

Ellen G. White Estate

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ELLEN G. WHITE

Spiritual Gifts. Volume 4A

Ellen G. White

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About the Author

Ellen G. White (1827-1915) is considered the most widely translated American author, her works having been published in more than 160 languages. She wrote more than 100,000 pages on a wide variety of spiritual and practical topics. Guided by the Holy Spirit, she exalted Jesus and pointed to the Scriptures as the basis of one's faith.

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Chapter 22—The Sanctuary

The tabernacle was made according to the commandment of God. The Lord raised up men, and qualified them with more than natural abilities to perform the most ingenious work. Neither those workmen nor Moses were left to plan the form, and workmanship of the building. God himself devised the plan, and gave it to Moses, with particular directions as to its size and form, and the materials to be used, and specified every article of furniture which was to be in it. He presented before Moses a miniature model of the heavenly sanctuary, and commanded him to make all things according to the pattern showed him in the mount. Moses wrote all the directions in a book, and read them to the most influential of the people.

Then the Lord required the people to bring a freewill offering to make him a sanctuary that he might dwell among them. “And all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses. And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord’s offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments. And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted, and brought bracelets, and ear-rings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold, and every man that offered, offered an offering of gold unto the Lord.”

[6] Great and expensive preparations were necessary. Precious and costly materials must be collected. But the Lord accepted only the free-will offerings. Devotion to the work of God, and sacrifice from the heart, were first required in preparing a place for God. And while the building of the sanctuary was going on, and the people were bringing their offerings unto Moses, and he presenting them to the workmen, all the wise men who wrought in the work examined the gifts, and decided that the people had brought enough, and even more than they could use. And Moses proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, “Let neither man nor woman make any more work

for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing.”

The repeated murmurings of the Israelites, and the visitations of God’s wrath because of their transgressions, are recorded in sacred history for the benefit of God’s people who should afterward live upon the earth; but more especially to prove a warning to those who should live near the close of time. Also their acts of devotion, their energy, and liberality, in bringing their free-will offerings to Moses, are recorded for the benefit of the people of God. Their example in preparing material for the tabernacle so cheerfully, is an example for all who truly love the worship of God. Those who prize the blessing of God’s sacred presence, when preparing a building that he may meet with them, should manifest greater interest and zeal in the sacred work in proportion as they value their heavenly blessings higher than their earthly comforts. They should realize that they are preparing a house for God.

Many will expend much to erect comfortable and tasty buildings for themselves; but when they would prepare a place that they may receive the presence of the high and exalted One, they manifest a wonderful indifference, and have no particular interest as to the convenience, arrangement and workmanship. Their offerings are not given cheerfully from the heart; but are bestowed grudgingly, and they are continually studying in what manner the sacred building can be made to cost the least, and answer the purpose as a house of wor- [7] ship. Some manifest more interest in building their barns, wherein to keep their cattle, than they do in building a place for the worship of God. Such value sacred privileges just in that proportion which their works show. And their prosperity and spiritual strength will be just according to their works. God will not cause his blessing to rest upon those who have so little estimate of the value of divine things. Unwilling and stinted offerings are not accepted of God. Those who manifest that earnestness to bring to the Lord acceptable offerings, of the very best they have, willingly, as the children of Israel brought their presents to Moses, will be blessed in that proportion that they have estimated the value of divine things.

It is of some consequence that a building prepared expressly for God to meet with his people, should be arranged with care, made comfortable, neat and convenient; for it is to be dedicated to God,

and presented to him, and he is to be entreated to abide in that house, and make it sacred by his holy presence. Enough should be willingly given to the Lord, to liberally accomplish the work, and then the workmen be able to say, Bring no more offerings. A house built for God never should be left in debt, for God would be dishonored. He is acquainted with every heart, and he will reward every one who freely gives back to him, when he requires, that which he has given them. If they withhold that which belongs to God, he will afflict them in their families, and cause decrease in their possessions, just according to their disposition to rob him.

[8] After the building of the tabernacle was completed, Moses examined all the work, and compared it with the pattern, and directions he had received of God, and he saw that every part of it agreed with the pattern, and he blessed the people. God gave a pattern of the ark to Moses with special directions how to make it. The ark was made to contain the tables of stone, on which God engraved, with his own finger, the ten commandments. It was in form like a chest, and was overlaid and inlaid with pure gold. It was ornamented with crowns of gold round about the top. The cover of this sacred chest was the mercy-seat made of solid gold. On each end of the mercy-seat was fixed a cherub of pure solid gold. Their faces were turned toward each other, and were looking reverentially downward toward the mercy-seat, which represents all the heavenly angels looking with interest and reverence to the law of God deposited in the ark in the heavenly sanctuary. These cherubs had wings. One wing of each angel was stretched forth on high, while the other wing of each angel covered their forms. The ark of the earthly sanctuary was the pattern of the true ark in Heaven. There, beside the heavenly ark, stand living angels, at either end of the ark, with each, one wing overshadowing the mercy-seat, and stretching forth on high, while the other wings are folded over their forms in token of reverence and humility.

In the earthly ark Moses was required to place the tables of stone. These were called the tables of the testimony, and the ark was called the ark of the testimony, because they contained God's testimony in the ten commandments. The tabernacle was composed of two apartments, separated by a curtain, or vail.

All the furniture of the tabernacle was made of solid gold, or plated with gold. The curtains of the tabernacle were of a variety of colors, most beautifully arranged, and in these curtains were wrought, with threads of gold and silver, cherubims, which were to represent the angelic host, who are connected with the work of the heavenly sanctuary, and who are ministering angels to the saints upon the earth.

Within the second veil was placed the ark of the testimony, and the beautiful and rich curtain was drawn before the sacred ark. This curtain did not reach to the top of the building. The glory of God, which was above the mercy-seat, could be seen from both apartments, but in a much less degree from the first apartment. Directly before the ark, but separated by the curtain, was the golden altar of incense. The fire upon this altar was kindled by the Lord himself, and was sacredly cherished by feeding it with holy incense, which filled the sanctuary with its fragrant cloud, day and night. Its fragrance extended for miles around the tabernacle. When the priest offered the incense before the Lord, he looked to the mercy-seat. Although he could not see it, he knew it was there, and as the incense arose like a cloud, the glory of the Lord descended upon the mercy-seat, and filled the most holy place, and was visible in the holy place, and the glory often so filled both apartments that the priest was unable to officiate, and was obliged to stand at the door of the tabernacle. The priest in the holy place, directing his prayer by faith to the mercy-seat, which he could not see, represents the people of God directing their prayers to Christ before the mercy-seat in the heavenly sanctuary. They cannot behold their Mediator with the natural eye, but with the eye of faith they see Christ before the mercy-seat, and direct their prayers to him, and with assurance claim the benefits of his mediation.

[9]

These sacred apartments had no windows to give light. The candlestick was made of purest gold, and was kept burning night and day, and gave light to both apartments. The light of the lamps upon the candlestick reflected upon the boards plated with gold, at the sides of the building, and upon the sacred furniture, and upon the curtains of beautiful colors with cherubims wrought with threads of gold and silver, which appearance was glorious beyond description. No language can describe the beauty and loveliness, and sacred

glory, which these apartments presented. The gold in the sanctuary reflected the colors of the curtains, which appeared like the different colors of the rainbow.

[10] Only once a year could the high priest enter into the most holy place, after the most careful and solemn preparation. No mortal eye but that of the high priest could look upon the sacred grandeur of that apartment, because it was the especial dwelling-place of God's visible glory. The high priest always entered it with trembling, while the people waited his return with solemn silence. Their earnest desires were to God for his blessing. Before the mercy-seat God conversed with the high priest. If he remained an unusual time in the most holy, the people were often terrified, fearing that because of their sins, or some sin of the priest, the glory of the Lord had slain him. But when the sound of the tinkling of the bells upon his garments was heard, they were greatly relieved. He then came forth and blessed the people.

After the work of the tabernacle was finished, "a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys." The tabernacle was constructed so as to be taken to pieces, and borne with them in all their journeyings.

[11] The Lord directed the Israelites in all their travels through the wilderness. When it was for the good of the people, and the glory of God, that they should pitch their tents in a certain place, and there abide, God signified his will to them by the pillar of cloud resting low directly over the tabernacle. And there it remained until God would have them journey again. Then the cloud of glory was lifted up high above the tabernacle, and then they journeyed again. In all their journeyings they observed perfect order. Every tribe bore a standard, with the sign of their father's house upon it, and every tribe was commanded to pitch by their own standard. And when

they traveled, the different tribes marched in order, every tribe under their own standard. When they rested from their journeyings, the tabernacle was erected, and then the different tribes pitched their tents in order, in just such a position as God commanded, around the tabernacle, at a distance from it.

When the people journeyed, the ark of the covenant was borne before them. “And the cloud of the Lord was upon them by day, when they went out of the camp. And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel.”

* * * * *

Chapter 23—Strange Fire

“And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.”

[12] The sons of Aaron did not take the sacred fire from the altar, which the Lord himself had kindled, and which he commanded the priests to use when they offered incense before him. They took common fire and put in their censers, and put incense thereon. This was a transgression of God’s express command, and his judgment speedily followed. Aaron’s sons, who officiated in holy things, would not have thus transgressed if they had not indulged freely in the use of wine, and were partially intoxicated. They gratified the appetite, which debased their faculties, and disqualified them for their sacred office. Their intellects were beclouded, so that they did not have a realizing sense of the difference between the sacredness of the fire which God let fall from Heaven, and was kept burning continually upon the altar, and the common fire, which he had said they should not use. If they had had the full and clear use of their reasoning faculties they would have recoiled with horror at the presumptuous transgression of God’s positive commands. They had been especially favored of God in being of the number of the elders who witnessed the glory of God in the mount. They understood that the most careful self-examination and sanctification was required on their part before presenting themselves in the sanctuary, where God’s presence was manifested.

“And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar, and unto Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes, lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people; but let your brethren,

the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the Lord hath kindled. And ye shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die; for the anointing oil of the Lord is upon you. And they did according to the word of Moses.” The father of the men slain, and their brothers, were forbidden to manifest any signs of grief for the ones who had been justly punished of God. When Moses reminded Aaron of the words of the Lord, that he would be sanctified in them that come nigh to him, Aaron was silent. He knew that God was just, and he murmured not. His heart was grieved at the dreadful death of his sons, while in their disobedience. Yet, according to God’s command, he made no expression of his sorrow, lest he should share the same fate of his sons, and the congregation also be infected with the spirit of unreconciliation, and God’s wrath [13] come upon them.

“And the Lord spake unto Aaron, saying, Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean.”

When the Israelites committed sin, and God punished them for their transgression, and the people mourned for the fate of the one punished, instead of sorrowing because God had been dishonored, the sympathizers were accounted equally guilty as the transgressor.

The Lord teaches us, in the directions given to Aaron, reconciliation to his just punishments, even if his wrath comes very nigh. He would have his people acknowledge the justness of his corrections, that others may fear. In these last days many are liable to be self-deceived, and they are unable to see their own wrongs. If God, through his servants, reprove and rebuke the erring, there are those who stand ready to sympathize with those who deserve reproof. They will seek to lighten the burden which God compelled his servants to lay upon them. These sympathizers think they are performing a virtuous act by sympathizing with the one at fault, whose course may have greatly injured the cause of God. Such are deceived. They are only arraying themselves against God’s servants, who have done his will, and against God himself, and are equally guilty with the transgressor. There are many erring souls who might have been saved if they had not been deceived by receiving false sympathy.

[14] The case of Aaron's sons has been placed upon record for the benefit of God's people, and should teach those especially who are preparing for the second coming of Christ, that the indulgence of a depraved appetite destroys the fine feelings of the soul, and so affects the reasoning faculties which God has given to man, that spiritual and holy things lose their sacredness. Disobedience looks pleasing, instead of exceeding sinful. Satan rejoices to see men, formed in the image of his Maker, yield themselves as slaves to a depraved appetite, for he can then successfully control the faculties of the mind, and lead those who are intemperate to act in a manner to debase themselves and dishonor God, by losing the high sense of his sacred requirements. It was the indulgence of the appetite which caused the sons of Aaron to use common instead of sacred fire for their offerings.

The sons of Aaron departing from God's commands represents those who transgress the fourth commandment of Jehovah, which is very plain—"Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work," &c. Nearly all the professed followers of Christ do not keep the day God has sanctified and required them to keep sacred, to rest upon it because he has rested upon it himself. They labor upon God's holy time, and honor the first day of the week by resting upon it, which is a common working day, a day upon which God did not rest, and upon which he has placed no sacred honor.

[15] A departure from the fourth commandment will not now be visited immediately with temporal death. Yet God does not regard the violation of his commandments any more lightly than he did the transgression of Aaron's sons. Death is the final punishment of all who reject light, and continue in transgression. When God says, Keep holy the seventh day, he does not mean the sixth, nor the first, but the very day he has specified. If men substitute a common day for the sacred, and say that will do just as well, they insult the Maker of the heavens and of the earth, who made the Sabbath to commemorate his resting upon the seventh day, after creating the world in six days. It is dangerous business in the service of God to deviate from his institutions. Those who have to do with God, who is infinite, who explicitly directs in regard to his own worship, should follow the exact course he has prescribed, and not feel at

liberty to deviate in the smallest respect, because they think it will answer just as well. God will teach all his creatures that he means just what he says.

* * * * *

Chapter 24—The Quails

God continued to feed the Hebrew host with the bread rained from Heaven; but they were not satisfied. Their depraved appetites craved meat, which God in his wisdom had withheld, in a great measure, from them. “And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting; and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic. But now our soul is dried away. There is nothing at all besides this manna before our eyes.” They became weary of the food prepared for them by angels, and sent them from Heaven. They knew it was just the food God wished them to have, and that it was healthful for them and their children. Notwithstanding their hardships in the wilderness, there was not a feeble one in all their tribes. Satan, the author of disease and misery, will approach God’s people where he can have the greatest success. He has controlled the appetite in a great measure from the time of his successful experiment with Eve, in leading her to eat the forbidden fruit. He came with his temptations first to the mixed multitude, the believing Egyptians, and stirred them up to seditious murmurings. They would not be content with the healthful food which God had provided for them. Their depraved appetites craved a greater variety, especially flesh meats.

[16] This murmuring soon infected nearly the whole body of the people. At first, God did not gratify their lustful appetites, but caused his judgments to come upon them, and consumed the most guilty by lightning from Heaven. Yet this, instead of humbling, only seemed to increase their murmurings. When Moses heard the people weeping in the door of their tents, and complaining throughout their families, he was displeased. He presented before the Lord the difficulties of his situation, and the unsubmissive spirit of the Israelites, and the position in which God had placed him to the people, that of a nursing father, who should make the sufferings of the people his

own. He inquired of the Lord how he could bear this great burden of continually witnessing the disobedience of Israel, and hearing their murmurings against his commands, and against God himself. He declared before the Lord that he had rather die than see Israel, by their perverseness, drawing down judgments upon themselves, while the enemies of God were rejoicing in their destruction. In his distress he said, I am not able to bear all this responsibility alone, because it is too heavy for me.

The Lord directed Moses to gather before him seventy of the elders, whom he knew to be the elders of the people. They were not to be those only in advanced years, but men of dignity, sound judgment, and experience, who were qualified to be judges, or officers. “And bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. And I will come down and talk with thee there; and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone. And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow, and ye shall eat flesh; for ye have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt; therefore the Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; but even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you; because that ye have despised the Lord which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt? And Moses said, The people among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them? And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord’s hand waxed short? Thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.”

[17]

Moses himself showed a manifest distrust of the power of God, for which the Lord rebuked him. By this question of the Lord to Moses, he was made to understand that nothing was impossible with the great Ruler of the universe. He reproved Moses for his forgetfulness of his miracles. He who could divide the Red Sea, and bind the waters that they were like a wall on either side of Israel, as

they passed through on dry land, and could rain them bread from Heaven, and bring them water out of the flinty rock, could provide meat to supply the host of Israel.

“And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the Lord, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle. And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders; and it came to pass, that when the spirit rested upon them they prophesied, and did not cease.” This prophetic gift rested upon the judges and elders to establish the confidence of the people in them, and to be a sign that God had chosen them to unite their authority with Moses, and assist him in the work of subduing the murmurings of the people during their sojourn in the wilderness, and thus ease the task upon Moses.

[18] “And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day’s journey on this side, and as it were a day’s journey on the other side, round about the camp, and, as it were, two cubits high upon the face of the earth. And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails. He that gathered least gathered ten homers, and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp. And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague.”

In this instance the Lord gave the people that which was not for their best good, because they would have it. They would not submit to receive from the Lord those things which would prove for their good. They gave themselves up to seditious murmurings against Moses, and against the Lord, because they did not receive those things which would prove an injury to them. Their depraved appetites controlled them, and God gave them flesh meats, as they desired, and he let them suffer the results of gratifying their lustful appetites. Burning fevers cut down very large numbers of the people. Those who had been most guilty in their murmurings were slain as soon as they tasted the meat for which they had lusted. If they had submitted to have the Lord select their food for them, and had been thankful, and satisfied for food which they could eat freely of without injury, they would not have lost the favor of God, and then

been punished for their rebellious murmurings, by great numbers of them being slain.

Chapter 25—Miriam

After Moses had told the Lord that he was unable to bear the burden of the people alone, and God had directed him to choose seventy of the elders, and he had put the same spirit upon them which was upon Moses, Aaron and Miriam were jealous because they had not been consulted in the matter. They had not felt reconciled to the act of Moses in so readily receiving the counsel of Jethro, his father-in-law. They feared that he had more influence over Moses than they had. And now, seventy elders had been chosen without their being consulted, and as they had never themselves felt the responsibility and burdens which Moses had borne for the people, they did not see any real necessity for the help of the seventy elders. “And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it.”

Aaron and Miriam thought that as they had been chosen to aid Moses in the work, that they bore the burden of the work as well as Moses. And as the Lord had spoken by them, as well as by Moses, why should he complain of such heavy burdens as to need seventy of the judges and elders appointed to the work of aiding him. Moses felt his weakness. He felt the great work committed to him, as no other man had ever felt. Aaron had shown his weakness by yielding to the people, and making a molten calf in the absence of Moses. God had ever been Moses’ counselor.

[20] As Miriam became jealous of Moses, she was disposed to find fault with the events of his life which God had especially over-ruled. She complained of Moses because he married an Ethiopian woman, instead of taking a wife from among the Hebrews. The wife of Moses was not black, but her complexion was some darker than the Hebrews. She was of a timid disposition, tender-hearted, and was greatly affected to witness suffering. This was the reason that Moses consented to have her return to Midian, while he was in Egypt, that she might not witness the terrific plagues which the Lord was to bring upon Egypt. After she met her husband in the wilderness,

she saw that his burdens and anxieties were liable to wear away his strength, and in her distress she acquainted her father with the matter. Jethro had marked that the care of all the people was upon Moses, and therefore he counseled him to look after the religious interest of the Hebrew host, while worthy men, free from covetousness, should be selected to look after the secular concerns of the people.

After Miriam became jealous, she imagined that Aaron and herself had been neglected, and that Moses' wife was the cause—that she had influenced the mind of her husband—that he did not consult them in important matters as much as formerly.

The Lord heard the words of murmuring against Moses, and he was displeased, for Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth. “And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out. And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam, and they both came forth. And he said, Hear now my words. If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold. Wherefore, then, were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and he departed. And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle, and behold Miriam became leprous, white as snow, and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and behold she was leprous. And Aaron [21] said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. Let her not be as one dead. And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.” “And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days; and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.”

The cloud was removed from the tabernacle because the wrath of God rested upon Miriam, and it did not return until she was removed out of the camp. God had chosen Moses, and put his Spirit upon him, and by the complaints of Miriam against God's chosen servant, she not only behaved irreverently to Moses, but toward God himself,

who had chosen him. Aaron was drawn into the jealous spirit of his sister Miriam. He might have prevented the evil if he had not sympathized with her, and had presented before her the sinfulness of her conduct. But instead of this, he listened to her words of complaint. The murmurings of Miriam and Aaron are left upon record as a rebuke to all who will yield to jealousy, and complain of those upon whom God lays the burden of his work.

* * * * *

Chapter 26—Caleb and Joshua

The Lord commanded Moses to send men to search the land of Canaan, which he would give unto the children of Israel. A ruler of each tribe was to be selected for this purpose. They went, and after forty days returned from their search, and came before Moses and Aaron, and all the congregation of Israel, and showed them the fruit of the land. All agreed that it was a good land, and they exhibited the rich fruit which they had brought as evidence. One cluster of the grapes was so large that two men carried it between them on a staff. They also brought of the figs, and the pomegranates, which grew there in abundance. After they had spoken of the fertility of the land, all but two spoke very discouragingly of their being able to possess it. They said that the people were very strong that dwelt in the land, and the cities were surrounded with great and high walls, and, more than all this, they saw the children of the giant Anak there. They then described how the people were situated around Canaan, and the impossibility of their ever being able to possess it. [22]

As the people listened to this report they gave vent to their disappointment with bitter reproaches and wailing. They did not wait, and reflect, and reason, that God, who had brought them out thus far, would certainly give them the land. But they yielded to discouragement at once. They limited the power of the Holy One, and trusted not in God, who had hitherto led them. They reproached Moses, and murmuringly said to one another, This, then, is the end of all our hopes. This is the land that we have been traveling from Egypt to obtain. Caleb and Joshua sought to obtain a hearing. But the people were so excited they could not command themselves to listen to these two men. After they were calmed a little, Caleb ventured to speak. He said to the people, “Let us go up at once, and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it.” But the men that went up with him said, “We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.” And they continued to repeat their evil report, and declared that all the men were of great stature.

[23] “And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants. And we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight. And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried, and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron. And the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God that we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt. Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.”

The Israelites not only gave vent to their complaints against Moses, but accused God himself of dealing deceitfully with them, by promising them a land which they were unable to possess. Their rebellious spirit here arose so high that, forgetful of the strong arm of Omnipotence, which had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and had thus far conducted them by a series of miracles, they resolved to choose a commander to lead them back to Egypt, where they had been slaves, and had suffered so many hardships. They actually appointed them a captain, thus discarding Moses, their patient, suffering leader, and they murmured bitterly against God.

Moses and Aaron fell upon their faces before the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of the congregation, to implore the mercy of God in favor of a rebellious people. But their distress and grief was too great for utterance. They remained upon their faces in utter silence. Caleb and Joshua rent their clothes, as an expression of the greatest sorrow. “And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us. Their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Fear them not.”

[24] “Their defense is departed from them.” That is, the Canaanites had filled up the measure of their iniquity, and the divine protection was withdrawn from them, and they felt perfectly secure and were

unprepared for battle, and by the covenant of God the land is insured to us. Instead of these words having the designed effect upon the people, they increased their determined rebellion. They became in a rage, and cried out with a loud and angry cry, that Caleb and Joshua should be stoned, which would have been done had not the Lord interposed, by a most signal display of his terrible glory in the tabernacle of the congregation, before all the children of Israel.

Moses went into the tabernacle to converse with God. “And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they. And Moses said unto the Lord, Then the Egyptians shall hear it, for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them; and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land, for they have heard that thou, Lord, art among this people, that thou, Lord, art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by daytime in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now, if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.”

Moses again refuses to have Israel destroyed, and himself made a mightier nation than was Israel. This favored servant of God manifests his love for Israel, and shows his zeal for the glory of his Maker, and the honor of his people. As thou hast forgiven this people from Egypt even until now, thou hast been long-suffering and merciful hitherto toward this ungrateful people, however unworthy they may be, thy mercy is the same. He pleads, Wilt thou not, therefore, spare them this once, and add this one more instance of divine patience to the many thou hast already given? [25]

“And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word. But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice, surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither

shall any of them that provoked me see it. But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went, and his seed shall possess it.”

The Lord bade the Hebrews to return, and go into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea. They were very near the good land, but by their wicked rebellion they forfeited the protection of God. Had they received the report of Caleb and Joshua, and gone immediately up, God would have given them the land of Canaan. But they were unbelieving, and showed such an insolent spirit against God, that they brought upon themselves the denunciation, that they should never enter the promised land. It was in pity and mercy that God sent them back by the Red Sea, for the Amalekites and Canaanites, while they were delaying and murmuring, heard of the spies, and prepared themselves to make war with the children of Israel.

[26] “And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying. How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.” The Lord told Moses and Aaron to say to the people that he would do to them as they had spoken. They had said, “Would God we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness.” Now God will take them at their word. He tells his servants to say to them, that they should fall in the wilderness, from twenty years old and upward, because of their rebellion and murmurings against the Lord. Only Caleb and Joshua should go unto the land of Canaan. “But your little ones which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.”

The Lord declared that the children of the Hebrews should wander in the wilderness forty years, reckoning from the time they left Egypt, because of the rebellion of their parents, until their parents should all die. Thus should they bear and suffer the consequence of their iniquity forty years, according to the number of days they were searching the land, a day for a year. “And ye shall know my breach of promise.” They should fully realize that it was the punishment for their idolatry, and rebellious murmurings, which had obliged the Lord to change his purpose concerning them. Caleb and Joshua were

promised a reward in preference to all the host of Israel, because they had forfeited all claim to God's favor and protection.

The Lord sent fire from his presence and consumed the men who had brought the evil report, which made all the congregation murmur against Moses and against the Lord. But Caleb and Joshua lived before the Lord, and before the people which evidenced to them that their report was correct.

When the people learned from Moses the purpose of God concerning them, they mourned greatly. Early the next morning they gathered themselves before Moses, all equipped for war, and said, "We be here, and will go unto the place the Lord hath promised, for we have sinned." The Lord had said that they should not possess the land, but should die in the wilderness, and if they should go up to battle they would not prosper. Moses said, "Go not up, for the Lord is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies; for the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword; because ye are turned away from the Lord, therefore the Lord will not be with you." But they ventured to go out against their enemies, without their appointed leader, and without the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and they were met by their enemies, and smitten, and driven before them. Here the Israelites repented too late, and when God had said they should not go up to possess the land, they were as forward to go, as they had been backward before.

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Notwithstanding the recent murmurings of the Israelites, and the declaration from God that they should die in the wilderness, they did not walk carefully and humbly before him.

The Lord had made the case of Miriam a special example of warning to the Israelites. They had seen exhibited upon her the wrath of God because of her jealousy and complaints against his chosen servant Moses. The Lord then told them that Moses was greater than a prophet, and that he had revealed himself to Moses in a more direct manner than to a prophet. Said the Lord, "With him will I speak mouth to mouth." He then inquires of them, "Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" And Miriam became leprous. The instructions given in this instance to Aaron and Miriam were not intended alone for their benefit, but for the good of all the congregation of Israel.

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Chapter 27—Korah, Dathan, and Abiram

The Lord knew that Korah was rebellious at heart, and was secretly at work in the congregation of Israel against Moses, although his rebellion had not yet developed itself. The Lord made an example of Miriam as a warning to all who might be tempted to rebel against Moses. Korah was not satisfied with his position. He was connected with the service of the tabernacle, yet he desired to be exalted to the priesthood. God had established Moses as chief governor, and the priesthood was given to Aaron and his sons. Korah determined to compel Moses to change the order of things, whereby he should be raised to the dignity of the priesthood. To be more sure of accomplishing his purpose, he drew Dathan and Abiram, the descendants of Reuben, into his rebellion. [28]

They reasoned that, being descendants from the eldest sons of Jacob, the chief authority which Moses usurped belonged to them, and, with Korah, they were resolved to obtain the office of the priesthood. These three became very zealous in an evil work. They influenced two hundred and fifty men of renown to join them, who were also determined to have a share in the priesthood and government. God had honored the Levites to do service in the tabernacle, because they took no part in making and worshiping the golden calf, and because of their faithfulness in executing the order of God upon the idolaters.

To the Levites was assigned the office of erecting the tabernacle, and encamping around about it, while the hosts of Israel pitched their tents at a distance from the tabernacle. And when they journeyed the Levites took down the tabernacle, and bore it, and the ark, and the candlestick, and the other sacred articles of furniture. Because God thus honored the Levites, they became ambitious for still higher office, that they might obtain greater influence with the congregation. “And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among

them; wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?"

[29] Korah, Dathan and Abiram, and two hundred and fifty princes who had joined them, first became jealous, then envious, and next rebellious. They had talked in regard to Moses' position as ruler of the people, until they imagined that it was a very enviable position, which any of them could fill as well as Moses. And they gave themselves up to discontent, until they really deceived themselves, and one another, in thinking that Moses and Aaron had placed themselves in the position which they occupied to Israel. They said that Moses and Aaron exalted themselves above the congregation of the Lord, in taking upon them the priesthood and government, and that this office should not be conferred on their house alone. They said that it was sufficient for them if they were on a level with their brethren; for they were no more holy than the people, who were equally favored with God's peculiar presence and protection.

As Moses listened to the words of Korah, he was filled with anguish, and fell upon his face before the people. "And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even tomorrow the Lord will show who are his, and who is holy, and will cause him to come near unto him, even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him. This do, take you censers, Korah, and all his company, and put fire therein, and put incense in them before the Lord tomorrow; and it shall be that the man whom the Lord doth choose, he shall be holy. Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi. And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi. Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee. And seek ye the priesthood also? For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord. And what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?" Moses told them that Aaron had assumed no office of himself; that God had placed him in the sacred office.

[30] Dathan and Abiram said, "Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill

us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? Moreover, thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards. Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up.”

They accused Moses of being the cause of their not entering the promised land. They said that God had not dealt with them thus. He had not said that they should die in the wilderness. They would never believe that he had thus said; but that it was Moses who had said this, not the Lord; and that it was all arranged by Moses to never bring them to the land of Canaan. They spoke of his leading them from a land that flowed with milk and honey. They forgot in their blind rebellion their sufferings in the land of Egypt, and the desolating plagues brought upon that land. But they now accuse Moses of bringing them from a good land, to kill them in the wilderness that he might be made rich with their possessions. They inquired of Moses, in an insolent manner, if he thought that none of all the host of Israel were wise enough to understand his motives, and discover his imposture. Or if he thought they would all submit to have him lead them about like blind men as he pleased, sometimes toward Canaan, then back again toward the Red Sea and Egypt. These words they spoke before the congregation, and utterly refused to any longer acknowledge the authority of Moses and Aaron.

Moses was greatly moved at these unjust accusations. He appealed to God before the people whether he had ever acted arbitrarily, and implored him to be his judge. The people in general were disaffected, and influenced by the misrepresentation of Korah. “And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the Lord, thou, and they, and Aaron, tomorrow. And take every man his censer, and put incense in them, and bring ye before the Lord every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers, thou also, and Aaron, each of you his censer. And they took every man his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with Moses and Aaron.”

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Korah and his company who aspired to the priesthood in their self-confidence, even took the censers and stood in the door of the tabernacle with Moses. Korah had cherished his envy and rebellion until he was self-deceived, and he really thought that the congregation was a very righteous people, and that Moses was a tyrannical

ruler, continually dwelling upon the necessity of the congregation's being holy, when there was no need of it, for they were holy.

These rebellious ones had flattered the people in general to believe that they were right, and that all their troubles arose from Moses their ruler, who was continually reminding them of their sins. The people thought if Korah could lead them, and encourage them, and dwell upon their righteous acts, instead of reminding them of their failures, they should have a very peaceful, prosperous journey, and he would without doubt lead them, not back and forward in the wilderness, but into the promised land. They said that it was Moses who had told them that they could not go into the land, and that the Lord had not thus said. Korah in his exalted self-confidence gathered all the congregation against Moses and Aaron, "unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation. And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment. And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation? And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs', lest ye be consumed in all their sins. So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side, and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children. And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit, then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord." As Moses ceased speaking, the earth opened and swallowed them up, and their tents, and all that pertained unto

them. They went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the congregation.

As the children of Israel heard the cry of the perishing ones, they fled at a great distance from them. They knew that they were in a measure guilty, for they had received the accusations against Moses and Aaron, and they were afraid that they should also perish with them. The judgment of God was not yet finished. A fire came from the cloud of glory and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense. They were princes; that is, men generally of good judgment, and of influence in the congregation, men of renown. They were highly esteemed, and their judgment had often been sought in difficult matters. But they were affected by a wrong influence, and became envious, jealous and rebellious. They perished not with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, because they were not the first in rebellion. They were to see their end first, and have an opportunity of repenting of their crime. But they were not reconciled to the destruction of those wicked men, and the wrath of God came upon them, and destroyed them also.

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning, and scatter thou the fire yonder, for they are hallowed. The censers of these sinners against their own souls, let them make them broad plates for a covering of the altar; for they offered them before the Lord, therefore they are hallowed; and they shall be a sign unto the children of Israel.” After this exhibition of God’s judgment, the people returned to their tents, but not humbled. They were terrified. They had been deeply influenced by the spirit of rebellion, and had been flattered by Korah and his company to believe that they were a very good people, and that they had been wronged and abused by Moses. They had their mind so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of those who had perished, it was difficult to free themselves of their blind prejudice. If they should admit that Korah and his company were all wicked, and Moses righteous, then they would be compelled to receive as the word of God, that which they were unwilling to believe, that they should certainly all die in the wilderness. They were not willing to submit to this, and tried to believe that it was all imposture, and that Moses had deceived them. The men who had perished had spoken pleasant words to them, and manifested especial

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interest and love for them, and they thought Moses a designing man. They decided that they could not be wrong; that after all, those men who had perished were good men, and Moses had by some means been the cause of their destruction.

[34] Satan can lead deceived souls to great lengths. He can pervert their judgment, their sight, and their hearing. It was so in the case of the Israelites. “But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord.” The people were disappointed in the matter resulting as it did in favor of Moses and Aaron. The appearance of Korah, and his company, all impiously exercising the priests’ office with their censers, struck the people with admiration. They did not see that these men were offering a daring affront to the divine Majesty. When they were destroyed, the people were terrified; but after a short time all came in a tumultuous manner to Moses and Aaron, and charged them with the blood of those men who had perished by the hand of God.

“And it came to pass when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation, and behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared. And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces.” Notwithstanding the rebellion of Israel, and their cruel conduct to Moses, yet he manifested for them the same interest as before. He fell upon his face before the Lord, and implored him to spare the people. While Moses was praying before the Lord to pardon the sin of his people, he requested Aaron to make an atonement for their sin, while he remained before the Lord, that his prayers might ascend with the incense and be acceptable to God, that all the congregation might not perish in their rebellion. “And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them; for there is wrath gone out from the Lord. The plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people. And he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And

he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed. Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, besides them that died about the matter of Korah. And Aaron returned unto Moses unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the plague was stayed.”

Chapter 28—Aaron's Rod

God mercifully condescended to give the host of Israel another evidence, one calculated to correct their perverted judgment. He therefore required that each tribe should take a rod, and write upon the rod the name of the house of their fathers. "And thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi; for one rod shall be for the head of the house of their fathers. And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you. And it shall come to pass, that the man's rod whom I shall choose shall blossom. And I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you. And Moses laid up the rods before the Lord in the tabernacle of witness. And it came to pass that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, and behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds. And Moses brought out all the rods from before the Lord unto all the children of Israel, and they looked, and took every man his rod. And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels. And thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not." God here wrought a miracle which was sufficient to silence the complaints of the Israelites, and which was to be a standing testimony on whom God had settled the priesthood. All the remarkable changes in the rod occurred in one night, to convince them that God had positively distinguished between Aaron and the rest of the children of Israel. After this miracle of divine power, the authority of the priesthood was no longer called in question. This wonderful rod was preserved to be frequently shown to the people to remind them of the past, to prevent them from murmuring, and again calling in question to whom the priesthood rightfully belonged. After the children of Israel were fully convinced of their wrong, in unjustly accusing Moses and Aaron, as they had done, they saw their past rebellion in its true light, and they were terrified. They

spake unto Moses, saying, "Behold we die, we perish; we all perish." They are at length compelled to believe the unwelcome truth, that their fate is to die in the wilderness. After they believed that it was indeed the Lord who had said they should not enter the promised land, but should die, they then acknowledged that Moses and Aaron were right, and that they had sinned against the Lord, in rebelling against their authority. They also confessed that Korah, and those who perished with him, were sinners against the Lord, and that they had justly suffered his wrath.

The facts relative to Korah and his company, who rebelled against Moses and Aaron, and against Jehovah, are recorded for a warning to God's people, especially those who live upon the earth near the close of time. Satan has led persons to imitate the example of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, in raising insurrection among the people of God. Those who permit themselves to rise in opposition to the plain testimony, become self-deceived, and have really thought that those upon whom God laid the burden of his work were exalted above the people of God, and that their counsels and reproofs were uncalled for. They have risen in opposition to the plain testimony which God would have them bear in rebuking the wrongs among God's people. The testimonies borne against hurtful indulgences, as tea, coffee, snuff and tobacco, have irritated a certain class, because it would destroy their idols. Many for a while were undecided whether to make an entire sacrifice of all these hurtful things, or reject the plain testimonies borne, and yield to the clamors of appetite. They occupied an unsettled position. There was a conflict between their convictions of truth and their self-indulgences. Their state of indecision made them weak, and with many, appetite prevailed. Their sense of sacred things was perverted by the use of these slow poisons; and they at length fully decided, let the consequence be what it might, they would not deny self. This fearful decision at once raised a wall of separation between them and those who were cleansing themselves, as God has commanded, from all filthiness of the flesh, and of the spirit, and were perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. The straight testimonies borne were in their way, and caused them great uneasiness, and they found relief in warring against them, and striving to make themselves and others believe that they were untrue. They said the people were all right, but it was the reproving

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testimonies which made the trouble. And when the rebellious unfurl their banner, all the disaffected rally around the standard, and all the spiritually defective, the lame, the halt, and the blind, unite their influence to scatter and sow discord.

Every advance of God's servants at the head of the work has been watched with suspicion by those who have had a spirit of insurrection, and all their actions have been misrepresented by the fault-finding, until honest souls have been drawn into the snare for want of correct knowledge. Those who lead them astray are so affected themselves by blind prejudice, and by rejecting the testimonies God has sent them, that they cannot see or hear aright. It is as difficult to undeceive some of these, who have permitted themselves to be led into rebellion, as it was to convince the rebellious Israelites that they were wrong, and Moses and Aaron were right. Even after God, in a miraculous manner, caused the earth to swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, the leaders in the rebellion, the people still would have it that Moses and Aaron were wrong, and that they had killed the people of the Lord. The Hebrews were not cured of their rebellion until fourteen thousand and seven hundred of the people had been slain who had joined the rebellious. And then, after all this, God in mercy condescended to perform a remarkable miracle upon the rod of Aaron, to settle their minds forever in regard to the priesthood.

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Chapter 29—Moses Sinned

Again the congregation of Israel was brought into the wilderness, to the very place where God proved them soon after their leaving Egypt. The Lord brought them water out of the rock, which had continued to flow until just before they came again to the rock, when the Lord caused that living stream to cease, to prove his people again to see if they would endure the trial of their faith, or again murmur against him. When the Hebrews were thirsty, and could find no water they became impatient and did not remember the power of God which had, nearly forty years before, brought them water out of the rock. Instead of trusting in God, they complained of Moses and Aaron, and said to them, “Would God we had died when our brethren died before the Lord.” That is, they wished that they had been of that number who had been destroyed by the plague in the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

They angrily inquired, “Why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink. And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces, and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes, and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock; so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice, and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation

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drank, and their beasts also. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.”

Here Moses sinned. He became wearied with the continual murmurings of the people against him, and at the commandment of the Lord took the rod, and, instead of speaking to the rock, as God commanded him, he smote it with the rod twice, after saying, “Must we fetch you water out of this rock.” He here spoke unadvisedly with his lips. He did not say, God will now show you another evidence of his power, and bring you water out of this rock. He did not ascribe the power and glory to God for causing water to again flow from the flinty rock, and therefore did not magnify him before the people. For this failure on the part of Moses, God would not permit him to lead the people to the promised land.

[40] The sins of good men, whose general deportment has been worthy of imitation, are peculiarly offensive to God. They cause Satan to triumph, and to taunt the angels of God with the failings of God’s chosen instruments, and give the unrighteous occasion to lift themselves up against God. The Lord had himself led Moses in a special manner, and had revealed to him his glory, as to no other upon the earth. He was naturally impatient, but had taken hold firmly of the grace of God, and so humbly implored wisdom from Heaven, that he was strengthened from God, and had overcome his impatience so that he was called of God the meekest man upon the face of the whole earth.

Aaron died at mount Hor, for the Lord had said he should not enter the promised land, because with Moses he had sinned, at the time of bringing water from the rock at Meribah. Moses and the sons of Aaron buried him in the mount, that the people might not be tempted to make too great ceremony over his body, and be guilty of the sin of idolatry.

The Canaanites made war with Israel, and took some of them prisoners, and the host of the Israelites besought the Lord to go with them to battle against the Canaanites, and deliver them into their hands, and they would utterly destroy their cities, and would be faithful in following God. He heard their prayer, and went out with

their armies to battle, and the Israelites overcame their enemies, and utterly destroyed them and their cities.

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Chapter 30—Fiery Serpents

[41] As the people journeyed from Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom, they were much discouraged, and complained of the hardships of the way.” And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water? and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people? and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee. Pray unto the Lord that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole. And it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived.”

The murmurings of the children of Israel were unreasonable, and the unreasonable always go to extremes. They uttered falsehoods in saying that they had no bread nor water. They had both given them by a miracle of God’s mercy. To punish them for their ingratitude, and complaining against God, the Lord permitted fiery serpents to bite them. They were called fiery, because their bite produced painful inflammation, and speedy death. The Israelites, up to this time, had been preserved from these serpents in the wilderness, by a continual miracle; for the wilderness through which they traveled was infested with poisonous serpents.

Moses told the people, that God had hitherto preserved them, that they had not been harmed by the serpents, which was a token of his care for them. He told them it was because of their needless murmurings, complaining of the hardships in their journey, that God had permitted them to be bitten of serpents. This was to show them that God had preserved them from many and great evils, which if

he had permitted to come upon them, they would have suffered that which they could call hardships. But God had prepared the way before them. There was no sickness among them. Their feet had not swollen in all their journeys, neither had their clothes waxed old. God had given them angels' food, and purest water out of the flinty rock. And with all these tokens of his love, if they complained, he would send his judgments upon them for their ingratitude, and make them to realize his past merciful care for them, of which they had been unmindful.

The Israelites were terrified, and humbled because of the serpents, and confessed their sin in murmuring. Moses was directed to erect the brazen serpent upon a pole, and if those who were bitten looked upon that they should be healed. Here the Israelites were required to do something. They must look upon the brazen serpent if they would live. Many had died by the bite of the serpents. When Moses raised the serpent upon the pole, some had no faith that merely looking at that would heal them, and they died. Mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters, were all anxiously engaged in helping their suffering, dying relatives and friends, to fix their languid eyes upon the serpent. If they could only once look while fainting and dying, they revived and were healed of all the effects of their poisonous wounds. There was no virtue in the serpent of brass to cause such a change immediately in those who looked upon it. The healing virtue received by their looking upon the serpent was derived from God alone. He chose in his wisdom this manner to display his power. It was the faith of the people in the provision made which was acceptable to God. By this simple means the people were made sensible that God had permitted these serpents to afflict them, because of their murmurings, and lack of faith in him. If they would obey God they had no reason to fear, for he would be their friend, and preserve them from dangers to which they were continually exposed in the wilderness.

The brazen serpent, lifted upon a pole, illustrates the Son of God, who was to die upon the cross. The people who are suffering from the effects of sin can find hope and salvation alone in the provision God has made. As the Israelites saved their lives by looking upon the brazen serpent, so sinners can look to Christ and live. Unlike the brazen serpent, he has virtue in himself and power to heal the

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[43] suffering, repenting, believing sinner. Christ says of himself, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

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Chapter 31—Balaam

The Israelites moved forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab, on this side of Jordan, by Jericho. Balak, the king of the Moabites, saw that the Israelites were a powerful people, and as they learned that they had destroyed the Amorites, and had taken possession of their land, they were exceedingly terrified. All Moab was in trouble. “And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. He sent messengers, therefore, unto Balaam, the son of Beor, to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt. Behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me. Come now, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me; peradventure, I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land; for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.”

Balaam had been a prophet of God, and a good man. But he apostatized, and gave himself up to covetousness, so that he loved the wages of unrighteousness. At the time Balak sent messengers for him, he was double-minded, pursuing a course to gain and retain the favor and honor of the enemies of the Lord, for the sake of rewards he received from them. At the same time he was professing to be a prophet of God. Idolatrous nations believed that curses might be uttered which would affect individuals, and even whole nations. As the messengers related their message to Balaam, he very well [44] knew what answer to give them. But he asked them to tarry that night, and he would bring them word as the Lord should speak unto him. The presents in the hands of the men excited his covetous disposition. God came to Balaam in the night, through one of his angels, and inquired for him, What men are these with thee? And Balaam said unto God, Balak, the “son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me saying, Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt,

which covereth the face of the earth. Come, now, curse me them, peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out. And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them. Thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed.” The angel tells Balaam that the children of Israel are conducted under the banner of the God of Heaven, and no curse from man could retard their progress. In the morning he arose, and reluctantly told the men to return to Balak, for the Lord would not suffer him to go with them. Then Balak sent other princes, more of them in number, and more honorable, or occupying a more exalted position than the former messengers; and this time Balak’s call was more urgent. “Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee [from] coming unto me, for I will promote thee unto very great honor, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me. Come, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people. And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.”

His fear of God’s power holds the ascendancy over his covetous disposition. Yet his course of conduct shows that his love of honor and gain was striving hard for the mastery, and he did not subdue it. He would have gratified his covetousness, if he had dared to do it. After God had said that he should not go, he was anxious to be granted the privilege of going. He urged them to remain that night, that he might make inquiry again of God. An angel was sent to [45] Balaam to say unto him, “If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them; yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.” The Lord suffered Balaam to follow his own inclinations, and try, if he chose so to do, to please both God and man.

The messengers of Balak did not call upon him in the morning to have him go with them. They were annoyed with his delay, and expected a second refusal. Balaam could have excused himself, and easily avoided going. But he thought that because the Lord the second time did not forbid his going, he would go and overtake the ambassadors of Balak. The anger of the Lord was kindled against Balaam because he went, and he sent his angel to stand in the way, and to slay him for his presumptuous folly. The beast saw the angel of the Lord, and turned aside. Balaam was beside himself with rage. The speaking of the beast was unnoticed by him as anything

remarkable, for he was blinded by passion. As the angel revealed himself to Balaam he was terrified, and left his beast and bowed in humility before the angel. He related to Balaam the word of the Lord, and said, "I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me." It was important to Israel to overcome the Moabites, in order to overcome the inhabitants of Canaan. After the angel had impressively warned Balaam against gratifying the Moabites, he gave him permission to pursue his journey. God would glorify his name, even through the presumptuous Balaam, before the enemies of Israel. This could not be done in a more effectual manner than by showing them that a man of Balaam's covetous disposition dared not, for any promises of promotion or rewards, pronounce a curse against Israel.

Balak met Balaam, and inquired of why he thus delayed to come when he sent for him, and told him that he had power to promote him to honor. Balaam answered, Lo, I am come unto thee. He then told him he had no power to say anything. The word that God should give him that could he speak, and could go no further. Balaam ordered the sacrifices according to the religious rites. God sent his angel to meet with Balaam, to give him words of utterance, as he had done on occasions when Balaam was wholly devoted to the service of God. "And the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak. And he returned unto him, and lo, he stood by his burnt sacrifice, he, and all the princes of Moab. And he took up his parable, and said, Balak, the king of Moab, hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? Or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him. Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

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Balaam spoke in a solemn, prophetic style. How shall I defy, or devote to destruction, those whom God hath promised to prosper? He declared in prophetic words that Israel should remain a distinct people; that they should not be united with, swallowed up by, or lost in, any other nation; that they would become far more numerous than

they then were; and he related their prosperity and strength. He saw that the end of the righteous was truly desirable, and prophetically expressed his desire that his life might end like theirs.

[47] Balak was disappointed and angry. He exclaims, “What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether.” Balak thinks it is the grand appearance of the Israelites in their tents, which Balaam views from a high mount, that keeps him from cursing them. He thinks if he takes him to another place, where Israel will not appear to such advantage, he can obtain a curse from Balaam. Again, at Zophim, at the top of Pisgah, Balaam offered burnt-offerings, and then went by himself to commune with the angel of God. And the angel told Balaam what to say. When he returned, Balak inquired anxiously, “What hath the Lord spoken?” “And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear. Hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor. God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless, and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel. The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt. He hath as it were the strength of a unicorn. Surely, there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel. According to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought! Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion. He shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain.”

Balak still flattered himself with the vain hope that God was subject to variation, like man. Balaam informs him that God will never be induced to break his word, or alter his purpose concerning Israel, and that it is in vain for him to hope to obtain a curse for his people, or to expect him to reverse the blessing he has promised to them. And no enchantment or curse uttered by a diviner could have the least influence upon that nation that has the protection of Omnipotence.

Balaam had wished to appear to be favorable to Balak, and had permitted him to be deceived, and think that he used superstitious

ceremonies and enchantments when he besought the Lord. But as he followed out the command given him of God, he grew bolder in proportion as he obeyed the divine impulse, and he laid aside his pretended conjuration, and, looking toward the encampment of the Israelites, he beholds them all encamped in perfect order, under their respective standards, at a distance from the tabernacle. Balaam was permitted to behold the glorious manifestation of God's presence, overshadowing, protecting and guiding the tabernacle. He was filled with admiration at the sublime scene. He opened his parable with all the dignity of a true prophet of God. His prophetic words are these: "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brought him forth out of Egypt. He hath as it were the strength of a unicorn. He shall eat up the nations, his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion Who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee. And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together. And Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times."

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The Moabites understood the import of the prophetic words of Balaam—that the Israelites after conquering the Canaanites, should settle in their land, and all attempts to subdue them would be of no more avail than for a feeble beast to arouse the lion out of his den. Balaam told Balak that he would inform him what the Israelites should do to his people at a later period. The Lord unfolded the future before Balaam, and permitted events which would occur, to pass before his sight, that the Moabites should understand that Israel should finally triumph. As Balaam prophetically rehearsed the future to Balak and his princes, he was struck with amazement at the future display of God's power.

After Balaam had returned to his place, and the controlling influence of God's Spirit had left him, his covetousness, which had not been overcome, but merely held in check, prevailed. He could think

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of nothing but the reward, and promotion to honor, which he might have received of Balak, until he was willing to resort to any means to obtain that which he desired. Balaam knew that the prosperity of Israel depended upon their observance of the law of God, and that there was no way to bring a curse upon them but by seducing them to transgression. He decided to secure to himself Balak's reward, and the promotion he desired, by advising the Moabites what course to pursue to bring the curse upon Israel. He counseled Balak to proclaim an idolatrous feast in honor of their idol gods, and he would persuade the Israelites to attend, that they might be delighted with the music, and then the most beautiful Midianitish women should entice the Israelites to transgress the law of God, and corrupt themselves, and also influence them to offer sacrifice to idols. This Satanic counsel succeeded too well. Many of the Israelites were persuaded by Balaam, because they regarded him as a prophet of God, to join him, and mix with that idolatrous people, and engage with him in idolatry and fornication.

“And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord, against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor.” Moses commanded the judges of the people to execute the punishment of God against those who had transgressed, and hang the heads of the transgressors up before the Lord, to cause Israel to fear to follow their example. The Lord commanded Moses to vex the Midianites, and smite them, because they had vexed Israel with their wives, wherewith they had beguiled them to transgress the commandments of God.

[50] The Lord commanded Moses to avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites, and then he should be gathered to his people. Moses commanded the men of war to prepare for battle against the Midianites. And they warred against them as the Lord commanded, and slew all the males, but they took the women and children captives. Balaam was slain with the Midianites. “And Moses, and Eleazar, the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp. And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hun-

dreds, which came from the battle. And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.”

Moses commanded the men of war to destroy the women and male children. Balaam had sold the children of Israel for a reward, and he perished with the people whose favor he had obtained at the sacrifice of twenty-four thousand of the Israelites. The Lord is regarded as cruel by many in requiring his people to make war with other nations. They say that it is contrary to his benevolent character. But he who made the world, and formed man to dwell upon the earth, has unlimited control over all the works of his hands, and it is his right to do as he pleases, and what he pleases with the work of his hands. Man has no right to say to his Maker, Why doest thou thus? There is no injustice in his character. He is the Ruler of the world, and a large portion of his subjects have rebelled against his authority, and have trampled upon his law. He has bestowed upon them liberal blessings, and surrounded them with everything needful, yet they have bowed to images of wood and stone, silver and gold, which their own hands have made. They teach their children that these are the gods that give them life and health, and make their lands fruitful, and give them riches and honor. They scorn the God of Israel. They despise his people, because their works are righteous. “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt. They have done abominable works.” God has borne with them until they filled up the measure of their iniquity, and then he has brought upon them swift destruction. He has used his people as instruments of his wrath, to punish wicked nations, who have vexed them, and seduced them into idolatry.

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A family picture was presented before me. A part of the children seem anxious to learn and obey the requirements of the father, while the others trample upon his authority, and seem to exult in showing contempt of his family government. They share the benefits of their father’s house, and are constantly receiving of his bounty. They are wholly dependent upon him for all they receive, yet are not grateful, but conduct themselves proudly, as though all the favors they received of their indulgent parent were supplied by themselves. The

father notices all the disrespectful acts of his disobedient, ungrateful children, yet he bears with them.

At length, these rebellious children go still further, and seek to influence and lead to rebellion those members of their father's family who have hitherto been faithful. Then all the dignity and authority of the father is called into action, and he expels from his house the rebellious children, who have not only abused his love and blessings themselves, but tried to subvert the remaining few who had submitted to the wise and judicious laws of their father's household.

For the sake of the few who are loyal, whose happiness was exposed to the seditious influence of the rebellious members of his household, he separates from his family his undutiful children, while at the same time he labors to bring closer to himself the remaining faithful and loyal ones. All would honor the wise and just course of such a parent, in punishing most severely his undutiful, rebellious children.

[52] God has dealt thus with his children. But man, in his blindness, will overlook the abominations of the ungodly, and pass by unnoticed the continual ingratitude and rebellion, and heaven-daring sins of those who trample upon God's law and defy his authority. They do not stop here, but exult in subverting his people, and influencing them by their wiles to transgress, and show open contempt for the wise requirements of Jehovah.

Some can see only the destruction of God's enemies, which looks to them unmerciful and severe. They do not look upon the other side. But let everlasting thanks be given, that impulsive, changeable man, with all his boasted benevolence, is not the disposer and controller of events. "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."

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Chapter 32—Death of Moses

Moses was soon to die, and he was commanded of God, before his death, to gather the children of Israel together, and relate to them all the journeyings of the Hebrew host since their departure from Egypt, and all the great transgressions of their fathers, which brought his judgments upon them, and compelled him to say that they should not enter the promised land. Their fathers had died in the wilderness, according to the word of the Lord. Their children had grown up, and to them the promise was to be fulfilled of possessing the land of Canaan. Many of these were small children when the law was given, and they had no remembrance of the grandeur of the event. Others were born in the wilderness, and lest they should not realize the necessity of their obeying the ten commandments, and all the laws and judgments given to Moses, he was instructed of God to recapitulate the ten commandments, and all the circumstances connected with the giving of the law.

Moses had written in a book all the laws and judgments given him of God, and had faithfully recorded all his instructions given them by the way, and all the miracles which he had performed for them, and all the murmurings of the children of Israel. Moses had also recorded his being overcome in consequence of their murmurings. [53]

All the people were assembled before him, and he read the events of their past history out of the book which he had written. He read, also, the promises of God to them if they would be obedient, and the curses which would come upon them if they were disobedient.

He related to the people his great sorrow because of his fault at Meribah. “And I besought the Lord at that time, saying, O Lord God, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand; for what God is there in Heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the Lord was wroth with me for your

sakes, and would not hear me. And the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter. Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes; for thou shalt not go over this Jordan. But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him; for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see. Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.”

[54] Moses told them that for their rebellion the Lord had several times purposed to destroy them. But he had interceded for them so earnestly that God had graciously spared them. He reminded them of the miracles which the Lord did unto Pharaoh and all the land of Egypt. He said to them, “But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord which he did. Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, whither ye go to possess it.”

Moses especially warned the children of Israel against being seduced into idolatry. He earnestly charged them to obey the commandments of God. If they would prove obedient, and love the Lord, and serve him with their undivided affections, he would give them rain in due season, and cause their vegetation to flourish, and increase their cattle. They should also enjoy especial and exalted privileges, and should triumph over their enemies. He related to them the advantages of the land of Canaan over that of Egypt. In certain seasons of the year, the cultivated lands in Egypt had to be watered from the river, by machinery, which was worked by the foot. This was a laborious process.

Moses said to them, “For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs. But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven. A land which the Lord thy God careth for. The eyes of the Lord thy God

are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.”

Many of the Egyptians paid that devotion to the river which belonged alone to God. They acknowledged it as their god, because they were dependent on its waters to quench their thirst, and to use upon their lands to cause vegetation to flourish; and it liberally supplied their tables with fish.

During the plagues on Egypt Pharaoh was punctual in his superstitious devotion to the river, and visited it every morning, and as he stood upon its banks he offered praise and thanksgiving to the water, recounting the great good it accomplished, and telling the water of its great power; that without it they could not exist; for their lands were watered by it, and it supplied meat for their tables. The first plague which visited Egypt was to come upon the waters, one of the exalted gods of Pharaoh. Moses smote the waters before Pharaoh and his great men, and they saw the waters which they were adoring turned to blood. It was a putrid mass for seven days, and all the fish that were in it died. The people could not use the water for any purpose.

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Moses instructed the children of Israel in an earnest, impressive manner. He knew that it was his last opportunity to address them. He then finished writing in a book all the laws, judgments and statutes which God had given him; also, the various regulations respecting sacrificial offerings. He placed the book in the hands of men in the sacred office, and requested that for safe keeping it should be put in the side of the ark, for God's care was continually upon that sacred chest. This book of Moses was to be preserved, that the judges of Israel might refer to it if any case should come up to make it necessary. An erring people often understand God's requirements to suit their own case, therefore the book of Moses was preserved in a most sacred place, for future reference.

Moses closed his last instructions to the people by a most powerful, prophetic address. It was pathetic and eloquent. By inspiration of God he blessed separately the tribes of Israel. In his closing words, he dwelt largely upon the majesty of God, and the excellency of Israel, which would ever continue if they would obey God, and take hold of his strength. He said to them, “There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his

[56] excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. And he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, Destroy them. Israel, then, shall dwell in safety alone. The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also, his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel. Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the word of thy excellency? And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.”

Joshua was selected of God to be Moses’ successor in leading the Hebrew host to the promised land. He was most solemnly consecrated to the future important work of leading, as a faithful shepherd, the people of Israel. “And Joshua, the son of Nun, was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him. And the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the Lord commanded Moses.” And he gave Joshua charge before all the congregation of Israel, “Be strong and of a good courage; for thou shalt bring the children of Israel unto the land which I swear unto them, and I will be with thee.” He spoke to Joshua in God’s stead. He also had the elders and officers of the tribes gathered before him, and he solemnly charged them to deal justly and righteously in their religious offices, and to faithfully obey all the instructions he had given them from God. He called heaven and earth to record against them, that if they should depart from God, and transgress his commandments, he was clear, for he had faithfully instructed and warned them.

[57] “And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho, and the Lord shewed him all the land to Gilead, unto Dan. And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar. And the Lord said unto him, This is the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed. I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley, in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre

unto this day. And Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.”

Moses ascended to Pisgah, the highest prominence of the mountain which he could attain, and there his clear and undimmed eyes viewed the land, the promised home of Israel. God opened before his sight the whole land of Canaan. He there in the mount fully realized the rich blessings Israel would enjoy if they would faithfully obey the commandments of God.

It was not the will of God that any one should go up with Moses to the top of Pisgah. There he stood, upon a high prominence upon Pisgah's top, in the presence of God and heavenly angels. After he had viewed Canaan to his satisfaction, he lay down, like a tired warrior, to rest. Sleep came upon him, but it was the sleep of death. Angels took his body and buried it in the valley. The Israelites could never find the place where he was buried. His secret burial was to prevent the people from sinning against the Lord by committing idolatry over his body. Moses had accomplished much for Israel. In all his instructions to them could be seen justice, intelligence and purity.

The life of Moses was marked with supreme love to God. His piety, humility and forbearance gave him influence with the host of Israel. His zeal and faith in God were greater than those of any other man upon the earth. He had often addressed his people in words of stirring eloquence. No one knew better than he how to move the affections of the people. He conducted all matters connected with the religious interests of the people with great wisdom.

Satan exulted that he had succeeded in causing Moses to sin against God. For this transgression, Moses came under the dominion of death. If he had continued faithful, and his life had not been marred with that one transgression, in failing to give to God the glory of bringing water from the rock, he would have entered the promised land, and would have been translated to Heaven without seeing death. Michael, or Christ, with the angels that buried Moses, came down from Heaven, after he had remained in the grave a short time, and resurrected him, and took him to Heaven.

As Christ and the angels approached the grave, Satan and his angels appeared at the grave, and were guarding the body of Moses, lest it should be removed. As Christ and his angels drew nigh, Satan

resisted their approach, but was compelled, by the glory and power of Christ and his angels to fall back. Satan claimed the body of Moses, because of his one transgression; but Christ meekly referred him to his Father, saying, “The Lord rebuke thee.” Christ told Satan that he knew that Moses had humbly repented of this one wrong, and no stain rested upon his character, and his name in the heavenly book of records stood untarnished. Then Christ resurrected the body of Moses, which Satan had claimed.

At the transfiguration of Christ, Moses was sent with Elijah, who had been translated, to talk with Christ in regard to his sufferings, and be the bearers of God’s glory to his dear Son. Moses had been greatly honored of God. He had been privileged to talk with God face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend. And God had revealed to him his excellent glory, as he had never done to any other.

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Chapter 33—Joshua

After the death of Moses, Joshua was to be the leader of Israel, to conduct them to the promised land. He had been prime minister to Moses during the greater part of the time the Israelites had wandered in the wilderness. He had seen the wonderful works of God wrought by Moses, and well understood the disposition of the people. He was one of the twelve spies who were sent out to search the promised land, and one of the two who gave a faithful account of its richness, and who encouraged the people to go up and possess it in the strength of God. He was well qualified for this important office. The Lord promised Joshua to be with him as he had been with Moses, and he would make Canaan fall an easy conquest to him, provided he would be faithful to observe all his commandments. He was anxious how he should execute his commission in leading the people to the land of Canaan. But this encouragement removed his fears. [59]

Joshua commanded the children of Israel to prepare for a three-days' journey, and that all the men of war should go out to battle. "And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go. According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee; only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses. Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death; only be strong and of a good courage."

The passage of the Israelites over Jordan was to be miraculous. "And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you. And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people. And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee."

[60] The priests were to go before the people and bear the ark containing the law of God. And as their feet were dipped in the brim of Jordan, and waters were cut off from above, and the priests passed on, bearing the ark, which was a symbol of the Divine presence, and the Hebrew host followed. When the priests were half way over Jordan, they were commanded to stand in the bed of the river until all the host of Israel had passed over. Here the then existing generation of the Israelites were convinced that the waters of Jordan were subject to the same power that their fathers had seen displayed at the Red Sea, forty years before. Many of these passed through the Red Sea when they were children. Now they pass over Jordan, men of war, fully equipped for battle. After all the host of Israel had passed over Jordan, Joshua commanded the priests to come up out of the river. As soon as the priests, bearing the ark of the covenant, came up out of the river, and stood on dry land, Jordan rolled on as before, and overflowed all his banks. This wonderful miracle performed for the Israelites greatly increased their faith. That this wonderful miracle might never be forgotten, the Lord directed Joshua to command that men of note, one of each tribe, take up stones from the bed of the river, the place where the priests' feet stood while the Hebrew host was passing over, and to bear them upon their shoulders, and erect a monument in Gilgal, to keep in remembrance the fact that Israel passed over Jordan on dry land. After the priests had come up from Jordan, God removed his mighty hand, and the waters rushed like a mighty cataract down their own channel.

When all the kings of the Amorites, and the kings of the Canaanites heard that the Lord had stayed the waters of Jordan before the children of Israel, their hearts melted with fear. The Israelites had slain two of the kings of Moab, and their miraculous passage over the swollen and impetuous Jordan filled them with the greatest terror. Joshua then circumcised all the people which had been born in the wilderness. After this ceremony, they kept the passover in the plains of Jericho. "And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you."

[61] Heathen nations had reproached the Lord, and his people, because the Hebrews had not possessed the land of Canaan, which they expected to inherit soon after leaving Egypt. Their enemies had triumphed, because they had so long wandered in the wilderness,

and they proudly lifted themselves up against God, declaring that he was not able to lead them into the land of Canaan. They had now passed over Jordan on dry land, and their enemies could no longer reproach them.

The manna had continued up to this time. But now, as they were about to possess Canaan, and eat of the fruit of the land, the Israelites had no more need of it, and it ceased.

As Joshua withdrew from the armies of Israel, to meditate and pray for God's special presence to attend him, he saw a man of lofty stature, clad in warlike garments, with his sword drawn in his hand. Joshua did not recognize him as one of the armies of Israel, and yet he had no appearance of being an enemy. In his zeal he accosted him, and said, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries. And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."

This was no common angel. It was the Lord Jesus Christ, he who had conducted the Hebrews through the wilderness, enshrouded in the pillar of fire by night, and a pillar of cloud by day. The place was made sacred by his presence, therefore Joshua was commanded to put off his shoes.

The burning bush seen by Moses was also a token of the divine presence, and as he drew nigh to behold the wonderful sight, the same voice which here speaks to Joshua, said to Moses, "Draw not nigh hither. Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

The glory of God hallowed the sanctuary, and for this reason the priests never entered the place sanctified by God's presence with shoes upon their feet. Particles of dust might cleave to their shoes, which would desecrate the sanctuary. Therefore, the priests were required to leave their shoes in the court, before entering the sanctuary. In the court, beside the door of the tabernacle, stood the brazen laver, wherein the priests washed their hands and their feet before entering the tabernacle, that all impurity might be removed, "that they die not." All who officiated in the sanctuary were required

of God to make special preparations before entering where God's glory was revealed.

In order to convey to the mind of Joshua that he was no less than Christ, the Exalted One, he says, "Put off thy shoe from off thy foot." The Lord then instructed Joshua what course to pursue in order to take Jericho. All the men of war should be commanded to compass the city once each day for six days, and on the seventh day they should go around Jericho seven times.

[63] "And Joshua, the son of Nun, called the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord. And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the Lord. And it came to pass, when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns passed on before the Lord, and blew with the trumpets, and the ark of the covenant of the Lord followed them. And the armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets, and the rearward came after the ark, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets. And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout. So the ark of the Lord compassed the city, going about it once; and they came into the camp, and lodged in the camp."

The Hebrew host marched in perfect order. First went a select body of armed men, clad in their warlike dress, but not now to exercise their skill in arms, but only to believe, and obey the directions given them. Next followed seven priests with trumpets. Then came the ark of God, glittering with gold, a halo of glory hovering over it, borne by priests in their rich and peculiar dress, denoting their sacred office. The vast army of Israel followed in perfect order, each tribe under its respective standard. Thus they compassed the city with the ark of God. No sound was heard but the tread of that mighty host, and the solemn voice of the trumpets, echoed by the hills, and resounding through the city of Jericho. With wonder and alarm the watchmen of that doomed city marked every move, and reported to those in authority. They cannot tell what all this display means. Some ridiculed the idea of that city being taken in this manner,

while others are awed as they behold the splendor of the ark, and the solemn and dignified appearance of the priests, and the host of Israel following, with Joshua at their head. They remember that the Red Sea, forty years before, parted before them, and that a passage had just been prepared for them through the river Jordan. They are too much terrified to sport. They are strict to keep the gates of the city closely shut, and mighty warriors to guard each gate. For six days the armies of Israel perform their circuit around the city. On the seventh day they compassed Jericho seven times. The people were commanded, as usual, to be silent. The trumpets' voice alone was to be heard. The people were to observe, and when the trumpeters should make a longer blast than usual, then all were to shout with a loud voice, for God had given them the city. "And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early, about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times; only on that day they compassed the city seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua [64] said unto the people, Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city. So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets. And it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city."

God intended to show the Israelites that the conquest of Canaan was not to be ascribed to them. The Captain of the Lord's host overcame Jericho. He and his angels were engaged in the conquest. Christ commanded the armies of Heaven to throw down the walls of Jericho, and prepare an entrance for Joshua and the armies of Israel. God, in this wonderful miracle, not only strengthened the faith of his people in his power to subdue their enemies, but rebuked their former unbelief.

Jericho had defied the armies of Israel, and the God of Heaven. And as they beheld the host of Israel marching around their city once each day, they were alarmed; but they looked at their strong defenses, their firm and high walls, and felt sure, that they could resist any attack. But when of a sudden their firm walls tottered and fell, with a stunning crash, like peals of loudest thunder, they were paralyzed with terror, and could offer no resistance.

[65] No stain rested upon the holy character of Joshua. He was a wise leader. His life was wholly devoted to God. Before he died he assembled the Hebrew host, and, following the example of Moses, he recapitulated their travels in the wilderness, and also the merciful dealings of God with them. He then eloquently addressed them. He related to them that the king of Moab warred against them, and called Balaam to curse them; but God “would not hearken unto Balaam, therefore he blessed you still”. He then said to them, “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods; for the Lord our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed.”

The people renewed their covenant with Joshua. They said unto him, “The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.” Joshua wrote the words of their covenant in the book containing the laws and statutes given to Moses. Joshua was loved and respected by all Israel, and his death was much lamented by them.

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Chapter 34—Samuel and Saul

The children of Israel were a highly-favored people. God had brought them from Egyptian bondage and acknowledge them as his own peculiar treasure. Moses said, “What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?”

Samuel had judged Israel from his youth. He had been a righteous and impartial judge, faithful in all his work. He was becoming old, and the people saw that his sons did not follow his footsteps. Although they were not vile, like the children of Eli, yet they were dishonest and double-minded. While they aided their father in his laborious work, their love of reward led them to favor the cause of the unrighteous.

The Hebrews demanded a king of Samuel, like the nations around them. By preferring a despotic monarch to the wise and mild government of God himself, by the jurisdiction of his prophets, they showed a great want of faith in God, and confidence in his providence to raise them up rulers to lead and govern them. The children of Israel being peculiarly the people of God, their form of government was essentially different from all the nations around them. God had given them statutes and laws, and had chosen their rulers for them, and these leaders the people were to obey in the Lord. In all cases of difficulty and great perplexity, God, was to be inquired of. Their demand for a king was a rebellious departure from God, their special leader. He knew that a king would not be best for his chosen people. They would render to an earthly monarch that honor that was due to God alone. And if they had a king, whose heart was lifted up and not right with God, he would lead them away from him, and cause them to rebel against him. The Lord knew that no one could occupy the position of king, and receive the honors usually given to a king, without becoming exalted, and their ways seem right in their own eyes, while at the same time they were sinning against God. At the word of a king innocent persons would be

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made to suffer, while the most unworthy would be exalted, unless he continually trusted in God, and received wisdom from him.

[67] If the Hebrews had continued to obey God after they left Egypt, and had kept his righteous law, he would have gone before them and prospered them, and made them always a terror to the heathen nations around them. But they so often followed their own rebellious hearts, and departed from God, and went into idolatry, that he suffered them to be overcome by other nations, to humble and punish them. When in their affliction they cried unto God, he always heard them, and raised them up a ruler to deliver them from their enemies. They were so blinded they did not acknowledge that it was their sins which had caused God to depart from them, and leave them weak and a prey to their enemies, but they reasoned that it was because they had no one invested with kingly authority to command the armies of Israel. They had not kept in grateful remembrance the many instances God had given them of his care and great love, but often distrusted his goodness and mercy.

God had raised up Samuel to judge Israel. He was honored by all the people. God was to be acknowledged as their great Head, yet he designated their rulers, and imbued them with his Spirit, and communicated his will to them through his angels, that they might instruct the people. God also gave special evidences to the people, by his mighty works performed through the agency of his chosen rulers, that they might have confidence that he had invested them with authority which could not be lightly set aside.

God was angry with his people because they demanded a king. He gave them a king in his wrath. Yet he bade Samuel to tell the people faithfully the manner of the kings of the nations around them; that they would not be as a judge of difficulties of church and State, to instruct them in the ways of the Lord, like their rulers: that their king would be exalted, and would require kingly honors, and would exact a heavy tax or tribute; that they would be oppressed; and that God would not manifest to them his mighty power, as in Egypt, to deliver them, but when they should cry unto him in their distress he would not hear them.

But the people would not receive the advice of Samuel and continued to demand a king. "And the Lord said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee;

for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.” Here God granted to rebellious Israel that which would prove a heavy curse to them, because they would not submit to have the Lord rule for them. They thought that it would be more honorable in the sight of other nations to have it said, The Hebrews have a king. The Lord directed Samuel to anoint Saul as king of Israel. His appearance was noble, such as would suit the pride of the children of Israel. But God gave them an exhibition of his displeasure. It was not a season of the year when they were visited with heavy rains, accompanied with thunder. “So Samuel called unto the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day. And all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not; for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.” Samuel sought to encourage the people, that although they had sinned, yet if they from that time followed the Lord, he would not forsake them, for his great name’s sake. “Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way. Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.”

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When the Philistines, with their large army, prepared to make war with Israel, then the people were afraid. They had not that confidence that God would appear for them as before they had wickedly demanded a king. They knew that they were but a handful, compared with the armies of the Philistines, and to go out to battle with them seemed to be certain death. They did not feel as secure as they thought they should in possession of their king. In their perplexity they dared not call upon God, whom they had slighted. The Lord said to Samuel, They have not rejected you, but me, by desiring a king.

Now, these men who had been valiant, and a terror to their numerous enemies, were afraid to go out against the Philistines to battle. They had their king, but did not dare to trust in him, and they felt that they had chosen him before the Strength of Israel. When they were brought into this perplexing condition, their hearts fainted. The people scattered, in their distress, and hid themselves in caves,

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and in thickets, and in high places, and in pits, as though escaping from captivity. Those who ventured to go with Saul followed him trembling. He was in great perplexity, as he saw that the people were scattered from him. He anxiously awaited the promised coming of Samuel; but the time expired, and he came not. God had designedly, detained Samuel, that his people might be proved, and might realize their sin, and how small was their strength, and weak their judgment and wisdom without God.

In their calamity they repented that they had chosen a king. They had possessed greater courage and confidence while they had God-fearing rulers to instruct and lead them, for they obtained counsel direct from God, and it was like being led by God himself. Now, they realized that they were commanded by an erring king, who could not save them in their distress. Saul had not a high and exalted sense of the excellence and terrible majesty of God. He had not a sacred regard for his appointed ordinances. With an impetuous spirit because Samuel did not appear at the appointed time, he rushed before God presumptuously, and undertook the sacred work of sacrifice. While equipped for war, he built the altar and officiated for himself and the people. This work was sacredly given to those appointed for the purpose. This act was a crime in Saul, and such an example would lead the people to have a low estimate of the religious ceremonies and ordinances sanctified and appointed of God, prefiguring the sinless offering of his dear Son. God would have his people have a holy regard and sacred reverence for the sacrificial work of the priests, which pointed to the sacrifice of his Son.

[70] As soon as Saul had finished his presumptuous work, Samuel appears and beholding the evidences of his sin, he cries out in grief to Saul, "What hast thou done?" Saul explains the matter to Samuel, justifying himself, setting before Samuel his perplexity and distress, and his delay as an excuse. Samuel reproves Saul, and tells him that he has done foolishly, in not keeping the commandments of the Lord, which if he had obeyed, the Lord would have established his kingdom forever. "But now thy kingdom shall not continue. The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee."

Because of the sin of Saul in his presumptuous offering, the Lord would not give to him the honor of commanding the armies of Israel in battle with the Philistines. The Lord would have his name alone magnified lest the armies of Israel should exalt themselves as though it were on account of their righteousness, valor or wisdom, that their enemies were overcome. He moved upon the heart of Jonathan, a righteous man, and his armor-bearer, to go over to the garrison of the Philistines. Jonathan believed that God was able to work for them, and save by many or by few. He did not rush up presumptuously. He asked counsel of God, then with a fearless heart, trusting in him alone, he moved forward. Through these two men the Lord accomplished his work of subduing the Philistines. He sent angels to protect Jonathan and his armor-bearer and shield them from the instruments of death in the hands of their enemies.

Angels of God fought by the side of Jonathan, and the Philistines fell all around him. Great fear seized the host of the Philistines in the field and in the garrison. And the spoilers that had been divided into separate companies, and sent in different directions, ready for their work of slaughter, were terribly afraid. The earth trembled beneath them, as though a great multitude with horsemen and chariots were upon the ground prepared for battle. Jonathan and his armor-bearer, and even the Philistine host knew that the Lord was working for the deliverance of the Hebrews. The Philistines became perplexed. There appeared to them to be men of Israel among them, fighting against them; and they fought against one another, and slaughtered their own armies. [71]

The battle had progressed quite a length of time before Saul and his men were aware that deliverance was being wrought for Israel. The watchmen of Saul perceived great confusion among the Philistines, and saw their numbers decreasing and yet no one was missed from the armies of Israel. After numbering the men of war Jonathan and his armor-bearer were reported missing. Saul and the people were perplexed. He had the ark of God brought, and while the priest was inquiring of God, the noise among the Philistines increased. It sounded like two great armies in close battle. When Saul and the people of Israel perceived that God was fighting for them, those who had fled and hid in their terror, and those who had joined the Philistines through fear, united with Saul

and Jonathan, and pursued the Philistines. The Lord wrought for Israel, and delivered them for his own name's glory, lest the heathen army should triumph over his people, and exalt themselves proudly against God.

Again Saul erred in his rash vow that no man should eat until the evening. There was a great lack of wisdom in Saul's zeal in making such a vow. It was a great day's labor for the people, and they suffered much through faintness, and when the time of the vow expired, the people were so faint that they transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and ate meat with the blood, which had been forbidden of God. Saul was determined to slay his son Jonathan, because in his faintness he had tasted of a little honey, being ignorant of his father's vow.

[72] Here was seen Saul's blind zeal, and failure to judge righteously and wisely in difficult matters. He should have reasoned thus: God has been pleased to work in a special manner through Jonathan, thus choosing him among the children of Israel to deliver them; and it would be a crime to destroy his life, which God has miraculously preserved. He knew that if he spared his life he must acknowledge that he had committed an error in making such a vow. This would humble his pride before the people. Saul should have respected the ones whom God had honored by choosing them to deliver Israel. In putting Jonathan to death, he would slay one whom God loved, while those whose hearts were not right with God he would preserve alive. God would not suffer Jonathan to die, but led the people to oppose Saul's judgment, although he were a ruling monarch, that he might be convinced that he sinned in making so rash a vow. "And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid. As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not."

Saul was an impulsive man, and the people of Israel were soon made to feel their sin in demanding a king. The Lord directed Samuel to go unto Saul with a special command from him. Before he related to him the words of the Lord, he said to him. "The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel; now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord."

Samuel had lost confidence in Saul's religious character, because he had been so regardless of following the word of the Lord. He had sinned in his presumptuous offering, and greatly erred in his rash vow. Therefore Samuel gave him a special charge to heed the words of the Lord. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel. How he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not."

Many years before, God had appointed Amalek to utter destruction. They had lifted up their hands against God, and his throne, and had taken oath by their gods that Israel should be utterly consumed, and the God of Israel brought down so that he would not be able to deliver them out of their hands.

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Amalek had made derision of the fears of his people, and made sport of God's wonderful works for the deliverance of Israel performed by the hand of Moses before the Egyptians. They had boasted that their wise men and magicians could perform all those wonders. And if the children of Israel had been their captives, in their power as they were in Pharaoh's, that the God of Israel himself would not have been able to deliver them out of their hands. They despised Israel, and vowed to plague them until there should not be one left.

God marked their boastful words against him, and appointed them to be utterly destroyed by the very people they had despised, that all nations might mark the end of that most proud and powerful people.

God proved Saul by intrusting him with the important commission to execute his threatened wrath upon Amalek. But he disobeyed God, and spared the wicked, blasphemous king Agag, whom God had appointed unto death, and spared the best of the cattle. He destroyed utterly all the refuse that would not profit them. Saul thought it would add to his greatness to spare Agag, a noble monarch splendidly attired. And to return from battle with him captive, with great spoil of oxen, sheep, and much cattle, would get to himself much renown, and cause the nations to fear him, and tremble before him. And the people united with him in this. They excused their sin among themselves in not destroying the cattle, because they could reserve them to sacrifice to God, and spare their own cattle to themselves.

[74] Samuel visits Saul with a curse from the Lord for his disobedience, for thus exalting himself before the Lord, to choose his own course, and follow his own reasoning, instead of strictly following the Lord. Saul goes forth to meet Samuel, like an innocent man, greeting him with these words, “Blessed be thou of the Lord. I have performed the commandment of the Lord. And Samuel said. What meaneth then the bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? And Saul said. They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God, and the rest we have utterly destroyed.”

Samuel relates to Saul what God had said unto him the night before, which night Samuel spent in sorrowful prayer, because of Saul’s sins. “When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel?” He reminds Saul of the commands of God which he had wickedly transgressed, and inquires, “Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord.”

“And Saul said unto Samuel, yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things, which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal.”

Saul here uttered a falsehood. The people had obeyed his directions. But in order to shield himself, he was willing the people should bear the sin of his disobedience.

“And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king. And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words, because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.”

[75] God did not wish his people to possess anything which belonged to the Amalekites, for his curse rested upon them and their posses-

sions. He designed that they should have an end, and that his people should not preserve anything for themselves which he had cursed. He also wished the nations to see the end of that people who had defied him, and to mark that they were destroyed by the very people they had despised. They were not to destroy them to add to their own possessions, or to get glory to themselves, but to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken in regard to Amalek.

The Lord had said unto Moses, "Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua; for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindermost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary. And he feared not God. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. Thou shalt not forget it."

And yet Saul had ventured to disobey God, and reserve that which he had cursed, and appointed unto death, to offer before God as a sacrifice for sin.

Samuel presented before Saul his wicked course, and then inquired, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" It would have been better had he obeyed God, than to make such provisions for sacrifices and offerings for their sins of disobedience.

God did not have as great delight in their shedding the blood of beasts as in obedience to his commandments. The offerings were divinely appointed to remind sinful man that sin brought death, and that the blood of the innocent beast could atone for the guilt of the transgressor, by virtue of the great sacrifice yet to be offered. God required of his people obedience rather than sacrifice. All the riches of the earth were his. The cattle upon a thousand hills belonged to him. He did not require the spoil of a corrupt people, upon whom his curse rested, even to their utter extinction, to be presented to him to prefigure the holy Saviour, as a lamb without blemish.

Samuel informed Saul that his rebellion was as the sin of witchcraft. That is, when one commenced to travel in the path

of rebellion, he yields himself to be controlled by an influence that is in opposition to the will of God. Satan controls the rebellious mind. Those who are thus controlled lose a calm trust in God, and have less and less disposition to yield loving obedience to his will. Satan becomes more and more familiar with them, until they seem to have no power to cease to rebel. In this respect, rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.

Saul's stubbornness in persisting before Samuel that he had obeyed God, was as iniquity and idolatry. His love to carry out his own will was more desirable to him than to obtain the favor of God, or the approbation of a clear conscience. And when his sin was opened clearly before him, and his wrong definitely pointed out, his pride of opinion, his excessive self-love, led him to justify himself in his wrong course, in defiance of the reproof of Samuel, and the word of the Lord by the mouth of his prophet. Such obstinacy in a known transgression, separated him forever from God.

He knew that he had gone contrary to God's express command, yet when reproved by God through Samuel, he would not humbly acknowledge his sin, but in a determined manner uttered a falsehood in self-justification. If he had humbly repented, and received the reproof, the Lord would have had mercy, and forgiven Saul of his great sin. But the Lord left Saul for his stubbornly refusing to be corrected, and uttering falsehoods to Samuel, his messenger. Samuel [77] told Saul that, as he had rejected the word of the Lord, God had rejected him from being king.

This last startling denunciation from Samuel gave Saul a sense of his true condition, and, through fear, he acknowledged that he had sinned, and had transgressed the commandment of the Lord, which he had before firmly denied. He entreated Samuel to pardon his sin, and to worship with him before the Lord. Samuel refused, and told Saul that God had rent the kingdom from him, and, lest he should be deceived, he told him that the Strength of Israel would not lie, and be as changeable as he was.

Again, Saul earnestly entreated that Samuel would honor him with his presence once more before the elders of Israel and all the people. Samuel yielded to his request, and called for the cruel king Agag, and he came to him very politely. "And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless

among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.”

And the Lord no more communicated with Saul, or instructed him through Samuel. He had chosen to follow his own will, and had rejected the word of the Lord. God left him to be guided by his own judgment, which he had chosen to follow rather than to obey God. Saul had no true repentance. He had been exalted because he was made king. He manifested greater anxiety to be honored by Samuel before the people than to obtain forgiveness and the favor of God.

Samuel came no more to Saul with directions from God. The Lord could not employ him to carry out his purposes. But he sent Samuel to the house of Jesse, to anoint David, whom he had selected to be ruler in the place of Saul, whom he had rejected.

As the sons of Jesse passed before Samuel, he would have selected Eliab, who was of high stature, and dignified appearance, but the angel of God stood by him to guide him in the important decision, and instructed him that he should not judge from appearance. Eliab did not fear the Lord. His heart was not right with God. He would make a proud, exacting ruler. None were found among the sons of Jesse but David, the youngest, whose humble occupation was that of tending sheep. He had filled the humble office of shepherd with such faithfulness and courage that God selected him to be captain of his people. In course of time, he was to change his shepherd's crook for the sceptre. [78]

David was not of lofty stature, but his countenance was beautiful, expressive of humility, honesty, and true courage. The angel of God signified to Samuel that David was the one for him to anoint, for he was God's chosen. From that time the Lord gave David a prudent and understanding heart.

When Saul saw that Samuel came no more to instruct him, he knew that the Lord had rejected him for his wicked course, and his character seemed ever after to be marked with extremes. His servants, whom he directed in regard to things connected with the kingdom, at times dared not approach him, for he seemed like an insane man, violent and abusive. He often seemed filled with remorse. He was melancholy, and often afraid where there was no danger. This unqualified him for ruler. He was always full of anxiety, and when in his gloomy moods he wished not to be disturbed, and at

times would suffer none to approach him. He would speak prophetically of his being dethroned, and another occupying his position as ruler, and that his posterity would never be exalted to the throne, and receive kingly honors, but that they would all perish because of his sins. He would repeat prophetically sayings against himself with distracted energy, even in the presence of his lords and of the people.

[79] Those who witnessed these strange exhibitions in Saul recommended to him music, as calculated to have a soothing influence upon his mind when thus distracted. In the providence of God, David was brought to his notice as a skillful musician. He was also recommended for being a valiant man of war, prudent and faithful in all matters, because he was especially guided by the Lord. Saul felt at times humbled, and was even anxious that one should take charge of the government of the kingdom who should know from the Lord how to move in accordance with his will. While in a favorable state of mind he sent messengers for David. He soon loved him, and gave him the position of armor-bearer, making him his attendant. He thought if David was favored of God, he would be a safeguard to him, and perhaps save his life when he should be exposed to his enemies. David's skillful playing upon the harp soothed the troubled spirit of Saul. As he listened to the enchanting strains of music, it had an influence to dispel the gloom which settled upon him, and to bring his excited mind into a more rational, happy state.

Especially was the heart of Jonathan knit with David's, and there was a most sacred bond of union established between them, which remained unbroken till the death of Saul and Jonathan. This was the Lord's doings, that Jonathan might be the means of preserving the life of David, when Saul would try to kill him. God's providence connected David with Saul, that by his wise behaviour he might obtain the confidence of the people, and by a long course of hardships and vicissitudes be led to put his entire trust in God, while he was preparing him to become ruler of his people.

When the Philistines renewed war with Israel, David was permitted to go to his father's house to resume the occupation of shepherd which he loved. The Philistines dare not venture their large armies against Israel, as they had heretofore done, fearing they would be overcome and fall before Israel. They are ignorant of the weakness

of Israel. They know not that Saul and his people have great anxiety, and dare not commence the battle with them, fearing that Israel will be overcome. But the Philistines propose their own manner of warfare, in selecting a man of great size and strength, whose height is about twelve feet, and they send this champion forth to provoke a combat with Israel, requesting them to send out a man to fight with him. He was terrible in appearance, and spoke proudly, and defied the armies of Israel and their God. [80]

For forty days this proud boaster filled Israel with terror, and made Saul greatly afraid, for no one dared to venture to combat with the mighty giant. Israel, on account of their transgressions had not that sacred trust in God which would lead them to battle in his name. But God would not suffer an idolatrous nation to lift their heads proudly against the Ruler of the universe. He saved Israel, not by the hand of Saul, but by the hand of David, whom he had raised up to rule his people.

Saul knows not what to do. He imagines Israel as Philistine slaves. He can see no way of escape. In his trouble he offers great reward to any one who will slay the proud boaster. But all feel their weakness. They have a king whom God does not instruct, who dare not engage in any perilous enterprize, for he expects no special interposition from God to save his life. As Israel had been partaker with him in transgression, he had no hope that God would work specially for them, and deliver them out of the hands of the Philistines. The armies of Israel seemed paralyzed with terror. They could not trust in their king, whom they had demanded of God. Saul's mind was changeable. He would for a short time direct the armies, and then fear and discouragement would seize him, and he would countermand his orders.

As David is performing an humble errand from his father to his brethren, he hears the proud boaster defying Israel, and his spirit is stirred within him. He is jealous for the armies of the living God whom the blasphemous boaster has defied. He expresses his indignation, that a heathen, who has no fear of God, and no power from him, should be left to thus hold all Israel in fear, and triumph over them.

David's eldest brother, Eliab, whom God would not choose to be king, was jealous of David, because he was honored before him. [81]

He despised David, and looked upon him as inferior to himself. He accused him before others of stealing away unknown to his father to see the battle. He taunts him with the small business in which he is engaged, in tending a few sheep in the wilderness. David repels the unjust charge, and says, "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" David is not careful to explain to his brother that he had come to the help of Israel; that God had sent him to slay Goliath. God had chosen him to be ruler of Israel, and as the armies of the living God were in such peril, he had been directed by an angel to save Israel.

David is brought before Saul, and tells him that Israel need not fear, "Thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine." Saul objects because of his youth. David refers to the perils he had experienced in the wilderness, to save the sheep under his care. He humbly ascribes his deliverance to God. "The Lord delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." Saul gives David permission to go. He places upon David his own kingly armor. But David laid it off, and merely chose him five smooth stones from the brook, a sling and staff. As the proud defier of Israel saw the young man of beautiful countenance approaching him with this equipment, he inquired, "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?" He cursed David by his gods, and boastingly invited him to come to him, that he might give his flesh to the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field. "Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield." But I come to thee not in display of armor, nor with powerful weapons, but "in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." David makes no boast of superior skill. His boast is in the Lord. "This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands. And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth."

David cut off the head of the proud boaster with his own powerful sword, of which he had boasted. And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they were confused, and fled in every direction, Israel pursuing them.

When Saul and David were returning from the slaughter of the Philistines, the women of the cities came out with demonstrations of joy and singing to meet them. One company sang, "Saul hath slain his thousands." Another company responded to the first, "And David his ten thousands."

This made Saul very angry. Instead of manifesting humble gratitude to God that Israel had been saved out of the hand of their enemies by the hand of David, a cruel spirit of jealousy comes upon him, and, as in times past, he yields himself to its control. "And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands; and what can he have more but the kingdom?" His fears were aroused, that this was indeed the man who would take his place as ruler. Yet because the people all esteemed and loved David, Saul was afraid to openly harm him.

Through the influence of the people, David was promoted to take charge of the business connected with warfare. He was leader in all their important enterprises. As Saul saw that David had won the love and confidence of the people, he hated him, for he thought that he was preferred before him. He watched an opportunity to slay him, and when the evil spirit was upon him, and David played before him as usual, to soothe his troubled mind, he tried to kill him by throwing with force a sharp-pointed instrument at his heart. Angels of God preserved the life of David. They made him to understand what was the purpose of Saul, and as the instrument was hurled at him, he sprang one side, and received no harm, while the instrument was driven deep in the wall where David had been sitting.

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The people of Israel were now made to feel their peculiar position. They had daily evidence that God had left Saul to his own guilty course, and they were commanded by a ruler who dared to commit murder, and slay a righteous person whom the Lord had chosen to save them. And by the cruel acts of Saul they were having living evidences to what extremes of guilt and crime a king might go who rebelled against God, and was governed by his own passions.

David had obeyed Saul as a servant, and his conduct was humble. His life was irreproachable. His faithfulness in doing the will of God was a constant rebuke to Saul's extravagant, rebellious course. Saul determined to leave no means untried, that David might be slain. As long as Saul lived, this was the great object of his life, notwithstanding he was compelled to ascribe to the providence of God the escape of David from his hands. Yet his heart was destitute of the love of God, and he was a self-idolater. To his pride and ambition, true honor, justice, and humanity were sacrificed. He hunted David as a wild beast. David often had Saul in his power, and was urged by the men whom he commanded to slay him. Although David knew that he was chosen of God as ruler in Israel, yet he would not lift his hand against Saul, whom God had anointed. He chose to find an asylum among the Philistines. He made even his enemies to be at peace with him by his prudent, humble course, with whom he remained until the death of Saul.

[84] When the Philistines again make war with Israel, Saul is afraid. He has had no rest in any season of peril, and the people are divided. Some go with Saul in all his wickedness. Others cannot trust to his judgment, and wish a righteous ruler. Saul's last acts have been so cruel, presumptuous and daring, that his conscience is as a scourge, continually upbraiding him. Yet he does not repent of his wickedness, but pursues his relentless course with despairing desperation, and at the prospect of a battle he is distracted and melancholy. He presumes, with his load of guilt upon him, to inquire of God, but God answers him not. He has barbarously massacred the priests of the Lord, because they suffered David to escape. He destroyed the city where the priests lived, and put a multitude of righteous persons to death, to satisfy his envious rage. Yet in his peril he dares to approach God, to inquire whether he shall make war with the Philistines.

But as God has left him, he seeks a woman with a familiar spirit, who is in communion with Satan. He has forsaken God, and at length seeks one who has made a covenant with death and an agreement with hell, for knowledge. The witch of Endor had made agreement with Satan to follow his directions in all things, and he would perform wonders and miracles for her, and would reveal to

her the most secret things, if she would yield herself unreservedly to be controlled by his Satanic Majesty. This she had done.

When Saul inquired for Samuel, the Lord did not cause Samuel to appear to Saul. He saw nothing. Satan was not allowed to disturb the rest of Samuel in the grave, and bring him up in reality to the witch of Endor. God does not give Satan power to resurrect the dead. But Satan's angels assume the form of dead friends, and speak and act like them, that through professed dead friends, he can the better carry on his work of deception. Satan knew Samuel well, and he knew how to represent him before the witch of Endor, and to utter correctly the fate of Saul and his sons.

Satan will come in a very plausible manner to such as he can deceive; and will insinuate himself into their favor, and lead them almost imperceptibly from God. He wins them under his control cautiously at first, until their perceptibilities become blunted. Then he will make bolder suggestions, until he can lead them to commit almost any degree of crime. When he has led them into his snare fully, he is then willing that they should see where they are, and he exults in their confusion, as in the case of Saul. He had suffered Satan to lead him a willing captive, and now Satan spreads before Saul a correct description of his fate. By giving Saul a correct statement of his end, through the woman of Endor, Satan opens a way for Israel to be instructed by his Satanic cunning, that they may, in their rebellion against God, learn of him, and by thus doing, sever the last link which would hold them to God.

[85]

Saul knew that in this last act, of consulting the witch of Endor, he cut the last shred which held him to God. He knew that if he had not before willfully separated himself from God, this act sealed that separation, and made it final. He had made an agreement with death and a covenant with hell. The cup of his iniquity was full.

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Chapter 35—David

God selected David, a humble shepherd, to rule his people. He was strict in all the ceremonies connected with the Jewish religion, and he distinguished himself by his boldness and unwavering trust in God. He was remarkable for his fidelity and reverence. His firmness, humility, love of justice, and decision of character, qualified him to carry out the high purposes of God, to instruct Israel in their devotions, and to rule them as a generous and wise monarch.

[86] His religious character was sincere and fervent. It was while David was thus true to God, and possessing these exalted traits of character, that God calls him a man after his own heart. When exalted to the throne, his general course was in striking contrast with the kings of other nations. He abhorred idolatry, and zealously kept the people of Israel from being seduced into idolatry by the surrounding nations. He was greatly beloved and honored by his people.

He often conquered, and triumphed. He increased in wealth and greatness. But his prosperity had an influence to lead him from God. His temptations were many and strong. He finally fell into the common practice of other kings around him, of having a plurality of wives, and his life was embittered by the evil results of polygamy. His first wrong was in taking more than one wife, thus departing from God's wise arrangement. This departure from right, prepared the way for greater errors. The kingly idolatrous nations considered it an addition to their honor and dignity to have many wives, and David regarded it an honor to his throne to possess several wives. But he was made to see the wretched evil of such a course by the unhappy discord, rivalry and jealousy among his numerous wives and children.

His crime in the case of Uriah and Bath-sheba was heinous in the sight of God. A just and impartial God did not sanction or excuse these sins in David, but sends a reproof, and heavy denunciation by Nathan, his prophet, which portrays in living colors his grievous

offense. David had been blinded to his wonderful departure from God. He had excused his own sinful course to himself, until his ways seemed passable in his own eyes. One wrong step had prepared the way for another, until his sins called for the rebuke from Jehovah through Nathan. David awakens as from a dream. He feels the sense of his sin. He does not seek to excuse his course, or palliate his sin, as did Saul; but with remorse and sincere grief, he bows his head before the prophet of God, and acknowledges his guilt. Nathan tells David that because of his repentance, and humble confession, God will forgive his sin, and avert a part of the threatened calamity, and spare his life. Yet he should be punished, because he had given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. This occasion has been improved by the enemies of God, from David's day until the present time. Skeptics have assailed christianity, and ridiculed the Bible, because David gave them occasion. They bring up to Christians the case of David, his sin in the case of Uriah and Bathsheba, his polygamy, and then assert that David is called a man after God's own heart, and if the Bible record is correct, God justified David in his crimes. [87]

I was shown that it was when David was pure, and walking in the counsel of God, that God called him a man after his own heart. When David departed from God, and stained his virtuous character by his crimes, he was no longer a man after God's own heart. God did not in the least degree justify him in his sins, but sent Nathan his prophet, with dreadful denunciations to David because he had transgressed the commandment of the Lord. God shows his displeasure at David's having a plurality of wives by visiting him with judgments, and permitting evils to rise up against him from his own house. The terrible calamity God permitted to come upon David, who for his integrity was once called a man after God's own heart, is evidence to after generations that God would not justify any one in transgressing his commandments, but that he will surely punish the guilty, however righteous, and favored of God they might once have been while they followed the Lord in purity of heart. When the righteous turn from their righteousness and do evil, their past righteousness will not save them from the wrath of a just and holy God.

Leading men of Bible history have sinned grievously. Their sins are not concealed, but faithfully recorded in the history of God's church, with the punishment from God, which followed the offenses.

[88] These instances are left on record for the benefit of after generations, and should inspire faith in the word of God, as a faithful history. Men who wish to doubt God, doubt christianity, and the word of God, will not judge candidly, and impartially, but with prejudiced minds will scan the life and character, to detect all the defects in the life of those who have been the most eminent leaders of Israel. A faithful delineation of character, God has caused to be given in inspired history, of the best and greatest men in their day. These men were mortal, subject to a tempting Devil. Their weakness and sins are not covered, but are faithfully recorded, with the reproof and punishment which followed. "These things were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come."

God has not allowed much said in his word to extol the virtues of the best men that have lived upon the earth. All their victories, and great and good works, were ascribed to God. He alone was to receive the glory, he alone to be exalted. He was all and in all. Man was only an agent, a feeble instrument in his hands. The power and excellence was all of God. God saw in man a continual disposition to depart from, and to forget him, and worship the creature, instead of the Creator. Therefore God would not suffer much in the praise of man to be left upon the pages of sacred history.

David repented of his sin in dust and ashes. He entreated the forgiveness of God, and concealed not his repentance from the great men, and even servants of his kingdom. He composed a penitential Psalm, recounting his sin and repentance, which Psalm he knew would be sung by after generations. He wished others to be instructed by the sad history of his life.

[89] The songs which David composed were sung by all Israel, especially in the presence of the assembled court, and before priests, elders and lords. He knew that the confession of his guilt would bring his sins to the notice of other generations. He presents his case, showing in whom was his trust and hope for pardon. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according to the multitude of thy mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me

thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation.”

David does not manifest the spirit of an unconverted man. If he had possessed the spirit of the rulers of the nations around him, he would not have borne from Nathan the picture of his crime before him in its truly abominable colors, but would have taken the life of the faithful reprovcr. But notwithstanding the loftiness of his throne, and his unlimited power, his humble acknowledgment of all with which he was charged, is evidence that he still feared and trembled at the word of the Lord.

David was made to feel bitterly the fruits of wrongdoing. His sons acted over the sins of which he had been guilty. Amnon committed a great crime. Absalom revenged it by slaying him. Thus was David's sin brought continually to his mind, and he made to feel the full weight of the injustice done to Uriah and Bath-sheba.

Absalom, his own son, whom he loved above all his children, rebelled against him. By his remarkable beauty, winning manners, and pretended kindness, he cunningly stole the hearts of the people. He did not possess benevolence at heart, but was ambitious and, as his course shows, would resort to intrigue and crime to obtain the kingdom. He would have returned his father's love and kindness by taking his life. He was proclaimed king by his followers in Hebron, and led them out to pursue his father. He was defeated and slain.

David was brought into great distress by this rebellion. It was unlike any war that he had been connected with. His wisdom from God, his energy and war-like skill, had enabled him to successfully resist the assaults of his enemies. But this unnatural warfare, arising in his own house, and the rebel being his own son, seemed to confuse and weaken his calm judgment. And knowing that this evil had been predicted by the prophet, and that he had brought it upon himself, by his transgressing the commandments of God, destroyed his skill and former unequalled courage.

David was humbled and greatly distressed. He fled from Jerusalem to save his life. He went not forth with confidence and kingly honor, trusting in God as in previous battles; but as he went up by the ascent of the mount of Olivet, surrounded by his people, and his mighty men, he covered his head in his humility, and walked

barefoot, weeping, and his people imitating the example of deep humility manifested by their king, while fleeing before Absalom.

Shimei, a kinsman of Saul, who had ever been envious of David because he received the throne and kingly honors which had once been given to Saul, improved this opportunity of venting his rebellious rage upon David in his misfortune. He cursed the king, and cast stones and dirt at him, and his servants, and accused David of being a bloody and mischievous man. The followers of David begged permission to go and take his life, but David rebukes them, and tells them to "let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?" If my son "seeketh my life, how much more now may this Benjamite do it? Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him."

He thus acknowledges before his people and chief men, that this is the punishment God has brought upon him because of his sin, which has given the enemies of the Lord occasion to blaspheme. The enraged Benjamite might be accomplishing his part of the punishment predicted, and if he bore these things with humility, that the Lord would lessen his affliction, and turn the curse of Shimei into a blessing. David does not manifest the spirit of an unconverted man. He shows that he has had an experience in the things of God. He manifests a disposition to receive correction from God, and in confidence turns to him as his only trust. God rewards David's humble trust in him, by defeating the counsel of Ahithophel, and preserving his life.

David was not the character Shimei represented him to be. When Saul was repeatedly placed in his power, and his followers would have killed him, David would not permit them to do so, although he was in continual fear of his own life, and was pursued like a wild beast by Saul. At one time when Saul was in his power, he cut off a piece of the skirt of his robe, that he might evidence to Saul that he would not harm him, although he might have taken his life if he was so disposed. David repented even of this, because he was the Lord's anointed.

When David was thirsty, and greatly desired water of the well of Bethlehem, three men, without his knowledge, broke through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem,

and brought it to David. He considered it too sacred to drink and quench his thirst, because three men, through their love for him, had periled their lives to obtain it. He did not lightly regard life. It seemed to him that if he drank the water these brave men had put their lives in jeopardy to obtain, it would be like drinking their blood. He solemnly poured out the water as a sacred offering to God.

After the death of Absalom, God turned the hearts of Israel, as the heart of one man, to David. Shimei, who had cursed David in his humility, through fear of his life, was among the first of the rebellious to meet David on his return to Jerusalem. He made confession of his rebellious conduct to David. Those who witnessed his abusive course urged David not to spare his life, because he cursed the Lord's anointed. But David rebuked them. He not only spared the life of Shimei, but mercifully forgave him. Had David possessed a revengeful spirit, he could readily have gratified it, by putting the offender to death.

Israel prospered and increased in numbers under David's rule, and, as they became strong, and had increased in wealth and greatness, they became exalted and proud. They forgot the Giver of all their mercies, and were fast losing their peculiar and holy character, which separated them from the nations around them. [92]

David, in his prosperity, did not preserve that humility of character and trust in God which characterized the earlier part of his life. He looked upon the accessions to the kingdom with pride, and contrasted their then prosperous condition with their few numbers and little strength when he ascended the throne, taking glory to himself. He gratified his ambitious feelings in yielding to the temptations of the Devil to number Israel, that he might compare their former weakness to their then prosperous state under his rule. This was displeasing to God, and contrary to his express command. It would lead Israel to rely upon their strength of numbers, instead of the living God.

The work of numbering Israel is not fully completed before David feels convicted that he has committed a great sin against God. He sees his error, and humbles himself before God, confessing his great sin in foolishly numbering the people. But his repentance came too late. The word had already gone forth from the Lord to his faithful prophet, to carry a message to David, and offer him his

choice of punishments for his transgression. David still shows that he has confidence in God. He chooses to fall into the hands of a merciful God, rather than be left to the cruel mercies of wicked men.

[93] Swift destruction followed. Seventy thousand were destroyed by pestilence. David and the elders of Israel were in the deepest humiliation, mourning before the Lord. As the angel of the Lord was on his way to destroy Jerusalem, God bids him to stay his work of death. A pitiful God loves his people still, notwithstanding their rebellion. The angel clad in warlike garments, with a drawn sword in his hand, stretched out over Jerusalem, is revealed to David, and to those who were with him. David is terribly afraid, yet he cries out in his distress, and his compassion for Israel. He begs of God to save the sheep. In anguish he confesses, "I have sinned, and I have done wickedly. Let thine hand be against me, and against my father's house, and not upon the people." God speaks to David by his prophet, and bids him make atonement for his sin. David's heart was in the work, and his repentance was accepted. The threshing-floor of Araunah is offered him freely, where to build an altar unto the Lord; also cattle, and everything needful for the sacrifice. But David tells him who would make this generous offering, that the Lord will accept the sacrifice which he is willing to make, but that he would not come before the Lord with an offering which cost him nothing. He would buy it of him for full price. He offered there burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. God accepted the offering by answering David in sending fire from Heaven to consume the sacrifice. The angel of God was commanded to put his sword into his sheath, and cease his work of destruction.

David composed many of the Psalm in the wilderness, to which he was compelled to flee for safety. Saul even pursued him there, and David was several times preserved from falling into the hands of Saul by the special interposition of Providence. While David was thus passing through severe trials and hardships, he manifested an unwavering trust in God, and was especially imbued with his Spirit, as he composed his songs which recount his dangers and deliverances, ascribing praise and glory to God, his merciful preserver. In these Psalm is seen a spirit of fervor, devotion and holiness. He sung these songs, which express his thoughts and meditations of divine things, accompanied with skillful music upon the harp and other

instruments. The Psalm contained in [2 Samuel 22](#), was composed while Saul was hunting him to take his life. Nearly all the sacred songs of David were arranged in the earlier period of his life, while he was serving the Lord with integrity and purity of heart.

David purposed to build a house for God, in which he could place the sacred ark, and to which all Israel should come to worship. The Lord informed David through his prophet that he should not build the house, but that he should have a son who should build a house for God. "I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men. But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee." God manifests pity and compassion for the weakness of erring man, and promises, if he transgress, to punish him, and if he repent, to forgive him. [94]

The closing years of David's life were marked with faithful devotion to God. He mourned over his sins and departure from God's just precepts, which had darkened his character, and given occasion for the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. The Lord, through his angel, instructed David, and gave him a pattern of the house which Solomon should build for him. An angel was commissioned to stand by David while he was writing out, for the benefit of Solomon, the important directions in regard to the arrangement of the house. David's heart was in the work. He manifested an earnestness and devotion in making extensive preparations for the building, and spared neither labor nor expense, but made large donations from his own treasury, thereby setting a noble example before his people, which they did not hesitate with a willing heart to follow.

David feels the greatest solicitude for Solomon. He fears that he may follow his example in wrong doing. He can see with the deepest sorrow the spots and blemishes he has brought upon his character, by his falling into grievous sins, and he would save his son from the evil if he could. He has learned by experience that the Lord will in no case sanction wrong doing, whether it be found in the loftiest prince, or the humblest subject, but would visit the leader of his people with as much severer punishment as his position is more responsible than the humble subject's. The sins committed by the leaders of Israel would have an influence to lessen the heinousness [95]

of crime on the minds and consciences of the people, and would be brought to the notice of other nations, who fear not God, but who trample upon his authority, and they would be led to blaspheme the God of Israel.

David solemnly charges his son to adhere strictly to the law of God, and to keep all his statutes. He relates to Solomon the word of the Lord, spoken unto him through his prophets. “Moreover, I will establish his kingdom forever, if he be constant to do my commandments and my judgments, as at this day. Now, therefore, in the sight of all Israel, the congregation of the Lord, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the Lord your God, that ye may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance for your children after you forever. And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever. Take heed now, for the Lord hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary. Be strong, and do it.”

After giving this charge to his son, in the audience of the people, and in the presence of God, he offers grateful thanks to God for disposing his own heart, and the hearts of the people, to give willingly for the great work of building. He also entreats the Lord to incline the heart of Solomon to his commandments. He says, “I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart, I have willingly offered all these things. And now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee. O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee. And give unto Solomon, my son, a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace, for the which I have made provision.”

David’s public labor was about to close. He knew that he should soon die, and he does not leave his business matters in confusion, to vex the soul of his son, but while he has sufficient physical and mental strength, he arranges the affairs of his kingdom, even to the

minutest matters, not forgetting to warn Solomon in regard to the case of Shimei. He knew that he would cause trouble in the kingdom. He was a dangerous man of violent temper, and only kept in control through fear. Whenever he dared, he would cause rebellion, or, if he had a favorable opportunity, would not hesitate to take the life of Solomon.

David, in arranging his business, sets a good example to all who are advanced in years, to settle their matters while they are capable of doing so, that when they shall be drawing near to death, and their mental faculties are dimmed, they shall have nothing of a worldly nature to divert their minds from God.

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Chapter 36—Solomon

[97] The hearts of the people were turned toward Solomon, as they were to David, and they obey him in all things. The Lord sends his angel to instruct Solomon by a dream, in the night season. He dreams that God converses with him. “And God said, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David, my father, great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O Lord, my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David, my father; and I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give, therefore, thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad; for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?”

“And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment, behold, I have done according to thy word. Lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.”

God promises that as he has been with David, he will be with Solomon. If he will walk before the Lord in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that God commanded him, and

if he will keep his statutes and judgments, he promises to establish his throne upon Israel forever. Solomon feels the magnitude of the work in building a house for God. He thus gives expression to his ideas: “Who is able to build him an house? seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him.”

The Lord imparted unto Solomon that wisdom which he desired above earthly riches, honor, or long life. He was the wisest king that ever sat upon the throne. God gave him an understanding heart. He wrote many proverbs and composed many songs. For many years his life was marked with devotion to God, uprightness, and with firm principle and strict obedience to God’s commands. He directed in every important enterprise, and managed the business matters connected with the kingdom with the greatest wisdom. His faithfully carrying out the directions, in constructing the most magnificent building the world ever saw, caused his fame to spread among the nations everywhere. He was greatly blessed and honored of God. All nations acknowledged, and marveled at, his superior knowledge, wisdom, the excellence of his character, and the greatness of his power. Many came to him from all parts of the world to behold his unlimited power, and to be instructed how to conduct difficult matters. The temple built for God could not be excelled for richness, beauty, and costly design.

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After the temple was finished, Solomon assembled all Israel, and many nations also came to witness the dedication of the house of God. It was dedicated with great splendor. Solomon addresses the people, and seeks to tear away from the minds of all present the superstitions which have clouded the minds of heathen nations in regard to Jehovah. He tells them that God is not like the heathen gods, who are confined to temples built for them, but the God of Israel would meet them by his Spirit when the people should assemble in that house dedicated to his worship.

Solomon kneels before God in the presence of that immense congregation and makes supplication to God. He inquires in his prayer, “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee. How much less this house that I have builded?” He continues, “That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which

thou hast said, My name shall be there; that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place.”

[99] “Now, when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices: and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord’s house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshiped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth forever.”

Seven days was Solomon engaged in the dedication of the house of God. And after the ceremonies were ended of dedicating the house, “The Lord said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication that thou hast made before me. I have hallowed this house which thou hast built, to put my name there forever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually. And if thou wilt walk before me as David, thy father, walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments, then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel forever, as I promised to David, thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel. But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them, then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them, and this house which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and Israel shall be a proverb and a by-word among all people.”

If Israel remained faithful and true to God, this glorious building was to stand forever, as a perpetual sign of God’s especial favor to his chosen people. They were called peculiar, because they alone, among all the nations of earth, preserved the true worship of God, by keeping his commandments.

[100] While Solomon remained pure, God was with him. In the dedication of the temple he exalts God’s law before the people. While blessing the people he repeats these words: “The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers. Let him not leave us, nor forsake

us; that he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers.”

In the uprightness of his heart, he exhorts the congregation of Israel: “Let your heart, therefore, be perfect with the Lord our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.” As long as Solomon steadfastly obeyed the commandments, God was with him, as he had entreated that he might be, as he was with David. “Thou hast shown unto my father David great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart.”

There is enough contained in these words to silence every skeptic in regard to God’s sanctioning the sins of David and Solomon. God was merciful to them according as they walked before him in truth, righteousness, and uprightness of heart. Just according to their faithfulness, God dealt with them.

Solomon walked for many years uprightly before God. Wisdom was given him of God to judge the people with impartiality and mercy. But even this exalted, learned, and once good man, fell through yielding to temptations connected with his prosperity and honored position. He forgot God, and the solemn conditions of his success. He fell into the sinful practice of other kings, of having many wives, which was contrary to God’s arrangement. God commanded Moses to warn the people against their having a plurality of wives. “Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away. Neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.”

Solomon’s heart was turned from God when he multiplied to himself wives of idolatrous nations. God had expressly forbidden his people to intermarry with idolatrous nations, for he had chosen them as his peculiar treasure. “For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods. And his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David, his father.” “And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he kept not that which the Lord commanded. Wherefore, the Lord said unto Solomon,

Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.” The Lord informed Solomon by his prophet of his purpose concerning him. That he would cause his prosperity to cease, and would raise up adversaries against him, and he should no longer reign as universal monarch upon the throne of Israel. Had Solomon died prior to his departing from God, his life would have been one of the most remarkable upon record. But he tarnished his lustre, and exhibited a striking example of the weakness of the wisest of mortals. The greatest men, and the wisest, will surely fail, unless their lives are marked with trust in God, and obedience to his commandments.

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Chapter 37—The Ark of God

The ark of God was a sacred chest, made to be the depository of the ten commandments, which law was the representative of God himself. This ark was considered the glory and strength of Israel. The token of Divine presence abode upon it day and night. The priests who ministered before it were sacredly consecrated to the holy office. They wore a breast-plate bordered with precious stones of different materials, the same as compose the twelve foundations of the city of God. Within the border were the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, graven on precious stones set in gold. This was a very rich and beautiful work, suspended from the shoulders of the priests, covering the breast.

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At the right and left of the breast-plate were set two larger stones, which shone with great brilliancy. When difficult matters were brought to the judges, which they could not decide, they were referred to the priests, and they inquired of God, who answered them. If in favor, and if he would grant them success, a halo of light and glory especially rested upon the precious stone at the right. If against, a vapor or cloud seemed to settle upon the precious stone at the left hand. When they inquired of God in regard to going to battle, the precious stone at the right, when circled with light, said, Go and prosper. The stone at the left, when shadowed with a cloud, said, Thou shalt not go, thou shalt not prosper.

When the high priest entered within the most holy once a year, and ministered before the ark in the awful presence of God, he inquired, and God often answered him with an audible voice. When the Lord did not answer by a voice, he let the sacred beams of light and glory rest upon the cherubim upon the right of the ark, in approbation or favor. If their requests were refused, a cloud rested upon the cherubim at the left.

Four heavenly angels always accompanied the ark of God in all its journeyings, to guard it from all danger, and to fulfill any mission required of them in connection with the ark. Jesus the Son

of God, followed by heavenly angels, went before the ark as it came to Jordan, and the waters were cut off before his presence. Christ and angels stood by the ark and the priests in the bed of the river until all Israel had passed over Jordan. Christ and angels attended the circuit of the ark around Jericho, and finally cast down the massive walls of the city, and delivered Jericho into the hands of Israel.

[103] When Eli was high priest, he exalted his sons to the priesthood. Eli was alone permitted to enter the most holy once a year. His sons ministered at the door of the tabernacle, and officiated in the slaying of the beasts, and at the altar of sacrifice. They continually abused this sacred office. They were selfish, covetous, gluttonous, and profligate. God reproved Eli for his criminal neglect of family discipline. Eli reproved his sons, but did not restrain them. And when they were placed in the sacred office of priesthood, Eli heard of their conduct in defrauding the children of Israel in their offerings, also their bold transgressions of the law of God, and their violent conduct, which caused Israel to sin.

Their crimes were known to all Israel. Eli reproved them. He presented before them the enormity of their sin. It was not like a sin against each other, which officiating priests could atone for. But if the priests themselves sin against God, and show open contempt for his authority, who should atone for them? They regarded not the counsel of their father. Eli was judge, and also high priest, in Israel, and he was responsible for the conduct of his sons. He should have at once removed them from the priesthood, and judged them as their case deserved. He knew if he should do this they must suffer death for their abominable example to Israel. Permitting them, loaded with guilt, to occupy the relation of priests to Israel, would lead the people to lightly regarded crime, and to despise the sacrificial offerings.

The Lord by his prophet sent a reproof to Eli. "Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation, and honorest they sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? Wherefore, the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me forever; but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

Eli's undue affection for his sons made him a partial judge. He excused sins in them which he would have condemned in others. The Lord informed Eli by his prophet that because he had thus suffered his sons to remain in sacred office, while they were compelling Israel to sin, and because of their transgressions of his law, he would cut off both his sons in one day. As Eli had neglected his sacred duty, God would punish them, and they should both perish. [104]

Here is a standing rebuke to parents, professed followers of Christ, who neglect to restrain their children, but merely entreat their children, like Eli, and who say, "Why do ye so wickedly?" but who do not decidedly restrain them. Such suffer God's cause to be dishonored, because they do not exercise that authority which belongs to them in order to restrain wickedness.

The Lord made known to the child Samuel the judgments he would bring upon Eli's house because of his negligence. "And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house. When I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever."

The transgressions of Eli's sons were so daring, so insulting to a holy God, that no sacrifice could atone for such willful transgression. These sinful priests profaned the sacrifices which typified the Son of God. And by their blasphemous conduct they were trampling upon the blood of the atonement, from which was derived the virtue of all sacrifices.

Samuel told Eli the words of the Lord, "and he said, It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." Eli knew that God had been dishonored, and he felt that he had sinned. He submitted that God was just in thus punishing his sinful neglect. The word of the Lord to Samuel was made known by Eli to all Israel. In doing this, he thought to correct in a measure his past sinful negligence. The evil pronounced upon Eli was not long delayed. [105]

The Israelites made war with the Philistines, and were overcome, and four thousand of them were slain. The Hebrews were afraid. They knew if other nations should hear of their defeat, they would be encouraged to also make war with them. The elders of Israel decided that their defeat was because the ark of God was not with them. They sent to Shiloh for the ark of the covenant. They thought of their passage over Jordan, and the easy conquest of Jericho, when they bore the ark, and they decided that all that was necessary was to bring the ark to them, and they would triumph over their enemies. They did not realize that their strength was in their obedience to that law contained in the ark, which was a representative of God himself. The polluted priests, Hophni and Phinehas, were with the sacred ark, transgressing the law of God. These sinners conducted the ark to the camp of Israel. The confidence of the men of war was restored, and they felt confident of success.

[106] “And when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the Lord was come into the camp. And the Philistines were afraid; for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. Woe unto us! Who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Quit yourselves like men, and fight. And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent. And there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. And the ark of God was taken, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.”

The Philistines thought this ark was the Israelites' god. They knew not that the living God, who created the heavens and the earth, and gave his law upon Sinai, sent prosperity and adversity according to the obedience or transgression of his law, contained in the sacred chest.

There was a very great slaughter in Israel. Eli was sitting by the wayside, watching with a trembling heart to receive news from the army. He was afraid that the ark of God might be taken, and polluted by the Philistine host. A messenger from the army ran to Shiloh and informed Eli that his two sons had been slain. He could bear this with a degree of calmness, for he had reason to expect it. But when the messenger added, "And the ark of God is taken," Eli wavered in anguish upon his seat, and fell backward and died. He shared the wrath of God which came upon his sons. He was guilty in a great measure of their transgressions, because he had criminally neglected to restrain them. The capture of the ark of God by the Philistines was considered the greatest calamity which could befall Israel. The wife of Phinehas, as she was about to die, named her child Ichabod, saying, "The glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken."

God permitted his ark to be taken by their enemies to show Israel how vain it was to trust in the ark, the symbol of his presence, while they were profaning the commandments contained in the ark. God would humble them by removing from them that sacred ark, their boasted strength and confidence.

The Philistines were triumphant, because they had, as they thought, the famous God of the Israelites, which had performed such wonders for them, and had made them a terror to their enemies. They took the ark of God to Ashdod, and set it in a splendid temple, made in honor of their most popular god, Dagon, and placed it by the side of their god. In the morning the priests of these gods entered the temple, and they were terrified to find Dagon fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. They raised Dagon and placed him in his former position. They thought he might have accidentally fallen. But the next morning they found him fallen as before upon his face to the ground, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were cut off. The angels of God, who ever accompanied the ark, prostrated the senseless idol god, and afterward mutilated it, to show that God, the living God, was above all gods, and before him every heathen God was as nothing. The heathen possessed great reverence for their god, Dagon, and when they found it ruinously mutilated, and lying upon its face before the ark of God, they were sad, and considered it a very bad omen to the Philistines. It was

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interpreted by them that the Philistines and all their gods would yet be subdued and destroyed by the Hebrews, and the Hebrews' God would be greater and more powerful than all gods. They removed the ark of God from their idol temple, and placed it by itself.

The men of Ashdod began to be greatly afflicted. The Lord destroyed them, and they remembered the plagues brought upon Egypt, and their mutilated god, and they were convinced that it was because they kept the ark of God that these distressing afflictions came upon them. God would evidence to the idolatrous Philistines, and also to his people, that the ark was strength and power to those who were obedient to his law, and to the disobedient and wicked it was punishment and death.

When the men of Ashdod were convinced that it was the God of the Hebrews who caused their afflictions, because of his ark, they decided that the ark of the God of Israel should not abide with them. "For," say they "his hand is sore upon us and upon Dagon our god."

[108] The great men and rulers consulted together, relative to what they should do with the ark of the God of Israel. They had taken it in triumph, but knew not what to do with the sacred chest; for instead of its being a power and strength to them, it was a great burden, and a heavy curse. They decided to send it to Gath. But the destroying angels carried on their work of destruction also in that place. Very many of them died, and they dared not retain the ark longer in Gath, lest the God of Israel should consume all the people by his curse.

They of Gath decided to send the ark to Ekron. And as the idolatrous priests bore the ark of God to Ekron, the people of Ekron were greatly alarmed and cried out, "They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people." The Ekronites were also afflicted, and great numbers of them died. They went to their gods for help, as the cities of Ashdod and Gath had done, but they obtained no relief. They had humbled themselves to cry to the God of Israel to whom the ark belonged for relief from their affliction. "So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place that it slay us not, and our people; for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city. The hand of God was very heavy there. And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods, and the cry of the city went up to heaven."

The ark of God was kept by the Philistines seven months. They had overcome the Israelites, and had taken the ark of God, wherein they supposed their power consisted, and thought that they should ever be in safety, and have no more fear of the armies of Israel. But in the midst of their joy at their success, a wailing was heard all over the land, and the cause was at length credited to the ark of God. It was borne from place to place in terror, and destruction from God followed its course, until the Philistines were greatly perplexed to know what to do with it. Angels who accompanied it, guarded it from all harm. And the Philistines did not dare to open the chest, for their god, Dagon, had met with such a fate, they feared to touch it, or to have it near them. They called for the priests and the diviners, and inquired of them what they should do with the ark of God. They advised them to send it back to the people to whom it belonged, and to send with it a costly trespass-offering, which if God would be pleased to accept, they would be healed. They should also understand that God's hand was upon them because they had taken his ark, which belonged alone to Israel.

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Some were not in favor of this. It was too humiliating to carry back the ark, and they urged that no one of the Philistines would dare venture his life to carry the ark of the God of Israel which had brought such death upon them. Their counselors entreated the people not to harden their hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh had done, and cause still greater afflictions and plagues to come upon them. And as they were all afraid to take the ark of God, they advised them, saying, "Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them. And take the ark of the Lord, and lay it upon the cart; and put the jewels of gold, which ye return him for a trespass-offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it away, that it may go. And see if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Beth-shemesh, then he hath done us this great evil. But if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us; it was a chance that happened to us. And the men did so; and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home. And the kine took the straight way to the way of Beth-shemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left."

[110] The Philistines knew that the cows would not be induced to leave their young calves at home, unless they should be urged so to do by some unseen power. The cows went direct to Beth-shemesh, lowing for their calves, yet going directly from them. The lords of the Philistines followed after the ark, unto the border of Beth-shemesh. They dare not trust that sacred chest wholly to the cows. They feared if any evil happened to it, that greater calamities would come upon them. They knew not that angels of God accompanied the ark, and guided the cows in their course where it belonged. The people of Beth-shemesh were reaping in the field, and when they saw the ark of God upon the cart, drawn by the cows, they were greatly rejoiced. They knew that it was the work of God. The cows drew the cart, containing the ark, to a large stone, and stood still of themselves. The Levites took down the ark of the Lord, and the offering of the Philistines, and they offered the cart and the cows which had borne the sacred ark, and the offering of the Philistines, unto God as a burnt-sacrifice. The lords of the Philistines returned to Ekron and the plague was stayed.

The men of Beth-shemesh were curious to know what great power could be in that ark, which caused it to accomplish such marvelous things. They looked upon the ark alone as being so powerful, and were not accrediting the power to God. None but men sacredly appointed for the purpose could look upon the ark, divested of its coverings, without being slain, for it was as though looking upon God himself. And as the people gratified their curiosity, and opened the ark to gaze into its sacred recesses, which the heathen idolaters had not dared to do, the angels attending the ark slew above fifty thousand of the people.

[111] And the people of Beth-shemesh were afraid of the ark, and they said, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? And to whom shall he go up from us? And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim, saying, 'The Philistines have brought again the ark of the Lord. Come ye down, and fetch it up to you.'" The people of Kirjath-jearim brought the ark of the Lord to the house of Abinadab, and sanctified his son to keep it. For twenty years the Hebrews were in the power of the Philistines, and they were greatly humbled, and repented of their sins, and Samuel interceded for them, and God was again merciful to them. And the Philistines made war with them,

and the Lord again wrought in a miraculous manner for Israel, and they overcame their enemies.

The ark remained in the house of Abinadab until David was made king. He gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand, and went to bring up the ark of God. They set the ark upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, drove the cart. David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of musical instruments. “And when they came to Nachon’s threshing-floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.” Uzzah was angry with the oxen, because they stumbled. He showed a manifest distrust of God, as though he who had brought the ark from the land of the Philistines, could not take care of it. Angels who attended the ark struck down Uzzah for presuming impatiently to put his hand upon the ark of God.

“And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me? So David would not remove the ark of the Lord unto him into the city of David; but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom, the Gittite.” David knew that he was a sinful man, and he was afraid that, like Uzzah, he should in some way be presumptuous, and call forth the wrath of God upon himself. “And the ark of the Lord continued in the house of Obed-edom, the Gittite, three months, and the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and all his household.”

God would teach his people that, while his ark was a terror and death to those who transgressed his commandments contained in it, it was also a blessing and strength to those who were obedient to his commandments. When David heard that the house of Obed-edom was greatly blessed, and that all that he had prospered, because of the ark of God, he was very anxious to bring it to his own city. But before David ventured to move the sacred ark, he sanctified himself to God, and also commanded that all the men highest in authority in the kingdom should keep themselves from all worldly business, and everything which would distract their minds from sacred devotion. Thus should they sanctify themselves for the purpose of conducting the sacred ark to the city of David. “So David went and brought up

the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness. And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings.”

David laid off his kingly attire, and clothed himself with garments similar to the priests, which had never been worn before, that not the least impurity might be upon his clothing. Every six paces they erected an altar and solemnly sacrificed to God. The special blessing of the Lord rested upon king David, who thus manifested before his people his exalted reverence for the ark of God. “And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal, Saul’s daughter, looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord, and she despised him in her heart.”

[113] The dignity and pride of king Saul’s daughter was shocked that king David should lay aside his garments of royalty, and lay by his royal scepter, and be clothed with the simple linen garments worn by the priest. She thought that he was greatly dishonoring himself before the people of Israel. But God honored David in the sight of all Israel by letting his Spirit abide upon him. David humbled himself, but God exalted him. He sung in an inspired manner, playing upon the harp, producing the most enchanting music. He felt in a small degree that holy joy that all the saints will experience at the voice of God when their captivity is turned, and God makes a covenant of peace with all who have kept his commandments. “And they brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it. And David offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord.”

After Solomon had finished building the temple, he assembled the elders of Israel, and the most influential men among the people, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David. These men consecrated themselves to God, and with great solemnity and reverence, accompanied the priests who bore the ark. “And they brought up the ark of the Lord, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, even those did the priests and the Levites bring up. And king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel, that were assembled

unto him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen, that could not be told nor numbered for multitude.”

Solomon followed the example of his father David. Every six paces he sacrificed. With singing, and with music, and great ceremony, “the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim spread forth their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim covered the ark and the staves thereof above.”

A most splendid sanctuary had been made, according to the pattern showed to Moses in the mount, and afterward presented by the Lord to David. The earthly sanctuary was made like the heavenly. In addition to the cherubim on the top of the ark, Solomon made two other angels of larger size, standing at each end of the ark, representing the heavenly angels always guarding the law of God. It is impossible to describe the beauty and splendor of this tabernacle. There, as in the tabernacle, the sacred ark was borne in solemn, reverential order, and set in its place beneath the wings of the two stately cherubim that stood upon the floor.

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The sacred choir united their voices, with all kinds of musical instruments, in praise to God. And while the voices in harmony, with instruments of music, resounded through the temple, and were borne upon the air through Jerusalem, the cloud of God’s glory took possession of the house, as it had formerly filled the tabernacle. “And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord.”

King Solomon stood upon a brazen scaffold before the altar and blessed the people. He then knelt down, and with his hands raised upward, poured forth earnest and solemn prayer to God, while the congregation were bowed with their faces to the ground. After Solomon had ended his prayer, a miraculous fire came from heaven and consumed the sacrifice.

Because of the sins of Israel, the calamity which God said should come upon the temple, if his people departed from him, was fulfilled some hundreds of years after the temple was built. God promised Solomon, if he would remain faithful, and his people would obey all

his commandments, that that glorious temple should stand forever in all its splendor, as an evidence of the prosperity and exalted blessings resting upon Israel for their obedience.

[115] Because of Israel's transgression of the commandments of God, and their wicked acts, God suffered them to go into captivity to humble and punish them. Before the temple was destroyed, God made known to a few of his faithful servants the fate of the temple, which was the pride of Israel, and which they regarded with idolatry, while they were sinning against God. He also revealed to them the captivity of Israel. These righteous men, just before the destruction of the temple, removed the sacred ark containing the tables of stone, and with mourning and sadness, secreted it in a cave where it was to be hid from the people of Israel, because of their sins, and was to be no more restored to them. That sacred ark is yet hid. It has never been disturbed since it was secreted.

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Chapter 38—The Messiah

Before Christ left Heaven, and came into the world to die, he was taller than any of the angels. He was majestic and lovely. “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” He took upon himself man’s nature. When his ministry commenced, he was but little taller than the common size of men then living upon the earth. Had he come among men with his noble, heavenly form, his outward appearance would have attracted the minds of the people to himself, and he would have been received without the exercise of faith.

About that period Messiah was expected. By many he was looked for to come as a mighty monarch. The Jews had boasted to the Gentiles of his coming, and had dwelt largely upon the great deliverance which he would bring them, that he would reign as king, and put down all authority. Every kingdom and nation would bow to him, and the Jewish nation would reign over them. They had the events of the first and second comings of Christ confounded together.

It was in the order of God that Christ should take upon himself the form and nature of fallen man, that he might be made perfect through suffering, and endure himself the strength of Satan’s temptations, that he might the better know how to succor those who should be tempted. The faith of men in Christ as the Messiah was not to rest in the evidences of sight, and they believe on him because of his personal attractions, but because of the excellence of character found in him, which had never been, neither could be found in another. All who loved virtue, purity, and holiness, would be drawn to Christ, and would see sufficient evidence of his being the Messiah, foretold by prophecy, that should come. Those who thus trusted in the word of God, would receive the benefits of the teachings of Christ, and finally of his atonement.

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Christ came to call the attention of all men to his Father, teaching them repentance toward God. His work was to reconcile man to God. Although Christ did not come as he was expected, yet he

came just as prophecy had marked out that he would come. Those who wished to believe, had sufficient foundation for their faith by referring to prophecy, which predicted the coming of the Just One, and described the manner of his coming.

The ancient Jewish church were the highly-favored people of God, brought out of Egypt and acknowledged as his own peculiar treasure. The many and exceeding great and precious promises to them as a people, were the hope and confidence of the Jewish church. Herein they trusted, and believed their salvation sure. No other people professed to be governed by the commandments of God. Our Saviour came first to his own people, but they received him not.

[117] The self-righteous, proud, unbelieving Jews expected their Saviour and King would come into the world clothed with majesty and power, compelling all Gentiles to yield obedience to him. They did not expect any humiliation and suffering would be manifested in him. They would not receive the meek and lowly Jesus, and acknowledge him to be the Saviour of the world. Had he appeared in splendor, and assumed the authority of the world's great men, instead of taking the form of a servant, they would have received and worshiped him. But they rejected Christ as their Saviour, and after they had set their hearts in rebellion against him, it was not so easy for them to change their course. Notwithstanding all the mighty works they saw him do, they were too proud and self-exalted to yield their rebellious feelings. Every token and manifestation of his divine character increased the hatred and jealousy of the Jews. They were not content to turn from him themselves, but they sought to hinder all they could from listening to his teachings, or witnessing his miracles. The majority rejected him. They despised his humble appearance. They denied his testimony. They loved the praise of men, and the grandeur of the world. In their estimation of these things, they thought their judgment perfect, even as the judgment of God.

The whole life and teachings of Christ were continual lessons of humility, benevolence, virtue, and self-denial. This was a continual reproof to the self-righteous, exacting spirit manifested by the Jews. Satan led them on until they seemed to possess a frenzy at the mere mention of the wonderful works of Christ, which were drawing the

attention of the people from them. They at length made themselves believe that he was an impostor, and any means they could devise to get rid of him would be a virtue in them. They could not point to one act in his life which they could condemn, yet his very goodness made him a subject of their jealousy and hate, and in their blind rage they cried out, Crucify him! crucify him! The rejection of light leaves men captives of Satan, subject to his temptations. When he controls the mind, light will become darkness to that mind, good evil, and evil good.

At the first advent of Christ, Satan knew that he had come to limit his power, and set free captives which he had bound, and his skill was especially exercised to lead the Jewish nation to believe Christ an impostor. The prophecies furnished sufficient evidence to unprejudiced minds that Christ was indeed the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. But the unbelieving Jews chose their own standard of virtue, and purity of life. They would not be taught by the Just One, and continued to perform their useless sacrifices and offerings, looking forward for a Messiah which had already come.

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Our heavenly Father designed to prove and test the professed faith and obedience of his people. The sacrifices which they performed under the law were typical of the Lamb of God, and illustrated his great atonement. Yet the Jewish nation were so blinded and deceived by Satan that when Christ came, whom their sacrifices and offerings had been prefiguring, they would not receive him. They led him as a lamb to the slaughter.

The same rebellion and hatred against Christ will be in the hearts of men at his second advent. If Christ's second coming should be in the same humble manner as at his first advent, reproving sin, and commending virtue and holiness, where there was then one voice raised, crying, Crucify him! crucify him! there would be thousands in this apostate age. Infidelity in regard to Christ's being the true Messiah, the Saviour of the world, will increase and spread to an alarming degree previous to his second coming. Satan has lost none of his skill and power which he has been exercising in past time. He can better deceive man now than at Christ's first advent.

The Son of God in this age will be as virtually despised and insulted by corrupt men who pretend to be good men, as at his first advent. Satan is now transforming himself into an angel of light, to

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hide the deformity of his character, and thereby he and his evil angels receive that worship from a blinded, deluded people, which belongs alone to God. Christ is trampled under foot. Virtue and holiness are despised. Evil angels whisper their low, corrupt teachings in the ears of men, and they are pleased. Their carnal minds are gratified. That which comes from Satan and hell they make themselves believe as with a hot iron. When the Son of God came into the world to die, man's sacrifice, he laid aside his glory and exalted stature. His height was but a little above the general size of men. His personal appearance bore no special marks of his divine character, which would of itself inspire faith. Yet his perfect form, and dignified bearing, his countenance expressing benevolence, love and holiness, were unequaled by any then living upon the earth.

When the Life-giver rose from the dead a triumphant conqueror, and made himself known unto his disciples, he was of the same size as before his crucifixion. There were no special marks which would at once cause the men of Emmaus to know that he was the Son of God. They did not know him until he told them who he was.

But when he ascended up on high, and led a multitude of captives, escorted by the heavenly host, and was received in through the gates of the city, with angelic songs of triumph and rejoicing, I beheld with admiration and wonder, that he possessed the same exalted stature that he had before he came into the world to die for man. Said the angel, God, who wrought so great a miracle as to make Christ flesh to dwell among men, and will with his almighty power lift up fallen, degenerate, and dwarfed man, and after they are redeemed from the earth, make them "grow up as calves of the stall," could in his infinite power return to his dear Son his own exalted stature, which was his before he left Heaven, and humbled himself as a man, and submitted to the death of the cross.

It is no marvel with the angelic host that their loved Commander, after he had carried out the plan of salvation, and ascended up to Heaven, should take his own exalted stature, and be clothed with majesty and glory, which was his before he left Heaven. But it was a marvel with all heaven, that the Father suffered the Son of his bosom to lay aside his glory, and come down to earth, and submit to humiliation, and the agonizing death of the cross to save fallen man.

Chapter 39—Health

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Adam and Eve in Eden were noble in stature, and perfect in symmetry and beauty. They were sinless, and in perfect health. What a contrast to the human race now! Beauty is gone. Perfect health is not known. Every where we look we see disease, deformity and imbecility. I inquired the cause of this wonderful degeneracy, and was pointed back to Eden. The beautiful Eve was beguiled by the serpent to eat of the fruit of the only tree of which God had forbidden them to eat, or even touch it lest they die.

Eve had everything to make her happy. She was surrounded by fruit of every variety. Yet the fruit of the forbidden tree appeared more desirable to her than the fruit of all the other trees in the garden of which she could freely eat. She was intemperate in her desires. She ate, and through her influence, her husband ate also, and a curse rested upon them both. The earth also was cursed because of their sin. And since the fall, intemperance in almost every form has existed. The appetite has controlled reason. The human family have followed in a course of disobedience, and, like Eve, have been beguiled by Satan: to disregard the prohibitions God has made, flattering themselves that the consequence would not be as fearful as had been apprehended. The human family have violated the laws of health, and have run to excess in almost everything. Disease has been steadily increasing. The cause has been followed by the effect.

God gave our first parents the food he designed that the race should eat. It was contrary to his plan to have the life of any creature taken. There was to be no death in Eden. The fruit of the trees in the garden, was the food man's wants required. God gave man no permission to eat animal food until after the flood. Every thing had been destroyed upon which man could subsist, and therefore the Lord in their necessity gave Noah permission to eat of the clean animals which he had taken with him into the ark. But animal food was not the most healthy article of food for man.

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The people who lived before the flood ate animal food, and gratified their lusts until their cup of iniquity was full, and God cleansed the earth of its moral pollution by a flood. Then the third dreadful curse rested upon the earth. The first curse was pronounced upon the posterity of Adam and upon the earth, because of disobedience. The second curse came upon the ground after Cain slew his brother Abel. The third most dreadful curse from God, came upon the earth at the flood.

After the flood the people ate largely of animal food. God saw that the ways of man were corrupt, and that he was disposed to exalt himself proudly against his Creator, and to follow the inclinations of his own heart. And he permitted that long-lived race to eat animal food to shorten their sinful lives. Soon after the flood the race began to rapidly decrease in size, and in length of years. There were a class of very large animals which perished at the flood. God knew that the strength of man would decrease, and these mammoth animals could not be controlled by feeble man.

Sin has prevailed since the fall. While a few have remained faithful to God, the great majority have corrupted their ways before him. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was on account of their great wickedness. They gave loose rein to their intemperate appetites, then to their corrupt passions, until they were so debased, and their sins were so abominable, that their cup of iniquity was full, and they were consumed with fire from heaven.

[122] When the Lord brought his people from Egyptian bondage, he led them through the wilderness to prove them, and try them. He promised to be their God, and to take them to himself as his peculiar treasure. He did not prohibit their eating meat, but withheld it from them in a great measure. He gave them food which he designed that they should have, which was healthy, and of which they could eat freely. He rained their bread from Heaven, and gave them purest water out of the flinty rock. He made a covenant with them, that if they would obey him in all things, he would put no disease upon them. But the Israelites were not satisfied with the food which God gave them. They murmured against Moses and against God, and wished themselves back in Egypt, where they could sit by the flesh pots. God in his anger gave them flesh to gratify their lustful appetite, and great numbers of them died in the act of eating the meat for

which they had lusted. While it was yet between their teeth the curse of God came upon them. God here teaches his people that he is displeased with their permitting their appetite to control them. The Israelites at times would prefer slavery, and even death, rather than to be deprived of meat.

The curse did not come all at once. It was first felt at Adam's fall, and increased at the murder of Abel, and greatly increased at the flood. Since the flood, as the human family have forgotten God, and have followed in a course of disobedience, and have transgressed his commandments, the curse has rested heavier and heavier upon men and upon the beasts. The trees and all vegetation also have felt the effects of the curse. All through the inspired history are exalted blessings promised upon the people of God on conditions of obedience, and curses threatened for disobedience.

“And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth. The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. The Lord shall establish thee a holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways. And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee. And the Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers to give thee. The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give thee rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand. And thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.”

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God pronounced upon his people a curse if they would not hearken unto his voice to observe to do all his commandments. “Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall send upon

thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me.”

[124] God would have his people clearly understand that they will be visited according to their obedience or transgression. Wickedness and disease have increased with every successive generation. The land has labored under the curse which man has brought upon it because of continued disobedience. “The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate.” Many marvel that the human race have so degenerated, physically, mentally, and morally. They do not understand that it is the violation of God’s constitution and laws, and the violation of the laws of health, that has produced this sad degeneracy. The transgression of God’s commandments has caused his prospering hand to be removed.

Intemperance in eating and in drinking, and the indulgence of base passions have benumbed the fine sensibilities, so that sacred things have been placed upon a level with common things. Nadab and Abihu drank too freely of wine, and the result was, they used common fire instead of sacred, and were destroyed for thus dishonoring God. When appetite is left to control reason, sacred things are not discerned. God expressly commanded the children of Israel not to eat swine’s flesh. The heathen used this meat as an article of food. God prohibited the Hebrews the use of swine’s flesh because it was hurtful. It would fill the system with humors, and in that warm climate often produced leprosy. Its influence upon the system in that climate was far more injurious than in a colder climate. But God never designed the swine to be eaten under any circumstances. Swine were useful. In a fruitful country, where there was much to decay upon the ground, which would poison the atmosphere, herds of swine were permitted to run free, and devoured the decaying substances, which was a means of preserving health. Other animals were forbidden to be eaten by the Israelites, because they were not the best articles of food.

If the Israelites had manifested a spirit of submission to God's wise prohibitions, he would have removed from them everything injurious to their health, and would have suffered no sickness to be among them. But he gave them what they lusted for, because they would not submit to him.

Appetite has been indulged to the injury of health. Stimulating drinks have been used freely, which have confused the brain and brought down man to the level of the brute creation. While intoxicated, every degree of crime has been committed, and yet the perpetrators have been excused in many instances, because they knew not what they were doing. This does not lessen the guilt of the criminal. If by his own hand he puts the glass to his lips, and deliberately takes that which he knows will destroy his reasoning faculties, he becomes responsible for all the injury he does while intoxicated, at the very moment he lets his appetite control him, and he barter away his reasoning faculties for intoxicating drinks. It was his own act which brought him even below the brutes, and crimes committed when he is in a state of intoxication should be punished as severely as though the person had all the power of his reasoning faculties. [125]

Nadab and Abihu, by drinking wine, beclouded their reasoning faculties, and so lost their sense of sacred things, that they thought they could as well offer common fire as sacred. God did not excuse them because the brain was confused. Fire from his presence destroyed them in their sin. Some look with horror upon men who have been overcome with liquor, and are seen reeling and staggering in the street, while at the same time they are gratifying their appetite for things differing in their nature from spirituous liquor, but which injure the health, affect the brain, and destroy their high sense of spiritual things. The liquor-drinker has an appetite for strong drink which he gratifies, while another has no appetite for intoxicating drinks to restrain, but he desires some other hurtful indulgence, and does not practice self-denial any more than the drunkard.

Those who do not control their appetites in eating are guilty of intemperance. In those cases where men lose all sense of their obligation to God, their families, and to community, it is a slow process. They are not changed from the kind husband and father at once. It takes time to degrade them to beasts, where they become

[126] mere wrecks of humanity. With many, their first error is in making a God of their appetite, subsisting mostly on highly-seasoned animal food which produces a feverish state of the system, especially if pork is used freely. The blood becomes impure. The circulation is not equalized. Chills and fever follow. The appetite fails. They think something must be done, and perhaps send for ale, which stimulates for the time, but as soon as the influence of the ale is gone they sink as much lower, and a continual use of the ale keeps them stimulated and over-excited. They think that the ale was of so much benefit to them, they must continue its use. After a while it loses its influence, then they use a stronger beverage, until they give themselves up to every excess, and man formed in the image of his Maker degrades himself lower than the beasts. It required time to benumb the sensibilities of the mind. It was done gradually, but surely.

Tobacco, in whatever form it is used, tells upon the constitution. It is a slow poison. It affects the brain and benumbs the sensibilities, so that the mind cannot clearly discern spiritual things, especially those truths which would have a tendency to correct this filthy indulgence. Those who use tobacco in any form are not clear before God. In such a filthy practice it is impossible for them to glorify God in their bodies and spirits, which are his. And while they are using slow and sure poisons, which are ruining their health, and debasing the faculties of the mind, God cannot approbate them. He may be merciful to them while, they indulge in this pernicious habit in ignorance of the injury it is doing them, but when the matter is set before them in its true light, then they are guilty before God if they continue to indulge this gross appetite.

[127] God required the children of Israel to observe habits of strict cleanliness. In any case of the least impurity they were to remain out of the camp until evening, then to wash themselves and come into the camp. There was not a tobacco-user in that vast army. If there had been, he would have been required to choose to remain out of the camp, or cease the use of the filthy weed. And after cleansing his mouth from the least of its filthy remains, he might have been permitted to mingle with the congregation of Israel.

The priests, who ministered in sacred things, were commanded to wash their feet and their hands before entering the tabernacle in

the presence of God to importune for Israel, that they might not desecrate the sanctuary. If the priests had entered the sanctuary with their mouths polluted with tobacco, they would have shared the fate of Nadab and Abihu. And yet professed Christians bow before God in their families to pray with their mouths defiled with the filth of tobacco. They go to the house which they have dedicated to God, professing to worship him, with a stupefying quid of tobacco in their mouths, and the high-colored saliva staining their lips and chin, and their foul breath polluting the atmosphere. They leave their poisonous filth either upon the floor, or in receptacles prepared for the purpose. This is the offering they present to God. Instead of the cloud of fragrant incense filling the house as in the case of the ancient tabernacle, it is filled with the sickening, polluted odor of ejected tobacco spittle and quids, and the air breathed by the congregation is poisoned.

Men who have been set apart by the laying on of hands, to minister in sacred things, often stand in the desk with their mouths polluted, their lips stained, and their breath tainted with the defilements of tobacco. They speak to the people in Christ's stead. How can such service be acceptable to a holy God, who required the priests of Israel to make such special preparations before coming into his presence, lest his sacred holiness should consume them for dishonoring him, as in the case of Nadab and Abihu? These may be assured that the mighty God of Israel is still a God of cleanliness. They profess to be serving God while they are committing idolatry, by making a God of their appetite. Tobacco is their cherished idol. To it every high and sacred consideration must bow. They profess to be worshipping God, while at the same time they are violating the first commandment. They have other gods before the Lord. "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord."

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God requires purity of heart, and personal cleanliness, now, as when he gave the special directions to the children of Israel. If God was so particular to enjoin cleanliness upon those journeying in the wilderness who were in the open air nearly all the time, he requires no less of us who live in ceiled houses, where impurities are more observable, and have a more unhealthful influence. Tobacco is a poison of the most deceitful and malignant kind, having an exciting, then a paralyzing influence upon the nerves of the body. It is all

the more dangerous because its effects upon the system are so slow, and at first scarcely perceivable. Multitudes have fallen victims to its poisonous influence. They have surely murdered themselves by this slow poison. And we ask, What will be their waking in the resurrection morning?

Tea and coffee are stimulating. Their effects are similar to those of tobacco; but they affect in a less degree. Those who use these slow poisons, like the tobacco-user, think they cannot live without them, because they feel so very badly when they do not have these idols. Why they suffer when they discontinue the use of these stimulants, is because they have been breaking down nature in her work of preserving the entire system in harmony and in health. They will be troubled with dizziness, headache, numbness, nervousness, and irritability. They feel as though they should go all to pieces, and some have not courage to persevere in abstaining from them till abused nature recovers, but again resort to the use of the same hurtful things. They do not give nature time to recover the injury they have done her, but for present relief return to these hurtful indulgences. Nature is continually growing weaker, and less capable of recovering. But if they will be determined in their efforts to persevere and overcome, [129] abused nature will soon again rally, and perform her work wisely and well without these stimulants. The whole system under the influence of these stimulants often becomes intoxicated. And to just that degree that the nervous system is excited by false stimulants, will be the prostration which will follow after the influence of the exciting cause has abated. This prostration may in time be overcome by abstaining from the use of those things which created such a condition in the system. Those who indulge a perverted appetite, do it to the injury of health and intellect. They cannot appreciate the value of spiritual things. Their sensibilities are blunted, and sin does not appear very sinful, and truth is not regarded of greater value than earthly treasure.

There is a class who profess to believe the truth, who do not use tobacco, snuff, tea, or coffee, yet they are guilty of gratifying the appetite in a different manner. They crave highly-seasoned meats, with rich gravies, and their appetite has become so perverted that they cannot be satisfied with even meat, unless prepared in a manner most injurious. The stomach is fevered, the digestive organs are taxed,

and yet the stomach labors hard to dispose of the load forced upon it. After the stomach has performed its task it becomes exhausted, which causes faintness. Here many are deceived, and think that it is the want of food which produces such feelings, and without giving the stomach time to rest, they take more food, which for the time removes the faintness. And the more the appetite is indulged, the more will be its clamors for gratification. This faintness is generally the result of meat-eating, and eating frequently, and too much. The stomach becomes weary by being kept constantly at work, disposing of food not the most healthful. Having no time for rest, the digestive organs become enfeebled, hence the sense of “goneness,” and desire for frequent eating. The remedy such require is to eat less frequently and less liberally, and be satisfied with plain, simple food, eating twice, or at most, three times a day. The stomach must have its regular periods for labor and rest, hence eating irregularly between meals is a most pernicious violation of the laws of health. With regular habits, and proper food, the stomach will gradually recover.

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Because it is the fashion, in harmony with morbid appetite, rich cake, pies, and puddings, and every hurtful thing, are crowded into the stomach. The table must be loaded down with a variety, or the depraved appetite cannot be satisfied. In the morning, these slaves to appetite often have impure breath, and a furred tongue. They do not enjoy health, and wonder why they suffer with pains, headaches, and various ills. Many eat three times a day, and again just before going to bed. In a short time the digestive organs are worn out, for they have had no time to rest. These become miserable dyspeptics, and wonder what has made them so. The cause has brought the sure result. A second meal should never be eaten until the stomach has had time to rest from the labor of digesting the preceding meal. If a third meal be eaten at all, it should be light, and several hours before going to bed.

Many are so devoted to intemperance that they will not change their course of indulging in gluttony under any considerations. They would sooner sacrifice health, and die prematurely, than to restrain their intemperate appetite. And there are many who are ignorant of the relation their eating and drinking has to health. Could such be enlightened, they might have moral courage to deny the appetite, and eat more sparingly, and of that food alone which was healthful,

and by their own course of action save themselves a great amount of suffering.

[131] Persons who have indulged their appetite to eat freely of meat, highly-seasoned gravies, and various kinds of rich cakes and preserves, cannot immediately relish a plain, wholesome, and nutritious diet. Their taste is so perverted they have no appetite for a wholesome diet of fruits, plain bread and vegetables. They need not expect to relish at first food so different from that which they have been indulging themselves to eat. If they cannot at first enjoy plain food, they should fast until they can. That fast will prove to them of greater benefit than medicine, for the abused stomach will find that rest which it has long needed, and real hunger can be satisfied with a plain diet. It will take time for the taste to recover from the abuses which it has received, and to gain its natural tone. But perseverance in a self-denying course of eating and drinking will soon make plain, wholesome food palatable, and it will soon be eaten with greater satisfaction than the epicure enjoys over his rich dainties.

The stomach is not fevered with meat, and overtaxed, but is in a healthy condition, and can readily perform its task. There should be no delay in reform. Efforts should be made to preserve carefully the remaining strength of the vital forces, by lifting off every over-tasking burden. The stomach may never fully recover health, but a proper course of diet will save further debility, and many will recover more or less, unless they have gone very far in gluttonous self-murder.

Those who permit themselves to become slaves to a gluttonous appetite, often go still further, and debase themselves by indulging their corrupt passions, which have become excited by intemperance in eating and in drinking. They give loose rein to their debasing passions, until health and intellect greatly suffer. The reasoning faculties are, in a great measure, destroyed by evil habits.

The present corrupt state of the world was presented before me. The sight was terrible. I have wondered that the inhabitants of the earth were not destroyed, like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. I have seen reason enough for the present state of degeneracy and mortality in the world. Blind passion controls reason, and every high consideration with many is sacrificed to lust.

The first great evil was intemperance in eating and drinking. Men and women have made themselves slaves to appetite. They are intemperate in labor. A great amount of hard labor is performed to obtain food for their tables which greatly injure the already overtaxed system. Women spend a great share of their time over a heated cook-stove, preparing food, highly seasoned with spices to gratify the taste. As a consequence, the children are neglected, and do not receive moral and religious instruction. The over-worked mother neglects to cultivate a sweetness of temper, which is the sunshine of the dwelling. Eternal considerations become secondary. All the time has to be employed in preparing these things for the appetite which ruin health, sour the temper, and becloud the reasoning faculties.

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A reform in eating would be a saving of expense and labor. The wants of a family can be easily supplied that is satisfied with plain, wholesome diet. Rich food breaks down the healthy organs of body and mind. And how many labor so very hard to accomplish this.

Children who eat improperly are often feeble, pale and dwarfed, and are nervous, excitable and irritable. Everything noble is sacrificed to the appetite, and the animal passions predominate. The lives of many children from five to ten and fifteen years of age seem marked with depravity. They possess knowledge of almost every vice. The parents are, in a great degree, at fault in this matter, and to them will be accredited the sins of their children which their improper course has indirectly led them to commit. They tempt their children to indulge their appetite by placing upon their tables flesh meats and other food prepared with spices, which have a tendency to excite the animal passions. By their example they learn their children intemperance in eating. They have been indulged to eat almost any hour of the day, which keeps the digestive organs constantly taxed. Mothers have had but little time to instruct their children. Their precious time was devoted to cooking various kinds of unwholesome food to place upon their tables.

Many parents have permitted their children to be ruined while they were trying to regulate their lives to fashion. If visitors are to come, they wish to have them sit down to as good a table as they would find among any of their circle of acquaintances. Much time and expense are devoted to this object. For the sake of appearance, rich food is prepared to suit the appetite, and even professed

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Christians make so much parade that they call around them a class whose principal object in visiting them is for the dainties they get to eat. Christians should reform in this respect. While they should courteously entertain their visitors, they should not be such slaves to fashion and appetite.

I was shown that more deaths have been caused by drug-taking than from all other causes combined. If there was in the land one physician in the place of thousands, a vast amount of premature mortality would be prevented. Multitudes of physicians, and multitudes of drugs, have cursed the inhabitants of the earth, and have carried thousands and tens of thousands to untimely graves.

Indulging in eating too frequently, and in too large quantities, over-taxes the digestive organs, and produces a feverish state of the system. The blood becomes impure, and then diseases of various kinds occur. A physician is sent for, who prescribes some drug which gives present relief, but which does not cure the disease. It may change the form of disease, but the real evil is increased ten fold. Nature was doing her best to rid the system of an accumulation of impurities, and could she have been left to herself, aided by the common blessings of Heaven, such as pure air and pure water, a speedy and safe cure would have been effected.

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The sufferers in such cases can do for themselves that which others cannot do as well for them. They should commence to relieve nature of the load they have forced upon her. They should remove the cause. Fast a short time, and give the stomach chance for rest. Reduce the feverish state of the system by a careful and understanding application of water. These efforts will help nature in her struggles to free the system of impurities. But generally the persons who suffer pain become impatient. They are not willing to use self-denial, and suffer a little from hunger. Neither are they willing to wait the slow process of nature to build up the overtaxed energies of the system. But they are determined to obtain relief at once, and take powerful drugs, prescribed by physicians. Nature was doing her work well, and would have triumphed, but while accomplishing her task, a foreign substance of a poisonous nature was introduced. What a mistake! Abused nature has now two evils to war against instead of one. She leaves the work in which she was engaged, and resolutely takes hold to expel the intruder newly introduced into the

system. Nature feels this double draft upon her resources, and she becomes enfeebled.

Drugs never cure disease. They only change the form and location. Nature alone is the effectual restorer, and how much better could she perform her task if left to herself. But this privilege is seldom allowed her. If crippled nature bears up under the load, and finally accomplishes in a great measure her double task, and the patient lives, the credit is given to the physician. But if nature fails in her effort to expel the poison from the system, and the patient dies, it is called a wonderful dispensation of Providence. If the patient had taken a course to relieve overburdened nature in season, and understandingly used pure soft water, this dispensation of drug mortality might have been wholly averted. The use of water can accomplish but little, if the patient does not feel the necessity of also strictly attending to his diet.

Many are living in violation of the laws of health, and are ignorant of the relation their habits of eating, drinking, and working sustain to their health. They will not arouse to their true condition until nature protests against the abuses she is suffering, by aches and pains in the system. If, even then, the sufferers would only commence the work right, and would resort to the simple means they have neglected—the use of water and proper diet, nature would have just the help she requires, and which she ought to have had long before. If this course is pursued, the patient will generally recover, without being debilitated. [135]

When drugs are introduced into the system, for a time they may seem to have a beneficial effect. A change may take place, but the disease is not cured. It will manifest itself in some other form. In nature's efforts to expel the drug from the system, intense suffering is sometimes caused the patient. And the disease, which the drug was given to cure, may disappear, but only to re-appear in a new form, such as skin diseases, ulcers, painful diseased joints, and sometimes in a more dangerous and deadly form. The liver, heart and brain are frequently affected by drugs, and often all these organs are burdened with disease, and the unfortunate subjects, if they live, are invalids for life, wearily dragging out a miserable existence. Oh, how much that poisonous drug cost! If it did not cost the life, it cost quite too much. Nature has been crippled in all her efforts. The

whole machinery is out of order, and at a future period in life, when these fine works which have been injured, are to be relied upon to act a more important part in union with all the fine works of nature's machinery, they cannot readily and strongly perform their labor, and the whole system feels the lack. These organs, which should be in a healthy condition, are enfeebled, the blood becomes impure. Nature keeps struggling, and the patient suffers with different ailments, until there is a sudden breaking down in her efforts, and death follows. There are more who die from the use of drugs, than all who could have died of disease had nature been left to do her own work.

[136] Very many lives have been sacrificed by physicians' administering drugs for unknown diseases. They have no real knowledge of the exact disease which afflicts the patient. But physicians are expected to know in a moment what to do, and unless they act at once, as though they understood the disease perfectly, they are considered by impatient friends, and by the sick, as incompetent physicians. Therefore to gratify erroneous opinions of the sick and their friends, medicine must be administered, experiments and tests tried to cure the patient of the disease of which they have no real knowledge. Nature is loaded with poisonous drugs which she cannot expel from the system. The physicians themselves are often convinced that they have used powerful medicines for a disease which did not exist, and death was the consequence.

Physicians are censurable, but they are not the only ones at fault. The sick themselves, if they would be patient, diet and suffer a little, and give nature time to rally, would recover much sooner without the use of any medicine. Nature alone possesses curative powers. Medicines have no power to cure, but will most generally hinder nature in her efforts. She after all must do the work of restoring. The sick are in a hurry to get well, and the friends of the sick are impatient. They will have medicine, and if they do not feel that powerful influence upon their systems, their erroneous views lead them to think they should feel, they impatiently change for another physician. The change often increases the evil. They go through a course of medicine equally as dangerous as the first, and more fatal, because the two treatments do not agree, and the system is poisoned beyond remedy.

But many have never experienced the beneficial effects of water, and are afraid to use one of Heaven's greatest blessings. Water has been refused persons suffering with burning fevers, through fear that it would injure them. If, in their fevered state, water had been given them to drink freely, and applications had also been made externally, long days and nights of suffering would have been saved, and many precious lives spared. But thousands have died with raging fevers consuming them, until the fuel which fed the fever was burnt up, the vitals consumed, and have died in the greatest agony, without being permitted to have water to allay their burning thirst. Water, which is allowed a senseless building, to put out the raging elements, is not allowed human beings to put out the fire which is consuming the vitals.

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Multitudes remain in inexcusable ignorance in regard to the laws of their being. They are wondering why our race is so feeble, and why so many die prematurely. Is there not a cause? Physicians who profess to understand the human organism, prescribe for their patients, and even for their own dear children, and their companions, slow poisons to break up disease, or to cure slight indisposition. Surely, they cannot realize the evil of these things as they were presented before me, or they could not do thus. The effects of the poison may not be immediately perceived, but it is doing its work surely in the system, undermining the constitution, and crippling nature in her efforts. They are seeking to correct an evil, but produce a far greater one, which is often incurable. Those who are thus dealt with are constantly sick, and constantly dosing. And yet, if you listen to their conversation, you will often hear them praising the drugs they have been using, and recommending their use to others, because they have been benefited by their use. It would seem that to such as can reason from cause to effect, the sallow countenance, the continual complaints of ailments and general prostration of those who claim to be benefited, would be sufficient proofs of the health-destroying influence of drugs. And yet many are so blinded they do not see that all the drugs they have taken have not cured them, but made them worse. The drug invalid numbers one in the world, but is generally peevish, irritable, always sick, lingering out a miserable existence, and seems to live only to call into constant exercise the patience of others. Poisonous drugs have not killed them outright,

[138] for nature is loth to give up her hold on life. She is unwilling to cease her struggles. Yet these drug-takers are never well. They are always taking cold, which causes extreme suffering, because of the poison all through their system.

A branch was presented before me bearing large flat seeds. Upon it was written, *Nux vomica, strychnine*. Beneath was written, *No antidote*. I was shown persons under the influence of this poison. It produced heat, and seemed to act particularly on the spinal column, but affected the whole system. When this is taken in the smallest quantities, it has its influence, which nothing can counteract. If taken immoderately, convulsions, paralysis, insanity, and death, are often the results. Many use this deadly evil in small quantities. But if they realized its influence, not one grain of it would be introduced into the system.

When first taken, its influence may seem to be beneficial. It excites the nerves connected with the spinal column, but when the excitement passes away, it is followed by a sense of prostration and of chilliness the whole length of the spinal column, especially upon the head and back of the neck. The patients generally cannot endure the least draught of air. They are inclined to close every crevice, and for want of the free, invigorating air of heaven, the blood becomes impure, the vital organs are weakened, and general debility is the result. By unduly exciting the sensitive nerves connected with the spinal column, by this poisonous drug, they lose their tone and vitality, and weakness of the back and limbs follows. The sight and hearing are often affected, and in many cases the patient becomes helpless.

[139] I was shown that the innocent, modest-looking, white poppy yields a dangerous drug. Opium is a slow poison, when taken in small quantities. In large doses it produces lethargy and death. Its effects upon the nervous system are ruinous. When patients use this drug until it becomes habit, it is almost impossible to discontinue it, because they feel so prostrated and nervous without it. They are in a worse condition when deprived of it than the rum-drinker without his rum, or the tobacco-user deprived of his tobacco. The opium slave is in a pitiful condition. Unless his nervous system is continually intoxicated with the poisonous drug, he is miserable. It benumbs the sensibilities, stupefies the brain, and unfits the mind for the service

of God. True Christians cannot persist in the use of this slow poison, when they know its influence upon them.

Those who use opium cannot render to God any more acceptable service than can the drunkard, or the tobacco-user. Those who break off the use of this nerve and brain-destroying practice will have to possess fortitude, and suffer, as will the drunkard, and the tobacco slave, when deprived of their body and mind-destroying indulgences. God is displeased that his followers should become slaves to habits which ruin body and mind. *Nux vomica*, or strychnine, and opium have killed their millions, and have left thousands upon the earth to linger out a wretched, suffering existence, a burden to themselves, and those around them.

Mercury, calomel, and quinine have brought their amount of wretchedness, which the day of God alone will fully reveal. Preparations of mercury and calomel taken into the system ever retain their poisonous strength as long as there is a particle of it left in the system. These poisonous preparations have destroyed their millions, and left sufferers upon the earth to linger out a miserable existence. All are better off without these dangerous mixtures. Miserable sufferers, with disease in almost every form, mis-shapen by suffering, with dreadful ulcers, and pains in the bones, loss of teeth, loss of memory, and impaired sight, are to be seen almost every where. They are victims of poisonous preparations, which have been, in many cases, administered to cure some slight indisposition, which after a day or two of fasting would have disappeared without medicine. But poisonous mixtures, administered by physicians, have proved their ruin.

The endless variety of medicines in the market, the numerous advertisements of new drugs and mixtures, all of which, as they say, do wonderful cures, kill hundreds where they benefit one. Those who are sick are not patient. They will take the various medicines, some of which are very powerful, although they know nothing of the nature of the mixtures. All the medicines they take only make their recovery more hopeless. Yet they keep dosing, and continue to grow weaker, until they die. Some will have medicine at all events. Then let them take these hurtful mixtures and the various deadly poisons upon their own responsibility. God's servants should not administer

medicines which they know will leave behind injurious effects upon the system, even if they do relieve present suffering.

Every poisonous preparation in the vegetable and mineral kingdoms, taken into the system, will leave its wretched influence, affecting the liver and lungs, and deranging the system generally. Nor does the evil end here. Diseased, feeble infants are brought into the world to share this misery, transmitted to them from their parents.

I have been shown that a great amount of suffering might be saved if all would labor to prevent disease, by strictly obeying the laws of health. Strict habits of cleanliness should be observed. Many, while well, will not take the trouble to keep in a healthy condition. They neglect personal cleanliness, and are not careful to keep their clothing pure. Impurities are constantly and imperceptibly passing from the body, through the pores of the skin, and if the surface of the skin is not kept in a healthy condition, the system is burdened with impure matter. If the clothing worn is not often washed, and frequently aired, it becomes filthy with impurities which are thrown off from the body by sensible and insensible perspiration. And if the garments worn are not frequently cleansed from these impurities, the pores of the skin absorb again the waste matter thrown off. The impurities of the body, if not allowed to escape, are taken back into the blood, and forced upon the internal organs. Nature, to relieve herself of poisonous impurities, makes an effort to free the system, which effort produces fevers, and what is termed disease. But even then, if those who are afflicted would assist nature in her efforts, by the use of pure, soft water, much suffering would be prevented. But many, instead of doing this, and seeking to remove the poisonous matter from the system, take a more deadly poison into the system, to remove a poison already there.

If every family realized the beneficial results of thorough cleanliness, they would make special efforts to remove every impurity from their persons, and from their houses, and would extend their efforts to their premises. Many suffer decayed vegetable matter to remain about their premises. They are not awake to the influence of these things. There is constantly arising from these decaying substances an effluvia that is poisoning the air. By inhaling the impure air, the blood is poisoned, the lungs become affected, and the whole system

is diseased. Disease of almost every description will be caused by inhaling the atmosphere affected by these decaying substances.

Families have been afflicted with fevers, some have died, and the remaining portion of the family circle have almost murmured against their Maker because of their distressing bereavements, when the sole cause of all their sickness and death has been the result of their own carelessness. The impurities about their own premises have brought upon them contagious diseases, and the sad afflictions which they charge upon God. Every family that prizes health should cleanse their houses and their premises of all decaying substances.

God commanded that the children of Israel should in no case allow impurities of their persons, or of their clothing. Those who had any personal uncleanness were shut out of the camp until evening, and then were required to cleanse themselves and their clothing before they could enter the camp. Also they were commanded of God to have no impurities upon the premises within a great distance of the encampment, lest the Lord should pass by and see their uncleanness.

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Many do not realize the necessity of light, and pure air in their houses in order to have health. Some build houses, and furnish them expensively, more to gratify pride, and to receive visitors, than for the comfort, convenience and health of their families. The best rooms are kept dark. The light and air are shut out, lest the light of heaven may injure the rich furniture, fade the carpets, or tarnish the picture frames. When visitors are permitted to be seated in these precious rooms, they are in danger of taking cold, because of the cellar-like atmosphere pervading them. Parlor chambers and bedrooms are kept closed in the same manner and for the same reasons. And whoever occupies these beds which have not been freely exposed to the light and air, do so at the expense of health, and often even of life itself.

Rooms that are not exposed to light and air become damp. Beds and bedding gather dampness, and the atmosphere in these rooms is poisonous, because it has not been purified by light and air. Various diseases have been brought on by sleeping in these fashionable health-destroying apartments. Every family who prizes health above the empty applause of fashionable visitors, will have a circulation of air, and an abundance of light through every apartment of their houses for several hours each day. But many will follow fashion

so closely, they become slaves to it, and would suffer sickness, and even death, rather than be out of the fashion. They will reap that which they have sown. They will live fashionably, and suffer with diseases as the result, be doctored with fashionable poisons, and die fashionable deaths.

Sleeping rooms especially should be well ventilated, and the atmosphere made healthy by light and air. Blinds should be left open several hours each day, the curtains put aside, and the room thoroughly aired. Nothing should remain, even for a short time, which would destroy the purity of the atmosphere.

[143] Many families suffer with sore throat, and lung diseases, and liver complaints, brought upon them by their own course of action. Their sleeping rooms are small, unfit to sleep in for one night, but they occupy the small unhealthy apartments for weeks and months, and years. They keep their windows and doors closed, fearing they should take cold if there was a crevice open to let in the air. They breathe the same air over and over, until it becomes impregnated with the poisonous impurities, and waste matter, thrown off from their bodies, through the lungs, and the pores of the skin. Such can test the matter, and be convinced of the unhealthy air in their close rooms, by entering them after they have remained awhile in the open air. Then they can have some idea of the impurities they have conveyed to their blood, through the inhalations of the lungs. Those who thus abuse their health, must suffer with disease. All should regard light and air as among Heaven's most precious blessings. They should not shut out these blessings as though they were enemies.

Sleeping apartments should be large, and so arranged as to have a circulation of air through them, day and night. Those who have excluded the air from their sleeping rooms, should commence to change their course immediately. They should let in air by degrees, and increase the circulation until they can bear it day and night, winter and summer, with no danger of taking cold. The lungs, in order to be healthy, must have pure air.

Those who have not had a free circulation of air in their rooms through the night, generally awake feeling exhausted, feverish, and know not the cause. It was air, vital air, that the whole system required, but which it could not obtain. Upon rising in the morning, most persons would be benefited by taking a sponge-bath, or, if

more agreeable, a hand-bath, with merely a wash-bowl of water. This will remove impurities from the skin. Then the clothing should be removed piece by piece from the bed, and exposed to the air. The windows should be opened, and the blinds fastened back, and the air left to circulate freely for several hours, if not all day, through the sleeping apartments. In this manner the bed and clothing will become thoroughly aired, and the impurities will be removed from the room. [144]

Shade trees and shrubbery too close and dense around a house are unhealthy; for they prevent a free circulation of air, and prevent the rays of the sun from shining sufficiently through. In consequence of this, a dampness gathers in the house. Especially in wet seasons the sleeping rooms become damp, and those who sleep in the beds are troubled with rheumatism, neuralgia, and lung complaints, which generally end in consumption. Numerous shade trees cast off many leaves, which, if not immediately removed, decay, and poison the atmosphere. A yard beautified with scattering trees, and some shrubbery, at a proper distance from the house, has a happy, cheerful influence upon the family, and, if well taken care of, will prove no injury to health. Dwellings, if possible, should be built upon high and dry ground. If a house be built where water settles around it, remaining for a time, and then drying away, a poisonous miasma arises, and fever and ague, sore throat, lung diseases, and fevers, will be the result.

Many have expected that God would keep them from sickness merely because they have asked him to do so. But God did not regard their prayers, because their faith was not made perfect by works. God will not work a miracle to keep those from sickness who have no care for themselves, but are continually violating the laws of health, and make no efforts to prevent disease. When we do all we can on our part to have health, then may we expect that the blessed results will follow, and we can ask God in faith to bless our efforts for the preservation of health. He will then answer our prayer, if his name can be glorified thereby. But let all understand that they have a work to do. God will not work in a miraculous manner to preserve the health of persons who are taking a sure course to make themselves sick, by their careless inattention to the laws of health. [145]

Those who will gratify their appetite, and then suffer because of their intemperance, and take drugs to relieve them, may be assured that God will not interpose to save health and life which is so recklessly periled. The cause has produced the effect. Many, as their last resort, follow the directions in the word of God, and request the prayers of the elders of the church for their restoration to health. God does not see fit to answer prayers offered in behalf of such, for he knows that if they should be restored to health, they would again sacrifice it upon the altar of unhealthy appetite.

There is a class of invalids who have no real located disease. But as they believe they are dangerously diseased, they are in reality invalids. The mind is diseased, and many die who might recover of disease, which exists alone in the imagination. If such could have their minds diverted from themselves, from noticing every poor feeling, they would soon improve. Inactivity will cause disease. And to this the indulgence of unhealthy appetite, and drug-taking, and those who had no real located disease will become invalids in very deed. They make themselves so. If such would engage in cheerful, healthy labor, they would rise above poor feelings. Even if they should become very weary at times it would not hurt them. As they would accustom themselves to healthy, active labor, the mind would be occupied, and not find time to dwell upon every ache and pain.

[146] If invalids would dispense with medicines of every description, and improve their habits of eating, and exercise as much as possible in the open air, their names would soon be dropped from the invalid list. The power of the will is a mighty soother of the nerves, and can resist much disease, simply by not yielding to ailments, and settling down into a state of inactivity. Those who have but little force, and natural energy, need to constantly guard themselves, lest their minds become diseased, and they give up to supposed disease, when none really exists. It is slow murder for persons to confine themselves days, weeks and months in doors, with but little out-door exercise.

Others are too active in body and mind. The mind of such must rest as well as the body, and without it, will be overworked, and the constitution must break down. Satan exults to see the human family plunging themselves deeper, and deeper, into suffering and misery. He knows that persons who have wrong habits, and unsound bodies, cannot serve God so earnestly, perseveringly and purely as though

sound. A diseased body affects the brain. With the mind we serve the Lord. The head is the capitol of the body. If the finger is pricked, the nerves, like the telegraphic wires, bear the intelligence immediately to the brain. Satan triumphs in the ruinous work he causes by leading the human family to indulge in habits which destroy themselves, and one another; for by this means he is robbing God of the service due him.

In order to preserve health, temperance in all things is necessary. Temperance in labor, temperance in eating and drinking. Because of intemperance a great amount of misery has been brought upon the human family. The eating of pork has produced scrofula, leprosy and cancerous humors. Pork-eating is still causing the most intense suffering to the human race. Depraved appetites crave those things which are the most injurious to health. The curse, which has rested heavily upon the earth, and has been felt by the whole race of mankind, has also been felt by the animals. The beasts have degenerated [in] size, and length of years. They have been made to suffer more than they otherwise would by the wrong habits of man.

There are but a few animals that are free from disease. They have been made to suffer greatly for the want of light, pure air, and wholesome food. When they are fattened, they are often confined in close stables, and are not permitted to exercise, and to have free circulation of air. Many poor animals are left to breathe the poison of filth which is left in barns and stables. Their lungs will not long remain healthy while inhaling such impurities. Disease is conveyed to the liver, and the entire system of the animal is diseased. They are killed, and prepared for the market, and people eat freely of this poisonous animal food. Much disease is caused in this manner. But people cannot be made to believe that it is the meat they have eaten, which has poisoned their blood, and caused their sufferings. [147]

Many die of disease caused wholly by meat-eating, yet the world does not seem to be the wiser. Animals are frequently killed that have been driven quite a distance for the slaughter. Their blood has become heated. They are full of flesh, and have been deprived of healthy exercise, and when they have to travel far, they become surfeited, and exhausted, and in that condition are killed for market. Their blood is highly inflamed, and those who eat of their meat, eat poison. Some are not immediately affected, while others are

attacked with severe pain, and die from fever, cholera, or some unknown disease. Very many animals are sold for the city market known to be diseased by those who have sold them, and those who buy them are not always ignorant of the matter. Especially in larger cities this is practiced to a great extent, and meat-eaters know not that they are eating diseased animals.

[148] Some animals that are brought to the slaughter seem to realize by instinct what is to take place, and they become furious, and literally mad. They are killed while in that state, and their flesh prepared for market. Their meat is poison, and has produced, in those who have eaten it, cramp, convulsions, apoplexy, and sudden death. Yet the cause of all this suffering is not attributed to the meat. Some animals are inhumanly treated while being brought to the slaughter. They are literally tortured, and after they have endured many hours of extreme suffering, are butchered. Swine have been prepared for market even while the plague was upon them, and their poisonous flesh has spread contagious diseases, and great mortality has followed.

The body, which God calls his temple, should be preserved in as healthy a condition as possible. Many act as though they had a right to treat their own bodies as they please. They do not realize that God has claims upon them. They are required to glorify him in their bodies and spirits, which are his. While they give themselves up to the gratification of unhealthy appetites, and thus bring disease upon themselves, they cannot render to God acceptable service. None should remain in ignorance of God's claims. All his promises are on conditions of obedience. All should work for themselves. They should do that which God requires them to do, and not leave God to do for them that which he has left for them to do. It is a sacred duty which God has enjoined upon reasonable beings, formed in his image, to keep that image in as perfect a state as possible. Those who bring disease upon themselves, by self-gratification, have not healthy bodies and minds. They cannot weigh the evidences of truth, and comprehend the requirements of God. Our Saviour will not reach his arm low enough to raise such from their degraded state, while they persist in pursuing a course to sink themselves still lower.

All are required to do what they can to preserve healthy bodies, and sound minds. If they will gratify a gross appetite, and by so doing blunt their sensibilities, and becloud their perceptive faculties so that

they cannot appreciate the exalted character of God, or delight in the study of his Word, they may be assured that God will not accept their unworthy offering any sooner than that of Cain. God requires them to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. After man has done all in his power to insure health, by the denying of appetite and gross passions, that he may possess a healthy mind, and a sanctified imagination, that he may render to God an offering in righteousness, then he is saved alone by a miracle of God's mercy, as was the ark upon the stormy billows. Noah had done all that God required of him in making the ark secure, then God performed that which man could not do, and preserved the ark by his miraculous power. [149]

Our Redeemer, laying aside his glory and majesty, to take human nature, and to die man's sacrifice, was a miracle of God. It was God's wise arrangement to save fallen man. God requires his people to be laborers together with him. He requires them to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, and present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is the only service he will accept from reasonable mortals. Jesus has stooped very low in order to reach man in his low estate. And God requires of man to make earnest efforts, and deny self, that he may preserve his vigor of mind, and elevate himself, and imitate the example of him in whom was no guile. Then will he be benefited with the atonement of Christ. As the Lord bade faithful Noah before the flood, Come thou, and all thy house, into the ark, he will, previous to the time of trouble, say to his faithful saints, who have been preparing for translation, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee. Hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. The earth, also, shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain."

Christ took not on him the nature of angels, but the nature of man, that he might acquaint himself with the temptations with which he was beset, and help man in his fallen state, and by his own humiliation and death elevate men to become heirs with him to his Father's kingdom. Christ endured the strongest temptations of Satan, that he might experience in himself the severest conflict [150]

which the children of men would have with the fallen foe, and that he might sustain those who should come to him for strength in their temptations.

Satan caused the fall of the first Adam, and he boasted to the angels that he should succeed with the second Adam, Jesus Christ, by approaching him through the appetite. Before Christ entered upon his ministry, Satan commenced his series of temptations. He knew that he could lead astray through the appetite sooner than in any other way. Eve fell in consequence of appetite when she had every kind of fruit good to satisfy her wants. Christ suffered a long fast of forty days, and endured the keenest hunger. Satan came to him with his series of temptations while thus weak and suffering, tempting him to do a miracle for his own sake, to appease his hunger, and by so doing give him evidence that he was the Son of God. "And when the tempter came to him, he said, if thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Christ answered him with Scripture. "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Christ refers to his Father's law. The words of God spoken from Sinai are the conditions of life. These words obeyed will give man again free access to the tree of life, that our first parents forfeited all right to by disobedience. Their transgression made it needful for Christ to come to reconcile fallen man to God by his own death.

[151] The scene of Christ's temptation was to be a lesson for all his followers. When the enemies of Christ, by the instigation of Satan, request them to show some miracle, they should answer them as meekly as the Son of God answered Satan, "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." If they will not be convinced by inspired testimony, a manifestation of God's power would not benefit them. God's wondrous works are not manifested to gratify the curiosity of any. Christ, the Son of God, refused to give Satan any proof of his power. He made no effort to remove Satan's "if," by showing a miracle. The disciples of Christ will be brought into similar positions. Unbelievers will require them to do some miracle, if they believe God's special power is in the church, and that they are the chosen people of God. Unbelievers, who are afflicted with infirmities, will require them to work a miracle upon them, if God is with them. Christ's followers should imitate the example of their

Lord. Jesus, with his divine power, did not do any mighty works for Satan's diversion. Neither can the servants of Christ. They should refer the unbelieving to the written, inspired testimony for evidence of their being the loyal people of God, and heirs of salvation.

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Chapter 40—Experience

In the winter of 1864, my Willie was suddenly and violently brought down with lung fever. We had just buried our oldest son with this disease, and were very anxious in regard to Willie, fearing that he, too, might die. We decided that we would not send for a physician, but do the best we could with him ourselves by the use of water, and entreat the Lord in behalf of the child. We called in a few who had faith to unite their prayers with ours. We had a sweet assurance of God's presence and blessing.

[152] The next day Willie was very sick. He was wandering. He did not seem to see or hear me when I spoke to him. His heart had no regular beat, but was in a constant agitated flutter. We continued to look to God in his behalf, and to use water freely upon his head, and a compress constantly upon his lungs, and soon he seemed rational as ever. He suffered severe pain in his right side, and could not lie upon it for a moment. This pain we subdued with cold water compresses, varying the temperature of the water according to the degree of the fever. We were very careful to keep his hands and feet warm.

We expected the crisis would come the seventh day. We had but little rest during his sickness, and were obliged to give him up into others' care the fourth and fifth nights. My husband and myself the fifth day felt very anxious. The child raised fresh blood, and coughed considerably. My husband spent much time in prayer. We left our child in careful hands that night. Before retiring my husband prayed long and earnestly. Suddenly his burden of prayer left him, and it seemed as though a voice spoke to him, and said, Go lie down, I will take care of the child. I had retired sick, and could not sleep for anxiety for several hours. I felt pressed for breath. Although sleeping in a large chamber, I arose and opened the door into a large hall, and was at once relieved, and soon slept. I dreamed that an experienced physician was standing by my child, watching every breath, with one hand over his heart, and with the other feeling his

pulse. He turned to us and said, "The crisis has passed. He has seen his worst night. He will now come up speedily, for he has not the injurious influence of drugs to recover from. Nature has nobly done her work to rid the system of impurities." I related to him my worn-out condition, my pressure for breath, and the relief obtained by opening the door. Said he, "That which gave you relief, will also relieve your child. He needs air. You have kept him too warm. The heated air coming from a stove is injurious, and were it not for the air coming in at the crevices of the windows, would be poisonous, and destroy life. Stove heat destroys the vitality of the air, and weakens the lungs. The child's lungs have been weakened by the room being kept too warm. Sick persons are debilitated by disease, and need all the invigorating air that they can bear to strengthen the vital organs to resist disease. And yet in most cases air and light are excluded from the sick room at the very time when most needed, as though dangerous enemies."

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This dream and my husband's experience was a consolation to us both. We found in the morning that our boy had passed a restless night. He seemed to be in a high fever until noon. Then the fever left him, and he appeared quite well, except weak. He had eaten but one small cracker through his five-days' sickness. He came up rapidly, and has had better health than he has had for several years before. This experience is valuable to us.

I have thought for years that I was dependent upon a meat diet for strength. I have eaten three meals a day until within a few months. It has been very difficult for me to go from one meal to another without suffering from faintness at the stomach, and dizziness of the head. Eating would remove these feelings. I seldom allowed myself to eat anything between my regular meals, and have made it a practice to often retire without supper. But I have suffered greatly for want of food from breakfast to dinner, and have frequently fainted. Eating meat removed for the time these faint feelings. I therefore decided that meat was indispensable in my case.

But since the Lord presented before me, in June, 1863, the subject of meat-eating in relation to health, I have left the use of meat. For a while it was rather difficult to bring my appetite to bread, for which, formerly, I have had but little relish. But by persevering, I have been able to do this. I have lived for nearly one year without

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meat. For about six months most of the bread upon our table has been unleavened cakes, made of unbolted wheat-meal and water, and a very little salt. We use fruits and vegetables liberally. I have lived for eight months upon two meals a day. I have applied myself to writing the most of the time for above a year. For eight months have been confined closely to writing. My brain has been constantly taxed, and I have had but little exercise. Yet my health has never been better than for the past six months. My former faint and dizzy feelings have left me. I have been troubled every spring with loss of appetite. The last spring I had no trouble in this respect. Our plain food, eaten twice a day, is enjoyed with a keen relish. We have no meat, cake, or any rich food upon our table. We use no lard, but in its place, milk, cream, and some butter. We have our food prepared with but little salt, and have dispensed with spices of all kinds. We breakfast at seven, and take our dinner at one. It is seldom I have a faint feeling. My appetite is satisfied. My food is eaten with a greater relish than ever before.

I have, since a child, been afflicted with dropsy and heart disease, occasioned by my misfortune when about nine years old. For several years, in the spring, I have had a shock of paralysis which has nearly cost me my life. But, in answer to prayer, I have recovered from its effects. The last spring I had no symptoms of this much-dreaded affliction. I have no trouble with dropsy or heart disease. I have within eight months lost twenty-five pounds of flesh. I am better without it. I have more strength than I have realized for years.

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Chapter 41—Delusions of Progression

True knowledge has decreased with every successive generation. God is infinite, and the first people upon the earth received their instructions from that infinite God who created the world. Those who received their knowledge direct from infinite wisdom were not deficient in knowledge.

God instructed Noah how to make that immense ark, for the saving of himself and his family. He also instructed Moses how to make the tabernacle, and the embroidery, and skillful work which was to adorn the sanctuary. The women wrought, with great ingenuity the embroidery of silver and gold. Skillful men were not wanting to accomplish the work of making the ark, the tabernacle, and the vessels of solid gold. [155]

God gave David a pattern of the temple which Solomon built. None but the most skillful men of design and art were allowed to have anything to do with the work. Every stone for the temple was prepared to exactly fill its place, before being brought to the temple. And the temple came together without the sound of an axe or a hammer. There is no such building to be found in the world for beauty, richness and splendor.

There are many inventions and improvements, and labor-saving machines now that the ancients did not have. They did not need them. The land has felt the curse, more and more heavily. Before the flood, the first leaf which fell, and was discovered decaying upon the ground, caused those who feared God great sorrow. They mourned over it as we mourn over the loss of a dead friend. In the decaying leaf they could see an evidence of the curse, and of the decay of nature.

The greater the length of time the earth has lain under the curse, the more difficult has it been for man to cultivate it, and make it productive. As the soil has become more barren, and double labor has had to be expended upon it, God has raised up men with inventive faculties to construct implements to lighten labor on the

land groaning under the curse. But God has not been in all man's inventions. Satan has controlled the minds of men to a great extent, and has hurried men to new inventions which has led them to forget God.

[156] In strength of intellect, men who now live can bear no comparison to the ancients. There has been more ancient arts lost that the present generation now possess. For skill and art those living in this degenerate age will not compare with the knowledge possessed by strong men who lived near one thousand years.

Men before the flood lived many hundred of years, and when one hundred years old were considered but youths. Those long-lived men had sound minds in sound bodies. Their mental and physical strength was so great that the present feeble generation can bear no comparison to them. Those ancients had nearly one thousand years in which to acquire knowledge. They came upon the stage of action from the ages of sixty to one hundred years, about the time those who now live the longest have acted their part in their little short life time, and have passed off the stage. Those who are deceived, and flattered on in the delusion that the present is an age of real progress, and that the human race has been in ages past progressing in true knowledge, are under the influence of the father of lies, whose work has ever been to turn the truth of God into a lie.