As joy, it is fitted to live in the heart; as a joy that does not ignore sorrow or make light of sin, the presence of these will only the more tend to preserve and give it power over the soul. It is truly a “song in the night,” and for the night, such as God alone could give—a witness to the Giver.

1. (31:30—32:4.) The faithfulness and majesty of God.

The real theme is in the first four verses: it is God Himself, the unchangeable One, faithful, just, and right. Well may the heavens hear, and the earth, the blessed words which drop as the rain, and distil as the dew of night, refreshing grass and herb. It is Jehovah’s name they publish, that sweet and wonderful name which expresses truly what He is, and which man, dropped out of that knowledge, needs so much to learn. To Him they ascribe greatness; yes, to Him, O man, out of the clay, who hast ruined thyself by thy pretension to it. *He* is the Rock—the “dwelling-place in all generations,” says our Moses elsewhere (Ps.90:1)—safe as shelter, strong against storm, clear-shadowy in the noon-tide heat of a desert land. “His work is perfect”—though men and devils have combined in their own persons to dishonour it. “All His ways are judgment”—not wrath, but far-seeing, well-discerning righteousness. “A God of faithfulness without deceit, just and right is He.”

2. (32:5-7.) The contradiction of His people.

But Israel? Alas, they have dealt corruptly with Him. Man, most favoured, most blessed, can turn all this into the occasion of deeper condemnation. Adopted as His family, they are no sons of His, but a blot upon them, a generation crooked and perverse.

And will men thus requite Jehovah? and He the Father who has purchased them from captivity for the love He bare them? Foolish and unwise as they were, did they not know Him to be that? Had He not made and established them? Let them look back, then, upon the past, the record of continuous generations. Or let them ask their fathers, and the elders hoary with age. There could be but one answer of whomsoever they inquired.

3. (32:8-14.) Who were His portion.

The song carries them then back to a time beyond these experiences, before the nation existed at all, when the sons of Adam were finding the abodes assigned them of God. Even then, when the Gentiles were receiving their inheritance, He set their bounds according to the needs of such a number as the children of Israel would become. For in truth they were Jehovah's portion—His people, and Jacob (though but “Jacob”) the lot of His inheritance.

Where had He found them? In a desert land, yea, a howling wilderness; but where the Lord's care had only the more opportunity for display. Compassed about, watched over, guarded as the pupil of the eye, they had proved this. By the law He had stirred them up like the eagle her nest, while with outstretched wings as in the pillar of cloud, He had sheltered and nestled them, then borne them up and carried them in His feathers. He, He alone did this, asking help of no strange god, and setting them upon the high places of Canaan, amid the abundance of that plenteous land.

4. (32:15-18.) Their apostasy.

Then the song turns from past to future, but which is seen as the past, clear in the vision of God. Jeshurun grew fat and kicked: God's loved, upright one⁶ became rebellious in prosperity—a strange, common case—and gave up his Maker, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. Then the heart estranged from Him turned to those that were His opposites. Strange gods came in, with their abominations, gods newly invented replaced Him who had brought them forth—a thing continually repeated since, and under every imaginable form.

5. (32:19-33) Its recompense from God.

God could not forget, and be as man; but He could, and was forced to, hide His face. They had given Him up for gods that were not, and He would move them to jealousy by a people they disdained as none. It is here that the apostle sees the calling of the Gentiles. (Rom.10:19.) But Moses' object is not to develop this; he goes on to the positive consequences of God's wrath, the wrath of slighted love, and which works out in the end the purposes of love. His anger burns to the bottom of Sheol, for there are cast the objects of it; and with that which reaches down to this the earth and its

⁶ Jeshurun is the diminutive of “Jasher” — “upright.”

produce are necessarily consumed. The foundations of the mountains are set on fire by the volcano of wrath; the elements, the teeth of beasts, hunger and plague fight against them; the sword of the enemy bereaves: a full end of them seems impending, but the proud enemy would not recognize Him in this, but only the strength of His own hand. Such is man, the unconscious worker-out of purposes he knows nothing of; and so God reigns, amid unintelligent and hostile powers, yoked to His service in their own despite.

Yet He longs and yearns over them! Let the cross say if He does not. And here His pity breaks out in Moses' words. Oh, that they had been wise! that they had understood, that they had considered the end sure to come! Vanquished, broken by a contemptible enemy—how should it be unless their Rock had sold them, and the unchangeable Jehovah delivered them into their hands! Was He less a Rock? Was it because their God was as poor a reliance as the common trusts of men? Ah, their bitter enemies could easily themselves decide this. No, alas! it was that the fruit He had looked for from them was but the vine of Sodom, bitter and poisonous; and He who was the Righteous had been forced to be against them.

6. (32:34-43.) Their discipline, which ends with the breaking of the rod.

This is all plain; but the end has unexpected disclosures. There was a secret hidden with God, sealed up among His treasures! Not judgment therefore; which every bad conscience could predict, and which He loves not!

Yet vengeance is His, and recompense, and their feet shall slip, the day of their calamity shall come, judgment shall come, Jehovah shall judge His people. Yes, judge; but not destroy! For when He sees them stricken down, helpless, their power gone, none left to help them, and the vanity of their false gods is fully seen—*then* will He call them to Himself, with whom no other can be or can compare, and the rod of their correction, having accomplished its work, shall be broken: He will turn His hand against their enemies.

It is the judgment of the living nations when the Lord appears, and which will bring in blessing for more than Israel. Hence the nations too can be bidden to rejoice, with Israel His people; the trumpet of their recall is the first note of earth's jubilee: "for if the casting away of them be the

reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" (Rom.11:15.)

Thus Moses' song vindicates itself as that; and what man is having been seen, evil looked in the face and triumphed over, its theme is fully looked at, and its argument maintained. Greatness belongs to God alone: He is the rock; His way is perfect. Let us remember but our littleness; let us ascribe to Him the greatness; let us hold fast to His perfection: then we have indeed a song which, begun in the night of time, shall last forever.

3. (32:44—33.) The blessing and how realized,

The blessing of the tribes is Moses' last public act, emphasizing what is in the heart of God toward His people; and this is always blessing. But there are two significant things linked with and introductory to this.

1. (32:44-47.) Can the law be life?

First, Moses and Joshua unite in reciting the song in the ears of the congregation, the old leader and the new being thus in that harmony in which all God's agents, all dispensations, ultimately are. The people are then urged to set their hearts to it, as the condition of the accomplishment of obedience, and therein of lengthened days. In fact, for the blessing to come, the song must have done its work. Man must learn his own nothingness and the might of God; and the blessing waits for this. Hence the section here is fully in its place as introductory to what is before us.

2. (32:48-52.) The witness of the law in Moses' death.

Secondly, we have the death of Moses again announced, with the sin for which he was set aside explicitly stated. It was not surely merely casual the connection of this with the song and blessing. Moses is in his own person an example of the condemning power of the law. He can only see from afar, what he is forbidden to possess; and if Moses, whom will it not exclude? For the true blessing, therefore, we must go beyond law—beyond the old covenant to the new; beyond all past dispensations to that under which Israel is really to enter upon her inheritance.

3. (33.) The fullness of blessing, which law cannot give: (therefore millennial, under the new covenant.)

And, accordingly, when we come to the blessing of the tribes, we find that, after the first, we have really before us their millennial condition, into

which the first and the second introduce us. Apart from Reuben, who represents for us the nation on their national footing, all the rest give us unmodified blessing, and which has but only partial connection with the features of their past history. This has perplexed the sober commentators, while leaving much to exercise the imagination of the “higher critics.” The real fact relieves all perplexity, while it is in perfect consistency with the character and purpose of all this closing portion of Deuteronomy, and with the general doctrine of Scripture also. It reminds us of the omitted blessings of the twenty-seventh chapter, and the emphasis upon the curse both there and elsewhere; of the memorial of the law set up on Ebal; and of how far already the Song has carried us.

The fullness of the blessing could not be under law, however modified. Here it is full, although Reuben may be an exception to be explained, and Simeon be omitted. This would not infer any omission of Simeon at the end, as the individual tribes, both here and in Jacob’s prophecy, stand often for aspects of the whole nation (compare Genesis 49, notes) and may even, as in Joseph, contemplate it in its great Head and King.

The blessing divides into six parts, the first speaking of God as their Leader and His power for them, already there in the wilderness; the second, of their salvation by Him; the third, of their portion as thus saved; the fourth, of the Gentiles blessed through them; the fifth, the consequences in the government of God, no more against them; and lastly, the triumph of divine goodness over all their sin. The introduction may seem a strange one to a picture of millennial days. It may remind us in this of what is stated in the opening of the book, that from Sinai to Kadesh—from which they might have entered the land—was only eleven days’ journey. In fact, it was nearly forty years that passed before they actually did enter. Even so the long time elapsing before the blessing comes to them has its necessity only in their own condition. He whose power and love had brought them through the wilderness, was even then ready to give them the full promise, but that they were not prepared for this. And when the time shall come, it will be the completion of what their passage through it then implied. The wings under which they at last come to rest are those that canopied over them in their journeyings of old. All, therefore, is in place, as ever.

Let us look at it in detail.

a) (33:1-5.) God their Leader, in power.

It is the blessing of Moses, the man of God, poured forth with his full heart in it, but where above all God reigns; and thus the eyes are cleared and strengthened and the soul assured, so that what would be prayer becomes prophecy. He sees Jehovah advancing from Sinai with them, His glory flooding the wilderness, Seir radiating it from the east, Mount Paran from the North and West, angelic hosts around Him: out of His right hand came in fire to them the mandate of a King.⁷ Yea, it is He who, God of all, loveth the peoples,⁸ in whose hand His angels are ministering spirits for them, sitting at His feet, receiving, each one, of His words.

The law given to Israel by this glorious God, had yet a human mediator and interpreter; and thus Moses became, as it were, king in Jeshurun, the tribes receiving it from him, formally gathered under their heads. This position of Moses has been often before us; it typified that of the far more wondrous “Mediator of the new covenant.” God, seeking to be near, addresses man in form as man.

b) (33:6-11.) Israel’s salvation by Him.

The blessing of the tribes follows, beginning with Reuben, the rejected first-born, who, as in Jacob’s prophecy, receives what seems but little that. He is to live and not die, and his men be numerable. No one doubts that this is the regular force of the words, though exceptions have been pleaded. The argument for the opposite thought, “Let not his men be few” is simply that it appears more like blessing. When we take the whole prophecy into account, however, the grammatical meaning justifies itself. For we have seen already in Genesis 49 how the first-born of nature stands for the

⁷ There are difficulties in this passage, well known to the critics, arising most of all from the abrupt poetic style. What is given above is literal according to the Hebrew, and consistent enough as it would seem with the whole character of what is here. The argument that the unusual word for “law”—*dath*, the “mandate of a King”—is a word too recent for Moses’ time is worth little, as literature of Pentateuchal date is not abundant enough to prove it. Haevernick looks at it as derived from *din*, to “judge.” And Koenig as an Aramaism which may “testify as well of a very early, as of a late composition.” (See Schroeder, in Lange’s Commentary.)

⁸ The plural form naturally looks beyond Israel; and this is in keeping with the blessing itself which, with all prophecy beside, connects that of the earthly people with that of the world at large.

nation on the ground of the first covenant, which was really “natural,” fleshly, because legal; and here nothing but the blessing of God (which of course is grace) could have preserved the existence of the nation at all. Under the sentence of the law, and rejecting their Deliverer, they have yet been marvellously kept from extinction, while also the subjects of a constant persecution—“a sword drawn out after them”—which has fulfilled the latter part of the prediction no less clearly.

Then follows Judah, not Simeon or Levi, as with Jacob. Simeon is not found at all, while Levi has gained a new and higher place. Judah, on the other hand, has fallen from that which Jacob pictured for him, and yet with a possible limit—“till Shiloh come.” Shiloh, we know, has come, and Judah’s staff of magistracy has been taken away. They knew not the day of their visitation. Moses’ blessing implies the disastrous consequences. “And he said, ‘Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah, *and bring him unto his people*; let his hands be sufficient for him, and be Thou a help to him from his enemies.’”

Judah, then, has been a wanderer, and separated from his people; his hand has brought him no sufficient help, and his enemies have been busy with him. All this suits exactly with what has long been history, and predicts the deliverance awaiting them in the near future. No tribal name, it is evident, would fill this place but that of Judah, connected with and following, as it does, that of Reuben. Numerically, they are in order, Reuben giving first the continuance, Judah then the deliverance of the people. Levi comes third, as showing the way of this deliverance to be by priesthood and sacrifice, the only way before God at any time for the restoration of the sinner.

We see, then, why Levi has such a special place in the blessing of Moses. We must look through the tribe and its individual history, to see, as in other cases, the One through whom the blessing comes for Israel. Christ is plainly the One with whom God’s Thummim and Urim are, the Holy One. proved at the place of proof, and striven with where the waters of life gushed out. A Moses and an Aaron might give way under the pressure, but not the One for whom they stood. On the other side, the faithfulness of Levi at the scene of the calf-worship was more than found in Him who could say, “The zeal of Thy house hath eaten Me up,” Here Levi falls so much behind that it is proportionately difficult to read the antitype in the type. But there is a double application, Israel as a whole having to turn

to God in this spirit to receive their final blessing, while for them none the less, as their day of atonement witnesses, the sacrifice upon the altar is the one means of acceptance. Here Christ is both priest and sacrifice, and through Him alone Thummim and Urim return to the delivered people: divine “perfections” being manifested, divine “light” results, and the voice of God is heard in new and more familiar intercourse with His people than for Israel the past age of law could realize at its best.

And now it is no temporary deliverance that is effected: “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.*” Here, therefore, a day begins for them which does not set.

c) (33:12-17.) Their portion and His presence.

Benjamin follows Levi: “And of Benjamin he said, ‘The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety near Him: He shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between His shoulders’.” The reference conceived by some to the tabernacle at Gibeon, or to the temple in Jerusalem in this last expression, is surely a mistake. It is not the Lord who dwells between Benjamin’s shoulders (which would be an inversion of all right thought) but the reverse. It is Benjamin who dwells in security, covered and sustained by his covenant-God. We see that Levi’s sacrifice has opened the sanctuary to him; and this is the way of divine grace—His redeemed God brings near to Himself. This is true in measure of the earthly as of the heavenly people; and will be Israel’s special glory in the days to come. From, this centre it radiates over the land, and thus the blessing of Joseph follows and unites with that of Benjamin. Under the smile of God the whole of the fruitful land breaks out into a manifold and continuous harvest. It is the good will of Him who dwelt in the bush that crowns as with a diadem the head of the Nazarite, separated to God and thus from his brethren. It is very plain that Christ it is who brings in this way the blessing down, and how Jacob’s word is confirmed in that of Moses here. For it the intruding Gentiles must be banished from the land, giving way to the myriads of “fruitful” Ephraim, and the thousands of Manasseh.

d) (33:18-19.) The extension of the blessing to the Gentiles.

Zebulon and Issachar are joined together. In Jacob’s prophecy we see the one stretching out toward the nations round, and the other couching underneath their yoke. We are reminded of this here, though how

different is all now. Zebulon may now rejoice in going out, Issachar in the tents of her pilgrimage; and still they stretch out toward the nations; but they are now ambassadors of a present King, and with a joyful invitation to come up and do Him homage. “They shall call the peoples to the mountain: there they shall offer the sacrifices of righteousness.” The millennial application of this is as clear as can be: and Isaiah and Micah both develop it: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. For He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 2:2-3.) We see in what a connected and orderly manner the prophecy proceeds also. It is another kind of commerce from what in the past has attracted Israel: now the nations are attracted, and Israel sucks of the abundance of the seas (compare Isaiah 60:5), and of the treasures hid in the sand of the seashore (the ports of its coasts?).

e) (33:20-25.) Governmental, results.

Lastly, come the children of the bondmaids, but there is no longer any trace of what is servile in their condition. Their blessing is harder to interpret than what has gone before, although not always so, and that which is most obscure seems to be so from its brevity. In general, it seems to express the moral results of the relationship in which God now stands to His people. First, in Gad power and the ruler’s seat, from which is maintained the righteousness of the Lord, and His judgment in the midst of Israel. The meaning of Dan’s blessing is not so clear, but we may see in it power that makes itself feared round about: “thine enemies shall cringe before thee” (v.29). Naphtali shows us the full favour of God enlarging the old limits: they possess as never before the sea—the coast of the Philistines and Phoenicians—and the south—including Edom’s territory as far as the Red Sea. Obadiah witnesses to both of these (v.19-21). Lastly, Asher completes the blessing of Israel by declaring its pre-eminence over that of all else, yet not envied, but accepted by their brethren—the nations of the earth—their feet dipped in the flowing oil which speaks the fatness of the bounteous land. The last two points are differently understood. Many for “shoes” read “bolts,” which Keil interprets as “castles;” and the moderns against the

ancients read “rest” instead of “strength.” In these two there would be doubly expressed their abiding security: and though we may not be willing to give up what we are so familiar with, that “as thy days thy strength shall be,” it is certainly not unsuited as the close of this wonderful blessing to have “as thy days shall be thy *rest*.”

f) (33:26-29.) The triumph of divine goodness.

The last words celebrate the triumph of divine goodness for them, before which all enemies are helpless and defeated. This is a thing of course: but blessed are the people who are the subjects of such a salvation! And who is like the God of Jeshurun? He rides upon the heavens to thy help. Thy refuge is the eternal God; and underneath are everlasting arms!

4. (34.) The death of Moses.

The last chapter of Deuteronomy is necessarily an appendix by another hand. It is the account of Moses’ death on the mount, and his burial by God, after being shown the land into which he cannot enter. Joshua succeeds him as Israel’s leader; but as a prophet in the nearness to God to which he was called, he had no successor until He came who in His own Person stood alone, in life, in death, filling all the mediatorial types, and transcending them by the full measure of His infinite glory, in whose light indeed alone they shine.